# Located lives:

An ethnographic representation of people and place on a British council estate

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This thesis is the product of thinking with others. I feel privileged to be surrounded by people who teach me so much and listen to me as though I have something to say.

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Summary

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This thesis is the product of ethnographic research conducted over a period of eighteen months on a council estate, located on the outskirts of a city in Britain. The research explores how the everyday lives of people on The Estate are shaped by their being there. It also examines the material and social conditions, which produce and legitimate knowledges of these people and this place.

A central concern of the research is the exploration of classed identity formations. Conducted in 'austerity Britain' it traces the material and social constitution of the council estate at a moment of heightened interest (popular, political and academic) as 'other'. The thesis aims to develop a theorisation of being placed on the council estate, which maintains sensitivity to the objectifying processes of claiming to know: specifically, a political commitment to representations of ideas of difference and dissensus (Rancière, 1998; 2006).

This work is produced in conversation with class theory; inspired by Bourdieu's linking of objective structures to subjective experience (Bourdieu, 1977; 1980; 1983) and feminist reflexive writings of the affective in classed beings (Hey, 2006; Walkerdine, 2010; Lucey, 2010). However, crucially, it does not produce a new categorisation of class. Rather I begin from a premise that 'identity categories are never merely descriptive, but always normative, and as such, exclusionary' (Butler, 1992: 15-16). In this thesis, I work through a deconstruction of the concepts of class in order to 'continue to use them, repeat them, to repeat them subversively, and to displace them from the contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power' (1992: 17).

This work is located within academic debates around identity. Thinking with post-structural conceptualisations of gender (Butler, 1990) and race (Nayak, 1977), I develop these as a way to think class. I build upon conceptualisations of habitus (Bourdieu, 2005) as a starting point for exploring subjectivities. Drawing upon work foregrounding the affective consequences of shifts in circumstances resulting in a habitus 'out of place' (Reay, 2007); I explore the moments of negotiation that occur when one is 'in place'.

Furthering a theorisation of class as a social placing, I bring in conceptual developments within social geography to explore the social constitution of classed places (Massey, 2005; Featherstone, 2013). Through my conceptualisation of 'being place(d)' I posit identity formation and place making as intertwined processes. Consequently, identity formation through processes of being place(d) on The Estate is not a simple process of socialisation where one learns to be through being of a particular place; rather it is the positioning in place through being in moments of difference.

Through my analysis, I theorise identity as moments of identification (Hall, 1996), within which aspects of self are formed in proximity and/or distanced with others. This conceptualisation of relational identity construction is heavily influenced by Bourdieu's thinking, yet moves beyond habitus as 'forgotten history' (Bourdieu, 1990: 56) to habitus as 'foregrounded history'.

Finally, I bring my range of theoretical resources together in my analysis of a Community Centre as a 'contact zone' - a social space where 'cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power' (Pratt, 1991: 34). These momentary exposures do not occur in isolation and are entangled within histories and processes of domination that reach far beyond the moment of contact. Consequently, analysis of this interaction requires bifocality - at once interested in the moment of construction, whilst exploring the contexts within which this moment is located and thus interpreted. In so doing, I highlight the importance of power in the maintenance of structures, whilst allowing the possibility of subversion and resistance within moments of contact.

# Contents

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Section 1: Introducing the research

This thesis is the product of ethnographic research conducted over a period of eighteen months on a council estate, located on the outskirts of a city in Britain. The research explores how the everyday lives of people on The Estate are shaped by their being there.  It also examines the material and social conditions, which produce and legitimate knowledges of these people and this place.

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This work is produced in conversation with class theory; inspired by Bourdieu's linking of objective structures to subjective experience (Bourdieu, 1977; 1980; 1983) and feminist reflexive writings of the affective in classed beings (Hey, 2006; Walkerdine, 2010; Lucey, 2010). However, crucially, it does not produce a new categorisation of class.  Rather, I begin from a premise that 'identity categories are never merely descriptive, but always normative, and as such, exclusionary' (Butler, 1992: 15-16). In this thesis, I work through a deconstruction of the concepts of class in order to 'continue to use them, repeat them, to repeat them subversively, and to displace them from the contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power' (1992: 17).

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Thus, the research is located within academic debates around identity theorisations. Thinking with post-structural conceptualisations of gender (Butler, 1990) and race (Nayak, 1997), I develop these as a way to think class. I build upon conceptualisations of habitus (Bourdieu, 2005) as a starting point for exploring subjectivities. Drawing upon work foregrounding the affective consequences of shifts in circumstances resulting in a habitus 'out of place' (Reay, 2007); I

explore the moments of negotiation that occur when one is 'in place'. Through my analysis, I theorise identity as moments of identification (Hall, 1996), within which aspects of self are formed in both proximity and distance with others. This conceptualisation of relational identity construction is heavily influenced by Bourdieu's thinking, yet moves beyond habitus as 'forgotten history' (Bourdieu, 1990: 56) to habitus as 'foregrounded history'.

## Research temporalities

Introducing my research now, as it comes to an end, I am distinctly aware of the representational weight of time. This research is of course a product of its time, it is located within a 'feel' of this time, a national sentiment, perhaps. Yet, time is dynamic; it may be stretched and compressed, it can stand still. It can fly by. I am left questioning how I can speak of this research as a singular, coherent, autonomous project: what is my research context and how do I begin to represent it in its shifting complexity in time?

Through a foregrounding of research temporalities, I hope to make visible movements, shifts and ruptures in my research trajectory. More than this, however, by exploring contexts as temporal, I make a methodological claim around the cyclical nature of sociological research. By this, I refer to processes of knowledge production as inherently connected to the social.

In this Section I outline the social location of this research. Drawing upon representations of the council estate in dominant political, cultural and academic discourses. I explore the development of this research within the 'feel' of the moment and my own social positioning of proximity and/or distance from these discourses.

## A time, a place?

This research is an ethnography of a council estate, conducted over a period of eighteen months. It is necessarily located within *a* time and *a* place; my ethnographic data captures moments enacted within this specific context. Although this spatial and temporal context is important it is mediated through other spaces and other times. Thus, I am concerned with the social constitution of time and place, so that through ethnography I may explore the dynamic processes of place production, at once constituted by and constitutive of structuring dominant discourses.

Therefore, this ethnography is a product of my positioning within a time/space nexus also; it is an experiential account of time and place located within my imagining of constitutive histories and possible futures. Nevertheless, I think it is important to stress that the 'I' with which I write is not a claim to a stable, unitary, autonomous viewpoint. Rather, drawing upon Butler's thinking on gender:

> 'What I call my "own" gender appears perhaps at times as something that I author or, indeed, own. But the terms that make up one's own gender are, from the start outside oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author' (Butler, 2004: 1)

Thinking identity in this way, I do not assert myself as being one thing and not another. The 'I' is constituted in a 'sociality'; 'one is always "doing" with or for another' (Butler, 2004: 1), as such the 'I' of my thesis is contingent on its legitimation through the recognition of the reader. Nevertheless, processes of making the self are entangled with the reading of symbolic inscription of bodies and behaviours. Thinking with Skeggs' (2004) analysis of class as 'making through marking', I understand the self as a consequence of classification. Therefore, the 'sociality' within which one is constituted is immersed within power dynamics; as a relational being, the 'I' is formed within moments of struggle for recognition. As Butler notes:

> 'The human is understood differentially depending on its race, the legibility of that race, its morphology, the recognisability of that morphology, its sex, the perceptual verifiability of that sex, its ethnicity, the categorical understanding of that ethnicity' (Butler, 2004: 2)

So, the constitution of the 'I' within sociality, does not negate the reading of continuity of the self by the other. Rather, it enables a critique of this reading. It is a challenge to the notion of an essentialised being, and a bringing to the fore of the 'processes of classification: exploitation, domination, dispossession and devaluation, and their legitimation' (Skeggs, 2015: 205). Therefore, although there is no stable 'I' that I may speak from or claim to know, I am located in moments of classification that position me within an imagined continuity of the social world. These identity markers shift in meaning, are valued differentially within moments of interaction and through relational identity construction they may re-form anew. As such, aspects of the 'I' have been invested in through a 'stylised repetition of acts' (Butler, 1988: 2), which position me in unexpected ways throughout my ethnography.

My understanding of myself is as a white, working class, woman. Pursuing a PhD focussed on class analysis, it is my classed identity that I feel; both in moments of being positioned and in my own positioning of others in their proximity and/or distance to my claim to be classed. I think of this as being valorised in the sense that it is made sensible as an identity claim only in its articulation within dominant discourses; that is, when I speak it through a middle class academic vernacular. Thus, my access to academic discourses, as a resource, has shifted my classed positioning, to some extent complicating it. The academy is a paradoxical space for one embodying aspects of a de-valued classed position (Hey, 2003). Of course, there are entrenched cultural norms within higher education which, often explicitly, exclude those differentially classed (Reay et al, 2009; Read et al, 2003). However, there are also spaces within which a particular enactment of working *classness* is valued and valorised as a form of 'authenticity'. It was within these spaces that I first became interested in not simply being classed, as a structural consequence, but the processes of classification. I had entered a space where my class judgements were validated, a space within which I was in a position to class; to classify others. I became very uncomfortable with this naming of class, specifically the use of Bourdieu's theorisations to map

(and trap) others and me in their/my perceived static classed position. Running alongside this discomfort I felt with popular class analysis, I experienced a re-classification during fieldwork.

> *When I arrived Sharon said she had something important to talk to me about. She said would I mind going out in the car – I said no, of course not – I thought she wanted me to pick up some food or something – she gave me her bank card and pin and said go put £40 petrol in your car.*
>
> *I was really surprised and shocked – I didn't know what to say – I said she really didn't need to – honestly.*
>
> *She wouldn't have none of it and said she didn't want to discuss it – it was all agreed, they had talked about it and it was decided.*
>
> *I took the gift – when I returned, I thanked her again and she said maybe this will help you get down to see your family.*

<div align="right">Sarah's fieldnotes, 30th January 2014</div>

Throughout my ethnography I was constantly positioned and re-positioned as different aspects of me were highlighted and foregrounded. The stable working class identity I invested in and championed in my enactment with other 'working class academics' was constantly undermined within processes of being classed by my participants. I was re-storied as 'in need', disparate aspects of my trajectory were narrated together to classify my position as poor. Though this classification was often informed by dominant discourses of deserving/undeserving and respectable/not respectable, these ideas were always troubled and mediated through affective relationships. It was my unexpected classification but also the kindness with which I was treated that has shaped my research focus on the processes of classification that occurs within The Estate. Specifically, the entanglement of dominant discourses with everyday enactments of a 'liveable life' (Butler, 2004).

## 'Austerity' and the visibility of class

The socio-political context of this research is often spoken of, both within academic and popular discourse, as 'austerity Britain' (Atkinson et al, 2012; Mckenzie, 2015). Sociological analyses trace a 'process of intense ideological work' to embed austerity as the 'common sense' answer to the 'question' of welfare since the 2008 global financial crisis and subsequent recession (Jensen, 2014: 2.1). I outline this academic construction of the political context of austerity in order to suggest a re-conceptualisation of common sense as the *site* rather than the *outcome* of political struggle (Hall and O'Shea, 2013).

Drawing upon Bourdieu's notion of 'doxosophy' (Bourdieu, 1999), Jensen argues that discourses of austerity are produced in a 'mutually constitutive feedback loop' between fast media and fast policy; a 'revolving door between politician and "social commentator" where new forms of welfare "commonsense" [sic] start to congeal' (Jensen, 2014: 3.3). Furthering Clarke and Newman's (2012) analysis of the 'alchemy of austerity', she draws connections between political

'discursive repertoires', such as 'Big Society' (Cabinet Office, 2010) and 'Broken Britain' (Cameron, 2010), and media representations of 'poverty porn', as 'creating new forms of neoliberal commonsense [sic] around welfare and social security' (Jensen, 2014: 1).

This new common sense, centred on the 'immensely powerful binary of "skiver" and "striver" conceives of its citizens as one or the other, occupying different spaces, oriented by different morals, aspirations and values' (2014: 2.5). It is the dislocation of such discourses from the social, political, economic structuring of this time that reinforces the 'common sense' of these claims; common sense 'seems to be outside time…[i]ndeed it may be persuasive precisely because we think of it as a product of Nature rather than of history' (Hall and O'Shea, 2013: 2).

Nevertheless, Hall and O'Shea illustrate the 'strangely composite' nature of common sense, making visible the 'unresolved struggle over common sense within the individual as well as between individuals and groups' (Hall and O'Shea, 2013: 14). This conceptualisation of common sense as 'a site of political struggle' (ibid: 3) moves beyond a distinction between the production of it as doxosophy and sociological commentary as critique, outlined above. Focussing attention on the processes through which common sense is established redefines its production as a moment of politics. As Rancière suggests:

> 'politics is an act of impurity, a process that resists purification…Politics makes visible that which a social order wishes to render invisible, and it does so in such a way that it does not just "add" to what is already given. Instead, it undermines the purity of the given.'
>
> (Chambers, 2011: 305)

In this way, politics is moments which rupture. As a site of politics, common sense is performative (Butler, 1998), these fleeting ruptures are formative of a police order:

> 'an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and the sayable' (Rancière, 1999: 29)

Thus, 'politics has no ''proper'' object…all its objects are blended with the objects of police' (Rancière, 2003: 4). There is no distinction, therefore, between doxosophy and sociological critique. Both are formative of austerity as a distribution of the sensible (Rancière, 2004).

> 'The ideological politics of austerity have made class divisions and their consequences even more apparent. For instance, in the UK in the last few years there have been £18 billion cuts to the welfare budget, leading to the establishment of 423 food banks in Britain which feed 913,138 people including 330,205 children. How can the existence of class be denied when the real incomes for the poorest have fallen 40 per cent, and 33 per cent of families lack basic resources, and where the longest depression of wages since 1979 has occurred and the cost of living has risen by 25 per cent in last 5 years, and where the top 10 per cent of households in the UK are now 850 times wealthier than the bottom 10 per cent.' (Skeggs, 2015: 206-207)

Understood as formative of a distribution of the sensible, academic representations of austerity, such as that outlined by Skeggs (2015), are constitutive of 'ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying' (Rancière, 1999). Therefore, the location of this research within a context of 'austerity', refers to the material conditions of a particular time and place as constitutive of and constituted through legitimate ways of knowing and speaking of these conditions.

Therefore, I characterise the analysis I employ within this thesis as a discomforting questioning that may make visible the representational power of classifications. Thinking with Rancière's conceptualisation of politics enables a critical engagement with the academic representations outlined above, through an exploration of the ways they (re)constitute that which they critique.

## Common sense as political struggle: possibilities for change

Thus, despite my discomfort with the tendency for sociological analyses of 'common sense' to differentiate between a one founded on 'misperceptions' and another on the critical intellectual work (Tyler and Jensen, 2015), they do provide a methodology for the 'unpicking of…mechanisms of consent' (ibid, 29). That is, by emphasising ways in which common sense representations 'generate divergent, resistant and multifarious meanings and affects' (Allen, Tyler and De Benedictis 2014: 2.5), there may be an opportunity to fracture this imaginary (Tyler and Jensen, 2015).

For me, Hall and O'Shea's (2013) conceptualisation of common sense as a site of political struggle draws attention to the processes through which common senses are produced, reproduced, legitimised and policed. This more dynamic account of common sense brings to the fore temporality and change. Through a focus on the composite formations of common sense, dominant discourses do not negate dissensus. Rather, common sense may be conceived as a site of dissensus and, as such, a productive site. To think politics in this way means:

> 'on the one hand, to reject any model of unalloyed politics…and, on the other, to insist that politics can never proceed as if the other can be fully known and incorporated into the social order. In Rancièrean language, we are always subject to an "excess of words" that both makes politics possible and prevents its closure.'

> (Chambers, 2011: 305)

The use of a 'cultural political' methodology to 'examine the mechanisms through which…sentiments are produced and mediated' (Tyler and Jensen, 2015: 1), enables a tracing of the histories of political values, locating claims to common sense within a moral economy.

I return to the argument I have put forward, that all representation feeds into the formation of a 'distribution of the sensible' (Rancière, 2004), throughout the thesis. Specifically, I advance this 'cultural political' methodology as means to trace the social construction of the council estate in my contextual Chapter (see Chapter 2, Section 1). For now, this discussion has introduced key

ideas of representation and politics which inform the development of my research questions in the following Section.

# Section 2: Core debates - towards questioning

In this Section I open up some of the core debates that run throughout my thesis. In so doing, I trace the emergent focus of my research towards a questioning of representation.

My research began as an exploration of classed identity formation. As such, my research questions were embedded within class analysis as an exploration of the material and social consequences of classed being. Through an ethnographic exploration of everyday life on The Estate I questioned:

1. What are the connections between material position and social position?
2. What are the processes through which these connections are formed on The Estate?

Though my objective in this research is to know class, I was particularly conscious of naming class in my research questions. Rather, the framing of my research questions around the fundamental assumption of class theory, that there is a connection between material position and social position, necessitated a stepping back from conceptualisations of class in order to question how class is produced.

Although these questions maintained a common thread throughout the research, new questions arose in the doing of ethnography, my being an ethnographer, my analysis and finally in my writing of this thesis.

A new questioning emerged out of my thinking through the core debates of my thesis. This questioning centred on what knowledges my research produced, what the consequences were for claiming to know may be and what it means to represent the lives of others:

3. What are the material and social conditions which produce and legitimate knowledges of these people and this place?

I begin by outlining what drew me to the methodology of ethnography and introducing the core debate of authenticity as a legitimating claim of ethnography.

## Truth telling: Legitimation through authenticity

'The reflexive turn has broadened such understanding to include the very space of our ethnographic knowing. Hence, to situate ethnography as a ruin/rune is to foreground the limits and necessary misfiring's of its project, problematizing the researcher as "the one who knows". Placed outside of mastery and victory narratives, ethnography becomes a kind of self-wounding laboratory for discovering the rules by which truth is produced. Attempting to be accountable to complexity, thinking the limit becomes our task and

much opens up in terms of ways to proceed for those who know both too much and too little.' (Lather, 2001: 482)

For me, ethnography as a methodology does not provide answers to my questions of representation, but rather keeps my questioning open and uncertain. It is not a best practice; it does not produce a 'how to guide' to representation. However, it does provide both research and thinking tools with which to explore the production of representations.

Nevertheless, ethnography is not neutral ground within which these debates occur. The history of the ethnographic contract is one deeply rooted in assumptions around representation. The researcher and researched are constituted through an 'imaginary exchange of reciprocal lacks that masks the real asymmetries of power and status' (Cohen, 2000: 13). Founded in voyeurism and ventriloquism, the researcher lacks the authenticity of the participant and the participant lacks the authority of voice of the researcher. Thus, the ethnographic exchange is entangled within the supposition of an authentic subject, a claim which shapes notions of belonging, possibilities for change and the question of agency.

From the 'reciprocal lacks' of Cohen's critique of what may be called 'traditional' ethnography, to the authority of voice celebrated in what Lather terms the 'new' ethnographies of self-revelation and personal narrative, 'authenticity and voice are at the heart of claims to the "real" in ethnography' (Lather, 2001: 483). There has been a shift away from the explicit ventriloquism of the traditional ethnographer; the re-telling of a people in the voice of the ethnographer through their analysis, to a privileging of the authority of voice: a practice of representation designed to move beyond appropriation. Yet both these representations centre on claims of authenticity, both in terms of the people under study and the researcher as a legitimate knower.

Drawing upon Gates' argument that authenticity plays a 'troublesome' role in claims of 'realness', and that attention must be paid to the ways in which all writers are 'cultural impersonators' (Gates, 1991: 3), Lather draws attention to authenticity as an aspect of 'contemporary regimes of disciplinary truth-telling' (Lather, 2001: 483). In this way, both the traditional ethnographer constructing representations through analysis, and the new ethnographer, representing through the display of 'raw' data, evoke authenticity as a mechanism to capture that which they seek to know. By capture, I refer to the capturing of ethnographic moments for their use as objects of 'show and tell' but also capture in the sense of to hold still, to keep as one's own, and to know. The authentic subject is static, their lives reduced through the ethnographer's representation into 'a too-easy, too-familiar eating of the other' (2001: 484).

> *The first time I met Sharon we talked about my home town. She told me what she knew of it, that she had heard that it was where many travellers had settled. She had visited The Estate I was bought up on once, with the Community Centre. She joked that it was really old fashioned, that there were kids playing with conkers. Her (the Community Centre) kids didn't know what to make of it.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 3rd May 2013

The positioning of a subject as 'authentic' is an act of power, through claims to know, the other is fixed in place and in their difference. Yet this power relation is not static, it is not that one is endowed with power and the other is not. Rather, the defining of the other as 'authentic' is a process of power production, it is in the act of naming that power lies. As such, what I had perceived to be shared histories that may position me, to some extent, *with* my participants often became points of distinction. Therefore, although there is of course an inherent power in the production of knowledge of a people through research, the relationship between the researcher and the researched is complex. Though I never believed myself to be an 'insider' researcher I had imagined a togetherness; that together we would represent that which is named as other. However, often dominant discourses were drawn upon by my participants to locate my experience as an 'authentic' state, one which they could look upon and know as different and fixed.

Through acts of de-familiarisation with disciplinary conceptualisations of authenticity, Lather complicates and challenges the position that authenticity refers to 'singular, transparent, static identity categories assumed to give the writer a particular view' (Lather, 2001: 483). In this way, a feminist ethnography becomes, 'not about offering a competing ontological frame but about looking at the historical, philosophical and cultural construction of frames, that which [it] invests with patterns of belief and habit' (2001: 479), both in terms of the object of research and the research methodology itself. Feminist research is concerned with power and Skeggs calls for analysis of the 'actual process of ethnography and asks who has the power to do, write, authorize and distribute research in the name of feminist ethnography' (Skeggs, 2001: 3). It is these post-structural feminist theorists that drew me to ethnography, not only as a method but a form of questioning and analysis (2001: 5).

So, for me, feminist ethnography is a politics about 'how we should do research' (Skeggs, 2001: 4). Moreover, it is a methodology for understanding processes. An ethnographic methodology informs this work from its focus on the 'production of everyday life' (Lather 2001: 481), to the methods I have used. It also is an analysis which connects 'meaning, social structure, power relations and history' (2001: 481) and a textual representation of the research.

As an account of processes, ethnography is necessarily conducted across time and space. Put simply, therefore, it can be defined through its utilisation of particular methods:

> 'fieldwork that will be conducted over a prolonged period of time; utilizing different research techniques; conducted within the settings of the participants, with an understanding of how the context informs the action; involving the researcher in participation and observation; involving an account of the development of relationships between the researcher and the researched and focusing on how experience and practice are part of wider processes' (Skeggs, 2001: 4)

As a method, methodology, analysis and text, ethnography produces a particular form of representation. The ethnographic moment is produced in contact between participant and researcher. Thus, the site of knowledge production, what is known of the people of the research, is re-located within the interaction between the researcher and the researched.

> *In the break between the clubs, I struggled to keep up with the banter. Holly had cooked a pizza for us all to share. She got it out the oven, slipping it on to a tea towel, she carried it over to the kitchen work top in the middle of room and slapped it down. After slicing it with a rolling cutter she stepped back as the group began to help themselves. Holly looked at me, and with a smile said 'I'll get you a plate Sarah, you don't look like the sort to eat without one'. As she walked over to the cupboard I asked 'Would you get me a knife and fork too?' For a moment the room went silent, it wasn't until I began to laugh that they realised I was joking*

Sarah's fieldnotes, December 2nd 2013

As an ethnographer, my representations of my participants are formed within moments where they 'show and tell' their everyday lives. In this way, the ethnographic representation is not formed through being the same or even learning to become alike, rather it is being there in moments of difference. This focus on the research interaction to some extent de-stabilises the notion of the authentic research participant, as knowledge of the everyday is produced in and through interaction. By providing an account of the processes of the research encounter, ethnography highlights the ways in which the self is defined and the practices by which connections with others are formed and maintained. In the above fieldnote for example, Holly defines herself in opposition to me, locating her identity as that of the group, through her claim to my difference. Running alongside this, however, are wider social practices of group formation. Though there are perceived differences between us, through my engagement with banter I was able to form connections and acceptance within the group. In this way, the ethnographic representation is not a looking in, or a capturing of an authentic way of being, rather it is an attention to the practices of the everyday that may be made visible in moments of the research encounter.

Furthermore, it is ethnography as an ontological and epistemological commitment that distinguishes it from other formations of qualitative research, a commitment which transcends the doing of research and is embedded in the representation of research. Of course, all research sets its own ontological and epistemological parameters, laying claim to legitimacy through the utilisation of disciplinary techniques, yet through a 'desire to stop confining the other within the same…[ethnography] is more about not being so sure' (Lather, 2001: 480). For me, the fundamental aspect of ethnography is the textual representation of the people of the research, the ontological and epistemological foundations of ethnography within a conception of the everyday as producer of structure, invites a critical stance on the ethnography itself as a powerful representation, a writing into being. This critical engagement with the practice of ethnographic

writing as only ever 'partial truths' (Clifford and Marcus, 1986) produced a new mode of legitimate writing through the use of fragmented writing styles which attempt to make visible the limits of the ethnographic text. Nevertheless, Lather notes:

> '…textual "solutions" have their limits and a doubled epistemology is called for where the text becomes a site of the failures of representation. Here textual experiments are not so much about solving the crisis of representation as troubling the very claims to represent'. (Lather, 2001: 481)

I have felt this failure of representation acutely in my use of ethnographic fieldnotes throughout the thesis. In my methodology Chapter I experiment with alternative formations of the fieldnote, 'storying' an ethnographic moment so as to explore what may be made visible through lyricism, an attempt to portray the feel of the moment (see Chapter 4, Section 1). However, I have not storied my other fieldnotes beyond that which is necessary for anonymisation. This is in part a result of the frustration I felt when writing the lyrical note, a frustration at the limits of my ability to truly represent the feel of the moment. Yet, underlying it is some felt sense of authenticity; that through displaying this data in its original form, it may be considered a bounded object, real and of substance. This is one of the many textual compromises I have made within the thesis; I had to find a way to prevent the research slipping through my fingers before I had a chance to really look on it. Thus, my analysis requires what Lather terms a 'doubled epistemology'; the fieldnote of course refers to the ethnographic moment, it describes and works to comprehend, it constructs the object of research, my presentation of this data in its original fieldnote form, works to construct another object, the fieldnote itself, my conceptualisation of the ethnographic moment, as an object of research. This, I hope, is not a practice of self-analysis; my interest does not lie there. Rather, it is to make visible the production of any knowledge of the people of my ethnography, to account for temporality and to 'produce and learn from ruptures, failures, breaks and refusals' (Lather, 2001: 482).

It is ethnography's troubled connections to authenticity that pushes me in my thinking throughout the thesis to question what it means to represent: how am I legitimating my claims to know and where lies power within the research process?

## Reflexivity: performing position

> 'When we enter ethnography we enter it with all our economic and cultural baggage, our discursive access and the traces of positioning and history that we embody. We cannot easily disinvest of these. In fact we may not even know that much about ourselves' (Skeggs, 2001: 21)

Founding my analysis on a display and re-thinking of my fieldnotes of course draws upon notions of reflexivity; my reflections are endowed with legitimacy through my locating them within the disciplinary technique of reflexivity. My making visible of assumptions and misunderstandings embedded within my fieldnotes is possible due to the passing of time and my on-going contact

with the people of my ethnography, as I learn more or maybe become interested in different things. However, I do not wish to afford reflexivity the power of an ability or gift that is accessed by researchers alone. Surely reflexivity is just the naming of processes of understanding one's place within the social which enables our everyday being in the world? More than this, I do not consider reflexivity to be something you simply do; rather it is an integral aspect of the feminist project. It is not something that may be mastered but a commitment to examining processes and 'questioning the use of power and powerlessness…examining closely the politics of seemingly apolitical situations, evaluating the responsibilities we bore toward one another' (Wolf, 1992: 132).

As Lather notes, 'we often do not know what we are seeing, how much we are missing, what we are not understanding or even how to locate those lacks' (Lather, 2001: 485). Informed by Visweswaran's (1994) distinction between interpretive/reflexive ethnography and deconstructive ethnography, Lather is critical of the former in its authorising of itself through 'confronting its own processes of interpretation as some sort of cure toward better knowing' (Lather, 2001: 485). She argues for a deconstructive approach to ethnography characterised as 'knowing through not knowing' (Visweswaran, 1994: 80), what she conceptualises as 'reflexivity under erasure' (Lather, 2001: 484).

Most powerful in Lather's discussion of reflexivity is her call for caution in the research process, a recognition that, as highlighted by McCoy, 'all research is to some degree surveillance' (McCoy, 1998: 6). That is to say that 'it is key to recognize the limits as well as possibilities of self-reflexivity' (Lather, 2001: 483).

It is this troubling of claims to represent that threads this thesis together, there is a tension in my project between my challenge to categorisations of class and my exploration of what I position as classed lives. In other words, by seeking to know the processes of classification, this research fixes and reifies complex lives into known identities, through the presentation of ethnographic moments. In my working within the inadequacies of my own writing and ability to tell the lives of my ethnography, I bring in concepts and thinkers to aid my understanding of this research and do more work than my ethnographic writing is able to do. In this next Section I discuss three conceptual areas that inform my engagement with representation: the politics of knowing; structure and agency in post-structural thought; and identity.

## From seeking to know to embracing wonder

> 'Wonder is not necessarily a safe, comforting, or uncomplicatedly positive affect. It shades into curiosity, horror, fascination, disgust, and monstrosity…when I feel wonder, I have chosen something that has chosen me, and it is that mutual "affection" that constitutes "us" as, respectively, data and researcher' (MacLure, 2013: 229)

Maggie MacLure's theorisation of wonder draws the processes of knowing into the same post-structural thinking that explores the constitution of the known. By this I mean that she brings to

the fore the relationship between the knower and the known, so that what is known is re-imagined as constituted within the mutual 'affection' of the researcher and the data. In this way, it is not enough for the post-structural thinker to map the trajectories of the known object, or even to reflect on their own trajectories so as to examine what they, as knower, may know. Rather, attention must be drawn to the moment of representation, the space between the knower and the known; a recognition of representation as a moment of 'politics' in the sense that it 'revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time' (Rancière, 2004: 7).

Thinking of representation as a moment of politics makes explicit the power dynamics inherent in acts of representation. Informed by feminist writers who draw attention to power in research relationships, I began this research mindful and cautious of the consequences of rupturing lives through research. However, it has been in the writing of my thesis that I have become aware of and interested in the processes of knowledge production and the inevitability of representation as an act of power. This had led me to question what it is to know, what is produced when one lays claims to know and what are the legitimating practices performed to ensure claims to know are recognised.

Thus, this thesis centres on a questioning of representation, a discomfort with the classing of lives through their categorisation and an exploration of the possibility of enacting wonder; that is a focus on the space between knower and known, an interest in the production of knowledge as the consequence of this relationship. This project has led me to the work of post-structuralist thinkers; that through their calling into 'question the ways in which such "examples" and "paradigms" serve to subordinate and erase that which they seek to explain' (Butler, 1992: 5), draw theoretical attention to claims to know.

Positioning my engagement with the people of this research and the data I produced of them as characterised by 'wonder' moves beyond an acknowledgement of my positionality as an anchoring of what I may know, to the creation of a space where I may talk of what I do not know or at least cannot represent:

> 'It is this liminal condition, suspended in a threshold between knowing and unknowing, that prevents wonder from being wholly contained or recuperated as knowledge, and thus affords an opening onto the new' (MacLure, 2013: 228)

## Structure and agency in post-structural thought: challenging the autonomous subject

> 'And the point is not to do away with foundations, or even to champion a position that goes under the name of antifoundationalism…Rather, the task is to interrogate what the theoretical move that establishes foundations authorizes, and what precisely it excludes or forecloses' (Butler, 1992: 7)

Feminist ethnography is founded on an affinity between political interests and methodological possibilities. Ethnography, through a focus on the everyday life of participants enables an articulation of their 'hidden' knowledges and resistances, an account of the ways in which agency produces structure (Willis, 1997). The possibility to explore the connection between structure and agency through ethnography speaks to some feminists' concerns of the importance of linking the personal and political. Moreover, the in-depth nature of ethnographic research, being conducted over a period of time, allows an exploration of the complexity of individual lives; the potential of ethnography to explore the intersections of multiple identities enables the interconnections of gender to be explored (Skeggs, 2001: 11-12). Thus, this ethnography is located within multiple foundations; connections to the histories of ethnography and its development within feminist works.

Butler's work to 'interrogate what the theoretical move that establishes foundations authorises' (Butler, 1992: 7) informs my approach to ethnography, through an attention to the 'institutional power relations involved in actually producing a text' (Skeggs, 2001: 15). One of my key concerns in the design, fieldwork and writing of my research was that the experiences of my participants would be subsumed into established categorisations, ultimately leading to the 'reproduction of these categories intact' (2001: 15). Post-structural theory draws my attention to the ways in which 'power evades the very conceptual apparatus that seeks to negotiate its terms…that this implication of the terms of criticism in the field of power is not the advent of nihilistic relativism incapable of furnishing norms, but, rather, the very precondition of a politically engaged critique' (Butler, 1992: 6-7). Therefore, in my work, post-structural thought is a means to think structure; when location is ignored it is assumed that 'ontology is the ground of epistemology' (Skeggs, 2001: 16) that being equals knowing. As such, my focus on the everyday lives of my participants is not founded in notions of an 'authentic subjective experience' (2001: 17), rather my interest is in the ways in which subjects are constituted through experience (Scott, 1992).

Central to post-structural thought is a challenge to the 'rational transparency of the subject's intentionality, and aims to subvert the very definition of the subject itself (Butler, 1992: 10). Moving beyond locating identity within the self, as an inherent aspect of the individual, post-structuralism considers the formation of the self by the 'constitutive outside' (Lucey, 2010); 'the subject is constituted through an exclusion and differentiation…concealed, covered over, by the effect of autonomy' (Butler, 1992: 12).

These theorisations aided my thinking through of the possibilities of agency, change and resistance. However, I continue to be concerned about the extent to which these thinking tools can tell us about moments of non-action, the acts that cannot be conceived of, by the researcher, as moments of doing. Of course, the post-structural project is one which works towards a

destabilising of normalised behaviour, yet these normative behaviours are often those within our social experience and as such rendered and recognised and thus visible. The use of non-normative action to destabilise identity categorisations, for example Butler's valorising of drag (Butler, 1990), opens up recognition, but I worry that there remain particular identifications, so deeply devalued that they may only be viewed in their absence, as apathy.

Charlesworth's attention to 'the link between access to economic resources, value and human being' may go some way towards recognising actions which when read through normative value systems 'appear chaotic, confused, lacking in direction, ambition and foresight' (Charlesworth, 2000: 39). Locating behaviour within structural constraints opens the possibility to recognise action beyond that which appears purposeful, as Charlesworth notes:

> '…to walk deliberately, requires assurance, to move about in the public realm, requires income, transport, it requires the appropriate marks of presence, the right clothes, it requires resources of self-presentation to meet and discern mutual interests with a view to doing something' (Charlesworth, 2000: 40).

Although I feel limited by my own locatedness to see beyond that which I know, I hope to engage sensitively with the possibility of multiple meanings to resist the *definite* in my analysis of behaviour.

## Locating the subject: post-structural theorisations of identity

> 'Location is not a listing of adjectives or assigning of labels such as race, sex and class. Location is not the concrete to the abstract of decontextualisation. Location is the always partial, always finite, always fraught play of foreground and background, text and context, that constitutes critical enquiry. Above all, location is not self-evident or transparent' (Haraway, 1997: 37).

Post-structural theorisations of identity are not a dislocating of the subject from the social, or a denial of subjectivities; 'to take the construction of the subject as a political problematic is not the same as doing away with the subject' (Butler, 1992: 15). Rather, through deconstructing the subject we may explore the 'linguistic functions it serves in the consolidation and concealment of authority' (1992: 15). Thus, an exploration of classed subjectivities through post-structural theory is not to move away from class as a structural and therefore material location, but to recognise that 'if the subject is constituted by power, that power does not cease at the moment the subject is constituted, but is subjected and produced time and again' (1992: 13). As such, post-structural theory allows for the exploration of the processes through which the subject is constituted, furthermore, providing space within my analysis for subversion of classed categories. Butler notes that 'identity categories are never merely descriptive, but always normative, and as such, exclusionary' (1992: 15-16), a claim which spoke to my discomfort with the potential reification of class within my work. Through a deconstruction of these terms I hope to 'continue to use them,

repeat them, to repeat them subversively, and to displace them from the contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power' (1992: 17).

Throughout the thesis I draw upon Hall's conceptualisation of 'identification' as the basis of my imagining of identity:

> '…identification is, then, a process of articulation, a suturing, an over-determination not a subsumption. There is always 'too much' or 'too little' – an over-determination or a lack, but never a proper fit, a totality. Like all signifying practices, it is subject to the 'play' of difference. It obeys the logic of more-than-one. And since as a process it operates across difference, it entails discursive work, the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries, the production of 'frontier-effects'. It requires what is left outside, its constitutive outside, to consolidate the process' (Hall, 2000: 17)

Hall's theorisation of identity as a 'signifying practice' insists that I remain critically interested in identity claims as an act of symbolic violence. That I continue to question affinities I may feel with particular identity claims and ask what is unsaid, what is outside, who is rendered invisible in moments where sameness obscures the processes of identification.

> '…in this sense, identifications belong to the imaginary; they are phantasmatic efforts of alignment, loyalty, ambiguous and cross-corporeal cohabitations, they unsettle the I; they are the sedimentation of the 'we' in the constitution of any I, the structuring present of alterity in the very formulation of the I. Identifications are never fully and finally made; they are incessantly reconstituted, and, as such, are subject to the volatile logic of iterability. They are that which is constantly marshalled, consolidated, retrenched, contested and, on occasion, compelled to give way' (Butler, 1993: 105)

# Chapter 2: Constructing context

## Introduction

In this Chapter I weave together multiple representations of The Estate in order to construct a context within which to locate my ethnography. Drawing upon the social, political and material constructions of The Estate, I story the research within a trajectory of national political change, local housing dynamics and shifting service provision.

I begin by tracing the history of The Estate construction, from the development of housing for those displaced through slum clearance to current changes in the infrastructure serving The Estate. I am interested in weaving the discursive into these 'fact' based analyses of estate development as read through the objectifying histories of policy and planning. To support this, I draw upon developments in social geography, I hope to explore the connections between physical space and cultural representations of space (Rogaly and Taylor, 2009).

I explore the context of my research through colliding representations. I aim to speak back to and complicate accounts of The Estate as a homogenous place of 'disadvantage' through a making visible of the ways in which demographic statistics are entwined with social, cultural and political discourses producing particular representations of The Estate. Thus, I do not wish to work within a binary of the discursive and the material, or discourse and fact, rather explore the processes by which the material is always mediated through the discursive so that fact is always founded in discursive constructions of the object. What I refer to when I say 'fact' based analysis of The Estate, are those discourses of estate development that are not considered discourses, the representations of The Estate which have an objectifying authority. Histories of demographic information, housing planning and re-planning, changes to tenancies and tenants' rights, housing policy and so on, are drawn upon to story an account of The Estate endowed with the legitimacy of objectivity. There are, of course, possible challenges to these representations within their own epistemological and ontological framing, for example, unrecorded data of those transient within The Estate. However, this is not the line of argument I wish to pursue, rather I hope to bring in these accounts of The Estate into an alternative epistemological and ontological space: that is, to explore them as a discourse, to question what assumptions underpin them and what they produce.

It is therefore necessary for me to define what I mean by discourse and what this means in terms of the ontological and epistemological space within which I position myself. For me, discourse is formative representation, it is the recognition of power in acts of naming and knowing. It refers to the ideas that inform representations in all forms; written, spoken, and visual. My understanding of discourse is informed by Marxist notions of ruling ideas being the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships (Marx and Engels, 1970 [1857]), whilst maintaining that as 'an

imaginary entity, a symbolic representation is performative and becomes institutionalized' (Skeggs, 2014: 9). As such, I consider discourse to be an act of power; it is not simply that dominant discourses map onto material inequalities, they actively produce material conditions. My focus is on discursive construction, the processes through which discourse produces the social. Drawing upon a post-structural ontological position, the power inherent in discourse is imagined beyond the top down dynamic of Marxist materialism, rather power is cyclical and diffuse; power is produced and reproduced in everyday interactions, discourse is a resource and as such is produced by and produces the self.

Moving forward from this 'historied' account of The Estate, I explore the demographics of The Estate at the time of the research; such as, what types of housing forms The Estate? What are the forms of housing tenure? Who lives on The Estate? I will discuss the services available to residents of The Estate, considering the social consequences of its peri-urban positioning on the outskirts of a city.

Framing my discussion around the notion of home, I will trace housing policies shaping The Estate, from ideas of 'homes for heroes', to the 'Englishman and his castle' with the 'right to buy'; I argue there has been a stripping away of the right to home by current coalition policies such as the 'bedroom tax'.

The final Section of the Chapter introduces the central question of my thesis: is living on The Estate a classed position? Drawing upon literature which equates The Estate with working class identities I question whether class is a helpful concept to think about life on The Estate? Can the language of class adequately explore the experience of being located within a de-valued position?

## Section 1: Fictionalising The Estate

Throughout the thesis I refer to The Estate of my ethnography as 'The Estate'. For me, the decision to not give The Estate a name is both methodological and political. By speaking of The Estate in this way, I may move beyond a simple process of anonymisation to a fictionalisation of The Estate, which enables connections to be made between the social and material conditions of The Estate of my research and broader social, political and economic structures of society.

The Estate is at once an abstract estate, that is, The Estate as a place in the British imaginary; a generic estate, one constructed through shifts in welfare and housing policy; and The Estate of my ethnography, the specific geographical and historical situatedness of my research site. Through blurring the lines of distinction between these three constructions of The Estate I hope to fictionalise The Estate, anonymising it, whilst at the same time embedding it within multiple stories, in this way acknowledging my ethnography as a moment between memoried histories and possible futures.

I think it is important to think about the methodology of fictionalising The Estate beyond a requirement to anonymise. I argue that the process of fictionalisation does more work than to simply mask identification, it produces something. The fiction is a new imagining of the research, a stylised account making visible all that is deemed of importance, actively forgetting that which may complicate or confuse. It is a process of sense making for the researcher, in this sense, the fictionalisation of the research site is a creative process of analysis; drawing upon particular histories and representations, the fiction forms the parameters of the research, locating it within a specific perception of time and space. This process of fictionalising The Estate allows me to make connections between The Estate of my ethnography and other representations of The Estate; popular, political and academic. Thus, The Estate is constructed in both its proximity and distance from these other representations; the research positions The Estate within broader trajectories as a product and producer of estate representations.

This rationale informs my naming of all the places within the research, in the hope that through their abstraction they may be more explicitly located within dominant representations:

| The Estate | Local City Council built housing estate |
| --- | --- |
| The Community Centre | Resident initiated social space, venue for after school youth clubs (Primary School aged and Secondary School aged) |
| Estate Primary | Primary School Academy located on The Estate |

In this Section I present an image of The Estate, bringing together social, political and material conditions which form The Estate. I begin by mapping the physical terrain of The Estate, exploring the ways in which the geographies of The Estate are connected to the 'feel' of the place, I argue that the 'residualization' of The Estate is a consequence of socio-spatial de-valuing. Developing this representation of The Estate, I draw upon statistical data produced about The Estate to explore its material and social composition, through an account of housing form and tenure and residents' demographic information. Drawing out the example of Working Age Benefit Claimants, I discuss the importance of storying statistics in order to make connections between social phenomena. I close this Section with an account of the processes through which changes in housing policy shape both the material and social conditions of The Estate, advancing Hanley's (2007) argument that housing policy is the site of struggle for neoliberal formations of citizenship.

## Histories and geographies of The Estate

The Estate is located at the edge of the city, situated within a valley, it is visually and physically contained. The first houses were constructed there in the 1920's, with the slum clearance of the inner city during the inter-war years furthering development to house displaced residents throughout the 1930's. Due to the scarcity of tree planting, both around the edges of The Estate and along the streets, The Estate is a physically severe environment; in summer, the lack of shelter causes the valley to heat up, and in winter, strong winds sweep along the valley floor, channelled by the long linear streets. The Estate was redesigned in the 1970's, with many of the older houses being demolished to make way for higher density housing. The longer roads of the 1930's were replaced by a series of cul-de-sacs which branch off from one main street, creating a sense of fragmentation within The Estate. The Estate juts into the rural landscape, the bottom of The Estate forms the entrance, with the main street stretching up a steep hill, each side is enclosed by the valley; a wall of green that wraps around The Estate. There is no through way, the top of The Estate forms a dead end; it is simply the turning bay for the bus that serves The Estate.

Within the residential cul-de-sacs there is little open space, the large amount of road infrastructure and high boundary fences and walls form a 'visually harsh urban environment' (City Council, Urban Characterisation Study, 2014). The buildings turn their back on the main street, their front accessible by walk-ways, often through under passes. As a consequence, from the main street, The Estate lacks points of reference, for those who do not know their way around The Estate. It is illegible. These physical constructions feed into the social imaginings of the place; the 'blank facades facing onto streets, and the consequent lack of surveillance, impact on the perceived pedestrian safety' (City Council, Urban Characterisation Study, 2014). The development of The Estate homes during different historical periods and within different ideologies, in terms of assumed needs and possibilities, has resulted in a multitude of building types, layouts and scale, further enforcing a lack of visual and physical continuity. As the City Council reflect 'the neighbourhood feels disjointed in character'; there is a clear connection between the physical construction of The Estate and the 'feel' of the place.

The Estates containment is reflected in the provision of services within its boundaries. Given its physical disconnection from the City, this is necessary and I do not mean to suggest that The Estate does not require its own services. However, locating these services within The Estate does not inevitably mean that these services are any more connected to The Estate in terms of a sense of belonging or ownership. The Estate has two local newsagents, selling a limited range of essential groceries, one located half way up the main street, the other at the top of The Estate. There is a church (Church of England) here, holding two services on Sunday and targeted drop in sessions each weekday, working as a food bank and mediator with formal service providers. The

social club on The Estate is currently a venue for a children's nursery, although talks of its imminent re-opening are a favourite rumour continually doing the rounds on The Estate.

Of course The Estate does not exist in isolation, it is the product of national policy shifts in addition to local dynamics. Much of the literature historicises The Estate in terms of a before and after Thatcher Britain, considering the 'right-to-buy' policy as a turning point in the constitution of estates and their wider representation in the British imaginary (Hanley, 2007). Although these policies shaped the cultural recognition of The Estate, devaluing the concept of social housing; local social, political and economic dynamics had begun processes of residualization long before the 1980's.

I think it is important to talk of residualization with reference to The Estate to make explicit the processes through which The Estate is formed as a product of particular policies; that is as configured by both national and local power dynamics. As such not all estates are made equal, the specific landscape, and its associated value, shape The Estate's physical and social materiality. The Estate is constructed on de-valued land, it is set within a harsh physical environment, its development stunted by its enclosure within a valley. A dead-end, located on the fringe, the surrounding landscape forms the city's 'backstage'; it is a place for the dirty work of waste disposal, with the city dump adjoining The Estate.

The Estate's physical dislocation is further entrenched by its transport links; it is served by one looped bus service. Travelling between the city centre and The Estate, the bus service has become notorious in the local area, its number a short hand for The Estate, featuring in jokes and folklore. The 'last bus', a late night service which runs from the city centre to The Estate, featured as the title of a radio chat show, with the host commenting that the 'last bus' 'has the reputation locally of being a rough ride, fully of lippy birds and nutty geezers - just like the show in fact'. In this way, the physical disconnection of The Estate is interwoven with social and cultural disconnections. The attachment of particular values to the place of The Estate and the people of The Estate, is extended to these mobile representations, such as the singular bus; these social cues indicate difference and distance between estate residents and the city's wider population. Thus, The Estate's specific peri-urban geography and its physical and social distance from the city have shaped its construction in the local imaginary and national discourse.

These processes of residualization are made explicit when considering The Estate in its relation to the wider city. It is not the only site of social housing in the city, yet its physical and social construction is distinct. There is a stark socio-spatial polarization between it and the city that is the result of housing policies, disinvestment and shifting cultural representations that stigmatize The Estate as a contemporary slum (Jones, 2010). In this way, The Estate is socially constituted in its relative positioning in national political discourses and their local manifestations. Jones

argues that the residualization of estates are the 'direct result of policies in relation to slum clearance, allocations and sales implemented from the 1930s' (ibid: 515). By drawing connections between these policies, which pushed affluent workers out of tenure, and the rise in stigmatising discourses of 'problem families', Jones asserts that 'the 1940s and 1950s saw an appreciable shift in emphasis in terms of the ways in which tenants from slum clearance areas were depicted' (ibid: 524). There was a marked shift in journalistic accounts away from structural considerations, such as the role of high rents in the exacerbation of poverty, to an increasingly personalized, behaviourist interpretation (ibid: 525). Indicatively, these social divisions within estate residents were materially constituted through the introduction of council house sales, and income capping during the 1950's, resulting in the 'privatization of entire estates, increasingly so-called 'unsatisfactory tenants'…bec[oming] concentrated in specific parts of particular inter-war estates' (ibid: 515).

Furthering Jones' analysis, I think the dynamic between estates is also important, particularly the connection between the social and material value attached to place and the ways in which these policies are implemented. What I mean by this is that processes of residualization are relational; the privatization of one estate shapes the residualization of another. The housing policies which led to the privatization of council homes affected a particular form of council home, thus the social housing stock of today is of particular forms, concentrated in particular places. The positioning of the city's social housing on the periphery has excluded these areas from processes of gentrification which shape inner-city social housing and the consequent complexities these shifting notions of value entail. Nevertheless, social housing in the city with better transport links and more integrated with other housing tenures have been more comprehensively privatised than The Estate. As a result of this the city's most available social housing has become concentrated on The Estate, whose containment within the valley has maintained a social and physical separateness distinct from other areas of social housing in the city.

## Storying the statistics

The Estate is often represented in local and national media through the storying of census data, the selection and weaving together of statistics in order to form a specific type of narrative. Working at the level of the Ward, census data does not capture The Estate in isolation, rather its statistics are in some ways dampened down by the adjoining affluent areas. Nevertheless, this information is important as a means to capture the ways in which The Estate is constructed within local and national representations. The data I draw upon is a report commissioned by the City Council compiled by a private company, its purpose is to aggregate Census data, Indices of Deprivation, and other neighbourhood statistics to form a representation of local areas. The report aims to capture The Estate within the recognised boundaries of the City Council, claiming to 'turn

complex datasets into engaging stories; making data, information and analysis accessible for communities and decision-makers' (OCSI, 2014). In many ways The Estate demographics are unexceptional, falling in line with national averages in England. The Estate is predominately White British (81%), with 19% of estate residents identified as BME, statistics which reflect the England national average of 79.8% and 20.2% respectively. The same is true for immigrant communities, with 82.1% of estate residents born in England (nationally this is 83.5%) and 14.7% being born outside England (nationally 13.8%). Of course, The Estate has a much higher proportion of Social Housing than the national average. At the time of the 2011 Census, 42.3% of The Estate was tenured as Social Rented Housing, with 34.8% of the housing stock being Owner Occupied (England average being 17.7% Social Housing and 64.1% Owner Occupied). Purpose built flats form the majority of dwellings, 33.4% of The Estates accommodation, with terraced and semi-detached houses constituting 22.2% and 20.2% respectively.

The report leads with a series of hard-hitting headlines, drawing from a range of disparate data. Making connections between these distinct facts is not only complex, given the various sources and measures used, claims of causation or correlation would be problematic. How then does the report turn this data into 'engaging stories'? The narrative of this data is implicit, there are no overt connections made between the stated facts, it is for the reader to formulate these connections, to read between the lines and connect the dots. My aim, therefore, is to form a narrative of The Estate, to make visible this telling of The Estate as a creative process; that quantitative representations require an imagining of the social and as such are located within value systems. Thus, this is my storying of the data, my attempt to make sense of these 'facts'. Through a layering of multiple demographic information, I seek to problematise the dislocation of these headline statistics from their social location.

Statistics from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP: February, 2014) indicate that the percentage of working age benefit claimants on The Estate is 28.7%, beyond double England's average of 12.9%. This headline statistic begins to shape the plot of the 'story' this report tells. What I aim to do is complicate the meaning of this statistic by drawing together data from the report to weave a narrative which moves beyond a simple story of benefit receipt as something which is static, all-encompassing and an individual condition. The headline statistic of Working Age Benefit Claimants is the product of a particular context. Perhaps this is obvious. The report presents statistics on a wide range of contextual factors for the reader to locate these facts, yet the story is not explicit. On The Estate the 'Unemployment' to 'Available Jobs' ratio is 29.92 claimants per job. England's average is 3.43 claimants per job. It is clear that the local economic context shapes the percentage of estate residents claiming working age benefits, yet the report distances these two accounts of The Estate. Whilst the statistics representing 'Job Opportunities' are headed under 'Economy' the headline statistic of 'Working Age Benefit Claimants' is headed

under 'Vulnerable Groups'. Although, this is a valid measure of material deprivation, and therefore, an indicator of vulnerability, the distinction dislocates the statistic from structural factors working in distinct geographical and social locations. As a result, the claiming of benefits is reduced to the actions of the autonomous individual, rather than explored as a product of social and material conditions.

In order to further complicate this headline statistic, I think it should be read alongside The Estate having 11.4% of its population requiring Disability Living Allowance. When this is compared to England's average of 5%, it is clear that there is a high concentration of disabled people living on The Estate. The Estate is characterised as a 'Health Deprivation Hotspot', a neighbourhood ranked among the most deprived 20% neighbourhoods in England on the Indices of Deprivation 2010 Health domain, a measure of morbidity, disability and premature mortality. Reflecting this, 25% of estate residents are living with a limiting long-term illness (England average 12.6%). What I am suggesting is that statistics related to benefit receipt must be further contextualised. The data presented for total number of working age benefit claimants within this report does not differentiate between those working, non-working and unable to work. Family composition may further contextualise the statistic of benefit claimants, with 40.9% of families with dependent children on The Estate are lone-parent (England average 24.5%).

The measure of working age DWP Benefits encompasses all benefits payable to people of working age (16-64) who need additional financial support due to low income, worklessness, poor health, caring responsibilities, bereavement or disability. As such, highlighting the percentage of lone-parent families may complicate the figure of the benefit recipient beyond the idea of their worklessness. A similar story may be constructed around the statistics representing Housing Benefit, of which 50.1% of estate residents are in receipt (England average, 18.6%). Housing Benefit (HB) can be claimed by a person if they are liable to pay rent and if they are on a low income and it provides a measure of the number of households in poverty. When narrated together with the proportion of lone-parent families on The Estate, and thus single income families, this statistic takes on further complexity. Furthermore, the statistics relating the level of Income Support are again more than double England's average, with 4.9% of estate residents being eligible compared with 2.2% nationwide. Income Support is a measure of people of working age with low incomes. As a means tested benefit, it is payable to people aged over 16, working less than 16 hours a week, and having less money coming in than the Department for Work and Pensions regulations indicate they need to live on. This statistic too may be re-imagined in its reading together with the statistics around lone-parenthood, capturing the ways benefit receipt is a dynamic process not a static state of worklessness.

In this brief discussion my aim has been to think with rather than against statistical data. Despite the obvious ontological and epistemological tensions between this statistical representation of The Estate and my research methodology, drawing these accounts of The Estate into a qualitative logic of enquiry, enables their deconstruction as dominant discourse.

Utilising this method of the tracing of dominant discourses, I now focus in on one policy change, the removal of the spare room subsidy (Department for Work and Pensions, 2013), in order to explore the connections between dominant conceptions of home and access to legitimate citizenship.

## The right to home

Changes to housing policy, which inevitably shape The Estate, may be explored through the tracing of dominant representations of home. The notion of a social psychology produced through shifting policy discourses provides a way to map national developments, connecting political agendas to the cultivating of culture, a national affect: what does it mean to have home, who has access to home, is there a right to home?

Following Hanley's argument that 'class is built into the physical landscape of the country' (Hanley, 2007: 18), housing policy not only physically locates classed groups; it socially produces their affective relationships. Housing policy necessarily reflects the values of a society; it is entrenched in discourses of deserving and undeserving, the positioning of the citizen within constructions of individual and societal 'success'. The physical locating of classed groups within estates, therefore, cannot be disconnected from the social locating this entails. Hanley traces the material and social construction of estates, from the paternalism of the discourse and practice of slums clearances, to the 'homes fit for heroes' of the inter-war years, the ongoing disinvestment and non-standard (sub-standard) construction, to the cultural devaluing of social housing through the redefining of citizenship as imagined through the 'Right-to-Buy'.

The more recent introduction of the policy and practice of squeezing welfare incomes such as applying housing benefit caps and enforcing deductions based on the claim of the state 'subsidising' 'spare rooms', referred to as a 'bedroom tax', epitomises Hanley's account of being 'housed'. Through making explicit the processes through which one comes to be on The Estate, Hanley makes visible unequal access to neoliberal formations of precarious citizenship. That is to say that The Estate is a place where one is housed, that this is a process beyond control, unstable and unpredictable.

The effect of these political manifestations lives as a process of dehumanisation of the benefit poor, a stripping away of the rights embodied in the market engaged citizenry; the right to home, the right to history, the right to community. Discourses of anti-welfare have produced an

assessment of those in receipt of benefits as autonomous: representations of the claimant, the benefit cheat, the jobless, take the individual as the site of welfare. This dislocation of the benefit poor from their social embeddedness, not only individualises their position as a personal failure, it produces a new conception of the responsibility of the state; to provide for the individual. Therefore, the benefit recipient is viewed not as a social being, embedded within social networks, rather, as an autonomous individual, un-located in social histories and responsibilities. For example, policies such as the bedroom tax, which is essentially a rent increase, has resulted in people moving out of family homes into smaller forms of accommodation. Under these policies, a sense of history, belonging and community are re-imagined as privilege.

The purposes of welfare have been redefined, denying the role of the social in the well-being of a people. Those in receipt of benefits have no right to home, no emotional attachment to their place, no connections with family and friends, they are to 'be housed' given the measured requirements of their household. There is a dislocation of families from any sense of their present trajectory, they are defined, reified at the point of assessment; there is no space for complexity. A qualitative study into the impact of the 'bedroom tax' in the UK explored these negative consequences for both family and community life (Moffatt et al, 2015). It complicates representations of benefit recipients and specifically the 'common sense' underpinnings of the 'bedroom tax'; that your home should match your needs and that these are easily quantifiable. The study found that most participants did not feel their home was too large for their needs, regardless of being defined as having a 'spare room' within the policy; '[t]his included accommodating children in part-time custodial arrangements, siblings of different ages and needs, children, [and] grandchildren' (Moffatt et al, 2015: 6). In this way, the narrowing of the site of welfare to the degree of deservingness of the individual has broader implications; the denial of family homes is the denial of a safety net for the children of these families, and the retraction of a home may lead to the isolation of those living alone, lacking a space for visitors to stay.

This Section has provided a picture of The Estate. However, I hope that this is more than a 'snapshot'. Through a historied account of The Estate, my aim has been to draw attention to the processes through which The Estate is materially and socially constituted. Exploring dominant discourses of home, I have argued that the formation of The Estate remains dynamic. In the next Section, I continue to map the formation of The Estate, locating the services available at the time of my research within this historied account.

## Section 2: Estate services

Furthering the social and material mapping of The Estate outlined in the previous Section, here I concentrate on locating the two key sites of my research within a social and political context: The Community Centre and Estate Primary. I begin by providing an account of the Community

Centre, locating its development within Labour's New Deal for Communities. Next, I consider the processes of marketization which shape educational provision on The Estate, making connections between the shifting formation of schooling on The Estate and movement within British politics away from the welfarist provision of services to post-welfarism.

## Space for community

The Community Centre forms the key site of my ethnography. Located at the base of the valley's steep wall it is distanced from the mass of housing, its positioning in the centre of surrounding football pitches means it is not visible from the road. It is not easily accessible by car, to park in the nearest car park, you must drive further into The Estate and follow a winding cul-de-sac back down the hill. To reach the Community Centre, you must then walk through a pathway cut through a patch of grass that, particularly in Summer, grows tall, further obscuring the building. Despite its proximity to the 'hub', the Community Centre is tucked out of view and there is very little physical or social interaction between these two distinct forms of community service.

The Community Centre was founded in 1999 following the murder of a teenage boy on The Estate. Initiated by a group of parents, a space was sought for the young people affected by the loss of their friend to come together. In September 1999 the City Council provided a Portakabin on a three-month trial basis, under the condition that any reports of anti-social behaviour would lead to its closing down. The Community Centre opened with no funding, its only facility a dart board. In December that year the leaders of the Community Centre were granted permission to continue using the cabin. Following a bid for 'Community Chest' funding (Taylor, 2006), the Community Centre purchased a pool table, table tennis table, TV and 'Tuck' to run a sustainable shop in January 2000. Later that year, The Estate and surrounding area were allocated funding through New Deal for Communities (Foley and Martin, 2000), funding was awarded to the Community Centre to employ two of the parents as full time youth workers for one year. During this time the Community Centre opened every day and four evenings a week until 10pm. A further three years of funding was applied for after this initial year, with money granted to build a new Community Centre, which was completed in 2007. The building is modern in design, firmly locating it in the aesthetic of the New Labour imagining of community engagement. It has curved edges, fun colours and a nod to environmentalism, with its token grass roof. The facilities inside the centre were designed in consultation with the young people of the youth club, having a music studio and computer suite, a working kitchen, a living room style space, with TV and sofas and a large hall to the back of the building. The building was opened to the community in January 2007, at which time it remained a shell, yet to be decorated and empty of furniture and facilities. Works were completed by the residents of The Estate and the centre was officially opened in the March of that year. Originally conceived as a space for 11-19 year olds, in 2008 another youth club for

7-11 year olds was introduced as it was perceived that '11 was too late' for the intervention the youth club provided.

This account of the Community Centre is taken from an interview I conducted with the manager Sharon and her description stopped at this point. I further explore the discursive construction of the Community Centre in Chapter 7 (see Chapter 7, Section 1). However, at this contextual stage, I think it is important to indicate some of the changes which shaped the Community Centre at the time of my research. As a result of cuts and the reallocation of public funding across three estates within the city, the responsibility of generating income shifted onto staff who must obtain project funding in order to maintain employment. As a result, during my fieldwork, the Community Centre staff reduced from five to two. These changes can be understood as part of a political project to introduce market principles into the provision of social, educational and care services. Next, I will explore in more detail the effects political discourses located within a neoliberal ideology have on educational provision on The Estate, in terms of access and ethos.

## A failing market: educational provision on The Estate

The formal services, a NHS children's centre, library, GP and pharmacy, have recently pooled together adjoining the Primary School to form a 'hub' in the centre of The Estate. The new buildings, with glass fronts, coloured panels and curved edges are in stark contrast to the Victorian institutional feel of the Primary School. There is an overt presence of authority within this service hub, due to high density of service provision within a small cluster of buildings this fraction of The Estate is populated, during working hours, by various professionals. The car parks are filled with new cars, the café located in the library serves customers in the trademark smart/casual wear of social workers, even the food served is targeted at the lunchtime culture of working professionals, with 'quick healthy bites' and 'caffeine fixes'. The library contains offices for the local authority such as housing services and child protection services, therefore for many residents the hub has a formal role, it is a space of contact with authorities rather than a leisure space. The library is often utilised by external service providers as a means to access the 'hard to reach' population of The Estate. Spaces within the library become representations of other spaces. For example, the local Secondary School take on a room in the library to hold their 'Parents Evening' meetings.

The bringing of services into The Estate is of course informed by discourses of 'engagement' (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2011), however this representational presence is necessitated by the retraction of social provision, the ongoing disengagement of key services. The Local Secondary School is located five miles from The Estate. Although a bus service is provided during school hours the logistics of 'Parents Evening' mean that accessing the school at this time is often unfeasible with 50.2% of estate households not owning a car. This is the key reasoning behind

the Secondary School using estate facilities to access estate residents. However, this engagement is the result of wider disengagement of educational services on The Estate. The Estate *had* a Secondary School located on its eastern edge which was closed ten years ago following its 'failing' status and three unsuccessful attempts to re-brand itself.

Processes of marketisation, resulting in the allocation of funds based on school 'success' as measured by league table positioning, have fundamentally re-shaped education provision available to young people on The Estate. At the time of the school closure, displaced pupils were distributed across the City, allocated a place at an alternative Secondary School, effectively breaking up the shared experiences and identity of being schooled together. This redistribution was part of the City's wider politics of parental choice, where parents are encouraged to express a preference for the school they wish their child to attend beyond the traditional catchment area constraints (Burgess et al, 2011).

The City provides an interesting case as neo-liberal priorities are presented through egalitarian discourses (Reay, 2008). The City introduced a new admission policy for secondary education in 2008, with the aim of getting a better balance in schools of children from a variety of backgrounds through the construction of catchment areas that take account of the number of children receiving free school meals. Once exceptional circumstances and sibling links have been taken into account an electronic ballot is used to allocate places within a catchment, thus the system seeks to avoid the 'halo' effect on local housing markets that proximity to a high achieving school has created.

Despite local discourses promoting equal access to education, the local council continues to advocate parental choice as a factor in a child's access to a good school. Thus, the local context highlights the contradictions inherent in neo-liberal policy. Parents are able to choose the school they wish to send their child to, and this is encouraged through admission guidance provided by the local council. Attendance at open days, examination of league tables and knowledge of school ethos and specialisations are all given as examples of responsible choosing. Parents are asked to provide three Secondary Schools in order of preference in the hope their child will be allocated one of the three, however, this is not guaranteed (Warrington, 2005; Wright, 2012). Secondary School admissions in the city are first allocated to children who live within the catchment area of the school, therefore if a family live outside of the catchment area, and the school is filled by those who live within the catchment, the parent will be unsuccessful in their choice of this school. Catchment areas within the city are served by either one or two Secondary Schools (excluding private fee paying schools and faith schools, as these have separate allocation criteria). Thus, despite this initial opening up of school options as a necessity of The Estate's school closure, the majority of young people on The Estate now attend the only Secondary School in The Estate's catchment area.

These changes in school provision are a manifestation of broader shifts in British politics away from the welfarist provision of services to post-welfarism; a change permeating ideology, language, policy and practices. The welfarist era essentially refers to a mode of coordination; 'a particular articulation of modes of power which connect the structures, cultures, relationships and processes of organisational forms in specific configurations' (Gewirtz, 2002: 30). Administrative rationality and professional expertise shaped the English school system from the 1940's to the mid 1980's. However, a shift in political commitments from Keynesian economics and distributive justice to market democracy and competitive individualism marked the introduction of the 'post-welfarist education policy complex' (2002: 2). Bureaucracy was criticised as 'counterproductive and repressive of the enterprising spirit of all employees' (2002: 32). Permeated by a utilitarian discourse of effectiveness, efficiency, performance and productivity post-welfarism replaced bureaucratic control systems with new managerialism (2002: 2). There has been a change emphasising the instrumental purposes of schooling. As a new manager it is not the role of head teachers to question or criticise the aims and constraints set outside the school (2002: 32).

A new alliance has formed. Education policy has become integrated into a wider set of ideological commitments. Masked by 'romantic possibilitarian rhetoric' and the naturalisation of market mechanisms there has been a reduction of government responsibility for social needs (Apple, 2004: 4-5). Rose (1993) argues that the retraction of service provision is legitimised through 'responsibilisation', the process of inculcating a culture of self-discipline and self-surveillance amongst welfare subjects. Moreover, the representation of right wing policies as 'common sense', less subject to political interference and bureaucratic procedures, is a depoliticising strategy (Tomlinson, 2005: 4). The expansion of the free market and reinforcement of competitive structures under post-welfarism is manifest in the de-personalisation of human beings into consumers, human resources and human capital. Informed by human capital theory, post-welfarist provision of education is instrumental in economic growth and productivity (2005: 6-7).

The subordination of social democratic values to neo-liberal values is evident in the 'fragmentation of social welfare programmes via the introduction of market principles' (Tomlinson, 2005: 1). Education has become less of a public service and more a commodity (2005: 2). This new social market is framed by incentives and rewards aimed at 'stimulating self-interested responses' (Ball, 2005: 11; Bowe et al, 1994). The current education system in Britain is structured on a market mechanism in which resources flow away from low-performance schools and towards high-performance schools (Gewirtz, 2002: 3). The key rationale underpinning these reforms is that market forces and more efficient management techniques will raise standards in schools (2002: 6).

These shifts within the provision of education on The Estate are manifestations of broader education policy (Parsons, 2012); markets, performance monitoring and inspection are not neutral means for improving schools (Gewirtz, 2002: 21). Discourses of the post-welfarist settlement in education are contradictory. Notions of devolution and decentralisation have informed policy changes that have affected the shift from schools' licensed autonomy to regulated autonomy. Under post-welfarism 'the state controls the work of schools and teachers through the mechanisms of a highly regulated market' (2002: 120). Moreover, this marketisation and the associated publication of performance data has contributed to a 'new politics of recognition' acting to further naturalise educational inequalities (Power and Franji, 2010: 2). For instance, media coverage of 'failing schools' is focused on the shortcomings of individual teachers and pupils and neglects to consider the disadvantage of a punitive funding structure where schools exist within 'hierarchically ordered and effectively selective local systems' (Gewirtz, 2002: 21). The social psychology of the market discourages the 'universalism and collectivity that in theory underpinned comprehensivism' (2002: 50). This pressure on individuals to be motivated by self-interest is 'not conducive to the retention of a comprehensive culture' (2002: 54).

This process is exemplified in The Estate's Primary School which was closed following its 'failing' status, and reopened as an Academy in 2013. The newly appointed Head Teacher had previously worked in a management position and his 'leadership' abilities took precedence in the local reporting surrounding his selection. The school's rebranding centred on the 'common sense' discourses of Conservative educational policy, locating success in the soft measures of 'ambition' and 'aspirations'. The experiential consequences of material and structural inequality is located within a psychologised language of individual endeavour, as the school encourages its staff and pupils to be 'great by choice', leading their mission statement with the commitment that 'We won't accept excuses and we won't make excuses'.

Shaped by the narrowing of the value and purposes of education, the school has streamlined its curriculum, prioritising basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Educational success has become synonymous with league table success, a national shift reflected in the school's overt engagement with grading. Throughout the school, the children are set by ability: in Maths this is across year groups, with the grouping of children based on their measured ability; in literacy this occurs within the class room, through the use of named groups and the allocation of particular spaces to ability groupings. Grade systems are bought to the fore in classroom learning so as they encompass the value of the activity; the outcome of skill embodiment is the allocation of a grade.

I will pick up this theme of learning as embodied practice in Chapter 6 (see Chapter 6, Section 2: Embarrassment as resistance), questioning the ways in which 'comportment, demeanour and behaviour come to construct [particular classed and raced bodies] as the impossible learner'

(Hollingworth, 2015: 1241). The aim of this Section has been to introduce the social and political context of the two keys sites of my ethnography, in order to provide a foundation upon which I can build a storying of my data. Furthermore, this partial account of the Community Centre and Estate Primary, acts to open up a line of enquiry that informs my analysis. Making connections between the everyday life of being on The Estate and structural forces, leads me to think through the ways in which The Estate is a classed position, an issue that I now turn to in the following Section.

## Section 3: The Estate, a class in itself

In this Section I introduce, and perhaps open up further complexity, rather than assert, the connections between being on The Estate and classed positioning. I continue to be concerned with whether class is a helpful concept in understanding life on The Estate. Is The Estate a classed position and if it is, is it working class, workless class, un-classed?

The Estate has long been an emblem of class in academic, political and popular cultural representations. Perhaps reflecting the changing conceptualisations of welfare within Britain, there has been a marked shift from more celebratory or perhaps romantic notions of The Estate, to representations of despair and dystopia, at times equally celebratory and romantic (as in Baeten's [2002] claim that places of exclusion are places of inclusion for those outcast from society). This entanglement of class with The Estate anchors representations of the experiential being on The Estate to a past gone by. Thus, The Estate is understood in its lack of what it once was, or more specifically, what working class men once were.

The tying of The Estate to class analysis, stories The Estates of today as the home of the historically classed. This tracing of estate histories through employment histories is valuable and contextualises processes of de-industrialisation, making connections between structural changes, cultural representations and challenges to identity formation and reformation (for example, Charlesworth, 2000).

However, these accounts tend to produce a static picture of The Estate, that The Estate is a place where classed lives are acted upon by external powers. The processes through which *people move out* of The Estate, are *housed on* The Estate, or *remain within* The Estate are obscured in these analyses. There is a dynamic production of estate identity; that although inextricably linked to class is not necessarily synonymous with it.

The processes through which one becomes *housed* on The Estate are constructed as processes of failure. Now, of course the definitions of failure, I would argue are classed; in that particular forms of lifestyles may be read as failure through a particular classed lens (I further explore the

possibilities of failure as a conceptual tool for class analysis in Chapter 3, Section 2: Classed places).

Thus, failure is not a neutral or natural state, failure is defined and redefined through the shifting power dynamics of ideologies, policies and the market. As discussed in Section 1, one of the most powerful constructions of failure on The Estate is the product of a redefinition of citizenship based on the ownership of home, clearly exemplifying the ways in which neoliberal ideologies, 'Right-to-Buy' policies and the housing market together shaped what it means to 'succeed' in British society.

This is a dynamic and complex process. I do not agree with simplified accounts of residualization where The Estate, in its role as 'safety net' catches all that sinks within society, neither do I think that the experience of being on The Estate is fully captured in the concept of working class. Rather, The Estate is a process of signification, it is definition through colliding representations. There is difference on The Estate. What I am interested in is the processes through which this difference is written out of accounts of The Estate and the affective consequences of this for the formation of a sense of self for those located on The Estate.

How then can I speak of the social position of being on The Estate, when the language of class is so entangled with a particular history so that talk of residualization does not capture the ways in which this process is socially produced?

The Estate is a systematically de-valued classed position, in the sense that it is a material inequality, the product of structural constraints which are understood through social cues, and attributed particular cultural meaning and therefore inferior relational value. Yet, the traditional descriptors of working, middle and upper class, do not illuminate the connections between The Estate as a social and material position. Perhaps The Estate is the remnants of the working class, or a fraction of it?

However, as these classifications continue to equate social positioning with occupational positioning, they are limited in their illumination of the experience of worklessness, parenthood, childhood, disability. Although I am cautious about reclaiming the concept of underclass, due to its entanglement with Right Wing political commentary, Levitas' conceptualisation of Moral Underclass Discourse (MUD) enables a mapping of the social production of The Estate as a devalued position.

Conceptually, Levitas' work relocates the notion of an Underclass, as a reaction against claims that poverty is a consequence of moral and cultural deficit (Morris, 1994; Murray, 1990). She traces the ways in which the Underclass are produced through policy and popular discourse. Thus, as a discourse, MUD socially produces the Underclass, it is the production and reproduction of a

myth. Although this Underclass myth leads to the stigmatisation of a particular group of people, these people are not named, their commonality is in their representation as Underclass. My question remains who are those named as Underclass, is MUD along with constructions of the Chav the 'demonisation of the Working Class' (Jones, 2012) or does this obscure the complex structural processes of polarisation that have reshaped class in Britain. I am unsure whether I can talk about 'being poor' as a communal experience, it may lose the important acknowledgement of the idea of trajectory that class helps to capture. However, I do think there is more work to do on thinking through the connections between class, The Estate and discursive representations. How can we speak of the culture of those in poverty without falling into discourses of the culture of poverty?

Throughout the thesis I employ this form of discomforting questioning as a practice that may open up analytic possibilities. I work to maintain an uneasiness with theorisations of class through the formation of an ethics of the representational power of classifications. I take up this questioning in the next Chapter as I work to map out my theorisation of The Estate, drawing upon the concepts of class and community to think through the connections between material and social positioning.

# Chapter 3: Theorising The Estate: the concepts of class and community

## Introduction

This Chapter provides an academic context to my work. Through a mapping of my theoretical engagement with class I hope to locate this work within current debates surrounding the definition and relevance of class, in addition to my own research trajectory, highlighting the importance of the temporal in academic ideas.

The Chapter is organised around my theorisation of class and community, drawing upon broad sociological literature theorising identity formation (Skeggs, 2004; Butler, 1988; Back, 2009), I explore the connections between the concepts of class and community, problematising their conflation.

I begin in Section 1, by tracing my theoretical engagement with class, from my interest in Bourdieu's sociology (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990; 1994; 2004) as a linking of objective structures to subjective experience, to a questioning of academic engagement with class as a product and producer or classed selves. This challenge leads me to thinking of the structure of class within post-structural conceptualisations, through an application of Butler's (1988) concept of performativity to classed being.

The next Section of the Chapter draws upon theorisations of community as 'communal beingness' (Walkerdine, 2010), making connections between the spatial turn in sociology and both popular and academic representations of classed places.

I end this Chapter, in Section 3, with a discussion of the problematic of representation, drawing upon Back's (2007) call for sensitivity in the reading of embodied practices. I question how I can valorise the joy felt in a classed life?

## Section 1: Theorising class - from structure to post-structure

This work begun as an exploration of class, a mapping of classed positionings in contemporary Britain. As such, this Section traces my theoretical engagement with class, a process very much still in motion, as I continue to question what it is I seek to know and what are the material and social conditions that enable my knowing. In this I refer to a sensitivity to the social conditions which enable the production of knowledge within the academy and the processes through which its distinction is marked from tacit, experience based accounts of the social. Specifically, I question the conditions of relations which legitimate my knowing; what is the relationship between the knower and the known? This is a questioning founded upon the feminist writings

(Lather, 2001; Skeggs, 2001; MacLure, 2013) discussed in my introductory Chapter (see Chapter 1, Section 2: Core debates), which draw theoretical attention to the space between knower and known, arguing that knowledge is the consequence of this relationship.

This Section aims to convey the temporality of my theoretical engagement with class. It is structured as a working through of the key debates central to contemporary class analysis. I hope it reads as a palimpsest, in that conceptual developments and further questions remain connected to the theoretical traces mapped through time.

I begin by engaging with the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, outlining the conceptual tools of habitus, field and capital. Drawing upon feminist work with and against Bourdieu (Skeggs and Adkins, 2005), I locate his theorisation of class within the context of contemporary Britain, and argue for a shift in theoretical attention from the object of exchange to the moment of exchange (Skeggs, 2004).

I then move on to explore the formative role Bourdieu's sociology plays in contemporary class analysis. Focussing on the example of disgust as formative of class distinction, I argue that academic analyses of class are themselves located within power relations which produce and reproduce representations of particular classed groups. I suggest that incorporating epistemological reflexivity into accounts of class, can open up a questioning of the formative relationship between academic representations and classed lives.

The final discussion of this Section explores the possibilities of thinking structure with post-structuralism. Outlining work which repositions class as a site of struggle and multiple reformations (Rogaly and Taylor, 2001; Bottero, 2005), I suggest that class is constituted as an object of belief through its performative practice (Butler, 1998; Lucey, 2010). I close the Section with what I hope is an opening up of some ontological and epistemological questions around the performativity of knowing (Rancière, 2006; Pelletier, 2012).

## Beyond or between? Structure and agency in class theory

Central to my theoretical questioning of class is the bridging of the apparent binary of structure and agency; my engagement with class theory has thus been shaped by my interest in class as a structural consequence constituted in and through interaction. It was this interest that initiated my engagement with Bourdieu's theory as a linking of objective structures to subjective experience (Adkins and Skeggs, 2004: 21), a recognition of the role of the self in the production of hierarchies; at once producers of culture and constrained by habitus (Reed-Danahay, 2005: 60).

Bourdieu's concept of habitus captures the dualism of structure and agency through an imagining of 'the ways the body is in the social world but also the ways in which the social world is in the

body' (Reay, 2004: 3). The habitus is not simply schema, composed solely of mental attitudes and perceptions, it is embodied history. As a product of history, the habitus produces more history in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It is a subjective but not individual system of internalised structures; 'this system of dispositions is the principle of continuity and regularity which objectivism sees in social practice without being able to account for it' (Bourdieu, 1990: 54). It is this homogeneity of habitus that produces practices 'immediately intelligible and foreseeable and hence taken for granted' (Bourdieu, 1977: 86). In this sense habitus is the structuring of affect, it is the theorisation of will as a consequence of positioning; 'refuse what is anyway refused and love the inevitable' (Bourdieu, 1977: 86).

Habitus begins to unpick class dispositions that have the appearance of natural distinction, going some way to questioning the privileging of ways of being. Yet there is little room for the discomfort of individuals within their habitus and thus the possibility for change. In Bourdieu's 'The Peasant and his Body' (2004) he describes the 'unhappy consciousness' of the bachelor who becomes 'embarrassed by his body and in his body' through a recognition of the shaping of his body by his social positioning. The subjects in Bourdieu's ethnographic account come to see their bodies as 'bearing the trace of the attitudes and activities associated with peasant life' (Bourdieu, 2004: 8). However, this embodied consciousness is not the beginnings of agency; there is an assumed stasis of habitus, which cannot make sense of this discomfort as an affective experience of the self. If habitus is enduring in its earliest form (Bourdieu, 1990: 60), protected in its surrounding by the like-minded (Bourdieu, 1994: 285) and etched onto the very body of its bearer, then is there space for discomfort felt by the self or is it only actualised in its naming in interaction as 'awkward' mannerisms?

Bourdieu posits that the peasant internalizes the devalued image others form of him and begins to perceive his body as an 'em-peasanted' body. This results in a break in solidarity with this image and a shift in attitude. Yet this shift works only to further entrench all about him that indicated his peasantry (Bourdieu, 2004: 2). Others have struggled with the notion of habitus and change (Reay, 2007; Stahl, 2013), yet the focus tends to be on the discomfort felt when a challenge to habitus occurs due to a shift in position, rather than a questioning of the *essential* habitus. It is difficult to talk of individual affective experience of habitus without conflating this notion with ideas of the reflexive project of the self (Giddens, 1991), yet what I am interested in is the relationship between those who share the conditions of the production of the habitus, and what it means to feel discomfort in the way things are. More than this, I question the perceived comfort of the poor. Is it not rather that their habitus is inherently one of discomfort?

Key to my conceptualisation of class is Bourdieu's concept of the field, a metaphor which enables a visualisation of social space, introducing the principle of a relational understanding of the social

world. Individuals occupy relative positions in a space of relations; they 'exist and subsist in and through difference' (Bourdieu, 1998: 31). Thus, the field is simultaneously a space of conflict and competition; 'relatively autonomous spheres of play' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 17). Therefore, the field avoids the determinism of structuralism as changes in the 'distribution and relative weight of forms of capital' in turn modify the structure of the field (1992: 17).

It was Bourdieu's concept of the field which first introduced me to the theorisation of the self as relational, that the individual is defined in and through relations with others. More than this, the field as a structure is both constitutive of and by the relations of which it is made; therefore, the field is a fluid structure, introducing the notion of class as process.

The field as a conceptual tool for analysis does appear to move beyond deficit models of class as it is not the actions or inactions of an individual, it is their position of difference from an other that determines their position within the field: class identity is negotiated through processes of self-identification and othering.

For Bourdieu this relational network, formed of positionings of relative power and resources, is not reducible to an empirical network of permanent structural relations. Rather, the field is formed of effective relations, 'a relation actualised in and by particular exchange' (Bottero, 2009: 5). It is the feel for the game that Bourdieu suggests effects differential positioning within the field, it is the 'sense of the imminent future of the game, the sense of the direction of the history of the game that gives the game its sense' (Bourdieu, 1980: 82). This grappling with the theorisation of orchestrated practice is for me unresolved. I am wary of the abstraction from material conditions inherent in a sociological imagining of the field; if the positioning of the self in relation to others within the field is shaped by the material and social conditions of existence, what space then is there for the reformation of the field? Bourdieu's assumption of homophily, patterns of association whereby the self is surrounded by those who are socially similar, limits the self to 'relatively homogenous self-contained and reproducing region of social space' (Bottero, 2009: 11).

Nevertheless, despite my reservations, Bourdieu's emphasis on the relational as a means to transcend the dualisms of individual/society and objective/subjective is core to my theorisation of class. Building upon this, my own thinking of class has been influenced by a movement beyond the objective/subjective to an attention to the intersubjective (Barnes, 2000). That is, an interest in the relationship itself, a focus on the processes through which one becomes classed.

The theorisation of class as process introduces a fluidity that is often aligned with theories of identity that speak against the existence of class (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992; Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994). However, I argue fluidity is an intrinsic part of classed experience:

> 'understanding of the importance of the spatial and temporal dimensions of class alongside a more nuanced, gendered approach allows analysis which acknowledges a fluidity suggesting the possibility of multiple reformations' (Rogaly and Taylor, 2001: 13)

It is in the thinking of habitus, field and capital together that Bourdieu's theory provides a 'metaphoric model' of social space which enables us to think about different formations of value and mobility (Adkins and Skeggs: 2004: 21), thus introducing the possibility of 'multiple reformations' of class. The introduction of social and cultural capital by Bourdieu into class analysis moved beyond purely economic definitions of class, highlighting that 'cultural lifestyle is not…an effect of structure, but rather one of the means by which stratification position is constituted' (Bottero, 2005: 83).

## Mapping structure, tracing capitals

The distribution of capital represents the structure of the social world (Bourdieu, 1983), the systematic organisation of the symbolic enables exchange and the attribution of value across fields (Skeggs, 2004: 15). Thus, for Bourdieu, the social researcher must 'endeavour to grasp capital and profit in all their forms and to establish the laws whereby the different types of capital…change into one another' (Bourdieu, 1983: 243).

Bourdieu theorised capital in three forms: economic, cultural and social. Economic capital is the most immediately and directly convertible into money. It refers to what you own, but may be institutionalised in the form of property rights.

The concept of cultural capital enables material resources, cultural qualities and academic qualifications to be understood as integrally connected. Firstly, cultural capital may be actualised in the embodied state, the conversion of external wealth into an integral part of the person: the habitus. In the embodied state, cultural capital is unrecognised as capital and recognised as competence; hereditary transmission is obscured yet the habitus 'always remains marked by its earliest conditions of acquisition which helps to determine its distinctive value' (Bourdieu, 1983: 245).

Secondly, cultural capital is transmissible in its materiality; the objectified state. However, what is transmissible is legal ownership and not what constitutes the 'precondition for specific appropriation' (Bourdieu, 1983: 246). As such, possession of the appropriate embodied capital is necessary for the consumption or use of material objects.

Finally, cultural capital exists in an institutionalised state making possible the conversion between 'cultural capital and economic capital by guaranteeing the monetary value of a given academic capital' (Bourdieu, 1983: 248). The objectification of cultural capital in the form of academic qualifications legitimises positions of power (Bourdieu, 1983).

Social capital is the 'aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu, 1983: 248). Although it is irreducible to the economic and cultural capital of an individual, it is never independent of it. Networks of relationships are the product of investment strategies, the conversion of economic and cultural capital (1983). Social capital is group membership 'enacted and so maintained and reinforced in exchanges' (1983: 249). Social capital facilitates an analysis that moves beyond economic determinism; social networks provide opportunities and information to members.

How this understanding of the formation of capital can make sense of the lives and relations of groups outside the mainstream symbolic economy is a question many class theorists grapple with (Hey, 2005). Fernandez-Kelly (1994) argues that the 'forms and effects of cultural and social capital are defined by physical vectors' (Fernandez-Kelly, 1994: 2), that are located within temporal, social and physical space. She introduces the importance of the material space in which networks conduct their exchanges and connect moments of shared understanding with the flow of social capital (1994: 11). Skeggs, too has re-worked conceptualisations of capital to think of 'culture as a resource or a use-value which can be separated from the fields and means by which it is exchanged' (Skeggs, 2004c). However, whilst Bourdieu's conceptual framework has been applied to the study of value systems within groups occupying disadvantaged social positions, it appears limited in its ability to understand investment in the de-valued. The capital of the poor cannot be recognised as capital, it lacks exchange value, and although theorists have conceptualised value beyond the symbolic economy (Skeggs, 2011; 2013); this is often understood as the misrecognition of the value of the capital. The generation of alternative capitals are paradoxical in that these constructions 'simultaneously play into other oppressive power relations' (Archer et al, 2007: 4).

## Bourdieu and British class culture: a perfect fit?

Thus, the application of Bourdieu's conceptual framework to British hierarchies of class culture is founded upon the assumption that a particular formation of middle class culture is constitutive of the symbolic economy. Of course this is not an unfounded assumption; middle class culture is translatable into Bourdieu's three forms of capital. The middle class occupy a relative position of wealth, thus have a relatively high level of economic capital. The cultural capital of the middle class is recognisable in its embodied state; in speech, posture and taste. Middle class culture is represented in its materiality, the objectified state; through works of art, interior design and association with brands. In its institutionalised state, middle class culture is surely the epitome of educational achievement. Finally, the social capital of the middle class almost becomes a caricature of itself, its image so well versed in sayings such as 'old boys network'. My questioning

then is not of Bourdieu's theory as a useful analysis of dominant culture, in this case a homogenised account of middle class culture, but of its application to the shifting dynamics of class relations, specifically the relationship between working and middle classes.

This conflation of the symbolic economy with middle class culture is perhaps a consequence of the internalisation of class structure, specifically in British society. Thus, Bourdieu's conceptual framework has not been used within British academia as an exploration of the symbolic economy, of capital in all its forms, rather the British class system has been mapped onto the symbolic economy. The inherent privileging of middle class culture as a direct representation of the symbolic economy remains unquestioned in much Bourdieusian research. This, I think has two key implications for how we come to know of class through an application of Bourdieu's logic. Firstly, working class culture can only be misrecognised as non-culture, and secondly, middle class culture and thus the symbolic economy is read onto the middle class body.

If we are to begin from the premise that middle class culture forms the foundation of the symbolic economy, then we may only theorise working class culture as misrecognised non-culture. Expanding this logic, if working class culture is always that which is misrecognised as the antithesis of culture then working class culture is continually constituted as lack – a non-value. This produces a static and homogenous representation of class culture, where middle class culture is and always has been that which is recognised as of value, producing working class culture as that which is and always has been of lack. Therefore, working class culture is defined not through its enactment by the working class but through its rejection by the middle class. This leads to my second point, that middle class culture is inseparable from middle class bodies, resulting in the reading of value onto the actions of the middle class. Much Bourdieusian research continues to read value onto the practices of the middle class and non-value onto the practices of the working class. It is only in the action of the middle class that cultural practices are read as of value; working class practices gain value only through their enactment by the middle class (Savage et al, 2013). This form of class appropriation is theorised as middle class 'asset stripping' of raced and classed cultural styles (Archer et al, 2007: 7). There are power relations here that enable the actions of one to be read as performance and expression and the other as an essential quality of the self, yet Bourdieu's logic does not have the conceptual space to unpick this, rather it traps the social researcher into reading value onto middle class bodies regardless of what they do and non-value onto the bodies of the working class.

Bourdieu's logic is bound within market logic; therefore, it cannot make sense of investment in that which is de-valued. It can only ever understand working class culture as lack, as value which is only understood within the logic of exchange and accumulation. Work of feminist theorists working at the limits of Bourdieu's thinking has opened up the concept of capital, as suggested

earlier, through the conceptualisation of use value (Skeggs, 2004b:17) and in exploring and utilising the affective dimensions of embodiment (Reay, 2015). This furthering of Bourdieu's class analysis, begins to question not only what are the structures which shape class embodiment, as conceptualised through the working together of habitus, capital, field, but also why do certain groups invest in that which is deemed to lack value and how are these alternative economies sustained? The work of Reay (2015), Skeggs (2004b), Probyn (2004) to the attention of the affective causes and consequences of classed being, opens up the possibility of exploring complexity in lives that, although de-valued within the dominant symbolic economy, experience pleasure, joy and fulfilment. These additional theorisations, therefore, explicitly explore agency in the production of classed lives, questioning why, despite being delegitimised within dominant culture, particular classed performances are invested in and reproduced.

## Class as inscription: the classed body

Through a shift in focus away from mapping classificatory systems, Skeggs (2004) asks how and why classifications have been established. It is not the object of exchange, rather the 'relationships and power that make the exchange possible' that forms her questioning (Skeggs, 2004: 7). This shift in theoretical attention onto the moment of exchange implicates what may be known of class production. Through the introduction of different systems of exchange, beyond the economic: the symbolic, cultural and moral, Skeggs begins to develop a theoretical understanding of class as process. For Skeggs, 'bodies are being inscribed simultaneously by different symbolic systems', yet it is only in the moment of exchange that this inscription becomes actualised as 'we learn to interpret bodies through different perspectives to which we have access' (2004: 3). Thus, it is within Skeggs' work that we may begin to question the entwining of middle class culture with the symbolic economy, as it is neither the abstract act nor the abstract body that carries value; it is in the moments of exchange where act and body are recursively inscribed through the recognition of value.

Skeggs defines class as a form of 'inscription that shapes bodies in the making of strata and behaviour' (Skeggs, 2004: 12). The making of class is actualised through the making of the self; 'the cultural resources for self-making and the techniques for self-production are class processes' (Skeggs, 2005: 75). Thus, class is produced within relationships of differential power, a recognition that accounts for stratification beyond Bourdieu's symbolic economy: within class distinction. Much feminist research has focused on the 'different forms and volumes of resources that [the working class] are able to deploy in coping with social and material limitations' (Vincent et al, 2008: 7). Through an emphasis on agency, this work maps the physical and psychic distancing of the self from classed inscriptions (Reay & Lucey, 2000; 2002). However, Skeggs maintains the link between symbolic value and structural constraints, which results in some forms

of culture being 'condensed and inscribed onto social groups and bodies that then mark them and restrict their movement in social space' (Skeggs, 2004: 2).

This 'making through marking' (Skeggs, 2004: 12) is a particular focus of contemporary class theorists critiquing popular discourses around the working class. This class analysis tends to draw upon media examples of 'mass vilification' (Tyler, 2008: 15) such as the caricature of the 'chav', and the distancing of middle class actors from the working class through judgements of taste. These forms of cultural analysis are premised upon disgust as a power relation, a mode of distinction; 'working class disgust and contempt for the middle class simply does not count, they lack the social authority to make their judgements stick' (Lawler, 2005: 15). Again, this class analysis mirrors British class consciousness through a focus on the imagined, intangible differences we cannot see yet somehow feel; 'it is not always the dangerous other that threatens but the proximate stranger who is not as easily identifiable' (Bhabha, 1996). This work argues that 'expressions of distaste and disgust are active in the making and remaking of social categories', that distinction between the middle and working class is maintained through the cultural construction of 'dirt' (Rhys-Taylor, 2013: 18). Mockery is considered within the literature a key vehicle for this class contempt, simultaneously speaking difference whilst distancing the self from those articulations (Raisborough and Adams, 2008: 4).

Although this body of work tends to refer to the working class as those marked by these discursive constructions, the disgust itself is targeted at the 'monstrous other', the class which is not one, the 'lumpen proletariat' (Marx, 2008 [1852]; Featherstone, 2013). I argue this fear and disgust is reproduced within these academic representations, which through the use of working class categorisations fail to acknowledge that disgust is targeted at specifically de-valued or un-classed positions. I think the British class consciousness of the academic authors and audiences cannot be separated from these representations of disgust. Thus, when the author articulates media representations of disgust, we cannot assume an objective distancing from this disgust. For me, these academic analyses perpetuate the mocking and voyeuristic media representations they aim to critique; an ironic tone in sociological writing excuses what is in effect a revelling in the vulgar.

Of course there is a difference in the intent of media representations and the academic analyses of these. Back's discussion of humour highlights the uneasy tension I feel in the reading of these academic discussions. If we take academia as a space of play, then 'in the processes of play practices and actions which are invested with non-play meanings are subverted and inverted by collusion' (Back, 1990: 9). Thus, the success of play is dependent upon not only the content but the context; the performance of the teller and the relationship between the teller and the audience (1990: 8). The tension I feel is between the 'meaning of the act in wider usage and the meaningless

guaranteed in play' (1990: 10); a reliance on both author and audience to understand the purpose of the act and agree to the re-ascription of meaning.

As in play, the author suspends meaning in the re-articulation of voices of condemnable others; the meaningless space created within academic writing allows the author to speak back to these representations. Displays of class hatred are reproduced as artefacts that the author can walk around and examine. It is in the reading by the audience that this fragile construction must be supported. The audience must recognise the author's intentions and accept her voice as the ventriloquism of an other.

The demarcation of the author's interpretations and the voice of the other is facilitated through the use of quotes which physically separate the text, thus distancing the author from that which she writes about. However, there are moments within these texts where the voice of the author and the voice of the other blur:

> 'Pramface, with her hoop earrings, sports clothes, pony tail (or Croydon facelift) and gaggle of children, is the quintessential sexually excessive, single mother: an immoral, filthy, ignorant, vulgar, tasteless, working-class whore' (Tyler, 2008: 16)

I do not doubt the author's intention, as she reiterates the purpose of her writing is to draw 'critical attention' to the fetishization of the 'chav mum' as the epitome of contemporary class disgust (Tyler, 2008: 16). However, these moments of union between the voice of the author and the voice of the other shift the state of play, the audience must read within the author's tone an irony that is not read onto the voice of the other. Thus, the figure of disgust, imagined as a discursive construct of class disdain, begins to leak and slip.

For me, the foundation of the analysis upon this fragile construction cannot be sustained. There is an assumed objectivity of the audience, an ability to step outside these constructions of class disgust the author argues are entrenched in British society. Thus, I question the extent to which the article can map the discursive construct of the chav figure without falling into its own traps of class contempt. On a surface level this academic disgust is positioned against ignorance; ignorance of the media and ignorance of the general public in the form of internet forums:

> 'The popularity of this fictional character [Vicky Pollard] is repeatedly used as "evidence" for the truth of the existence of this disgusting social type' (Tyler, 2008: 19)

> 'Many of the urban dictionary posts obsessively focus on the spectacle of her excessive reproductive body' (Tyler, 2008: 16)

The journalistic representations of the chav are mocked for their blurring of fact and fiction, whilst internet posts are discarded as a form of pathology, an 'obsession' with the disgusting. The article centralises the emotive nature of class formations, introducing key conceptualisation of humour and sociability in the production of affective communal spaces/places within which disgust

reactions are shared (Tyler, 2008: 14). However, academia itself is positioned above disgust, and the emotive response of the audience to the two figures formed within the article is unexplored: the ignorant disgusted subject and the fictional disgusting subject. Thus, the reading of the article itself forms a space of disgust, whereby the reader is granted permission to explore their own feelings of disgust, safe in the knowledge that, as in play, no one gets hurt.

Thus, this work mirrors the 'thrills of slumming it' (Tyler, 2008: 22) in the reproduction of shocking discourse. The affective response is complex and inherently linked with the readers own classed position, it is unclear whether we should feel disgust at the ignorance of the writer, disgust at the possibility of the chav or shame that we too are part of the discourse constructing this figure of hate.

Nevertheless, Tyler reflects, the 'cumulative effect of disgust at chavs is the blocking of the disenfranchised white poor from view: they are rendered invisible' (Tyler, 2008: 23). More than this, academic distancing from the figure of the chav as the product of ignorance, further entrenches the hierarchical distinction of the academic knower from the known. Tyler's 'figurative methodology' moves beyond structural accounts of class, defining social classifications as 'complex political formations that are generated and characterised by representational struggles' (ibid: 2). Therefore, introducing the possibility of resistance in the form of the reclamation of chav as an 'affirmative subcultural identity' for those 'who have acquired enough cultural capital and social mobility to "rise above the filth"' (ibid: 23). Yet, the question remains how can we make sense of the lives of those named chav but who do not fall into the group of upwardly mobile cultural commentators?

Tyler's analysis of the chav through a 'figurative methodology' to some extent dislocates this classed formation from the specific social, historical and material conditions of its production. By positioning class disgust as that which is felt by the middle class for the working class, the formative nature of this discourse is unexplored. The chav is not simply produced within the discourse of middle class media; it is produced within communities of class struggle, where the myth of the chav is brought to life: in gossip, performance, jokes, name-calling, appropriation and acting out. As such, I think it is important that discursive constructs are empirically located, to make visible their formation beyond a top down naming of the oppressed. Dominant discourses are formed and reformed within multiple fields, mediated through different value systems, they circulate and have the potential to transform. I explore this conceptualisation of dominant discourse further in my analysis Chapters (for example, see Chapter 5, Section 2; Chapter 7, Section 1), through an account of the everyday (re)production of dominant discourses within The Estate.

## The objectification of the chav

The abstraction of the figure of the chav away from the communities to which the discourse adheres to, obscures the epistemic relation of this knowledge production. A critical reflection on what is being objectified in the production of knowledge is difficult to imagine as the premise of this work is the figure as constituted through a discourse of ignorance. Therefore, the assumption remains that the knowledge produced within these texts is of a myth, what is known is the discursive construction of the chav. There is a distancing from the lives this myth represents, and as a consequence the epistemic relation between the academic knowledge of the chav and the communities objectified in this knowledge production is hidden. There is an inherent power relation between the academic knower and the objectified known. A focus on the epistemic relation questions the ways in which this knowledge production shapes those who are known and the ways our assumption of those we seek to know shapes the knowledge produced of them.

Bourdieu argues that 'all symbolic systems – including science itself – embody power relations, and all practices – including intellectual practices – are interested' (Swartz, 1997: 270). Thus, he calls for a reflexive sociological practice which critically reflects upon the intellectual and social conditions that make enquiry possible: an 'epistemological reflexivity':
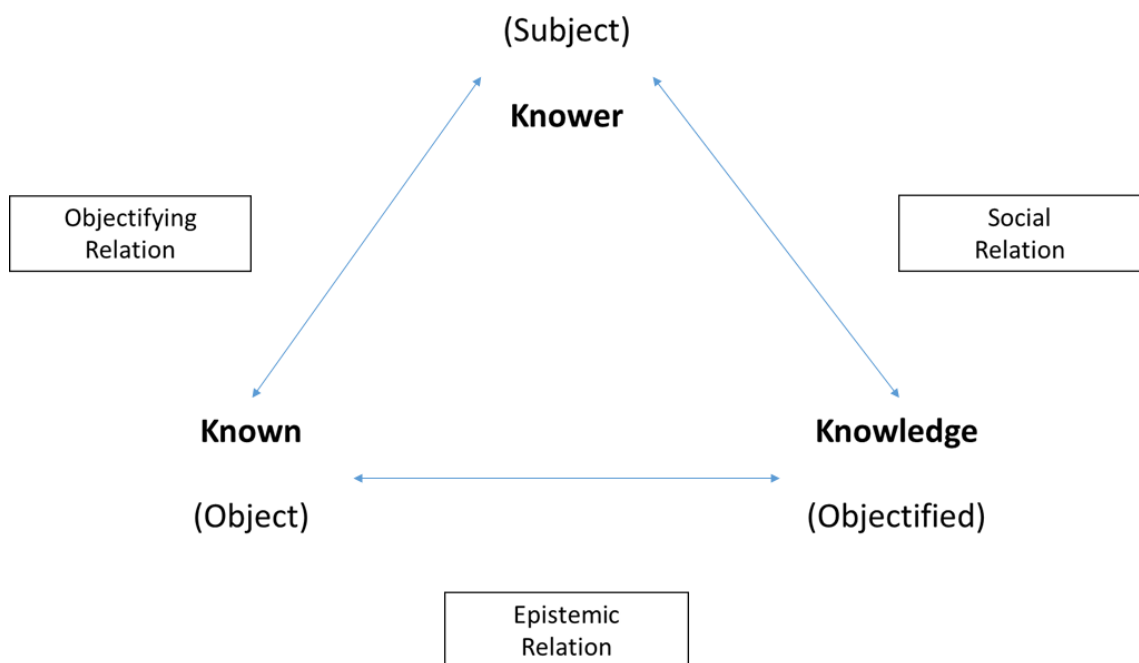


Adapted from Figure 1: Three Relations of Knowledge Claims (Maton, 2003: 57)

Much sociological reflexivity is focused upon the social relation of knowledge production, the subject's relation to the knowledge, the relationship between the researcher and the knowledge they produce or claim. Epistemological reflexivity is that which is focused on the object's relation to that knowledge, what is being objectified in the production of knowledge and how. Therefore,

this makes the objectifying relation itself the object for analysis; 'how social position and structure of the field in relation to objects of study shape knowledge claims' (Maton, 2003: 58).

It is Bourdieu's example of the observation of language which, I think, captures what should form the site of academic enquiry: rather than observing language from the standpoint of the speaking subject, where the listener is the site of language. 'It is with the language that he interprets speech' (Bourdieu, 1977: 1). This is a questioning of what may be known through a re-imagining of the site of the production of knowledge. Following the example of language, it is not in the researcher's analysis of the speaker, her meanings, it is an account of the speech from the viewpoint of the listener: the meaning that is made of the speech in that moment of interaction.

Bourdieu's reflexivity aims 'not to uncover individual researcher bias but the collective scientific unconscious embedded in intellectual practices by the field objectifying relations' (Maton, 2003: 58). This conceptualisation of reflexivity formed my own interest in the academic production of knowledge and the processes through which this knowledge fixes that which is known. Yet, I question the possibility of the researcher to step outside these structuring power relations beyond a statement of their own positioning within this field through an analysis of their individual partiality, intentionality and politics.

## Thinking structure as post-structure

It was this questioning of the internalisation of structure and the implications this has for the site of structural (re)production that lead me to explore post-structural conceptualisations of class. However, I remain cautious of post-structuralism as my understanding of class is as a structural inequality, class as both a consequence and producer of the structure of society. Nevertheless, post-structural sociology allows an exploration of the ways in which the structure of society is (re)produced through the self. This sociology also introduced to me the multiple formations of identity, the ways in which class is intersected with gender and race: how class is made through 'visualising moral subject formation' (Skeggs, 2005).

Skeggs furthers Bourdieu's account of capital accumulation and exchange through an analysis of the premise upon which cultural values are accorded their value. She considers contemporary class distinction as communicated through 'moral euphemism', rarely named directly (Skeggs, 2005). It is this morality that is 'embodied in personhood realised (or not) as a property value in systems of exchange' (2005: 969).

Therefore, for Skeggs, class is symbolically produced through the attribution of 'moral values to particular bodies' setting limits on the evaluation of particular bodies and practices (Skeggs, 2005b: 46). The definition of class as a 'moral-cultural property of the person' transfers talk of class to talk of taste: exclusion on the basis of culture and morality not biological essentialism

(Skeggs, 2005b: 50). Therefore, Skeggs' work introduces judgement as a site of class struggle and class formation (Skeggs & Loveday, 2012).

Butler repositions the constitution of social reality in the mundane acts of social agents, theorising the social agent as an object rather than the subject of constitutive acts (Butler, 1988: 2). Although Butler's work is an analysis of gender, I find her work helpful in theorising class formation, especially when this is understood as inherently entangled with gender and race. Moreover, Butler's challenge against the conceptualisation of gender as an entity beyond the acts of social agents is useful for the rethinking of class:

> 'Gender is not a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts precede; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylised repetition of acts' (Butler, 1988: 2)

This challenge resonates with class cultural theorists who appear to struggle with the desire to uncover the arbitrariness of class distinction whilst maintaining a sense of the self as classed. Analysis of class culture tends to be founded upon identity claims of difference; the focus is the misrecognition of the value of cultural practices. Butler's concept of performativity troubles the category of class, as if class reality is performative it is 'real only to the extent that it is performed' (1988: 10). This introduces a 'social temporality' to class, as constituting acts not only constitute the identity of the actor, but constitute that identity as a compelling illusion (1988: 3). Thus, class is formed as an 'object of belief' in the actions of social agents, both as a social category but also as a sense of self. The site of class formation then may be understood as the moment of action, the constitution of the self as a classed object through the performance of classed acts.

## The constitution of class as an object of belief

The notion of the 'social temporality' of class, for me, questioned the role class theory has in the constitution of class, and what effects the pursuit of class inequality has on the knowledge claims we make. I am concerned that the sociology of political critique such as the approach of Bourdieu is premised upon the ignorance of those in positions of oppression. The aim of this sociology is to illustrate the ways in which those in positions of power act to produce ignorance in others. A sociology of ignorance subverts this assumption, being 'open to the possibility that people value and work to maintain their own ignorance in specific ways' (Mair et al, 2012: 15). The conceptualisation of knowledge and ignorance is evaluative, it is the academic valuing of knowledge as inherently good that positions those outside of this as ignorant, de-valuing certain forms of knowledge. An ethnographic study of ignorance is premised upon ignorance as 'the product of specific practices, with effects that are distinct from the effects of the lack of knowledge to which the ignorance in question corresponds' (Mair et al, 2012: 15).

For Rancière 'knowing' is a practice which performatively divides the world in two; those who know and those who are ignorant (Pelletier, 2012: 272):

> 'people who speak and people who merely ventriloquize, people who can think the social order and people who can only obey its logic, people who can contribute to discussions about how society should be organized and people who are too caught up in their own economic occupation/culture to apply themselves authentically to the affairs of society' (Pelletier, 2012: 272).

Through the conceptualisation of 'mésentente', or disagreement, Rancière introduces the disputed status of speech. He considers speech as fragmented in to two forms, speech in its positivity and speech that is not considered speech, only noise. Thus, disagreement is:

> 'where there is a lack of agreement not only about the object of debate (what constitutes audible speech in the study of workers) but also the status of the speakers themselves, as speakers who speak, rather than emit noise or ventriloquize' (Pelletier, 2012: 276)

For Rancière the production of ignorance as the other to knowledge necessitates an ignorance of inequality if one's goal is to instantiate equality; 'rather than setting out to 'know' or verify inequality (or researching the perpetuation of domination), one can instead set out to 'verify' equality' (Pelletier, 2012: 273). In this sense equality becomes an action rather than the consequence of that action, equality is the disruption of inequality. Therefore, it is the role of the class analyst to verify equality through valorising actions 'characterised by the way they transgress the boundaries of categories' (2012: 274). This is not to valorise one group over another; rather it is about 'making prominent in one's analytic strategy discursive practices which make the contingency of inequality sensible' (2012: 274).

I hope my analysis reflects a Rancièrian sensibility in my focus on the power dynamics which enable knowing, and my commitment to representations of difference and disagreement. In the closing discussion of this thesis (see Chapter 8: Everyday happiness, liveable lives), I explore the analytic possibilities of instantiating equality, valorising the everyday practices within the Community Centre as transgressions of classification.

## Section 2: Theorising community - connecting people and place

Classed continuities and change are often conceived in terms of community: it is class as 'communal beingness' (Walkerdine, 2010: 5) which forms the basis of much sociological exploration of classed lives. Yet as a 'feel good term' (Hughes, 1998), community is rarely referred to negatively and avoids the critical attention applied to other structures such as society, institution, nation. My own notion of community is as a structure of the people, an affective relation with people and place shaped by shared value systems. However, the conceptualisation of community as produced by the people may mask the 'centrality of the role of the government' in the formation of what is deemed to be a legitimate community (Hill and Wright, 2003: 12).

There is an inherent paradox in social policies which target community development, in that their need to 'recreate or reinforce locally a sense of belonging, of consensus, inclusion and homogeneity' necessitates the 'condemnation, exclusion and alienation' of those perceived as outsiders (2003: 12).

This Section aims to explore the connections between people and place through the development of a theorisation of community. I suggest that the concept of community may illuminate something about the process through which classed identities are produced and reproduced across time and space.

I begin by extending the post-structural theorisation of class outlined in the previous Section to the concept of community. Thinking with Butler (1990) I suggest that community is not a stable category, rather it is constituted in moments of disagreement.

I move on to apply this post-structural sensibility to community as place (Massey, 2005), exploring the spatial turn within class analysis as a key conceptual tool in an analysis of The Estate which connects everyday life to capitalist structures (Featherstone, 2013).

I end this Section with a questioning of the ethics of representation, suggesting the need for a sensitivity to alternative forms of communication (Back, 2007). Outlining Baeten's (2002) critique of 'spatially fetishist' research, I caution against an analysis based on an 'epistemological framework of problems' (Baeten, 2002: 6) and indicate how this informs my own analysis.

## Community as being other

Brann-Barrett (2011) is critical of normative readings of community based upon sameness and unity, she makes explicit that 'members may have commonalities and related histories along with different lived experiences and perceptions' (Brann-Barrett, 2011: 6). Her conceptualisation of community as inter-relations captures the connectedness of 'people within a geographic space and their relationship with society outside that space' allowing for the exploration of social and cultural structures which shape these inter-relations (2011: 6). Further developing this concept, Valerie Walkerdine talks of 'interelationality' as webs of relations which construct the subject at their centre, challenging the assumption of a 'pre-existing stable subject that is simply linked to others' (Walkerdine, 2010: 5). In this sense community is not simply that which is produced by people, it is a system of relations which produce both people and community. This conceptualisation introduces the notion of community identity as process, a 'moral project' (Back, 2009: 4). Moreover, for me, this work pushes me to think 'community' with the theories of identity that inform my discussion of class. As Nayak has done with his work to 'dismantle the White norm', community may be seen as a repetitive attempt at 'being', it is an active verb, not a pre-given noun (Nayak, 1997: 22). Thus, Hall's (1996) conceptualisation of 'identification' may

better capture what I assert as classed identity. Hall considers identification discursive, in that it is a 'process of articulation' (Hall, 1996: 2), never completed, actualised in the 'binding and marking of symbolic boundaries' (1996: 3). In this way identity is conceived as moments of identification:

> 'Throughout their careers, identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render "outside", abjected' (Hall, 1996: 5)

By thinking with Judith Butler's (1990) theorisation of gendered subjectivities, community may be understood as 'defined against and built upon exclusion via the ongoing discursive construction of a "constitutive outside"' (Lucey, 2010: 3). This moves beyond traditional relational theorisation, whereby the community defines itself against what it is not, to a conceptualisation where community only ever comes to form in these moments of 'othering'. Community is not stable, rather, community is an interruption, it is constituted in moments of disagreement; attempts at 'being' other to what it is not.

In this way the concept of community may move away from nostalgic connotations with which it is so often imagined as 'an idealised version of the past' (Hill and Wright, 2003: 12). The introduction of the analytic tool of 'space-time' (Burgess, 2010) challenges me to think about the ways in which community is constituted in the making of both space and time. That people's everyday lives are embedded within the social construction of space and time, positioned within a narrative of their place and their time. I further develop this idea in Chapter 7 through an account of the everyday processes through which the personal is connected to the communal and the present is connected to the past, in the production of dominant discourses of The Estate (see Chapter 7, Section 1).

## Locating community

There has been a spatial turn in the sociology of identity (Parker et al, 2007; Wyse et al, 2012; Kehily and Nayak, 2008; Nayak, 2011). Informed by Massey's 'For Space', the sociological gaze has been turned to the space within which social acts occur, questioning its neutrality and stability. Massey theorises space as always under construction, as a product of its interrelations, constituted through interaction (Massey, 2005: 9). Scourfield et al (2006) question Massey's assumption that 'various boundaries of locally-situated life-conditions do indeed add up to place', that place is a thing in the sense that it may be observed as a complex whole (2006: 3). Yet, Massey asserts that multiplicity and space are co-constitutive, space as 'co-existing heterogeneity' (Massey. 2005: 9). In this way, I am unsure whether Massey's claim does entail the possibility of knowing space, rather it is an opening up of space to the same theoretical engagement as has been given to identity, an exploration of its complexity and a theorisation of it as not existing before/beyond relations.

This mirroring of Massey's theorisation of space with shifts within sociology and identity politics has produced a body of work where class theorists are bringing in space and place into their analysis of classed identity formations. Raisborough and Adams (2008) link Khatib's (2004) work on representations of Middle Eastern politics in film to representations of the working class in British popular culture, arguing that 'repeated cultural representations of specific spaces create and consolidate myths not only of the physical landscape but of the people who inhabit or are linked to it' (Raisborough and Adams, 2008: 10).

This shift in academic theorisation, I think, is the consequence of shifts within the academy and within British class structure. The sociological imagination of the UK academy is self-perpetuating in the sense that universities tend to set parameters on what is of interest; departments have 'cultures' of theoretical engagement. This shapes what is taught at undergraduate level, what is funded at postgraduate level and sets the research agenda for academics. Therefore, sociological assertions of the 'death of class' (Pakulski & Waters, 1996) reverberated around British sociology long after they were claimed. Those entering the academy at this time who nevertheless felt class (felt classed as an affective, embodied history and material positioning), found other ways to explore this sense of locatedness within structure; alternative ways to 'speak class'. Alongside this academic shift, changes in British welfare policy redefined the space of the working class, separating them physically and figuratively in housing estates. The fixing in space of the working class, the containment of their lives from mainstream society produced 'imagined geographies' (Said, 1978) of The Estate in both popular and academic representations. I do not think that one of these shifts caused the other, or that one came before the other, rather that both popular and academic representations of class produce what may be known of class. The current academic interest in classed places is mirrored in popular discourse where 'geographical referencing is one of the contemporary shorthand ways of speaking class' (Skeggs, 2004: 15). I am unsure whether these new ways of speaking class represent changes in the British class structure or whether they are simply the production of new 'imagined geographies' of class.

## Classed places

Nevertheless, these theorisations of the spatialisation of class have helped me think about the ways in which class is a racialized position. The processes of fixing a people to a place involves an essentialising of a people. The linking of certain groups to the landscape they inhabit, or are said to inhabit, fixes that group in both time and space; they are that place, they always have been and always will be that place. Rooke and Gidley (2010) argue that particular spaces and places discursively fix people in 'racialized class positions' (Rooke and Gidley, 2010: 2). Space and place have become signifiers for class, where classed places are synonymous with disordered places. Moreover, this 'spatial disorder comes to stand for moral disorder' (2010: 19) with the

'politics of entitlement, inclusion and desirability…increasingly discussed and realised in spatial terms' (2010: 24). This work reads the spatial fixity of the working class against the neoliberal ideal of a trajectory of progression, a life lived in the pursuit of fulfilment; personal, financial and social. It is against the highly mobile middle class other that those fixed in space are understood as 'literally left behind by modernity' (2010: 24). However, there is a complex relationship between people and place that I think is underdeveloped in this literature. What are the processes by which signifiers of people and place conflate? How does the body carry its place and how does place form the body?

Skeggs is concerned with the processes through which inscription enables 'some groups to propertise their personhood and others to be beyond appropriation as the foundational ground of valuelessness from which others can mark and know their distinctions' (Skeggs, 2004: 26). Her work begins to highlight the embodied connections between people and place, where place is inscribed onto the bodies of the people who inhabit it, a mark which they carry as a signifier of their 'valuelessness', a placing visible on their body beyond the landscape of their place.

This internalisation of place is explored in Mark Featherstone's paper (2013) 'Being-in-Hull, Being-on-Bransholme'. For me, this paper captures the struggle of the class theorist to talk of the everyday inequalities, the lived unfairness and the experiential deficiency of specific classed positions whilst claiming this existence as a structural consequence. Featherstone unpicks the positioning of life on The Estate as an effect of 'immersion in a temporal and spatial environment which has been destroyed by market forces' (Featherstone, 2013: 2). Using the example of the discursive nuance of being 'on' The Estate, Featherstone highlights the social, moral and often physical dislocation of The Estate from society – they are never really 'in' the world, but 'on' it, watching from afar (ibid, 2013: 3). He continues with this exploration of the way life on The Estate is talked of by residents as a reflection of their sense of place, with an account of their reference to The Estate as 'crap'. This 'excremental language' is an acknowledgement of the status of their place, a recognition of their 'existential and phenomenological rootedness in time, space and world' (ibid, 2013: 3).

Thus, Featherstone argues 'excremental existence' is the 'experience of systemic social exclusion' (Featherstone, 2013: 4); the dystopian social space of The Estate is not a natural condition it is the result of 'injustices and inequalities…hard-wired into the very form of late capitalism itself' (ibid, 2013: 2). This condition of exclusion not only refers to the space of The Estate, it is not simply that The Estate is materially deficient, it is that the 'effects of stand-alone-ness, such as economic and cultural poverty, come together to form a kind of negative civic pride'. The enclosure of the space is mirrored in the closure of the minds of the residents, in the sense-

making of their position there is 'unity in social and economic decay' (ibid, 2013: 5), there is no other way of being: 'it is shit but it is ours'.

Featherstone weaves the recent history of 'The Estate' in Britain, from development based on car ownership and mobility to the 'right to buy' policy, with his broader claims that capitalism necessitates 'a residue' of people, those left behind because of their 'competitive disadvantage in an essentially unjust economic system' (Featherstone, 2013: 8). Thus, the marginalisation of The Estate is understood as a process, a shaping of both people and place through continual 'failure'. The foundation of regeneration policies and practices on neoliberal ideology results in 'failure' being attached to both people and place. Attempts to 're-engineer these populations to make them fit for a new society that had excluded them in the first place' (ibid, 2013: 10) locate 'failure' on The Estate rather than as a structural consequence of late capitalism, fuelling 'Moral Underclass Discourse' (Levitas, 1999) where social position is seen as natural. Drawing upon Frantz Fanon's work on postcolonial exclusion (Fanon, 2008), Featherstone claims poverty on The Estate is 'epidermalised, written across their bodies, to the extent that everything about them smacked of exclusion' (Featherstone, 2013: 13).

For Featherstone, poverty is 'rooted in the very being of the marginalised' (Featherstone, 2013: 13), it is their sole identity, I would argue that 'failure' too forms selfhood on The Estate. Featherstone maps the formation of The Estate, from its conception as slum clearance to various welfare benefit and housing policy shifts, that shaped The Estate as the 'dumping ground' for the losers of capitalism (ibid, 2013: 9). I have struggled with talking of the 'failure' attached to The Estate, it is difficult to speak of as in many ways it runs alongside 'Moral Underclass Discourse' (Levitas, 1999). Of course there is an inherent difference, the disagreement lies in the foundation of the argument on neoliberal ideology, responsibilisation of the individual and a wilful ignoring of structural conditions of disadvantage. Nevertheless, I am cautious that the word 'failure' is so entrenched within capitalist discourse, the language of competitive capitalism is one of winners and losers, words that are synonymous with effort and ability. Is it possible to talk of 'failure' whilst claiming the game itself is unfair?

Featherstone's conceptualisation of a 'socially produced psycho-social pathology' (Featherstone, 2013: 16) captures a way to speak of 'failure' as a positioning, as a structural consequence that is nevertheless felt as an affective relationship between the self, The Estate and wider society. As a 'socially produced psycho-social pathology' 'failure' may be understood as 'communal beingness' (Walkerdine, 2010: 5), as both an individual and collective positioning, as a trajectory, a sense of history and a sense of future. 'Failure' is a classed position of 'socio-spatialised exclusion on the very edge of society' (Featherstone, 2013: 16), an experience which:

'explains why the language of the poor is truncated, restricted and marked by a kind of dark humour, violence and lack of care that says everything about their current plight and future prospects in a society characterised by a hyper-rational neo-liberal obsession with abstract value' (Featherstone, 2013: 16).

Featherstone draws attention to the complex links between structure and agency, highlighting the ways sense of place, shapes self. The experience of 'being-on' The Estate, of belonging to a place and a recognition of the positioning of this place in relation to others, forms 'modified modes of behaviour, norms and values' (Featherstone, 2013: 10). Yet, Featherstone does not address these communal behaviours, rather his paper is a challenge of their status as natural and an assertion that the 'cultural milieu' of The Estate is the consequence of capitalism.

## An ethics of representation

This work leaves me wondering how I can make sense of the lives of these people beyond the despair I might be invited to feel for them. How can I valorise the joy they have in their lives beyond claiming that it is merely an illusion of happiness?

Back (2007) explores the complexity of reading signifiers which despite being a target for stigma are nevertheless invested in by the working class (Back, 2007: 72). Thinking with Foucault, Back reads the body as a political field, locating agency in the embodied practices of the working class, that though mark them as inferior in judgments of taste, nevertheless are a means by which they reclaim and aestheticize the body (2007: 72-73). Thus, there is an alternative reading of these abjected bodies, one that 'while remaining mute when read through the moralistic bourgeois optic' may be highly expressive when read through the values of the working class (Rooke and Gidley, 2010: 28). These power claims may be necessarily paradoxical, that which expresses self, marks distinction. Nevertheless, they are a reclaiming of the body, they are power claims in the sense that these acts are the performance of selfhood. An awareness of alternative means of communication makes visible the agency of the oppressed:

'A life in her hands' Photograph by Paul Halliday (Back, 2007: 89)

> 'Each of the items that Vicki wears carries a meaning and association that escapes the strictures of bourgeois ignorance and prejudice. Each symbolizes a moment passed in living, a register of love or kinship to those near to her, or to the memory of the lost' (Back, 2007: 89)

This sensibility to alternative forms of communication, challenges the lens through which we read meaning onto the actions and bodies of the poor. It is an argument mirrored in Baeten's (2002) critique of 'spatially fetishist' research which through reading urban places through 'stereotypical and dystopian cultural images' (Baeten, 2002: 3) imposes these images on both people and place. Baeten's critique of urban dystopias is interesting in that he explores the ways in which they emerge from both conservative and progressive political discourses. Right wing moralised discourse envisions urban areas as 'perverted places where cultures of deviance, crime and poverty among the underclass are constantly reproduced', whilst left wing discourses consider the ways through which dynamics of capitalism have formed places of 'sharp socio-economic inequalities and exploitation' (2002: 4-5). Though founded upon different assumptions, both political discourses nonetheless interpret urban places through an 'epistemological framework of "problems"' (2002: 6). That is to say, the 'problem' is identified, those affected by the 'problem' are studied, the differences between them and the rest of us are highlighted and these differences are defined as the cause of the 'problem'. This speaks to Back's discussion of the reading of working class lives through a bourgeois lens, where bourgeois judgements become normalised so differences are understood as the root of social disadvantage.

Moreover, Baeten is specifically critical of the spatialisation of sociological research, arguing that it 'depoliticises the issues of poverty, repression and exploitation' through rendering invisible the structural production of inequality (Baeten, 2002: 11). For Baeten this spatial turn is a process by

which 'orientalism comes home', that both academic and popular representations of urban deprivation are formed from 'bourgeois imaginations' (2002: 8). Mirroring Said's (1978) critique of representations of the 'Orient', Baeten argues that representations of urban deprivation 'reveal more about the bourgeois urban desires, fantasies and fears' that about the urban itself (2002: 8). Thus, the urban city becomes a place one already knows by heart, a place that need only be 'rediscovered' (2002: 9). Baeten's critique is framed as a caution to the academic study of poverty:

> 'particularly those on the Left, should carefully consider the political messages, intended or unintended, that are attached to their representation of deprivation' (Baeten, 2002: 3).

Central to this claim is the linking of people to place, representations of urban decay, regardless of their political motive, are read onto the bodies of the people who live in these places. They *are* the place, therefore, whether the argument is that they created this dystopia or whether the dystopia created them, representations of place inherently come to represent people. The decay of a place is then confined to the cycle of people and place, both degenerating the other. This is Baeten's critique of the 'localisation' of poverty. However, I think that his focus on the 'city', as a place of urban deprivation, ignores structural productions of inequality. By naming the site of dystopic imaginings 'city', Baeten is ignoring structural and spatial distinctions within the 'city' which carve out places of disadvantage and contain them within estates. Moreover, his claim that 'spaces of exclusion are just as much spaces of inclusion' (Baeten, 2002: 12) may be just as politically dangerous as dystopian geographies. By envisioning places of deprivation as an 'inclusionary safe haven for society's Others' (2002: 12) Baeten assumes a link between people and place whereby this place is understood as the best place for them, resulting in an othering of people who live in deprived places. There is, I think, a false logic to this argument that because those excluded are spatially contained, it is assumed this place must be internally inclusive. I appreciate that Baeten is proposing a more nuanced account of urban places, one that seeks to explore the 'rich array of contradictions, conflicts and paradoxes that characterise it' (Baeten, 2002: 13). Nevertheless, in his characterisation of urban dystopia as an image of the 'city' Baeten does not explore the material and social inequalities that fix certain groups in place, that the city itself is divided along class lines.

Throughout my analysis, I work to maintain an openness in my interpretation of The Estate, exploring alternative readings of social phenomena and valorising the experiential everyday of my participants. Employing a bifocal lens in my analysis, I aim to represent the social production of The Estate as structural consequence and lived experience. Specifically, in Chapter 5, my spatial analysis of The Estate is informed by Baeten's critique in its focus on the co-constitution of people and place (see Chapter 5: Introduction).

# Conclusion

In this Chapter I have outlined a theorisation of class and community that acts as the conceptual foundation for this research. Thinking with contemporary sociological analyses of class I have highlighted key themes which shape my research, in terms of research design, analysis and representation. Most notably, class as process (Skeggs, 2004), class as embodied (Reay and Lucey, 2000; 2002) and class as performative (Butler, 1998; Lucey 2010). By tracing my theoretical engagement with the concept of class, this Chapter developed a post-structural conceptualisation of class, informed by Bourdieu's conceptual tools of habitus, field and capitals, as a way of linking of objective structures to subjective experience.

Developing the concept of community as a way to explore the connections between people and place, I argued the spatial turn within sociology provides an analytic lens through which to examine the processes through which communal affects are socially produced (Featherstone, 2013).

This mapping out of the concepts of class and community has inevitably raised ontological and epistemological questions around knowledge production and reproduction. It is these questions that the next Chapter works to explore, through a discussion of the research methodology.

# Chapter 4: Methodology

## Introduction

In this Chapter I explore the key methodological questions which have shaped and reshaped my research. Although this process was cyclical, in that my doing of the research raised methodological questions, which in turn informed my approach to doing the research, this Chapter is structured to first outline a theoretical engagement with representation in order to thread this methodological questioning through an account of my research design. In this way, I hope to provide an analytic lens through which to engage with research methodology.

I begin the Chapter, in Section 1, with a discussion of ethnographic data, exploring the form and purpose of ethnographic fieldnotes. Through the re-stylisation of one ethnographic fieldnote, I consider the methodological possibilities of the analytic practice of 'lyrical sociology' (Abbott, 2007). Thinking 'lyrical sociology' with a Rancièrian 'poetics of the social sciences', I reflect on the ethics of representation through ethnographic moments.

Locating this discussion of ethics, Section 2 begins to explore my development of a situated ethics within ethnographic encounters. This Section considers the ethical issue of access moving from a conceptual debate around whether participants can consent to their transformation from research subjects into objects (Davidson, 2008), to an account of institutional vulnerability and its consequences for gaining access to research sites. Finally, I consider the everyday negotiation of research relationships and practices of maintaining access.

Section 3 draws upon these methodological debates in an account of ethnography as a 'messy method'. Through the representation of my reflexive notes, I provide an account of my research trajectory, exploring the connections between the methods I utilised and my broader methodological commitments.

## Section 1: Capturing 'data'

The ethnographic practice of 'being there' as a research method opens up questions around what constitutes data, how can it be captured and recounted. The act of writing fieldnotes is a skill, to be learnt and practiced. Yet, the idea of observation as a research method in some ways masks the processes of writing. Observations are represented through text, as such they are bound to the author's ability to capture the feel of the moment, to present the reader with a vicarious sense of 'being there'.

In this Section, I explore the methodology of fieldnotes. I question the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying my fieldnote practice and suggest a 'lyrical' sensibility may enable an alternative analysis of my data.

The following piece of writing was taken from an ethnographic note I made during my fieldwork. I wanted to use this fieldnote to explore a style of sociological writing proposed by Andrew Abbott, which he has called 'lyrical sociology'. I was particularly interested in what knowledge may be produced through the stylisation of fieldnotes. Thus, I wrote 'The playground' with the intention of conveying my emotional response to a social happening, to 'communicate a mood' (Abbott, 2007: 73) and to recreate for the reader a social act in its affective complexity.

## Writing moments
'The playground'

> *The air is thick with the smell of softened tarmac, metallic and sweet. The heat of the afternoon sun is beating in my head. I lean against the playground climbing frame seeking a mottled shard of shade. A group of boys hang from the graffiti adorned frame and lie in subdued exhaustion on the 'helter-skelter' slide. The humming silence is ruptured by the spluttering cough of a dirt bike. A young boy joins my side. 'He's scared; he's scared' taunt the boys as they gather round to better observe the scene. The bike whines towards the park, using the steep grassy bank opposite to gain speed. The young boy's breathing slows; he does not gasp. We allow a communal sigh of relief as the bike turns and runs the length of the park, making a turn, back up the hill. The young boy responds to the accusation of cowardice, 'I don't like the noise'. Turning to me, with a slight tremble, he asks, 'Is he naughty?' Through the haze the bike appears distorted; the crack of the engine signals its return. Again the bike targets the playground, jolting down the hill followed by a stream of burnt, greasy air. Enraged, the young boy breaks away from the group, he lunges towards the bike. Arms waving and shouting a battle cry, he runs at the bike and to the playground gate. Pulling up and turning off, the bike veers away from the playground and continues on to adjacent fields. The young boy parades, jutting out his jaw and thrusting forward his head: 'Yeah - go, LEAVE!'*

Andrew Abbott's 'Against Narrative' is a provocation. I read it as a challenge to my own research practice, specifically my use of narrative formations. Abbott's paper is a theoretical exploration of a lyrical impulse within sociology, in which he urges the reader to 'imagine a kind of sociology…that is in some profound sense not narrative' (Abbott, 2007: 73). Reading the paper, I was drawn to the idea of lyrical sociology as an analytic practice, which, perhaps, may allow for a rediscovering of an emotional involvement with research (ibid).

Lyrical sociology aims to communicate the author's emotional reaction to the object of study, rather than to 'explain' that object. The emotional engagement of the author in the writing of lyrical sociology locates them within the moment, as opposed to the distance that can be a feature of narrative accounts. The lyrical can be located within the consciousness of the author in a particular place, but, perhaps more importantly, in a particular time. The lyrical is 'momentary'; it is not about something happening, or an outcome, 'it is something that is, a state of being'

(Abbott, 2007: 75). It was these three elements that shaped my writing of the ethnographic note above, through a focus on my own emotional response to the moment, my personal location in the moment and the moment in its lived state.

Lyrical sociology offers a way to present moments as they are experienced, not as read through theoretical gauze, but felt as 'humane sympathy' (Abbott, 2007: 278):

> 'even though…differences reify and ramify and trap us in our own nets…I do think it is established that the heart of lyrical sociology is precisely the evocation of this tension about difference: it confronts us with our temporal and social spatial particularities in the very process of showing us those of others' (ibid)

I sought to write a piece that explored what may be possible through the displaying of ethnographic data in lyrical form. Specifically, I had been interested in how the construction of the ethnographic moment in the present would shape what may be said about this data. Writing this piece was unfamiliar terrain. I shifted my attention away from understanding the ethnographic moment to simply sharing it. More than this, I actively dislocated the ethnographic moment from the spheres of time I worked within. Writing the piece in the present, I tried to capture the pace of the moment in its lived complexity, mundaneness and intensity. In order to convey these tensions, I selected an ethnographic moment that was particularly ambiguous.

Of course all ethnographic data is selective, what resonates as important to the researcher is inherently linked to their feel of the moment. However, there were many moments I could choose - so why this one? I had been thinking about this particular moment a lot and had some very clear ideas about the young boy, about his identity and about his behaviour. I chose this moment, as a challenge to myself, my thinking, my theorising. I wanted to explore what might be understood about this moment through the wilful ignoring of location, in time and space (Abbott, 2007; Pelletier, 2009).

## Working with lyrical sociology

I would now like to play with the lyrical; bringing together Andrew Abbott's 'lyrical sociology' and the 'poetics of the social sciences' of Caroline Pelletier's interpretive work with the philosophy of Rancière. In this discussion I draw on two themes within this work, in an attempt to tease out some points of affinity: the introduction of the affective into social science research; and, the 'practice of equality' (Pelletier, 2009: 273).

I read both articles as provocation: a disturbance of the normative and normalising practice of social scientific enquiry. Abbott's 'against narrative' questions the implied neutrality of narrative, bringing to the fore 'pathologies' that go unread in its opposition to causal analysis. Pelletier's engagement with Rancière calls for the re-centring of the critical research agenda around 'the other of power, and the other of domination' (Pelletier, 2009: 268). Again, it is through the

conception of an 'other' that ontological assumptions might be seen; it is critical theory's opposition to categorical positivism that Rancière suggests renders invisible the process by which '"critique" claims a position of mastery over its objects, and thereby reproduces the very hierarchy it criticises' (ibid).

## Affect as object of study

Lyrical sociology and the poetics of writing foreground the 'affective dimensions of accounts' (Pelletier, 2009: 278). Through narrative, a writer may provide an account and an explanation, but through the lyrical, a writer shares 'her intense reaction to some portion of the social process seen in a moment' (Abbott, 2007: 76). Therefore, lyrical sociology has obvious implications for what knowledge claims can be made. Here I turn to Rancière's assertion of methodology as an act; 'building a stage and sustaining a spectacle' (Pelletier, 2009: 280). Through this performance metaphor, Rancière suggests science may be thought of as 'constituting the world rather than understanding it' (ibid). In this way lyrical sociology may be seen as an opening up, a making visible of theory 'structured on fantasy' (ibid, 278). The conceptualisation of affect as the object of study introduces the possibility of true reflexivity, the situating of disciplinary theory as disciplinary 'wants'. This is not a call to move away from fantasy in academic writing, 'but to structure it in more egalitarian ways' (ibid, 279).

It is Rancière's troubling of 'knowing' that really speaks to my struggle with representation. He constructs 'knowing' as a practice, that divides the world into those who know and those who are ignorant; 'people who can think the social order and people who can only obey its logic' (Pelletier, 2009: 272). Rancière's critique is not only aimed at sociological methodology, but the assumptions made in the reading of data: 'the way a discipline positions its own discourse with respect to that of the object of study' (ibid). Rather than misrecognition as a foundation for analysis, Rancière posits disagreement. The concept of disagreement introduces dissensus on two levels of analysis, the object of debate and the status of speakers.

## A space for disagreement

This is where I draw a second affinity in lyrical sociology and Rancière's philosophy. The tension in Abbott's work between narrative and lyrical form is reminiscent of Rancière's discomfort with misrecognition. Abbott questions the embedding of a present in a narrative as it 'replaces its quality of disposition – locational indexicality – with a quality of dimensional fixedness in "larger" social entities' (Abbott, 2007: 92). Thus, he argues, lyrical sociology should be premised on 'maintaining the dispositional quality of the object of analysis, its position in the social world as it – the object – sees that world' (ibid). In this way, lyrical sociology may engage with Rancière's notion of disagreement by giving status to the speakers themselves; 'as speakers who speak, rather than emit noise or ventriloquize' (Pelletier, 2009: 276).

Both lyrical sociology and the philosophy of Rancière challenge my analytic position, by questioning the most basic assumption of sociological research: the quest to 'know'. Rancière's logic is that knowledge production implies ignorance, the production of an 'other' to knowledge. This implies, my pursuit to 'know' inequality is inherently flawed; I will remain ignorant of equality in its positioning as 'other' to the knowledge of inequality. Rancière suggests 'if one is 'ignorant' of inequality, if one denies the reality of inequality, one is in effect asserting and instantiating equality' (Pelletier, 2009: 273). This wilful 'dis-attention' to structural forces is echoed in Abbott's assertion that 'the determination of a present situation by something outside it is no reason not to celebrate or investigate or understand it in and of itself' (Abbott, 2007: 88).

At this point, I refer back to my ethnographic note 'the playground', as an exploration of what this 'practice of equality' might produce. My ethnographic fieldnotes take a similar form, they are descriptive, often written in the present, yet, they are littered with theorising. Events are described and instantaneously read through my theoretical lens. My descriptions lie flat and it is my theoretical puppetry that brings them to life. As demonstrated in the 'original' fieldnote below, the narrative form makes connections between the momentary and the theoretical, agency is located within broader social, cultural and historical positionings.

> *There is one boy who is sometimes at the club who is too young to be a member, I think he is 3 or 4. He must be a relative of someone at the club – maybe Sharon?*
>
> *He is adorned with a particular masculinity – both performed and symbolised through props.*
>
> *He has a close crew cut with patterns shaved into the shorter Section of his hair, he wears a diamond hoop in his ear and on this occasion wore a Ralph Lauren shirt – pink with white collar, which he wore sticking up. He has a distinctly masculine adult vocabulary, calling out 'Oi mate' to get his friends' attention.*
>
> *He demonstrated a certain vulnerability at times but this tended to be followed by a performance of aggression/confident behaviour.*
>
> *Some older boys were riding dirtbikes across the field opposite the park, using the hill to gain speed and so driving straight towards the park and turning off towards the bottom of the hill.*
>
> *There were many things about this situation that scared the young boy. His fear was visible in his body and through changes in his behaviour. He became subdued and stood quietly close to me. He watched the bikes intently but remained very quiet, one of the older boys said 'He's scared' and he replied 'I just don't like the noise'. He turned and looked up at me and asked if they would come in the park. I told him he was safe and they could not get in. He repeated that it was just the noise that he didn't like, but then he asked me: 'Are they naughty?'*
>
> *The bikes came down the hill straight along the length of the park and up past the Community Centre onto the football pitch. At this the young boy ran forwards shouting a battle cry 'Ahhh' and then 'Yeah go – leave'.*

*This aggressive outburst was at such odds with the subdued passive fear of moments before.*

*Maybe this was his way of controlling the situation or a statement of his masculine identity to push back against the claim made that he was scared. Perhaps it was a demonstration of learned behaviour that defied his fear, or perhaps the fear was learned, as when he asked me whether the boy was naughty.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 18th July 2013

In the re-stylisation of this fieldnote as lyric, my focus shifted from analysis, to representation. I aimed to convey to the reader what I experienced in the moment and therefore spent time reflecting on not only what happened but what I saw, what I smelt, what I felt. In this way, I think the piece more thoroughly embeds people in place as the moment is explored holistically. I am not proposing that my research should move away from theoretical engagement with the data, but that data may be presented in a different way to render visible this theoretical engagement. Exploring data through lyric, rather than theory, may open up other avenues of knowing; that we may 'know not only society's causes and consequences, not only its merits and demerits, but also…its beauty and sadness' (Abbott, 2007: 98).

So, what can be said about this ethnographic moment? I hope it captures the complexity and contradictions of this young boy's experience: the fear, the risk, the morality, the agency. The writing of this piece as lyric has helped me engage further with the possibilities of meaning of this moment. I can see how locating the young boy within broader structures and times weakens his act, at least anchors its meaning. But, by wilfully ignoring this boy's location within a wider narrative, I am able to open up new questions:

Why is he scared? What is his understanding of good/naughty? How does he position himself in relation to the 'naughty' dirt bike rider? How is he affected by the others' taunts? Why does he risk moving away from the group? And, what, perhaps, is the meaning of his performance?

In this Section, I have bought together Abbott's conceptualisation of lyrical sociology and Rancière's poetics of social science in order to develop an affective sensibility in the writing of my fieldnotes. In this thesis, I do not present my fieldnotes in the same lyrical form as I wrote 'The playground', however, I hope to practice equality in some small way through the opening up of dissensus in my writing; presenting voices in their 'disagreement' on an equal footing to those of sociological theorists.

## Section 2: Situated ethics - developing an ethnographic sensibility

In this Section, I explore the ethical questions raised within my research methodology. I begin by providing an account of my research method. Although a simplistic version, which I aim to complicate in Section 3, this retrospective account works to situate my discussion of the key

ethical challenges I negotiated throughout the ethnography. Through this act of storying my research into a description of what I did within the research, the centrality of access in the shaping of my research parameters is made visible. As such, the following discussion focusses on the ethics of access.

I begin with a discussion of accessing the everyday and the ethics of objectification. I argue that ethnography necessitates the development of a situated ethics informed by a social responsibility. I define situated ethics as a research sensibility that permeates practice beyond the ethnographic moment; in the writing of fieldnotes, the analysis of data and the writing of the research (Simons and Usher, 2000; Miller et al, 2012).

I develop this theme of accessing the everyday, introducing an argument that institutional access is shaped by the structural production of vulnerability. Exploring the two key sites of my ethnography, the Community Centre and the Primary School, I argue that the institutional vulnerability of these two spaces influenced the process of gaining access in different ways.

I end this Section with a discussion of the everyday negotiations of access, exploring an ethics of maintaining research relationships. I suggest that the sustaining of relationships within ethnography is an affective labour felt not only by me, but taken on by participants.

## Situating the discussion: my research method

In order to anchor my discussion of a situated research ethic, I provide a brief account of my research method. The purpose of this account is to provide a context within which to locate debates around the ethics of access.

The key site of my research was the Community Centre on The Estate. I spent two days a week there between June 2013 and September 2014, at first focussing on the Primary School aged after school club, then from December 2013 attending the secondary aged youth club in addition. I took part in celebrations and occasions that marked the passing of the year, such as the summer festival and Christmas party. In the Community Centre I took on the role of volunteer. Although an established role, as there are long standing parent volunteers, the distinction of me not having children at the Community Centre provided space for me to present a researcher identity alongside that of 'helper'. I sought to reinforce my conversations about the research through putting up posters around the Community Centre with a picture of myself explaining who I was and what I was doing there. My more long term presence in the Community Centre worked to mark me out from other researchers and those placed within the Community Centre as part of their professional training. This was an important aspect of building rapport, as the Community Centre is a highly valued space for those seeking experiences with 'disadvantaged' groups, thus has a high turnover

of visitors. Though these visitors are often valued by the Community Centre as volunteers, their short term presence locates them on the peripheries of social interactions.

Throughout the ethnography I sought access to other spaces on The Estate. I was particularly concerned about the exclusiveness of the Community Centre, due to it being formed predominantly through kinship ties. I had hoped that access to other services on The Estate may allow me to talk to those who perhaps cannot or do not want to access the Community Centre.

A key site I sought to access on The Estate was the Primary School. In March 2014, after a long process of trying to arrange a meeting, I met with the head teacher of it and arranged to spend a month in the school, two weeks before Easter half term and two weeks after. Using the register of the children who attended the Community Centre, I selected a Year 4 class that had the highest proportion of these children. I wanted to follow the children I had got to know for almost a year at the Community Centre and see the ways in which they engaged with school.

Within the classroom I took on the role of teaching assistant, observing the whole class and working with small groups. For maths the children were streamed by ability and so the class was split into three groups, and taught alongside pupils from other year groups. Maths classes took place each morning and so I divided my time between these three ability groupings. Other subjects and activities were internally streamed by ability through the use of group tables within the classroom, again I split my time between the different groups.

As my focus in the school was on this one group of children, I followed the class throughout their school day. This meant I moved beyond the classroom to the assembly, PE lessons and school trips. During play time, I went with the children to the playground and I ate my lunch with them in the lunch hall. My research encounters within the school were far more contained, in terms of attention on particular interactions, than my other ethnographic encounters. This was partly a consequence of the development of my research. Almost a year into the ethnography my interest in the school was shaped by emerging themes. Significantly, the sites I had been able to access on The Estate shifted what I had constructed to be the research object. Being in the Community Centre introduced childhood as a distinct site of identity formation; for example, before gaining access to this space I had only conceived of my research participants as adults, to the extent that my initial engagement with the Community Centre was a means to meet parents. Therefore, my engagement with the school was formed in light of this interest in children as social agents. I wanted to explore how they engaged with school and negotiated their role as pupil, moving my concern beyond the ways in which the school acted upon them.

Nevertheless, this shift in focus was not a natural development, it was shaped by my ability to negotiate access and create and maintain working research relationships. For example, my focus

on the children within the school was a conscious attempt to foster a research relationship and gain access to the school. In this way, my attempt to distinguish my research from the evaluative gaze associated with the processes of becoming an academy was an integral aspect of negotiating access to the school. In the following discussion, I explore in more detail some of the ethical consequences of negotiating research relationships.

## The ethics of access

Redefining a moment, a social space or social interaction, as the object of research is an ethical issue. Research defines groups as of interest, highlighting an aspect of their lives and bringing it to the fore so it may be abstracted from them, known by the researcher and presented in its isolation from the fuller complexities of their self.

Though universal statements and principles of ethical research practice informed my research proposal and design, in the actual doing of research these are mediated through the 'situatedness' of my specific research practice (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Therefore, gaining access to, or entering the lives of people for the purposes of this research required the development of situated ethics; an ethical code, local and specific to particular practices (Simons and Usher, 2000). A situated ethics, for me captures a sensitivity to the social context of research practice. The appropriateness of the act of research within a given social moment is difficult to decipher, hence I think it is important for a situated ethics to be embodied throughout the research process (Miller et al, 2012).

I found this conception of ethics particularly important for ethnography, where being embedded within the social, inevitably complicated my role. A situated ethics allowed me to remain within 'sensitive' moments and act according to my feel of the social. This situated ethics informed my actions beyond the ethnographic moment; at times I decided not to write this moment into my fieldnotes, or upon reflecting on my notes, I choose not to pursue further analysis.

> *I asked Charlie's Mum how she was, as I do each week (she always gives me an update) but today she told me she lost her baby. He was still born. She told me she went into labour the Monday before, during the storm. She had to go through labour. She called her boy Freddie and he is going to be cremated. She said she wants somewhere to remember him.*
>
> *Charlie came over and said 'My Mum's baby died'. I felt so useless and did not know what to say. She asked her Mum to show me pictures. Her Mum looked embarrassed and said no. She said her husband saw the baby but she didn't.*
>
> *I asked if the hospital had been good and she said they have given her help with telling the children about the baby. It is just so sad.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, November 11th 2013

Being within a group for an extended period of time meant that I had access to their trajectory, I lived their moments of change with them. This is very different from the reflections I accessed during interviews and necessitated a precautionary approach. As an ethnographer I experienced changes that ruptured the everyday – life events related to: health, relationships, family, and work. The longitudinal capacity of ethnography allowed me to weave these stories into a broader narrative, both personal and of the group. This long term connection with the participant also allowed me to make a more informed decision about whether to bring this moment into my analysis; further conversations allowed the participant to reflect on the event, providing them with the space to more consciously construct the ways in which they wanted the moment to be represented. These sensitive moments were an integral aspect of my ethnography, they were the moments where I accessed everyday life and experienced a shared affect. Therefore, I do not want to write these moments out of my ethnography. Rather, I suggest that an important element of situated ethics is reflecting on the moment of data collection and trying to understand what role I played beyond being a researcher; a friend, confidant, support.

> *There was a party at the Community Centre today. It was Sharon's birthday and the last session before Christmas.*
>
> *Reliving this day through writing my fieldnotes is not an appealing idea. Sharon has found out she is unwell. The type of unwell people cannot bare to name, talking of it only as 'not good news'.*
>
> *Party games were played and a big spread was laid on with all buffet favourites arranged on paper plates – sausage rolls, crisps, triangle sandwiches, cheese and pineapple, party rings.*
>
> *The hall was full of kids, running around, dancing, singing and laughing.*
>
> *Around the edge, a group of Mums looked on, talking in hushed tones and trying to conceal their tears.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 16th December 2013

Situated ethics, as a research sensibility, is hard to capture. I think it requires a constant checking of my behaviour and recognition of the complex ways in which research participation can be both demanding and all-encompassing, yet at the same time just one small fleeting part of the participants' lives. Thus, situated ethics enables me to be careful in my practice and mindful of that which lies beyond my construction of the research parameters.

## Institutional vulnerability

There is an inherent vulnerability of the research participant; 'no matter how reflexive, non-hierarchical and ethically sensitive the researcher, ultimately their task is to transform research subjects into objects' (Davidson, 2008: 10). The researcher is responsible for the representation

of their participants and, as I suggested above, this requires a sensitivity to the trajectory of people, groups and institutions.

The two key sites of my ethnography, the Community Centre and the Primary School, are officially recognised as vulnerable spaces, in that as individuals the children and arguably the adults within these spaces are 'vulnerable participants' (Davidson, 2008). Of course, the asymmetrical nature of the relationships between the researcher and child participants must be acknowledged and I took extra care to ensure the research was explained in a way comprehensible to child participants (Cocks, 2006), as I will discuss below. However, I would like to first consider the ways in which the precarity of the institutions may also be seen as vulnerability and the ways in which this is manifest in very different ways.

The Community Centre can be understood as located within a context of austerity and cuts in public expenditure. The changing economic and political context has had a direct effect on the funding and income of the voluntary and community sector (Syrett et al, 2013). Throughout my time at the Community Centre I struggled to untangle the feel of the place as I experienced it and some notion of it in its authentic state; my experience of its precarity was continually thrown into sharp relief by the stories I encountered of the Community Centre in its heyday.

In time, I began to appreciate the ways in which the Community Centre was changing, becoming shaped by cuts in public funding and the increased pressure to generate its own income. As a result, the staff were reduced and those who remained were in the risky position of obtaining grants in order to fund themselves and stay open. When I began the research, the Community Centre employed one part-time, three full-time youth workers and a full-time manager. Within the first few months, two of the full-time youth workers' contracts came to an end, having been unable to secure further funding. At the time of writing, the Community Centre is being run by the manager and one part-time member of staff.

Undertaking the research at this time of contraction of resources inherently shaped my experience of gaining access to the Community Centre, many things I initially took as the essence of the place were a response to this structural pressure. One example of this was that there were no formal means through which to negotiate my being there. Although I arrived armed with forms, security checks and ethical approval, these were dismissed as bureaucracy, a rejection I understood as a statement of how things are done here. However, this seemingly casual approach may be re-storied as a product of the Community Centre's vulnerability at that time. Conversations with previous employees suggested that this push against formalisation was a reaction to these reductions in funding, resulting in a closing of ranks, and a retreat from the recognised formal processes of youth work.

*The session was really quiet today and all the staff appeared exhausted. Sharon seemed knackered and even somewhat defeated, Joe was hung over and gagging for a fag, and Ross was enjoying his last day – his contract had been terminated.*

*I asked him if he would be popping back in – he said he's not coming back. He explained that he's hoping to get work at another community centre in the City. It's the same one Dan (youth worker) left to go to.*

*I had the feeling the Community Centre was being abandoned – like a sinking ship*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 25ᵗʰ November 2013

There was much critique of the Community Centre from wider groups and service providers who read this disengagement as apathy. Nevertheless, my access to the Community Centre was shaped by these dynamics, the particular financial vulnerability of the Community Centre and it may have been the lack of staff that resulted in an openness to my being there.

Gaining access to the Primary School, on the other hand, took a long time. Despite its physical proximity and connections made through the 'Community Centre' children, the school felt very distant, almost impenetrable. I attempted at first to make contact through the head teacher, sending emails, phoning and even visiting the school. None of this correspondence was answered. Six months into the ethnography it was announced that the head teacher would be leaving the school as part of its re-branding as an academy. It became apparent that my difficulty gaining access had been shaped by circumstances which had placed the school under increased monitoring and many of its staff in a precarious position. However, upon its re-opening I was able to meet with the new head teacher and gain access to the 'new' school with ease.

*My meeting with the Head seems a bit of a blur – I had an hour slot but can't have been with him for more than 10 mins – I signed into the school at 10.25 and out at 10.40!*

*He was very friendly but difficult to read. He had a clear 'can-do' attitude and everything was clear cut – it was like Bish Bash Bosh: you're in, no questions asked.*

*I had been ready to explain in detail the design and purpose of my research. But, as we neared his office he said 'So tell me about your research', we had barely sat down. I explained that my research is an ethnography which is guided by the principle of learning by being there – he jumped in – 'So what do you want to do at the school'?*

*I said ideally I would like to spend time in the class, doing participant observation in the class room and playground setting.*

*He said yes – 'How long do you want to be here for'?*

*This threw me – I had expected him to draw the parameters around what I can do.*

*I must have looked a bit stupid as I wrestled in my mind between grabbing as much as possible and being realistic about what I can do.*

*I said two weeks before and two weeks after Easter break.*

*He said yes – 'Let's sort out CRB's'. We went into the room next door where it was decided my Uni CRB would be fine and that was it.*

*'See it's easy' he said, 'don't worry; it's easy'.*

*It was weird, I was obviously nervous but his proclamation that 'it's easy' didn't put me at ease.*

*He said there's nothing to worry about here, 'See it's calm and quiet'. I agreed, 'Where is everyone?'*

*'They're learning' he said. I felt like I was getting the sales pitch.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 12th March 2014

There appeared to be a re-definition of research within the school, from surveillance and monitoring, to an inherently good thing, and a means to display change. An apparent openness to research was part of the school's new ethos, made visible in the presence of multiple researchers during my time there, the subsequent incorporation of research tools in their monitoring of pupils and the investment in internal observations of classroom teaching by senior members of staff.

There is more to say about the social, historical and material dynamics which shape research access. However, I hope this brief discussion has introduced a conceptualisation of vulnerability as a structural consequence. In the next Section, I complicate the notion of the vulnerable participant through an exploration of the affective labour associated with the maintenance of research relationships.

## Keeping up, keeping in: ethics and the maintenance of research relationships

There were many moments throughout my ethnography where I felt socially conspicuous, clumsy in my interactions and slow in my responses. The visibility I experienced in the Community Centre soon stripped away any notions I had garnered of insider status, it was clear that I was different from my participants (Hey, 2000; Bott, 2010). Nevertheless, I desired their acceptance. The relationship between us was of course more complex than simply finding myself in a position of power due to my researcher status. It was one that required an affective labour on both my part and theirs. These research relationships were formed over time, with the burden of negotiation shifting between myself and the participants as we learnt about one another and censored ourselves accordingly.

The following fieldnote captures one such moment of negotiation. In it, I recount an awkward moment, as I stumble and fail to anticipate the direction of my conversation with Sharon, the manager of the Community Centre. It is a moment of realisation for me, where I am confronted with difference that until this moment had remained hidden. I had been visiting the Community Centre for a few months when this conversation took place. Sharon had spoken to me many times of her conceptualisation of the working class: culture, humour, needs, challenges, hopes and

desires. In these conversations I had never once questioned who she referred to when she spoke of the working class, assuming her to be speaking of herself and of me, of the people of The Estate. Although I did not always agree with what Sharon said, I felt a connection to her words and trusted that perhaps these were things that I simply could not know myself. As such, I experienced this conversation as a jolt. It was not simply that I struggled to maintain the flow of the conversation as was socially acceptable, I felt the connection between us slipping away. My reaction, therefore, was a consequence of this slipping, of an inevitable loss. I did not tell Sharon that I disagreed with her. I simply nodded and smiled as she concluded her story.

> *When I arrived Sharon had just got back from collecting her grandson from school and had sent him off to get changed out of his school clothes, commenting that if he got them dirty his mum would only send them round to hers to get washed.*

> *She was annoyed and angry about something a parent had told her – as she recounted their conversation I shared her outrage and commented accordingly (really?! Oh no!)*

> *She told me that the parents of kids at the Secondary School had that day been given a letter about a school trip that would cost £130 with a deposit of £50 needed the next Monday to secure a place – I agreed this was unrealistic for low income families. She continued that those on free school meals would get a discount – I thought I knew the direction of her argument – that this was not enough or that this discount still ignored financial circumstances of parents. She said free school meal students only pay £30 – I can see how this remains a significant amount of money for a low income family and begun to say this when Sharon continued that this is a massive 'fuck you to the working class'.*

> *It took me a while to understand until I thought about who her working class refers to – the working. My conflation of those working and those on benefits into the working class is not recognised in this situation. Her outrage was that low income working families receive no such discount as the workless – regardless of their similar social/financial/physical position e.g. estate residents.*

> *This was an interesting conversation as I thought I knew where it was going. When Sharon began telling me about the school trip I knew that the cost was going to be an issue, when she told me it was £130 I felt the same outrage as she did and I could comment in a way that was true to how I felt but that I knew was in line with the moral of her story. As she went on to say that the school was subsidising the cost of the trip for those kids whose parents are on benefits, reducing the fee to £30, I felt, at this point, that the story had reached its 'happy ending'. I wasn't 100% sure whether the £30 fee would still be deemed too much by Sharon, as this is still a lot of money for a family on benefits, and was about to comment that it's a good thing the school recognises that not everyone can afford school trips when Sharon said that she was so angry and that it is just another massive fuck you to the working class.*

> *This shift in what I thought the story to be threw me and highlighted the differences in our positions. My understanding of a lower working class position merges those in low paid jobs and those on benefits. Sharon's reaction highlighted for me not only the differences in the moral construction of these as two distinct (for her) groups but also the differences in their material position. I felt this moral distinction personally as a reminder that my experience is not of working class life, it is of life on benefits and that these are different things.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 12th September 2013

At the time of writing this fieldnote I was conflicted by my response to Sharon's story, I was acutely aware of the tenuous nature of the research relationship we had constructed and yet was uncomfortable presenting myself in a way which went against my feelings in that moment. Writing about this now I can see that this perhaps was not a burden specific to being a 'researcher'. The processes by which Sharon and I negotiated the parameters of the conversation are not unique to a research interaction, they are an integral aspect of the social. Furthermore, the fieldnote only depicts my awkward feelings, my reflections and my reading of Sharon's position. It implies some sort of privileged view of the researcher that I just do not think is the case. Although I cannot represent Sharon's feeling of this moment, the longitudinal nature of my ethnography does allow me to trace the shift in tone of Sharon's conversations with me around this subject matter. Sharon shared my sensitivity to our difference and so the affective labour of maintaining our research relationship was not mine alone. Sharon began to soften her tone when benefit claimants were being discussed, often closing discussions with the reflection that of course there are some deserving families.

Thus, the maintenance of research relationships was an act of communal beingness, of being there together and constructing the parameters of meaning. Of course, this is never a neutral process, there are power relations which enable some to define and others to be defined. In this space and at this time, the dominant discourse, and therefore that invested with the power to define, was that of Sharon and her distinction between the working and workless.

## Section 3: Ethnography, a messy method

As demonstrated in the previous Section, when recounting the story of my research a logical narrative seems to emerge: it appears as though it is clear to me why I went to The Estate, why I did this and that, and why I spoke to particular people. This is of course a fiction. Ethnography is an inherently messy methodology and reflections on fieldwork illuminate its unpredictability. Yet in this context the word messy takes on a particular meaning. Ethnography is represented as the type of mess produced by good, clean fun. Mess where there is 'no harm done'; the type of mess recounted in stories such as this one, that we can all laugh about, as connections emerge and serendipity, fortunately, saves the day. Yet, what of the unspoken in this, what of 'messing up', what of 'making a mess of', and the social and affective consequences of this?

I experienced fieldwork as chaotic, uncontrollable and uncontainable; I felt it as a weight, an exhaustion of being ever interested. My research did not follow a trajectory of targeted action producing a clear outcome, it was a continual process of negotiation between what I wanted to do and what I could do. Nevertheless, as I am writing this account at the end of my fieldwork,

inevitably my narrative is anchored to what I felt I could do, there is no means to explore the possibilities of what ifs. However, what I hope to bring to the fore is an acknowledgement of these junctures, to illuminate the moments my decisions shaped the course of the research, and try to be reflexive on the occasions I made a mess of my ethnography.

The narrative of my ethnography is mixed within another version of another research project. To represent ethnography as the starting point is to obscure the ways in which this methodology falls within a broader history of my research experiences. Of course, any point a piece of research begins is difficult to define; is it when you first become interested in a topic, when your research is recognised (your proposal is accepted, or you receive funding), during the design of the research, moments of secondary research (literature reviews and seeking contextual information), and/or in that grand construction of 'entering the field'?

The cyclical nature of academic enquiry is difficult to express within the constraints of a social-scientific research construction. The development of a research proposal founded upon research questions, which we seek to answer through clearly demarcated methods, produces a notion of finite research. Yet, research has a biography, it is lived. I think of this research as resulting from and simultaneously constituting my academic interest in the lived experience of structural inequality. It is in constant development, founded upon what I know, what I have experienced and what I have read, and at the same time, learnt from it. The unexpected of my research draws me into new ways of thinking, understanding and knowing.

Therefore, in an attempt to make visible the shifting temporalities of my research I will draw upon writings of different moments within the research trajectory. In this way, I hope to locate the research within a coherent narrative of what I did, whilst complicating it, opening up a space for multiple representations of the research and the researcher.

## Storying the research

> I have hit a wall. I have fucked up. I am told to contemplate my position reflexively, to consider the meanings of the events that led up to this failure. In that way I may be productive: I have something to say. As a social researcher all I have evidence of is the fact that I have no evidence – that's okay; write about it. Is my failure really data? Can I write about the difficulties of gaining access as evidence for the underlying sensitivity of my topic – how do I distinguish this difficulty as data rather than as a reaction to my attempts at gaining access as inappropriate. If this is true and the problems I face gaining access are a result of my poor negotiation, then all I have evidence for is what not to do. Is this of any worth, and if it is who would find reflections on my failures useful? Perhaps as a confidence boost in order to think, well my research could be worse. It could be Sarah's.

Sarah's research reflections, 8th May 2013

This is not the most comfortable representation of my research. Although located at a particular time and reacting to a specific event, this note epitomises an ongoing methodological discomfort I face: the performance of reflexivity. Constructing the narrative of my research requires a choreographed recital within which I display the recognised techniques of reflexivity. Reflexivity is an academic style, a learnt behaviour, another aspect of the researcher skill base.

The moment this piece of writing refers to was my initial attempt to access two Primary Schools which were to be the key sites of my ethnography. My first contact with the schools did not, as I had anticipated, open up a line of communication where the research could be discussed and negotiated. Rather, my research proposal was kindly declined. I was reassured and advised that this is all part of the research process and that through being reflexive about the situation I may explore the methodological intricacies of gaining access. Yet, what I struggle with in the piece is production through reflexivity. I could comprehend the ways in which enacting reflexivity may develop conceptualisations of an object, but can reflexivity produce the object itself?

My initial engagement with reflexivity was founded in this scepticism informed by the ontological and epistemological assumptions of my thinking at this time. How can you produce knowledge of the world without experiencing it? Can you produce knowledge through the absence of experience? I have yet to find a comfortable answer to my questioning of what it means to produce data through reflexivity. However, my thinking around the value of this has changed, perhaps as I better understand the rules of how to 'do' reflexivity and feel that these acts may be recognised by others as such.

Throughout this Section I present a version of my research methodology through sharing my reflexive notes. I begin by reflecting on my performance of 'being ethnographer', using my account of selecting a notebook to explore some of the assumptions underpinning my research at this time. Reflecting on my first experiences of 'being there', I explore the process of constructing a research identity, finding a place to be on The Estate, and negotiating research relationships. I end this Section with a reflection on the role interviews had in my research design. In this discussion, I highlight some key methodological issues associated with the interviews, in terms of the ontology and epistemology of evidencing through interviews and the everyday enactment of a situated ethics.

## Being ethnographer

The following fieldnote is taken from the first page of my research notebook; it is my first reflection on what it means to be an ethnographer. In order to construct the parameters of this research, I take this as the moment my ethnography began. My struggle in this fieldnote to select and then make sense of my ethnographers' totem, makes visible the process through which I

began to carve out my ethnographer identity and my concern with how this would be perceived by the various groups I required to recognise it.

> *First page pressure, funny how much thought I put into choosing this note book. I would like to say it was picked purely pragmatically. I was obviously restrained by budget so the high end 'label' books were out of my reach – yet there were cheaper options. I considered a neon pink book – rationalised as a more 'friendly' less official looking notebook – less police-esque but I decided against because it was ring bound and writing with my left hand I never can quite use them comfortably.*
>
> *After much consideration I decided upon a cheap copy of the classic moleskin. To be honest, it was a bargain as other own brands were of similar price. But I wonder why I chose something imitating the traveller's log, the classic anthropologists' choice. I think there's a symbolic authority connected with the book. It's tactile, the leather look case is masculine and its apparent age indicated through its almost curling sides and spattered faux leather gives a sense of authenticity to my role. But this is my recognition, an academic fantasy, role play, who will recognise my performance? Am I trying to speak to participants through this manipulation of artefact or to other academics who will recognise its symbolic meaning...*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 7th June 2013

In the fieldnote, I draw upon various cultural references to construct caricatures of public note takers, and by pulling together these disparate representations, I attempt to create social cues which will indicate my authenticity in the role. I am cautious not to recreate personifications of authority, making assumptions about who I will be talking to and how they will relate to these figures of power. At the same time, I am drawn towards the history and authority of an ideal type; the authentic research notebook. The notebook symbolically legitimises my researcher performance. As a prop it supports the identity claims I make through my 'being there'. It acts as a mark of distinction, it is a physical barrier between me and the people I seek to know, an act of distancing which makes visible some of the ontological and epistemological assumptions of my research at this time (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

This conceptualisation of doing research implies that one may remain free of the binds of social interaction, exist on the peripheries of a moment, so as to look in. The act of note taking within the ethnographic encounter assumes of the researcher a social dexterity, that they may 'be there' as both participant and observer (Clifford, 1990). The notebook endows the researcher with the privilege of distance, it symbolises a disconnection, a social disinvestment in the moment; the notebook relieves the researcher of the responsibility of maintaining social interactions. The positioning of the researcher in this passive role is founded upon an ontology of a natural state of the social; that although the social may be constructed in its enactment by social agents, this is something to be observed, there is a continuity and stability to the social unaffected by the distanced researcher. The recording of these moments through descriptive note taking, reveals an epistemological assumption of my research, that we may know the social through capturing it. At

this early stage of my research my fieldnotes were descriptive, a record of what happened. I constructed a binary between my observations and my analysis, taking notes within the ethnographic moment and later exploring them through my 'mastery' of reflexivity. Thus, within this construction of my research, social reality is that which I can observe and represent through my notes, with knowledge of this social reality produced both at this descriptive level and at the level of analysis.

In many ways the note book I selected for my ethnographic fieldnotes epitomised the qualities of the researcher I sought to become. Its black leather cover has a professional feel, it indicates nothing about who I am, beyond my researcher identity. It was this anonymity which drew me to the notebook, as a means to define my role, an aide in my performance of the distanced researcher.

However, as the following fieldnote indicates, my enactment of the distanced researcher was soon challenged. My lack of a role on The Estate produced an anxiety around the legitimacy of my being there:

'Tea in a pot'

*I'm sitting in a far cry from the 'greasy spoons' I expected. Drawn in from my initial walk around The Estate by an unexpected barrier – I needed a wee. I feel so conspicuous, I feel guilty, of what I am not sure – what I feel sure of is that I don't belong here.*

*My fantasies/fears/nightmares appear to have come to life as I walk into the library in search of a toilet to be confronted by two uniforms – police?! I didn't do it – I swear – oh wait, community officers – 3 actually (another joins them). Is it really necessary? 3 PCSO's in a library? Mid-week, mid-day (the most benign experience of my life in sharp contrast to the official law enforcement symbolised in their get up).*

*The urgency of my bathroom needs heightened by my fear – I make my way to the counter – ask for a cup of tea and where I can find the loo. The exchange is completely normal. I passed!*

*Finally relieved, I'm told to take my seat – table service – this is not what I expected. Cosmopolitan café culture – a form of localised globalisation; the city encroaching The Estate?*

*I sit in the far corner hoping I will blend in with the wall, actually making myself more visible.*

*My 'tea for one' is bought over by the young man (18-20?) serving – not the 'cuppa' I expected but a tea cup with saucer, milk jug and teapot.*

*As I sit writing I feel the female PCSO watching me. I wonder which of us feels more insecure – me the strange solitary writer (unemployed – it is mid-week) or her: a PCSO, often facing jibes at their power (lack of) and receiving the same suspicion as the police, caught having a tea break.*

Sarah's Fieldnotes, 22nd May 2013

This fieldnote captures the acute physical discomfort and feelings of exposure I experienced during the ethnography. I felt my lack of role as conspicuousness, finding myself within social

interactions without norms within which to locate my performance. My romantic notions of writing in public spaces on The Estate, so as to be immersed in the sensory of the place, were soon ruptured. It became apparent my behaviour marked me out. The social cues I had drawn upon in the selection of my notebook were not recognised beyond the academy. My investment in a researcher identity, as professional and distanced, was not necessarily valued as a way to be within certain spaces on The Estate.

Thus, I found my researcher identity was more appropriate when mediated through, rather than distanced from, my everyday sense of self. Foregrounding other aspects of my identity, beyond being a researcher, became integral to gaining and maintaining access throughout the ethnography. Beginning to weave my own story into my researcher identity felt liberating, I became less conscious of ensuring my performance as researcher was recognised and felt more able to adapt to the given situation, beyond the limited behaviours of the distanced researcher.

## A visitor on The Estate

As illustrated in the above discussion, my initial visits to The Estate were marked by my lack of comprehension. My experience of being there did not fit neatly with the knowledge I had gathered together through my external gaze onto The Estate. Thus, this time was marked by a confrontation of my assumptions, shaping my fieldnotes into a comparative discourse, between The Estate as I saw it and the fiction I had constructed. Before entering The Estate, I had created a vision of the place and those who lived there, drawing upon secondary data; research, news reports, census statistics, alongside personal narrative; local representations, folklore, experiences with what I considered places like this. My fieldnotes explored this fiction through juxtaposing what I had expected with what I experienced. Often this practice produced an exploration of the mundane of The Estate as I tried to capture the pace and rhythms of everyday life in sharp contrast to popular representations of The Estate.

I felt this exposure of my assumptions as a discomfort, a social clumsiness, as I attempted to make sense of social situations where my understandings of behavioural norms were clearly inadequate. My first visit to The Estate was to a family I met through a friend, the time I spent with them challenged my ideas of what the research was about; the ways in which I had constructed the object of my research. I was faced with the awkward question, posed by my 'gatekeeper' friend: 'Who did you think you were going to talk to?' This was not only a challenge to who I thought 'they' were, but also who I was in relation to them. Locating my research practice within feminist debates I felt prepared for the complexities of the power relations inherent in the research relationship (Stacey, 1996). However, I had not given enough thought to the power of different value systems, in terms of recognition and the legibility of identity claims. There were multiple ways in which the family spoke of my social position as lacking and this inevitably shaped the

relationship formed between us, why they took part in the research and how they engaged with me.

The family was formed of a mother and father. They were both in their mid to late twenties, a similar age to me. They had four children; boys, aged ten and seven, a girl aged two, and a new-born baby boy. They lived in a three-bedroom semi-detached council house, on the corner plot at the entrance of a cul-de-sac off of the main street. Its corner position meant that the house had a large garden which wrapped around the left side. The garden was enclosed by a high brick wall and its perimeter marked by established trees, in blossom at the time of my visit. The family was embedded within kinship connections situated on The Estate, both the mother and father were raised there, their parents still lived on The Estate and some of the father's siblings lived there with their families. The family talked of established friendships on The Estate and were involved in various community activities, particularly the Community Centre.

The mother of the family led much of our conversations, although the father was there and the children came in and out. As such, our discussion was shaped by the relationship between the two of us; as she diligently recounted her every day, it was clear that she was aware of my lifestyle and worked hard to reflect a humble representation of herself. She was careful and considered in her account, bearing the affective load of concern for the impact her telling would have on me. She talked of how lucky they were to have council housing; that their home was stable, in good condition and reasonably priced. She shared stories of friends who, like me, rent privately and how council housing protected her and the family from the worry of rogue landlords, poor living conditions and rent increases. She balanced her account of family life with a thoughtful regard for my own, her valuing of it was explicit and although she showed interest in my 'student' life, she reassured me that there was no rush and that my life would indeed start soon.

Negotiating research relationships was a central tension throughout the ethnography; as suggested in Section 2, I found attempts to 'keep-up' and 'keep-in' with my participants socially exhausting (Hatfield, 1973; Hey, 1997). The practicalities of maintaining connections with people without a role on The Estate was soon apparent. Visiting The Estate gave me a sense of the rhythm of movements around it, from the wave of parents and children during the school run, to the direct routes rushed through by those nipping between the shop and their home. However, I sought narratives within which to locate these disparate observations and to access this I needed a base on The Estate, a way to cultivate ongoing connections. In the following Section, I discuss my introduction to the Community Centre as a place to meet and spend time with the people of The Estate.

## Finding a place to be

I spent the first month of my ethnography mapping out the services and community activities on The Estate. During this exploration phase of the research I maintained a broad interest in everyday life there, working towards accessing formal services and informal community groups. I gathered local knowledge about what happens on The Estate through posters, flyers and word of mouth. I followed up these leads in person, having found more formal or detached attempts of introduction, for example email or letter, at times inappropriate and ultimately unsuccessful.

Beginning my research in June, there was a flurry of community activity, as summer fetes, festivals and end of term celebrations were in their, somewhat frantic, last stages of planning. As such, my presence was interpreted as an extra pair of hands, and in exchange I was able to attend resident community development meetings which were held quarterly on The Estate. This ease of access was welcome after my earlier sense of disconnection stemming from my lack of role. At these community events I was ushered in; they were interested in my research and keen to tell me about the work they did on The Estate, how they came to be here, sharing anecdotes and future plans. However, these people were not residents of The Estate, they were professionals working on The Estate, they were cultivating community, they were not 'the community'. After attending a few meetings, it became apparent that the resident meetings were rarely attended by residents. They were a space of show and tell for local charities and service providers to share their current projects and develop ideas of engagement. Nevertheless, I was interested in the ways in which these meetings carved out a space within The Estate for an alternative representation and so I continued to attend them. The meetings made me aware of the formal community activities on The Estate and attending these began to establish a sense of belonging in terms of a continuity of being there; that through seeing the same people I could develop, in a small way, a level of rapport.

These formal community activities were a rupture of the everyday, they were one aspect of the summertime change of pace on The Estate, yet they were organised events, special occasions. I talked to people I met at these events about what they did on The Estate day-to-day, and the Community Centre was repeatedly referred to as a central place in their everyday lives. I arranged to meet the manager and talked about being there as a place to meet families, as they ran a parent and child after school club two days a week. I soon realised that although the after school club was designed to include parents, in practice the majority of parents dropped their children off and, particularly in these summer months, would wave them off from the bottom of the road. Moreover, my attempts to talk to those parents who did come into the Community Centre were stunted, my intention had been to meet parents through the Community Centre but to spend time with them in other spaces across The Estate. However, our conversations rarely moved beyond a

feeling out of what my research interest was and a conscientious engagement with my questions so as to move on as quickly as possible.

I began to rethink my engagement with the Community Centre, beyond a platform from which to meet parents, rather as a site for my ethnography. This was a key moment in the shaping of the research focus, shifting attention away from families as an object of research to a space, therefore encompassing the complex and dynamic relationships constructed within the space of the Community Centre. Consequently, the research subject was reimagined; from an exclusively adult agent to include children, as located within friendship relations alongside more traditional conceptions of the family and as an active producer of this space as a space of community.

Therefore, I became interested in the Community Centre as a space of identity formation, as a space where claims of sameness and difference simultaneously construct an estate identity which is produced and reproduced through the acts of individual residents in their coming together at the Community Centre. In this way, I conceptualised the Community Centre as a formalisation of estate identity, a reification of what being part of The Estate might mean, a process of objectification, enabling a version of The Estate to be packaged and promoted. That is, the Community Centre as the external face of The Estate, a space within which The Estate residents constructed together a version of their community, located within the internal power dynamics of The Estate but also broader structures of power in the form of an external gaze onto The Estate.

My naming of this space as a Community Centre within the thesis is therefore not value neutral. Although some refer to the space as a Community Centre, this is mainly professionals visiting The Estate, it is most commonly referred to using the name of the youth club that is run there. Partly this naming was to mirror the anonymisation of The Estate itself, both as a protection for participants in addition to locating it within broader discourses around estates in general. As such, the notion of an estate Community Centre is entangled with social and political ideologies around the needs of a people. From New Labour's ideas around 'Social Exclusion', the Coalition's 'Big Society' to the current Conservative manifestation of responsibilisation, the Community Centre is symbolic of estate solutions for estate problems. The valuing of a community run centre is founded in the authenticity of The Estate subject, an assumption that there is an inherent quality to being there that connects estate residents with an intense affinity. This is an idea invested in different storyings of The Estate and therefore is not simply a top-down discourse. I am interested in the processes through which this common sense notion of community is produced and reproduced. What are the assumptions underpinning the Community Centre: its purpose, its responsibilities, and its authenticity?

It is this questioning which marked the shift of my research methodology from predominantly qualitative interviews to ethnography. This involved the redefinition of the object of research

from individual reflections on the everyday, to the everyday practices enacted within the space of the Community Centre. Nevertheless, interviews remained a key method within this new conceptualisation of my methodology. In the next Section, I explore the ways in which these two methods were interconnected by an overarching feminist methodological commitment.

## In search of data: evidencing through interviewing

My initial research design was founded upon the interview as the source of my data. In many ways, my coming to ethnography was as a means to cultivate what I considered to be a perfected egalitarian interview style (Becker, and Geer, 1970a; 1970b; Atkinson and Coffey, 2002). In other words, the initial ethnographic turn in my work was informed by my concerns that the interview experience should be premised on feminist research methodologies (Oakley, 1988). My 'putting off' the interviews until the final stages of my ethnography was in the hope that I could achieve an interview which may, in some way, disrupt the inherent power dynamic between the researcher and the researched (Campbell et al, 2010). I did not think that the time I had spent with my participants would eradicate power dynamics within the interview, as I said, there is an inherent power in the asking of, recording from and objectifying through analysis of participants lives, which cannot be removed (Lyons and Chipperfield, 2000). However, I imagined that the demands made within the interview, in terms of sharing experiences and thoughts, would be lessened given the more reciprocal conversations we shared in throughout the ethnography (Davies, 2008).

I was cautious of the possibility of my interviews being limited by my own experiential and disciplinary landscape. If I was the one formulating the questions could I learn anything I did not already know? And so, my interview design developed out of a desire for the interview to provide a space within which the participant could explore the themes they felt were of importance (Heyl, 2001). As I had planned to interview three different groups, I tried to develop interview styles that I felt would best allow the participant to access what I imagined to be a space of possibilities within the interview. For adults, I felt this was something I could achieve through conducting an unstructured interview in an informal setting. I reasoned that through cultivating a relaxed interview style, this interaction could mirror the informal conversations we had together (Reinharz, and Davidman, 1992). However, for child participants I experimented with a few different techniques, taking into account their age and the feel of the interview situation (Christensen and James, 2008). For older, Secondary School aged participants I asked if they would use a disposable camera I gave them to take photographs of what was important to them in their lives so we could look through these together and talk about their day-to-day. In this way, they had time prior to the interview to think about what they wanted to talk about, shaping the interview focus. This reflexive process became an interesting point of discussion in the interview, as they talked about why they selected particular objects, people, and places to photograph

alongside the role they play in their everyday lives. For the younger group of children I interviewed, of Primary School age, I utilised a third object to enable them to explore their ideas. I decided to limit these interviews to the discussion around two themes, the school and the Community Centre, as these children were so young I felt they may be less able to consider what they share in the interview and so directing them towards the two themes would give the interview some focus (Scott et al, 2000). These themes were explored through either drawing or model making with playdough; associated objects were discussed, comparisons made and feelings reflected upon.

Altogether, two members of staff at the Community Centre, and three Primary School aged children were interviewed, eight Secondary School aged young people took photographs, with three of these taking part in an interview. After conducting these few interviews I decided that I would not pursue any more for a variety of reasons, practical and methodological. The different groups I interviewed presented different challenges and discomforts, I draw upon an example of each below in order to explore both practical and methodological challenges.

## Primary aged children: consenting to share

In terms of practicality, the interviews were difficult to conduct within the Community Centre. There are very few private spaces. During the youth clubs, when interviews with the young people were conducted, the Community Centre is very noisy and lively. The interviews were necessarily flexible, having to be moved and negotiated with the other young people at the Community Centre. Nevertheless, the singling out of individual children to take part created tension within friendship groups, at times making the interview distressing or simply annoying for child participants. I found it difficult to explain to the children why it was necessary to have written permission from their parents to take part in the interview. For them, the interview resembled many of the youth club activities I would help with; which is perhaps a flaw in my research design. I sought out an interview method for the Primary School aged children which would distinguish the interview from other forms of adult one-to-one interactions they may have, particularly, interview style interactions with teachers and social workers. I thought that if they could draw upon alternative interactions they have with adults, more in line with play, this would ease the burden of the one-to-one interview.

My limiting of the Primary School children's interviews to the themes of the school and the Community Centre was to some extent unsuccessful. The interview was utilised by all three primary aged participants to share their experiences, thoughts and feeling beyond the selected themes. Furthermore, the 'safe' subjects of the school and Community Centre often bought up 'troubling' issues:

*Sarah: and how about the lunch hall how do you feel in the lunch hall?*

*Helen: if he's sitting near me I feel really like not angry but scared because if I'm sitting next to him I feel like he's going to do something rude to me like what he did when he like when he does stuff when he did stuff to me really rude it was really bad because and like he was I was really*

*(Interrupted by fight)*

*Helen: (shouting) can you all go away because I'm recording! Shh we're recording! And like I was really scared of him because every time I sat next to him or was near him really badly I was really scared because I thought he would do something really rude to me, if I said what he did it would be really rude*

*Sarah: I know what he did, what did you do when he did that, did you tell a teacher?*

*Helen: yeah I got really like surprised and scared so I like ran to Jayne (TA) and told her once I told her he was all like zipped up and that and he acted like nothing was happened and stuff but it was really serious if it gets really bad the police might get involved and the social services that's how bad it is*

*Sarah: shall we talk a little bit about your different lessons...*

Interview with Helen, primary aged female

I continue to be concerned about the interviews I conducted with these children and my decision to not do anymore. I have yet to reconcile my feelings about this. On the one hand, I felt that the children were unable to shape the interview and make an informed decision about what they shared (Alderson and Morrow, 2011). On the other hand, I question the underlying assumptions of this claim. In many ways the children did shape the interviews, they utilised the themes of the Community Centre and the school to discuss issues that were of importance to them. Did the children need protecting from the inherent authority of the interview situation which may have influenced their telling, or was it that I needed protecting from the affective burden of what they shared with me?

I based my decision not to interview any more children on the feel of the three interviews I conducted. They were not comfortable experiences. They created tension between me and other children who felt they were being left out and between the children who did have an interview and their friends. However, reflecting on the interview transcripts now, I feel conflicted about my silencing of these children's stories (Grover, 2004). Within the field of the sociology of childhood, there are many who argue that children should be facilitated to participate in research (Alderson, 1995; Christensen and James, 2000). However, these stories were not shared with me based on some research rapport cultivated between me and the children, rather these were rehearsed stories told to me in my authority as adult.

Despite spending a year and a half with these children, carving out what I considered to be a distinct researcher identity, the formality of the interview shifted the dynamic to the architype of

child and concerned adult. In my imagining of what it means to engage a child, I created an interview space that so closely resembled the soft touch formality of social work interventions, it appears almost a parody. The children were suspicious of the activity, focussing their attention on the Dictaphone, they directly challenged the purpose of the interview. They were resistant to explore their experiences, cautious of any further questioning, with Jack shouting 'I just told you! I don't know what else'. Thus, there was a retreat into the well versed telling of critical moments in their lives, stories that they knew I, as a concerned adult, would want to hear.

The following interview extract is one example of the methodological complexity of interviewing children. The power dynamics are unclear, I am still unsure whether it represents a reproduction of structural relations between adult and child, with Jack telling me that which as an adult I should know, or whether there is agency in his carving out of space within the interview to share his concerns:

> *Jack: …Do you know Sophie?*
>
> *Sarah: Yeah*
>
> *Jack: Not this Sophie, at my school*
>
> *Sarah: No I don't know her*
>
> *Jack: She came to visit my home*
>
> *Sarah: Oh did she? Is she a teacher or a student?*
>
> *Jack: No, she's a visitor. That came to the school*
>
> *Sarah: …and she came to your house as well?*
>
> *Jack: Yup to talk about me and my mum, I don't know what about because I didn't hear*
>
> *Sarah: Oh okay*
>
> *Jack: It was about my mum and me. And today someone's looking at the house. Looking like seeing if it's tidy or not, we've already tidied up the house so if anyone makes noise she won't be happy, we will be happy if it's…do you know what I'm making?*
>
> Interview with Jack, Primary aged Male

Jack was the first Primary aged child I interviewed and the experience of this informed the ways in which I conducted the following interviews. As suggested, one of the key challenges I faced was finding a private and quiet space within the Community Centre. For Jack's interview I decided to use the office. Although not fully protected from the noise and interruptions of outside, due to a large window hatch which gets continually knocked on, the office provided a degree of separation from the other children as they are not allowed to come in. However, upon entering the office Jack's apprehension was palpable, it became apparent that this was not a neutral space. I am not sure how successful my attempts to reassure him were, I tried to set the parameters of the interview, explaining why I had asked him, what we were going to do and what that would

mean for him. Yet, this was something he returned to again and again, questioning why are we in the office, why is he the only child doing it, why am I recording, are we still doing it? Jack was trying to make sense of this interview space. It felt as though he was attempting to reconcile his positive feelings about doing an activity, having one-on-one time and doing something other children were not, with more troubled feelings of what an interview is, what it means to be asked questions and why he would be in the office. Jack would flit between the excitement and confidence of being asked to take part, firmly telling other children that 'No one else is allowed to do this', and a more cautious questioning of 'Why is it just me that's allowed?'

For Jack the interview was a space for him to talk about his life. Specifically, he directed the conversation towards two of his key concerns; firstly, his concern that his friend has moved school and secondly, as illustrated in the extract, his worry around home visits. Upon reflection I feel that I had not prepared myself for this overt utilisation of the interview space by the primary aged children. My rationale for the unstructured interview was founded upon an ethical position I had formed based on interviews with adult participants. In this formation, the unstructured interview would provide a space within which adult participants could reflect upon and share their own critical sense making of their lives. My interview technique was developed around an ethical claim to facilitate rather than shape the interview focus and value participants' own understandings of their lives and their positioning in relation to others (Birch and Miller, 2002). However, during the interview with Jack I became concerned about the extent to which he could, as a young child, manage the social pressures inherent in the interview. It was not that Jack could not critically reflect or share his own sense making of his life, rather I question whether he had the ability to make decisions about what he wanted to share and what he wanted to keep to himself and whether he had enough power within this exchange to negotiate the parameters of the interview (Ribbens, 1989).

Jack made sense of the interview situation by drawing upon his experiences, it was by forming parallels between the interview and other one-to-one contact he has with adults that Jack constructed the interview space as one for sharing worries and concerns. Through separating Jack from the day-to-day of the Community Centre and asking him direct questions, the interview resembled the forms of contact Jack has with other adults in positions of authority. Thus, despite the relationship we had built over time at the Community Centre, aspects of the interview symbolised a move away from our play to the serious work of the interview (Christensen, 2004). In this sense there was an overt power dynamic between Jack as a child and me as an adult, an authority that was not diminished by my friendly interactions with Jack.

Yet, I still question what was happening within this interaction: does Jack have no power within this exchange; does the interview form inherently lead to exploitation; is it possible to attribute agency to Jack?

## Secondary aged young people: the burden/boredom of research

This next extract is taken from an interview with Dizzi a Secondary School aged female. It vividly captures the frustration of the young people I interviewed. In some ways I regret conducting interviews with this Secondary School age group. They were the most difficult group to gain any meaningful access to. They were completely disinterested in me for a long time, making conversations about the research difficult to initiate. Over the period of a year, I developed some positive research relationships; I would be actively included in the day-to-day goings on of some friendship groups, whilst others simply tolerated my presence (a success in itself).

The youth club was often host to professional placements: teachers, social workers, and police would spend time at the Community Centre as an aspect of their training. The transitory nature of these placements resulted in these individuals often remaining on the peripheries of social interactions. However, it was other researchers who were held in contempt by many of the young people. The Community Centre's position within local and national media and policy discourses as a place of 'disadvantage' meant it was always a place of interest for researchers. The young people were often frustrated by the expectations of these researchers, making clear that they came to the Community Centre to relax not to take part in research.

> Dizzi: okay can I go now?
>
> Sarah: well we haven't spoken about them [photos] yet, um let's talk about these ones
>
> Dizzi: um I like that one [referring to a particular photo] because of the trees and you can see a good view
>
> Sarah: yeah I like that one, do you use like much of the green space like the green?
>
> Dizzi: no, I want to go I'm bored

<div align="right">Interview with Dizzi, Secondary School aged female</div>

It is clear from Dizzi's transcript that she did not want to be interviewed. Of course it was boring. All her friends were doing what they wanted to do and yet she had been asked to act in a certain way, to come away from her day-to-day and perform a particular form of reflexive work.

I designed the interviews with the different groups of participants in mind, aiming to develop a method which I imagined would facilitate participation. However, these were all premised upon a traditional formation of the interview as removed from everyday life. In the final example, I discuss the ways the formality of the interview space produced a limited account of self, defined through the participants imagining of my research interest.

## Being youth worker: identity claims within the interview

As is apparent in each of these interview transcripts, my interviews did not meet my expectations. I had constructed the interview as the ideal form of qualitative data, encompassing my valuing of the sense making of everyday life and privileging the voice of my participants. However, I was unable to achieve the in-depth unstructured interviews I had hoped for.

This extract is from the beginning of an interview with Sharon. Having known her for over a year and a half, I imagined that the interview would take on a conversational tone, giving her the space and the time to explore what she thought about her life. Yet, it is clear that she had tightly bounded the interview to a description of the history of the Community Centre.

> *Sarah: If you could start by just saying a little bit about you, like how long have you lived on The Estate?*
>
> *Sharon: okay right I was born on The Estate but moved away through my childhood and spent my childhood on another estate, both sets of, my parents and both sets of my grandparents were born on The Estate so it's a lot of my family live here and around here um I came back after I'd had my children and um do you want me to go on about that?*
>
> *Sarah: yes, please...*
>
> *Sharon: so I came back after I had my children, at the time I had four children and um my son he, his best friend got murdered on The Estate. When he got murdered we used to arrange, all the boys needed to be together, they didn't want to leave each other, they felt they needed to be together because they feared it would happen again*
>
> *Sarah: that group of friends?*
>
> *Sharon: that's right so at the time there was, in the end there was about thirty to forty group of these kids so we tried to get an old disused Portakabin just to get them off the streets two or three nights a week...*

Interview with Sharon, female youth worker

Throughout the interview, Sharon focussed solely on her role as youth worker. She shifted back to her recollections of the Community Centre even in response to direct questions about other aspects of her life. Rather than building upon the many conversations we had had, the interview felt like a well-rehearsed telling of the Community Centre, a media ready representation (Nunkoosing, 2005). For Sharon, the interview served a practical function to provide me with a coherent account of the Community Centre. She was telling the story. Though I understood the interview as a space for Sharon to reflect on her everyday life, she challenged this in her defining of the interview as a means to inform me of the 'facts'.

This resistance to the interview has made me rethink the assumptions underpinning my privileging of the interview space, as an opportunity for reflection beyond the everyday, and the interview transcript, as 'data' that may speak for itself. During the course of the ethnography Sharon had talked to me about her life, shared her feelings, opinions and experiences. The ethnographic

method, through its focus on the everyday, enables these discussions to be recognised and valorised as a reflexive practice. Sharon's resistance to my construction of the interview space highlights the ways in which the individualised practice of reflection demanded within the interview is not a neutral practice, it is a cultural form and has therefore attached different meanings in different contexts. The interview transcript is a social construction necessitating analysis at two levels; at the level of what is being said and at the level of the social, historical and material power dynamics which produce and reproduce what is being said. In this way, I engage with the interview transcripts in the same way as I do my own fieldnotes: in the case of the interview this is in the form of resisting the positioning of this data as participant 'voice' through my location of these discussions within a broader ethnographic account of the everyday.

## Analytic transformation: abduction and the reformation of inductive/deductive cycle

As introduced within the discussion of the previous Chapter, my analysis employs a critical bifocality (Weis and Fine, 2012) that explores the potentialities of agency whilst contextualising the individual actor within the material and structural conditions of social position (see Chapter 3, Section 2: An ethics of representation). As an analytic sensibility, critical bifocality is a practice that threads through the entire research process. In this way, I think it is appropriate to speak of moments of analysis as formative of the research project: the ethnographic encounter, the writing of fieldnotes, and the textual representation of the ethnography. Within this conceptualisation, the ethnographic encounter is understood as the site of everyday analysis, suggesting that meaning is co-constructed through performances of communal beingness. Processes of objectification form another moment of analysis, in the writing of fieldnotes, their re-stylisation and the connections and disconnections within the research narrative I construct. And, there is a time and space of analysis where data becomes artefact to be re-presented, re-animated and re-told through the act of writing. This approach to analysis enables me to work within the tension of deductive and inductive reasoning, re-imagining knowing as a cyclical process. Thinking of analysis as a formative process, I understand knowledge production to be iterative; where the research object is constructed and reconstructed through the dynamic between theory and observation (Cerwonka, and Malkki, 2008).

Of course, as a cycle, this approach to analysis is inherently reproductive. As outlined in this Chapter's opening discussion, knowledge is inseparable from the structures within which it is produced. As such, this cycle of deductive/inductive reasoning is located within dominant discourses which produce and reproduce a 'distribution of the sensible' (Rancière, 2004). However, as demonstrated in my 'play' with lyrical sociology, analytical creativity has transformative potential. Thinking with post-structuralism ruptures the deductive/inductive cycle. It 'defamiliarises, complicates, obstructs, perverts, proliferates' (MacLure, 2010: 278). Therefore, as illustrated below, abductive inference fragments the flat cycle of knowledge production, through a commitment to explore data that sits uneasily within the analytic frame (Meyer and Lunnay, 2012; Timmermans and Tavory, 2012).
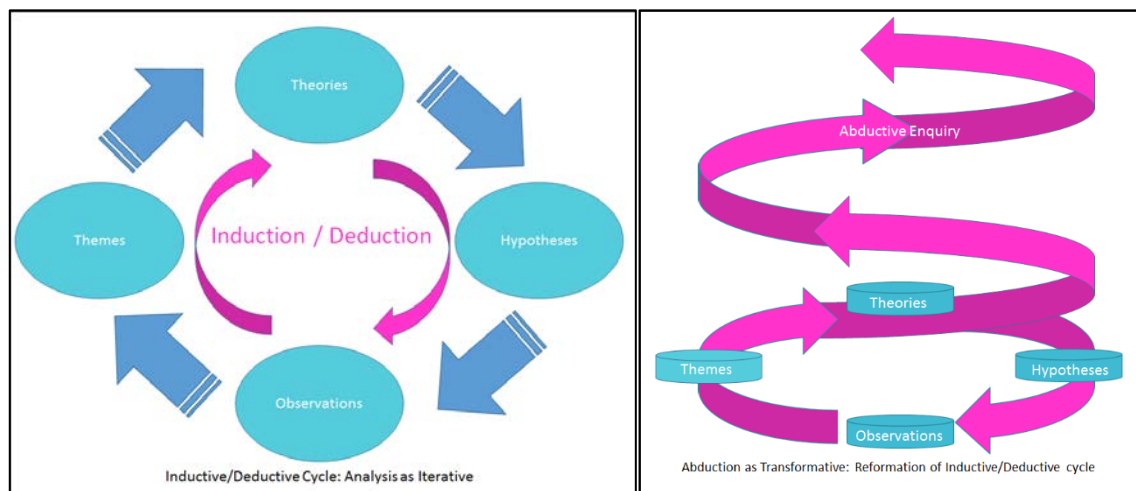


These images represent the way that I bring together inductive, deductive and abductive thinking as tools of analysis. They are different angles of the same image. The first is a cross Section, detailing a more 'flat' process of analysis produced within a cycle of inductive/deductive thinking. The second image captures moments of abductive thinking, which rupture this 'flat' cycle, transforming the direction of analysis. This movement, in turn, produces another cycle of inductive/deductive analysis. Thus, each cycle of analysis is reformed as data pushes against the limits of an established theoretical frame.

Such abductive analysis is integral to the re-animation and representation of my research in the following Chapters (specifically, the analytic Chapters: Chapter 5; Chapter 6; Chapter 7), as I explore the 'snags which have caught the threads of my researcher gaze, demanding some deconstructive tussle in textual form' (Webb, 2014: 92). In this way, the spiralling image articulates an 'awkwardness' in my analysis which through a process of questioning may produce 'glimpses, insights, small chances for action' (MacLure, 2010: 278).

# Conclusion

In this Chapter I have mapped out the core methodological themes within my research. An interest in the ethical question of representation threads itself through the Chapter; informing my engagement with capturing data, my discussion of access and the formation of a situated ethic, as well as my storying of the research method through the sharing of reflexive notes.

My aim has been to provide a coherent account of the research, upon which to build my analytical Chapters, whilst opening up methodological questions which have not only shaped and reshaped my research design, but continually inform my engagement with the data.

As such, the methodological discussion initiated in this Chapter not only informs the following analysis Chapters, but is taken up within them. The theme of representation continues within the Chapters that succeed as I explore the discursive construction of The Estate, bringing to the fore ethical questions around the production of knowledge of 'these' people and 'this' place in a moment in time.

# Chapter 5: Being place(d) - Identity formation and structural positioning

## Introduction

This Chapter is located within a 'spatial turn' in social class analysis. It builds upon work within the disciplines of Sociology and Social Geography which connect processes of identity formation to processes of place making. As outlined in my literature review, I understand class to be constituted as an object of belief through repetitive representations of both people and place. I therefore consider the new imagined geographies of class in both academic and popular accounts to both set parameters on what may be known of class and to feed into the production and reproduction of classed positions.

Using the conceptual tools developed in the work of Said (1978), Massey (2005), Raisborough and Adams (2008) and Rogaly and Taylor (2009), of place as process, this Chapter focusses on the tensions between structure and agency implicit in these theorisations. I question what the processes are through which individuals actively produce their place and what the affective consequences might be of the social and material limitations of this agency read in this way.

I begin, in Section 1, by outlining a conceptualisation of the entanglement of structure and agency in place making: being place(d). Through an analysis of contradictions inherent in a structurally located agency, I argue conflicting commentaries are produced as a means to reconcile place(d) identity. I explore the ways in which individual narratives thread into dominant discourses of The Estate, which in turn produce and reproduce discursive resources that may be drawn on in order to speak of The Estate more collectively.

In Section 2 of this Chapter, I continue my analysis of dominant discourses of The Estate, to explore the processes through which The Estate is discursively constructed. Exploring the example of the construction of The Estate as a place of fear, I argue shifts in the landscapes and soundscapes of it produce moments where The Estate becomes reified as a place of risk. I begin to unpack some of the consequences of place(d) identity formation. I consider the affective in the paradox of belonging to a devalued place and explore the conflation of people and place, questioning how signifiers of place are attached to and read off bodies.

## Section 1: Structure and agency in place making

In this Section I relocate a tension of structure and agency from the abstract to the everyday, as a felt consequence of being in the world. Within my analysis, I focus on the moments of negotiation between the individual and the material. I explore the ways in which individuals shape place: the

markers they may deploy in order to carve out distinction, the histories they create and recreate in their tellings of place and their influence and power to become the manifestation of place. Alongside this, I consider the ways in which place acts upon the individual, the processes by which place shapes identities and bodies. I bring together the material and discursive, arguing the experiential of being on The Estate may be mediated and transformed through the discursive. Thus, when I speak of place forming the individual, this encompasses both their material conditions of being in the world and the social values attached to this.

This interest in the tension between structure and agency in processes of place making leads me to the development of the concept of 'being place(d)' as a theoretical tool through which to think of these moments in-between. Inspired by the connections made between landscape and identity (Rooke and Gidley, 2010) I have developed 'being place(d)' as a way to speak of how this connection is socially produced. Drawing upon Massey's conceptualisation of space as a process which is 'open, porous and the product of other places' (Massey, 1995: 59), I argue identity formation through processes of 'being place(d)' on The Estate is not a simple process of socialisation where one learns to be through being of a particular place, rather it is the positioning in place through being in moments of difference.

I conceptualise identity formation and place making as an intertwined process: the process of 'being place(d)'. I hope that the term being place(d) captures the processes by which space and place shape the self, the ways in which one becomes the place: that is being place as a formation of subjectivities. At the same time, I acknowledge this as a structural consequence, that one is placed within relations of power; being place(d) is active, it is the continual positioning of the self in relation to an other. Though the concept is an attempt to move beyond, or perhaps more appropriately, in-between structure and agency, I think it is important for me to outline the ways in which being place(d) encapsulates both structure and agency in place identity formation.

The concept can be thought quite crudely as the bringing together of structure and agency, as an attempt to think through the making of selves and the production of space as inextricably connected. Thus, the concept enables the thinking of structure and agency concurrently. It is a 'bifocal' (Weis and Fine, 2012) tool of analysis, drawing attention to the ways in which individuals are actively engaged with the formation of place and self, whilst contextualising this agency within the material and structural. For the purposes of clarity, I will discuss processes of being place(d) through two distinct analyses: 'being *place*' and 'being *placed*'. These two ways of reading data provide different lenses through which to see and imagine meaning, though I will discuss them separately, my hope is that they may be thought together, so as to provide a way to both focus in and focus out, throughout my analysis.

The analytical lens of 'being *place*' may be thought of as the agentic aspect of being place(d); an account of the processes through which the individual becomes connected with representations of place. 'Being *place*' draws analytical attention to the ways in which individuals actively negotiate their social position, through the weaving together of narratives to which they have access. At this point, it is necessary to locate this reading within the parallel analysis of 'being *placed*', as access to narratives is inherently structural. I understand structural position as the social and material consequences of systematic inequalities. In this way, 'being *placed*', as the structural element of the concept, focusses analysis on the social positions shaping access to discourses and the material positions shaping access to resources. When thinking structure and agency together through the concept of 'being place(d)', both must be considered as process. An account of 'being place(d)' is not simply the reading of agency within structural constraint, though of course this is one aspect, it is also an analysis of the making of the material. By this I mean, the structural is mediated through the agentic, it is made and re-made through the actions and inactions of individuals.

As indicated at the start of this discussion, my analytic interest lies in the methods through which the tensions between structure and agency are negotiated by the individual. Therefore, being place(d) produces particular accounts of the self and conflicting commentaries emerge as the individual threads personal narratives into broader representations of The Estate. It is these conflicting commentaries that I shall now explore through analysis of the making and marking of boundaries: the boundary between The Estate and beyond; the boundary between the urban and the rural; the boundary between myself and The Estate; and finally the boundary between the past and present of Estate Primary.

Conflicting commentaries



Photograph taken by Bob, Secondary School aged male

The above photograph was taken by Bob from his bedroom window. Photographs were taken by the young people before their interview as a way for them to frame the conversation. They were all asked to take photos of their everyday life and what was important to them. My conversation with Bob centred on his housing on The Estate. At the time of the interview Bob was living with his Mum in a flat towards the bottom edge of The Estate, but they were soon to move home into a bungalow located further into The Estate. His reflections focussed on the complexity of this move, which although for him meant a material advancement, had connotations of a social disadvantage.

Bob talked about the material difference between the flat he was in and the bungalow where he would move to; that he would no longer have to share an entrance and that he would have a garden. However, the material advantages of moving to the bungalow were mediated through a social value system which drew lines of distinction between the borders of The Estate where his flat is located and the centre of The Estate where the bungalow is situated. Bob's relative valuing of the flat on the peripheries of The Estate, is formed at the intersection of the social and geographical. Geographically, the flat is less dislocated from local amenities than the majority of The Estate. It sits on the edges of The Estate, part of a purpose built, low rise block that is surrounded by a diversity of owner occupied and privately rented housing. The bungalow, on the other hand, is positioned within The Estate, which although is serviced by two small convenience

stores, is relatively distanced from other amenities (see Chapter 2, Section 2 for further discussion of estate services). Thus, the physical location of the flat may be preferable to the bungalow, however, implicit within the account is an indication of the social values attached to the geographical by Bob.

Bob had invested in the construction of a distinct boundary identity. When I asked him about living on The Estate he said 'well I live at the bottom, not on The Estate really'. Bob's place is a boundary; as the photograph shows, the view from his bedroom window is other, a sprawling expanse of owner occupied houses reaching out towards Town. It is in this moment of difference that his place is made visible. He distinguishes himself from The Estate, yet in the extract below, he struggles for recognition. Despite his assertion that he lives in East Town, he is aware that 'they still count it as The Estate'.

> *Sarah: Where you moving to?*
>
> *Bob: up the road*
>
> *Sarah: up towards The Estate?*
>
> *Bob: in The Estate, in one of the houses in the bungalow things*
>
> *Sarah: oh okay. So at the moment would you say this isn't The Estate?*
>
> *Bob: no that's East Town that's not The Estate now but they still count it as The Estate but it is East Town*
>
> *Sarah: okay so what do you think the differences are?*
>
> *Bob: different address*
>
> *Sarah: any other differences?*
>
> *Bob: more tidy*
>
> *Sarah: more tidy than in The Estate?*
>
> *Bob: yeah*
>
> *Sarah: and what about the people?*
>
> *Bob: same coz it's so close to The Estate, they're exactly the same*
>
> *Sarah: and what's that like?*
>
> *Bob: well sometimes you can get proper like sossy (meaning to talk back) people, like the people who live below me, well the people who used to they always caused arguments every Friday night so there's the police at the doors all Friday night, so that was noisy, that was noisy...*

<div align="right">Interview with Bob, Secondary School aged male</div>

It is easy to imagine Bob's life on the boundaries, that he lives on the edges of The Estate and thus despite being 'not on The Estate really', remains on the outskirts of respectability. Yet if we are to take seriously assertions of place as process, this image is far too static. What are the processes through which Bob is being place(d)?

Bob forms his place identity through his associations (social, material, cultural) with The Estate and his simultaneous claims of distinction. It is this active positioning of his self as at once with them, but not quite, which forms his place as boundary. Bob participates in The Estate through his engagement with the Community Centre, his sense of self is informed by the imagined history of The Estate and located in the sense of emdeddedness that comes from being part of the Community Centre. His claims of difference draw upon the material of his place, his spatial positioning on the periphery, as a marker of distinction; his place is 'more tidy' than The Estate. Though he may enter The Estate, even be part of it, this material difference is utilised by Bob as a marker of distinction. Yet he is cautious of any grand claims, he acknowledges that as The Estate is 'so close' the people of his place are 'exactly the same'. The caricature he paints of his noisy neighbour becomes entwined with his marginal Estate identity, as another example of Estate 'dangers' that leak and infect those beyond The Estate's material parameters.

Bob forms this boundary place identity around the claim that *his* place is East Town not The Estate. However, I argue this forms just one part of being place(d), the recognition of *place* identity is shaped by *placed* identity. This leads us to question, what are the power relations that shape Bob's identity formation? Do Bob's claims of distinction matter?

Bob's superior position of being placed on the edge of The Estate is not recognised by others: 'they still count it as The Estate but it is East Town'. The 'they' that Bob refers to is unclear, yet he shows a reflexive awareness that his claims of being beyond The Estate are unheard by others. Thus, Bob's position of striving for a superior 'location' is a perpetual symbolic struggle; it is a process of articulating and re-articulating difference. His boundary place identity is remade in his placed identity; that is his placing within systems of power. Bob's status as council housed feeds into this positioning. Thus, despite Bob's carving out of claims of distinction within The Estate an underlying placed identity locates him firmly within The Estate.

This notion of being placed on The Estate as the result of being housed, of being allocated social housing, has further consequences for the potential recognition of Bob's markings of distinction. When read through the neoliberal optic which values choice as an expression of the self, being housed distances the individual from contemporary formations of selfhood and active citizenship. This is an idea which I will return to in Section 3 of this Chapter in my analysis of the paradox of belonging on The Estate.

## The Estate as liminal space

> *The close proximity of the hills coupled with the over grown paving slabs gives the impression that The Estate is deserted – it has gone back to the wild.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 10th May 2013

The analysis of Bob's place(d) identity begins to explore the connections between the material and the social; that they are co-constitutive. Though Bob is materially located, in the sense of being positioned within a particular material milieu, this is attached a particular social meaning. The social meaning of Bob's place forms how it is made sense of by others, which in turn shapes his experience of being in his place. In the following discussion, I want to further develop the interconnection of the material and the social through analysis of an incomprehensibility of The Estate. I argue that aspects of the materiality of The Estate are experienced as jarring by visitors due the lack of fit between physical manifestations and dominant social representations of The Estate. These moments of incomprehensibility make visible the processes through which material conditions are connected to social meanings. The material is mediated through the social valuing of space. Therefore, alternative narratives are formed in order to make sensible the material of a place, which when associated with a different place, time and people would take on different social meanings.



Photograph taken by Lizzie, Secondary School aged female

The situation of The Estate on the eastern outskirts of Town physically dislocates The Estate (see Chapter 2, Section 1: Histories and geographies of The Estate), yet even in moments of physical proximity, there is a social distance between The Estate and outside others. One articulation of this social distance is in the reading of space and the values attached to it. The Estate is green, there are trees, playing fields and the rural landscape wraps around The Estate. In isolation this greenery is valued; when read through the bourgeois optic it symbolises purity, health, clean

living. However, its attachment to The Estate is jarring; there is a disconnection between the imagined purity of nature and the imagined filth of Estate houses and Estate people. Thus, The Estate makes no sense to those looking in, why do they not cherish this green and pleasant land?

This disconnection, between the imagined estate and The Estate as experienced during 'visits', was one of the most common conversations I had with the various professionals I met who worked on The Estate or spent time with there as part of their training. More than this, however, this process of show and tell was actively invested in by estate residents. Perceived judgments from outside others were often discussed and The Estate's isolation was conceived of as the root of misunderstandings: if only they would come and see for themselves the true nature of The Estate. I agree that The Estate's physical disconnection from the city enables ideas of The Estate to go unchallenged and uncomplicated. However, I do not think 'seeing for themselves' is as straightforward as it initially seems. It is not that there is a material truth of The Estate, that once one experiences The Estate they inherently know it. Rather, interaction with the material of The Estate is always mediated through the social; that is a positioning within power dynamics, value systems and multiple trajectories. Thus, in many ways the showing of The Estate to outside others leaves me with the feeling that much has been 'lost in translation'.

A BBC news report as part of the 'Politics Show' reported in 2010 that The Estate is one of the most deprived areas of the country; in the bottom 5%. The story led with the observation that The Estate 'is not at all cramped, with nice green spaces surrounding it. So what is going wrong?' (Drew, 2010). For me, this report highlights the incoherence of The Estate. The reporter cannot comprehend how this 'nice green' space is The Estate.

The Estate contaminates this green space, it is 'matter out of place' (Douglas, 1966); the entanglement of the green space within The Estate de-values the rural. The Estate becomes a space in-between, defined by these leaky boundaries between the beautifully unruly rural and the ugly unruly urban; a liminal space and therefore a 'dangerous' space. The Estate is unmaintained space where the rural and urban collide; over grown paving slabs, messy gardens and fly tipped fields all feed in to imaginings of the dirt of The Estate.

## Reconciling place(d) identity

As illustrated in the previous analysis, the reproduction of dominant discourses of The Estate runs alongside but is not equivalent to the material and experiential of being on The Estate. In this way dominant discourses are resilient to the material contradictions of The Estate. As such, these dominant discourses which systematically de-value The Estate produce a position of discomfort for those who must reconcile these powerful representations and their own experiential being in the world. The following fieldnote captures my own felt discomfort of negotiating an account of my being on The Estate with the notion of The Estate as a place of anti-social behaviour:

*There are many ways in which I feel at home here. Although I am not sure that word quite captures what I'm saying. 'Home' has connotations of comfort, belonging, some essential continuity between self and place – that is not how I feel. This place feels familiar; I know it – I am not it. I have never felt truly comfortable in my home estate and these same feeling of discomfort are surfacing now. It is quiet here – just like home – a strange disjuncture between the stories of anti-social behaviour and the benign reality.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2013

I wrote this fieldnote on the first day I spent on The Estate on my own. In many ways it is a product of its time, the discomfort I felt on these first visits was an embodied response to my anxiety of starting the research, of being left outside, not having a place to be on The Estate (see Chapter 4, Section 2 for further discussion of negotiating access). Nevertheless, in this fieldnote, I appear to refute the very theoretical sense making I have developed within this Chapter of 'being place(d)'. In the fieldnote, I claim to 'know' The Estate but not 'be' it, arguing against the assertion of continuity between self and place.

I want to use this fieldnote, my own reflections on place, as a way to explore the individual negotiations which occur in order to reconcile place(d) identity. Although I remain concerned about the methodological implications of analysing these reflections alongside those of my participants, I do not wish to conflate my experiences with theirs. However, I think it is important to make visible claims to 'know'. As such I hope that through thinking my own identity claim within theoretical sense making of 'being place(d)', I may at least position myself within these structures, not beyond them or free of them.

So, what may place(d) identity theorisation tell of my identity claims within this fieldnote? I describe my embodied experience of being on The Estate, a discomfort I link to my experience of growing up on other council estates. It is this discomfort which may be thought of as my place(d) identity. My place identity, that is being *place*, is expressed within my rejection of the place. In my perception of what The Estate 'is' and my attempts to position myself in opposition to this, I form my place identity, as one of difference and discomfort. In terms of being *placed*, that is my placing within power relations, my discomfort may be understood as an affective response to being housed on estates. My recollection of the 'stories' of estates as places of 'anti-social behaviour' feed into this placed identity, my discomfort with The Estate is my own attempt to reconcile associations with this de-valued place. On the one hand I claim I am not it, that I do not belong to this 'dangerous' place, on the other, I acknowledge that these 'stories' do not reflect my own estate 'reality'. Thus, my assertion that I 'know' The Estate but I 'am not it' is a struggle against dominant discourses of The Estate; I am not 'it', when the 'it' is a place of anti-social behaviour.

My claim to 'know' The Estate is a forging out of my place(d) identity as one where The Estate is unknown to outside others. My place(d) identity is The Estate, but it is not The Estate that is represented in dominant discourses of 'danger'.

Therefore, place(d) identity is inevitably conflictual, it is a dynamic of identity positioning, at once between self and place and between place and power. Conflicting commentaries arise from attempts to reconcile an identity that is in process, formed in moments of interaction, yet is held in place by relations of power, maintained within an imagining of continuity.

> *Joe was telling me how the Primary School has gone downhill since he went there.*
>
> *His argument was contradictory and didn't make much sense. On the one hand was a story of decline – of the movement from what it used to be when he was there to what it is now.*
>
> *He again told me the story of Miss Grace's last day, when he took her a card and she cried. He said everyone was so sad to see her leave. For Joe, Miss Grace was Estate Primary she made it what it was and without her it was nothing – it was shit, rubbish.*
>
> *Running parallel to this story, however, was a notion of 'It is what it is' – Joe argued The Estate Primary will always be the same – he took the piss out of the new uniform, logo and the 'hub' he felt that no matter how much money was thrown at it, it would still be the same place. He said that the kids are the same and the parents still have the same attitude – nothing, no amount of money would change this: 'They can change the face as much as they like but it's still the same'.*
>
> *It was hard to read Joe's tone; he was angry at the decline in the school since he had been there but I sensed a hopelessness in his assertion that nothing would ever change.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 6th March 2014

The above fieldnote is a reflection on a conversation I had with Joe, a male youth worker at the Community Centre. The narrative he formed of the school is one of tension between change and continuity, between place identity and placed identity. In retelling the story of Miss Grace's last day, a story he shared often as a symbol of decline, of this shift from the good times to now, Joe talks of processes by which people shape place. His reference to Miss Grace being place, speaks to conceptualisations of place as process, that place is formed in moments of interaction, without Miss Grace Estate Primary is no longer Estate Primary; it is 'nothing'. For Joe, Estate Primary was his relationship with Miss Grace, the place was formed within moments of interaction between himself, Miss Grace and Estate Primary. Thus, a shift in this relationship, shifts notions of place; without Miss Grace, Joe can no longer know Estate Primary. This process of place making is felt, place is a product of affect. Joe tells me that Miss Grace cried when he gave her a leaving card, that 'everyone was so sad to see her leave'. Joe's telling and retelling of this story may be an expression of his own sense of loss, the affective consequence of this re-making of place by the departure of Miss Grace.

Alongside this argument is the uneasy placement of a narrative of continuity. Joe's story of decline implies change, shift, process, yet his assertion that 'it is what it is', is static. He argues the kids are the same and the parents have the same attitude, nothing would change this. This placed identity, an internalisation of a static position, accounts for the ongoing de-valuing of The Estate. Joe makes sense of the positioning of The Estate within power systems through the linking of Estate problems to people problems; it is the kids and the attitudes of the parents that make Estate Primary the place it is. Yet again this is an uneasy alliance, as Joe must reconcile his own placed identity within this story, an identity claim he asserts through his mocking of the re-branding of Estate Primary; no matter how much money is thrown at it, it will still be the same place.

It is in the thinking of these conflicting commentaries together that place(d) identity may be a useful tool. Joe forms his place identity in moments of interaction between people and place; in this sense his place is a dynamic process. His placed identity is articulated through his jokes about the attempts to change The Estate school, this is recognition of continuity, shared history and being located. However, when understood as intertwined place identity and placed identity, there is space for the sense making of the individual. Thus, Joe's mocking of the re-branding of Estate Primary may be hopeless, yet it is also angry and defensive. He sees through strategies to 'change the face' of it, arguing Estate Primary is more than the physical, the material, the place is deeply entrenched in the people. His use of 'they' positions himself within the opposed 'us', there is a recognition that these changes occur within a power relation. In a declaration of a form of 'anti-civic pride' Joe draws the line of distinction between 'us' and 'them' making a joke of these outsiders and their attempts of change that underestimate the power he imbues in his place.

In this way, being place(d) may speak to ongoing debates within Bourdieusian analyses of value, which question how and why people continue to invest in symbolically de-valued practices (Skeggs, 2014). Conceptualising social position as both processual and agentic as well as material and reproductive, captures the ways in which the individual becomes deeply associated with place, that they are formed by and formative of their place. This deep association with place makes visible and felt structural shifts which produce and reproduce place. Therefore, moments of change bring to the fore the structures of power shaping the material conditions of place. The location of individuals within these structures of power limits the consequences of their resistances. However, an exploration of the narratives produced through processes of reconciling place(d) identity, may make visible the multiple meanings attached to both action and inaction.

As with the example of Joe, his mocking of the re-branding of the school felt hopeless, reproducing dominant discourses of The Estate through his account of 'problem families'. Yet, his positioning of himself within an 'us' necessitates a narrative shift, as he reconciles his sense

of self with these dominant de-valuing discourses. He constructs a form of 'anti-civic pride' through which he can undermine the structural changes which inevitably change the material of the school. In Joe's reliance on dominant discourses which de-value The Estate, his jokes to a certain extent work to reproduce the structure he seeks to critique. Nevertheless, Joe's jokes may be thought as resistance through resilience. His investment in an essentialising account of The Estate, produces a position from which to speak back to structural changes shaping place. In this way, his investment in systematically de-valued practices, enables him to critique the structures he feels are acting upon The Estate.

## Section 2: The discursive construction of The Estate

In this Section I further explore the processes through which The Estate is discursively constructed. My analysis of the everyday production of narratives of The Estate, enables me to draw attention to discourse as a resource, produced and reproduced through power dynamics that are cyclical and diffuse. I argue that dominant discourses which act upon and circulate within The Estate shape experiential being on The Estate. Thus, the material of estate is mediated through dominant value systems which give meaning to the structural materiality of The Estate.

I begin with an analysis of the discursive construction of The Estate as a place of fear. Through a shifting of analytic attention away from the feared moment as an objective phenomenon, I reflect on the processes through which signifiers of fear are woven together into a broader narrative of The Estate as a place of fear. I argue, dominant discourses of The Estate produce an interpretive repertoire within which particular soundscapes and landscapes are associated with fear and risk. I move on to explore the possibilities of resisting these dominant discourses. By foregrounding the active role individuals have in the formation and reformation of discourses, I consider how repositioning dominant discourses against experience enables acts of resistance.

Next, I explore the affect of dominant discourses through an analysis of estate stigma. Again, my focus is on the negotiations that occur within processes of making sense of the located self. I discuss acts of othering as a paradoxical form of agency, that by relocating 'estate problems' they become further reified as powerful homogenising representations of The Estate.

In the final part of this Section I explore two moments of negotiation between valued ways of being on The Estate and other dominant representations of selfhood. Through my analysis of these tensions I argue that access to discourses is mediated through embodied resources that are necessary for a socially coherent self. I raise questions such as, what are the processes by which signifiers of people and place conflate; how does the body carry its place and how does place form the body?

## Producing The Estate as a place of fear

In my theoretical Chapter, I outlined the argument that there has been a spatialisation of class in both popular and academic representations. In my discussion of the production of 'classed places', I drew upon the work of Baeten (2002) to argue that 'stereotypical and dystopian cultural images' reify The Estate (see Chapter 3, Section 2). These dominant discourses of The Estate form a lens through which The Estate is perceived; a bourgeois imagination of an othered place (Baeten, 2002; Said, 1978). In the following analysis, I aim to explore the circulation of these representations within The Estate itself. My aim is to draw attention to the ways experiential being on The Estate is brought into meaning through the weaving together of multiple narratives. Although I focus on the subjective construction of fear, I hope to make explicit the power inherent in discourse; that access to discourses are structured and therefore should be brought into an analysis of material inequalities.

The following fieldnote is saturated in fear. My own fear as I experience The Estate anew, as a deserted place; 'eerily quiet'. The fear and anger of Joe and Holly as they react to an 'attack' on the Community Centre. The (re)production of fear in Nathan's re-telling of the story of the burnt out car and his warning that I should no longer park where I have done for the past six months:

> *The whole estate felt eerily quiet as I drove past the school and reached the dead end where I park in a turning bay, I noticed the floor was blackened and scattered with glass. The lamppost hung limp to one side, its skin burnt and crackled.*

> *As I walked past the burnt out motorbike engine that had laid there since the summer, The Estate felt more sinister than it had before.*

> *Joe was outside the club using a hoe to scrape the floor and wall that was stained by a huge splash of white paint. I asked him what happened and he said the kids thought they were hilarious.*

> *Holly came out and pointing ahead she said "Look at them". Three boys were up the hill, opposite us near the big park, they were standing around a bin. They ran – there was a huge bang. I jumped. "Bloody idiots" said Holly "I should film them; I don't care about being a grass". She said it was sad because that was their lives – "Just being idiots".*

> *I asked Joe if they did anything on The Estate for bonfire night – he said they'd already had their bonfire – the kids had burnt out a car.*

> *He said they'd lit a fire cracker by the door of the club to try to set it on fire.*

> *When I went in Nathan also told me about the car and said I shouldn't park there anymore – he parks round the other side where it's better lit.*

> Sarah's fieldnotes, 4th November 2013

In this moment, I am an inextricable part of the production of fear, experientially and symbolically. This means that I am actively engaged in the forming of 'us', and therefore, in the comprehension of 'them'. Our fear shares a common source, an unruly other that we cannot understand. It is our inability to understand their behaviour which forms this sense of heightened

fear; their actions make no sense, they cannot be predicted, and thus, cannot be reasoned with. This fieldnote captures the processes through which fear is produced through the othering of the feared group. The 'kids' in this fieldnote are reduced to their feared acts: 'that was their lives' Their actions are incomprehensible to us and thus conflated with notions of ignorance, they are 'just being idiots'. Through this process of othering, the stripping away of complexity and contradiction from the other, the 'kids' are reified: they become de-humanised, an anonymous mass of 'bad kids'. It is this anonymity of the 'kids' that leads to their objectification, the 'kids' are reduced to symbols of fear.

The 'kids' in this fieldnote are overtly associated with destruction and fire: 'they'd already had their bonfire'. There is, however, an undertone of association with cars and motorbikes, which I would argue is more pervasive. The 'kids' are often linked to stories of burnt out cars and stolen motorbikes; their presence is announced in the chug of their dirt bikes. The motorbike represents danger, risk, criminality – all significantly adult tropes. I think it is this objectification, through the imagining of the 'kids' as inherently connected to motorbikes, which dislocates the 'kids' from dominant discourses of childhood (James and Prout, 1997). Thus, like The Estate itself, these 'kids' may be understood as inhabiting a liminal space, a space in-between childhood and adulthood, fuelling fears of their danger and threat to these performative roles.

As I asserted earlier, I am not beyond this objectification, I pick up symbolic cues which heighten my own fear. Gathering together the objects of my fear (the broken glass, the burnt lamppost, the motorbike engine) I form links with the narrative of Joe and Holly of vandalism at the Community Centre. Together we experience the fear of the loud bang, and my 'jumping' at this solidifies my location within the 'us' of this exchange; I experienced it too. It is in the moments following this shared fear that the 'kids' become identified as the sole source of our fear. Our fear is projected onto the 'kids' as they become the imagined perpetrators of vandalism, joy riding, noise, fly tipping and arson.

Moreover, it is not only the 'kids' that are objectified in this fieldnote, The Estate itself is reduced to a place of nastiness. Through a reflection on the ways in which the 'feel' of this moment was formed within the temporality of my ethnography, I hope to make visible the ways The Estate is constructed as a place of fear. This fieldnote was a moment of change, a shift in the seasons of The Estate, a change of pace: the 4th November, having started my fieldwork in May, was the first time I came to The Estate at mid-afternoon to find it already dark. My drive in, usually a crawl past Estate Primary, slowing to let children cross and weaving myself in and out of the parked cars of parents, was absent of this bustle. There were no calls of 'Sarah!', 'Hi Sarah' from the children as they walked to the Community Centre. The Estate felt empty, only a few braved the cold, wet day, and those that did strode briskly past, hood up, head down. It was this temporal

shift in the life of The Estate that produced a heightened sense of anxiety within me. The changing landscapes and soundscapes of The Estate alerted my senses resulting in a re-reading of the material and the symbolic.

In the fieldnote, I recount walking past the burnt out motorbike engine, a sight which I link to the sinister 'feel' of The Estate. Yet, despite this being the first time I wrote about the engine in my fieldnotes, it had been there since the summer. I must have been aware of the motorbike engine all the time it had been there, in order to recall that this was not the first time I had seen it. Why then did the motorbike engine take on a sinister 'feel' in this moment and not others?

It was the combination of shifts in the landscapes and soundscapes of The Estate which produced a sense of tension, the motorbike engine merely became entwined within this interpretive repertoire and narrative; with wild flowers growing up, through and around it, the sound of children playing, the warmth of the summer sunshine touching my skin, I made no link between the motorbike engine and fear.

Of course, this is not to deny the material and experiential reality of fear. The car in the fieldnote was burnt out, and I and others did experience fear. Rather, what I hope this analysis does is make visible the ways in which narratives of fear are constructed. The ways in which people and objects are storied within a narrative of fear, and the consequences this may have for those who are reified as feared others.

## Resisting fear

Fear is of course permeated with power; we feel fear when faced with our vulnerabilities. The positioning of others as feared or vulnerable to that which is feared, is an articulation of power. As such, fear is not a natural or neutral consequence of a particular phenomenon, rather it is socially produced; as argued above, fear is mediated through dominant interpretive repertoires. The following analysis considers how dominant discourses of fear may be shifted and transformed through acts of resistance which position experience in opposition of discursive representations.

> *When they said they were going up the hill I asked them to stay in the park but did not challenge them strongly – they are not allowed to play on the hill as it is very steep – but I thought with Ella in tow they probably wouldn't go up it.*
>
> *I was right, they walked a few metres up the hill and sat and watched us playing in the park, they waved down and waited to be challenged. I didn't say anything.*
>
> *They began to walk further up the hill – but again I wasn't too concerned, I could see they were being careful and they looked over to check I was watching (some boys had recently tobogganed down the hill on a piece of scrap metal – so I judged their behaviour against this)*
>
> *As they were nearing half way a man began walking up the hill on the same path – there are many paths carved out of the foliage like animal runs – this means that they are very narrow and either side thistles and bushes and wild grasses grow.*

*In order to pass, the man would have to cross paths with the children.*

*I continued to watch as the kids reached the top and the man came up to meet them – he continued walking and the kids turned to follow*

*I felt sick. I began walking towards the base of the hill as the kids disappeared over the peak. Seconds later they were back in view and it was clear they were playing and the man had continued on his way – I called them down.*

*They came down without argument.*

*As they neared the base of the hill I asked them who had gone up the hill. Ella said it was just them three, I said, no who had come up after and they said no one – I said I had seen a man walk up the hill behind them.*

*They said yeah but he's not a paedophile, I said I wasn't suggesting he was but wondered if they knew him. They said 'no', I asked if he said anything and they said 'no'.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 23rd September 2013

In this fieldnote I am fearful, reading back over it now, I am surprised by my reaction, that I seem so enmeshed within discourses of 'stranger danger'. At this time I was beginning to carve out a role for myself at the Community Centre, yet still negotiating the extent to which I should take on what I perceived to be the norms and values of the Community Centre or impose my own (a distinction I later concluded is impossible to create). Therefore, my response was formed within a moment of anxiety of having not performed my role at the Community Centre; I should not have let the children go up the hill.

The children took an active role in the formation of my position as 'not quite', challenging my knowledge of The Estate and their place within it. They questioned my reading of club rules telling me they play on the hill all the time, though I asked them to stay in the park, they ignored my request. They were pushing the boundaries of my authority, climbing the hill cautiously; stopping to catch my attention, ensuring their defiance was visible.

My anxiety was palpable and the children resisted their position within this. They challenged my questioning of them, when I asked who had gone up the hill, they replied only the three of them, and to them the man was of no consequence. When I challenged that I had seen a man walk up the hill behind them, they countered, 'yeah but he's not a paedophile'. This was a claim to know, to know what my fear was and to know that this fear was not real. In this display of adult ways of knowing the children re-locate ignorance, it is not the naïve child who is ignorant of danger but the fearful adult who imagines danger that is ignorant.

## Estate stigma and the re-location of 'estate problems'

The structural processes which position one within place are not necessarily visible, at least not fully comprehensible, all of the time. However, moments of rupture within the everyday bring to the fore particular formations of inequality. Due to the pervasiveness of representations which systematically de-value The Estate as both place and people (Mckenzie, 2012), I argue that estate

stigma results in an affective labour, whereby those placed on The Estate work to negotiate a positive sense of self with dominant discourses which de-value The Estate.

> *Sarah: ...when you were growing up here, did you feel like people thought certain things about you because you lived here?*
>
> *Joe: they still do to this day, The Estate is a place where people automatically, if they don't live here, just give it a bad name, basically, you get someone from Up Town mention where you're from and it's just straight up turn their nose up at ya, you know you got to try somehow, this estate needs its name changed a little bit because it's not nice for little kids you know maybe when they go to Secondary School and stuff and people say where you from, that they say The Estate and people are like ugh and it's not nice but that's the mentality the ways it's always been since I've been living here you know past 15 or 18 years it's sort of always the way it's been and I think it will take a lot to change it. Things like The Estate festival and different community projects and stuff that go on down here, obviously, it does help and makes The Estate look, puts The Estate in a different light, and uh but it's just uh it's got that stigma on The Estate which hasn't changed for years*

Interview with Joe, Youth Worker male

In this interview extract, Joe exposes the affective strain of negotiating the de-valued identity attached to The Estate with a positive sense of self. Using the example of children entering Secondary School, Joe highlights the ways in which estate 'stigma' shapes interactions, linking this to affective consequences: 'it's not nice for little kids'. It is in these moments of difference that the 'stigma' of The Estate is made visible and attached to the self through processes of othering. For Joe, this moment captures a recognition of difference, this is the moment 'little kids' become place(d); the moment the 'stigma' of The Estate becomes the 'stigmatisation' of the kids. In this way, Joe maintains The Estate as a safe place, a place where the kids may be free from the negative attitudes of outside others.

However, his desire for The Estate to change its name appears located within the responsiblising discourses of the right shift within British politics. In his discussion, Joe argues The Estate festival and community projects may begin to breakdown the de-valued image of The Estate, yet he locates responsibility within The Estate; it is The Estate that 'needs its name changed'. Therefore, although Joe articulates the felt consequences of the stigma attached to The Estate, these dominant discourses are not understood as formed by and formative of structural inequalities.

One possible account of this disconnect is that, inherent in the pursuit of a positive sense of self, is the making and marking of distinction. Thus, the very discourses which position one in place are often those one has limited access to. Therefore, in order to carve out spaces of distinction, dominant discourses of The Estate circulate, being formed and reformed, within The Estate as a resource through which value may be produced.

In the following interview extract, Joe carves out a space of value through a relocating of estate problems beyond his place:

*Sarah: what do you think that they're imagining when they think of The Estate?*

*Joe: Well they assume people get mugged up here, things get robbed constantly, there's burglary's, there's fights, there's this there's that, none of that happens, literally none of that ever happens, you can walk through this estate at any time and personally I feel safe when I walk through this estate doesn't matter what time of day it is I feel safe, maybe because I've lived here for so long, but even if I didn't I would probably still feel safe, I feel safe anyway in this community and I would like to think that the majority do*

*Sarah: so what do you think it is that makes people think that that stuff happens here?*

*Joe: um I don't know, a fair few years ago The Estate was a bit different it was a bit more hectic and stuff, a lot more young people about causing trouble, but that was the past and even then it wasn't a bad place, wasn't exactly a bad place, it was fine, alright there was young people running about, but where don't they do that, they do that on every estate up and down the country, there's no knife or gun crime or anything around here, it's so so rare that you ever hear of a mugging or anything, do you know what I mean, you know and we get classed in the same bracket as some of the worst estates probably in this country, we're like a little Beirut or whatever, they think it's like World War Three in this estate, but it's not, there's no gangs, no knife gun crime, like I said, you know there's nothing*

Interview with Joe, Youth Worker male

Joe's discussion of Estate problems begins by refuting the account of The Estate by outside others. He argues that the assumptions made about The Estate are wrong, that 'literally none of that ever happens'. He believes others think The Estate is a dangerous place where 'things get robbed constantly, there's burglary's, there's fights', yet he feels safe on The Estate. Joe posits that his feeling safe within the community may be because he has lived on The Estate for the majority of his life. Rather than this acting as a form of protection from the list of assumed crimes, it appears Joe is claiming that his safety is the consequence of knowing. It is in knowing The Estate that Joe bases his feeling of safety, he knows that these crimes are imagined, that it is 'so so rare that you ever hear of a mugging or anything'.

Joe locates The Estate's history of problems within broader structures of estate problems; these are problems affecting 'every estate up and down the country'. Yet he also draws lines of distinction, the problems of his Estate are not the problems of the imagined estate, where gangs, knife and gun crime are rife. Thus, Joe does not deny the existence of estate problems, he re-locates them. This re-articulation of identity highlights the ways in which agency operates within structural constraints (Rogaly and Taylor: 2009). Joe struggles to negotiate a positive sense of self, pushing against representations of The Estate as dangerous, nevertheless his agency is bounded, his conceptualisation of The Estate does not move beyond discourses of estates. Therefore, Joe's identity is embedded within discourses of estates as dangerous; he is limited only to define himself against this discourse. It is Joe's location within systems of power which bound his articulation of self within discourses of estates: his struggles for distinction necessarily reify estate problems further as he must locate these problems outside his self and his Estate in order to demonstrate his distance.

## Comfort in community

I want to further explore this analysis of the affective labour involved in the reconciliation of a positive sense of self with material and social conditions of being in the world which are systematically de-valued. In the interview, Joe is searching for ways to describe an affective experience he knows I cannot understand, and perhaps more importantly, one which is de-valued within dominant discourses of 'adulthood'; a comfort in place:

> *Sarah: …what would you say are like the best things about living here?*
>
> *Joe: um there's a good like community spirit to this place, you know, everyone does seem to get on, obviously people have their arguments, but if something happens on this estate, good or bad, everyone comes together and it has got a good community spirit. Um, you know personally, with the young people I'm working with, they're quality, I enjoy it, they're fun, all they want to do is be kids and that's what they should be, running about screaming and going mad because that's what kids do. Um you know, I don't know, this estate unless you live in this estate you never understand The Estate like it is a place where if you live here so long you want to leave but you can't because it's your home, you can't leave, most people never leave The Estate, feel like you're just trapped in The Estate, but trapped in a good way, because you don't want to leave because you do enjoy it that much, you know everyone here and you become friends and even just walking to the shop you're saying hello to like ten people because people just talk to ya so I enjoy The Estate anyway, not everyone does*
>
> Interview with Joe, Youth Worker male

In this extract Joe evokes a strong sense of his embeddedness within The Estate community. He talks of the strength of community action, 'if something happens on this estate, good or bad, everyone comes together', the 'spirit' of the community is clearly felt by Joe as a sense of locatedness within The Estate and an interconnectedness with the people of The Estate. This sense of belonging is, Joe believes, incomprehensible to those outside The Estate; 'unless you live in this estate you never understand The Estate'. Joe vividly describes his experience of being part of The Estate community, feeling valued by others, and being reminded of this in his everyday interactions; 'even just walking to the shop you're saying hello to like ten people'.

Yet, Joe also describes his position within The Estate as 'trapped', although he asserts, this is 'in a good way'. Joe's narrative may be contradictory, but he is aware of this. These contradictions are formed through his bringing together of multiple discourses in order to make sense of his position. Joe negotiates a sense of comfort in community with discourses of 'personal development':

> *Joe:…besides I don't want to live in The Estate or Town, be a youth worker, I want to travel*
>
> *Sarah: do you think that something you're going to want to do, move out*
>
> *Joe: uh yeah and no this estate is my home now so I can't imagine me living anywhere else, though I'd love to, I just couldn't imagine it, but also I want to move out and I want to travel a bit and try my hand at something, still working with young people that's what*

*I do, but in a different area, try and challenge different young people and see what happens you know, I can't be stuck here as long as Sharon has more mental strength than me, whereas I'm starting out, I've been doing this just over a year now, I need to I feel like I need to challenge myself a little bit more, to help my personal development grow a little bit, so I need to try, but not just yet, I'm quite happy, but eventually I will, eventually I will move*

<div align="right">Interview with Joe, Youth Worker male</div>

Joe's declaration that he doesn't want to live in The Estate, that he wants to travel, does not seem to fit in with the story he weaved throughout the rest of his interview. When I asked him whether this is something that he really wants to do, he seems to check himself, answering in a more measured way that The Estate 'is my home now so I can't imagine me living anywhere else, though I'd love to'. He shifts from a confident assertion to a very cautious conclusion; that he needs 'to try, but not just yet, I'm quite happy, but eventually I will, eventually I will move'. Joe draws from two opposing discourses to make sense of his place, in its past, present and future. He constructs his place on The Estate in terms of community value, but alludes to an imagined future, in line with discourses of 'personal development' where he may move up and out.

Of course, this process of 'personal development' is mediated through access to resources and discourses. Yet, there is more to Joe's discomfort with these formations of personhood than simply access. For performances of self to be recognised they must become embodied; in order to 'wear' one's self there must be a perceived ease, comfort and naturalness to behaviour. I want to close this Chapter with an analysis of the connections between the social and the body, exploring the felt consequences of social difference and the structural formation of the body as a process which reifies difference.

## Articulating privilege

In the following fieldnote Holly articulates difference. In many ways she *is* different from other young people who live on The Estate; her family although they live on The Estate, have bought their home and display their relative wealth through the cars they drive and the goods they consume. Such displays of material accumulation are read as a sign of propriety and are valued within The Estate. This difference is not one of discomfort for Holly, although there is an added affective labour in negotiating her Estate identity with material wealth, she takes pleasure in gift giving and acting as a role model, particularly in her sense of fashion and style. However, Holly talks about a felt difference, a discomfort in difference she experienced when attending an Alternative fee paying school:

*Holly was telling me about her schooling, she went to Secondary School in Out Town (a suburban residential area on the outskirts of the City). When I asked why she had gone to school so far away she said it was the only place she could get into. She explained that she moved there in year 8 after attending the Alternative School (she asked me if I knew the hippy school at the bottom of The Estate). She said she went there after finishing*

*Primary School at St. Jude's. But she said she hated it there, she said it was weird and she never felt comfortable there. She said it was all creative and performing and she didn't fit in. She said the way she dressed, designer and expensive clothes wasn't right (it has no uniform). She said she felt awkward because she often heard teachers and parents commenting that the school was so nice and the building so lovely, but it was such a shame it was at the bottom of The Estate. She said they had this celebration where they had to dance around a compost heap and she said some of the kids from The Estate saw her and shouted hey that's Holly, and they took the piss out of her for ages. So she asked to leave the school because it was too embarrassing. She said when she started at Out Town it was really hard to settle in and the work was difficult because she was behind having not followed the curriculum at the Alternative School.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 16th January 2014

On the surface, Holly experienced anxiety and embarrassment at over hearing teachers' and parents' derogatory comments about The Estate. In these situations, Holly's Estate identity is blurred, it is obscured from the view of others, yet felt deeply within her sense of self. Her value system felt at odds to the school's, 'it was all creative and performing' and her 'designer and expensive clothes' were not right. Finding herself within a space of an 'anti-material middle class', Holly's capital accumulation did not translate into this new symbolic economy, the articulations of privilege which position her as powerful on The Estate, were misrecognised.

However, I argue these values are necessarily embodied, it is not enough to say that Holly valued different things, these ways of being would take on different meanings if read off of the bodies of The Estate. Middle class anti-materialism, in order to gain value as a political statement, must be attached to the privileged body; it is the privilege of choice which means that the middle class are doing 'anti-materialism'. The absence of material wealth on The Estate cannot be read as a political statement, only ever as poverty, as lack. The people of The Estate cannot 'do' anti-materialism, through attachment to their bodies they cannot be conceived as 'doing' only 'being'. This is not to deny that the material conditions of The Estate are significantly different from the families who can access the fee paying school, rather it is because of these material conditions that the people of The Estate cannot position themselves within the value systems of the 'anti-material middle class'. I think this makes more visible the connections between structural constraints and identity and cultural formations. Holly could access the fee paying school, she reflected that the way she dressed was not right, yet she could not simply enact the 'anti-materialist middle class', when performed by The Estate body, such actions are seen as essential to the self, she is 'being' poor.

I am just beginning to think through these connections between the social and the body and my aim at this point of my analysis is to produce a discomforting questioning to inform further analysis. In the next Chapter, I draw upon Bourdieu's conceptualisation of habitus as a tool with which to sociologically imagine the connections between the body and society (see Chapter 6, Section 2).

## Conclusion

In this Chapter I have developed a theorisation of 'being place(d)' as an exploration of the interconnections between structure and agency in place making. Through an analysis of the making and marking of boundaries, I suggest individual negotiations take place in acts of threading together personal narratives and broader narratives of The Estate.

I further developed this account of dominant discourses of The Estate in Section 2, suggesting momentary shifts in the landscapes and soundscapes of The Estate produce and reproduce representations of The Estate as a place of risk.

Finally, this Chapter has introduced an analysis of the affective consequences of place(d) identity formation, through an exploration of the paradox of belonging to a devalued space. I advance this discussion in the next analytical Chapter (Chapter 6), exploring the centrality of affect in the formation of habitus.

# Chapter 6: The Affect of Habitus - Identity as Relational Construction

## Introduction

In this Chapter I hope to conceptualise identity construction within the central tension of my thesis, between structure and agency. My thinking is founded upon Bourdieu's notion of habitus as a tool with which to imagine 'the ways the body is in the social world but also the ways in which the social world is in the body' (Reay, 2004: 3).

The concept of habitus decentres subjectivity; the embodied habitus allows an 'actor to become an individual but only through how she uses the subjective presence of the collectivity' (Meisenhelder, 2006: 10). Therefore, the concept of habitus allows me to think about the body sociologically, that 'habitus is manifested in specific shared bodily stances and practices' but that these embodied dispositions do not reflect internal 'deep' drives or essential characteristics (2006: 9). As an inherently generative concept, habitus captures the processes through which one's body is shaped by the social whilst recognising the possibilities of individual bodies to reshape the social: as a description of everyday lived realities, habitus is 'that which generates practices, frames for positioning oneself in the world, and indeed ways of inhabiting the world' (Probyn, 2004: 10)

As an attempt to think through the questions raised within my theoretical Chapter (see Chapter 3), around feelings of discomfort in moments of recognition of one's habitus, this Chapter explores moments of identification as a negotiation of habitus and context. Thus, my analysis is both linked with and distanced from Bourdieu's theorisation, I aim to complicate and question the basis of habitus as a subjective but not individual system of internalised structures; that 'the individual agent [is] a world within the world' (Bourdieu, 1990: 56). Through a consideration of moments of everyday interaction, I argue that, although habitus provides a conceptual starting point for thinking about subjectivities, there is little space to theorise the *active* role individuals take in the formation of their self. I shift attention away from 'continuity and regularity' to a focus on moments of contradiction and complexity. As suggested in my theoretical Chapter (see Chapter 3, Section 1), my analysis builds upon the work of Reay (2007), Probyn (2004), Skeggs (2004b), who foreground the affective consequences of shifts in circumstances resulting in a habitus 'out of place'. Yet my specific interest is in the moments of negotiation that occur when one is 'in place'. Though inspired by Bourdieu's theorisations which explore the dualism of structure and agency, I am dissatisfied with habitus as the structuring of affect; that we 'refuse what is anyway refused and love the inevitable' (Bourdieu, 1977: 86). For me, Bourdieu provides

a way to think about the orchestration of everyday life, but I question how his concepts can make sense of change, difference, agency.

I take up Lane's (2012) critical engagement with Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the affective nature of the habitus that does not clearly enable the possibility for social change. As Lane argues, it is because 'practical dispositions incorporated into the habitus operate at the affective, embodied level that they are unconscious, fundamentally resistant to change, and marked by an extraordinary inertia' (Lane, 2012: 3-4). For Lane, an analysis 'allowing and accounting for such visceral affective reactions against one's social fate and the attempts to escape they can generate would necessitate a significant reformulation of Bourdieu's theories of habitus and class' (Lane, 2012: 3). It is this reformulation of Bourdieu's conceptualisation of habitus that this Chapter engages with.

Through my analysis, I will theorise identity as moments of identification within which aspects of self are formed in proximity and/or distance with others. This conceptualisation of relational identity construction is heavily influenced by Bourdieu's thinking, yet moves beyond habitus as 'forgotten history' (Bourdieu, 1990: 56) to habitus as 'foregrounded history'. Thinking with post-structural theorisations of identity as performance (Butler, 1990; Nayak, 1997; Hollingworth, 2015), my analysis aims to bring to the fore agency, whilst maintaining a notion of locatedness within structural inequality. I draw upon Connolly's (1995) theorisation of these structures as 'contexts', which I understand as discursive contexts around which the individual makes sense of and actively constructs their own identities. It is these contexts which represent the 'forgotten history' of habitus, by foregrounding this locatedness within contexts, my analysis focusses on the affective consequences of positioning for the subject. Thus, it begins from the premise of difference, that identity is fluid and contingent (Connolly, 1995); nevertheless, located within contexts, that is structured access to identity claims.

This Chapter is structured in two Sections. In Section 1 I explore identity as a relational construction, considering the active role individuals have in the formation of identity through my analysis of everyday social interactions on The Estate. In Section 2, I build upon this analysis through a more explicit focus on power. I consider the ways in which habitus is forged through the disciplining of the body and I explore the affective and social consequences of a lack of fit between the habitus and the field.

## Section 1: Making self, together

In this Section I explore identity formation within everyday interactions. I build upon conceptualisations of identity as relationally produced outlined in my theoretical Chapter (Hall, 1996; Walkerdine, 2010; Lucey; 2010), drawing analytical attention to processes of identification

(see Chapter 3, Section 1: Thinking structure as post-structure). Through my analysis of the everyday I hope to explore explicitly the connections between structure and agency, arguing that identity is formed through the active drawing upon structured discourses.

I begin with an account of identity as 'interelational' (Walkerdine, 2010). Challenging the assumption of a 'pre-existing stable subject that is simply linked to others' (Walkerdine, 2010: 5), I explore the webs of relations which construct the subject at their centre. In this way, I consider identity work as enacted together, that individual actor's work together to construct the feel of the moment within the everyday.

I move on to consider the ways in which the active 'carving out' of identity may be understood as a space of struggle. Through my analysis of children's appropriation of adult ways of know and being, I argue that there is agency in the enactment of taboo (Simpson, 2013). The children work to resist their social positioning through their play within alternative discursive contexts. However, I consider the ways this resistance is captured within a contradiction and therefore not necessarily progressive (Walkerdine, 1990).

The final two fieldnotes I discuss within this Section are used to begin to complicate my account of making self together through an attention to power dynamics. Through an exploration of difference, I suggest that individual agentic performances are nevertheless bought into meaning through epistemic frameworks of dominant discourse.

## Identity as relational construction

For me, the following reflexive note encapsulates identity as relational. There is no 'pure' or 'natural' state of behaviour, the self is forged in moments of difference and claims of sameness with an other. Thus, in this moment where I attempt to comprehend, my 'interest' in Michelle, it is a process through which I construct my self. I wrote extensively in my fieldnotes about the act of dancing in the Community Centre, an interest fuelled by my acute sense of distance during such moments:

> *The focal point of the hall in the Community Centre is a large projection screen which hangs above a stage constructed from low square blocks. The children use a computer to choose what is displayed on the screen, usually playing music videos from YouTube. This practice is interesting as it is an overt display of taste that is (almost) uncensored – the internet has some censoring of inappropriate content but mainstream pop videos are not affected by this. The kids will be asked to turn off a song if it repeatedly says "fuck", but words such as "bitch" and "arse" don't seem to warrant the same censorship.*
>
> *The kids choose what to play and how to respond to it. They usually choose current pop videos and dance on the stage in groups, with a particular move being popular and others copying it – boys do dance but in an ironic way, often "dance bombing", jumping onto the stage, performing an energetic dance and then jumping off the stage to the laughs of their peers.*

*Sharon's daughter Michelle was helping out and enjoyed watching the kids dance. She was encouraging – saying "Yeah I love this song" and picking up April and dancing with her. She saw me watching and smiled saying she loved seeing them dance and looked very lovingly and motherly towards the children.*

*I was interested in her reaction to their song choice and dancing. She was very positive and encouraging – she did not limit what they could put on, how loud it could be or how they could dance.*

*This was very different from my reaction to the dancing. I felt as though the songs should be more age appropriate and was concerned by the overt sexual content of videos and how this was acted out by the kids.*

*Yet there is not a clear process of "sexualisation" whereby the kids see sexualised behaviour and recreate it without reflexive management of their behaviour. The kids replicate some of the sexualised dance moves – the girls tend to move their hips in a kind of Beyoncé thrust – but they also laugh at certain "rude" gestures and particularly find innuendo funny. For example, when Psy pole dances they laugh at its "rudeness" – they do not take on this behaviour necessarily.*

*Their song choice and dancing is not simple, they act in contradictory ways, switching from "adult" music to "children's" music, such as "Gummy Bear". They can dance in quite "sexualised" ways and then move to routines or acting out the lyrics of songs. I find myself embarrassed by my reaction to their dancing, my assumptions of sexual "danger" often lead to moments of misunderstanding. As Rosie thrusts her hips back and forwards with her hands on her waist, it is not until I listen to the song that I realise this is her dance interpretation of laughing in Jessie J's "Who's laughing now".*

Sarah's fieldnotes 12th September 2013

Within my description of Michelle's interaction with the children is an exploration of my own positioning within the Community Centre, a complex web of at once feeling part and apart. Despite my discomfort in these moments, where I experience my sense making as a clumsy weight, Michelle invites me in, she acknowledges my involvement in the making of this moment, smiling at me. Thus, it is not simply that Michelle is 'loving' and 'motherly' towards the children, but that she is with me; together we construct the feel of this moment through the formation of (positive, equal, sisterly) relational identity.

Thinking identity in this way, it is simultaneously communal and individual, structured and fluid. Imagined differences informed by dominant discourses locate identity possibilities within discursive contexts, yet identity is enacted within moments of interaction, it is fluid and contingent. In this moment both Michelle and I are watching the children. I wrote that 'she did not limit what they could put on, how loud it could be or how they could dance', but then neither did I. I wrote that she smiled at me, but then I smiled back. I wrote that she told me how she loves seeing them dance, but then I agreed. I wrote that she looked lovingly and motherly towards the children, but then I did too.

Here, both Michelle and I engage in identity work together, drawing upon dominant discourses we locate each other within discursive contexts of our classed, raced; womanhood, motherhood,

heterosexuality. An acknowledgement of the distances and proximities of our selves in these multiple contexts informs the way we manage our own behaviour and read the behaviour of each other. We both embody positions of white, estate, women and of course this is bound up with many complex values attached to motherhood and sexuality. The heteronormativity of our position shapes our response to the children's dancing, we recognise their behaviour within our stories of heteronormative adulthood, thus their performance is seen as play; the children create the other through their performance of it, their innocence is imagined through their play with sexualised behaviour. As adult play, the children's dancing takes on a sensationalised quality that reinforces their position as child. It is this contradiction that Michelle and I experience as endearing in the children's performance. Therefore, our identity work is constructed in relation to the children's identity work; our womanhood, motherhood, heterosexuality only comes into being through its momentary distance and proximity with the children's 'doing of' their childhood.

Of course this is a simplification, from the rest of my fieldnote it is clear that I felt discomfort in this moment. Thus, though we drew upon similar contexts to make sense of the moment, both Michelle and I may have felt and thought very differently about it. What I hope to make visible is that despite individual differences, Michelle and I drew upon discursive contexts to make sense of the moment and we undertook identity work to perform our self and thus co-produce the other.

I have maintained this fieldnote as I wrote it, a muddle of observation and theorisation, in order to expose the negotiation of identity work that takes place within interaction, to make visible the complex ways we experience everyday life. This is something I have documented as an ethnographer, yet I do not think this process of theorisation is unique, I would argue the same sense making is experienced by each individual, in a drawing from discursive contexts in order to position the self in relation to the other.

Within this moment I draw upon multiple contexts in an attempt to make sense of and thus position myself within the interaction. My discomfort is perhaps inevitable given my liminal positioning as a researcher within the Community Centre, my attempts to know often left me feeling slow and clumsy in my interactions, as I sought to both participate and capture meaning. The discursive context from which I draw my sense making of the children's dancing as 'sexualised' was a combination of academic and popular media representations at the time concerned with gendered and racialised sexualisation within pop music videos. My initial reading of Rosie's behaviour makes clear the ways in which discursive contexts shape the ways in which interaction is experienced and made sense of; if I had not recognised the lyrics of the song, I would still have read Rosie's dance as only 'sexualised'. Approaching 'sexualised' behaviours with curiosity rather than judgement (Bragg and Buckingham, 2009; 2013), allows space to explore the ways in which children engage with multiple contexts of sexuality through identity

work of appropriation as a distancing practice. In this way these 'sexualised' music videos may be conceived of as one discursive context within which the children actively construct their identity performance.

As I noted within the fieldnote, the children's dancing does not fit within a narrative of progression whereby their behaviour is directly influenced by the sexual content of the music videos; there is '*reflexive management of their behaviour'*. The children are actively engaged in the construction of this moment, drawing upon multiple discursive contexts to refine their behaviour. Their dancing may mirror some of the dance moves they observe within the music videos, yet others are rejected; this is a relational negotiation of behaviour, a communal beingness (Walkerdine, 2010). The children construct their self in relation to each other, Michelle and I, and the artists within the music videos, drawing upon their locatedness within gendered, classed, raced, heteronormative discursive contexts.

The children '*dance on the stage in groups, with a particular move being popular and others copying it – boys do dance but in an ironic way'*. Here it is clear that the children engage in identity work together, negotiating behaviour with each other and with Michelle and me. The boys' 'ironic' use of dance provides an explicit example of the construction of the other through the performance of taboo. The boys forge their masculine identity through their parodied effeminate performances on stage; by mirroring the dance moves of the "hyper-sexualised" female music artists the boys make sensible their masculine identities, through making visible the distance between their self and the dance performance. The more careful engagement of the girls with this play may be understood as a fear of proximity between their self and the 'hyper-sexualised' female of the music video. Hence, their play is more bounded within their gendered discursive context of respectability, heterosexuality, femininity. Nevertheless, the children's play within taboo may open up space for the subversion of discursive contexts, as explored in the following analysis.

## 'Carving out': agentic possibilities of taboo play

Moments of gossip form a powerful analogy for conceptualisations of identity as a relational construction. They are moments of interplay between individual identity, in-group alliances and out-group distancing. The power dimension of acts of gossip are palpable, as they centre around claims to know, moments of gossip make visible internal dynamics and the 'making through marking' of outside others (Skeggs, 2004: 12).

I am interested in the ways the making of selves within momentary interactions such as gossiping are located within discursive contexts. In what ways are personal interactions shaped by the discursive contexts within which we are located? How do discursive contexts shape possibilities of interactions? Can moments of interaction subvert discursive contexts?

*Joanna ushered us in, with great intensity and excitement.*

*'Sooo...what's the gossip?'*

*She threw her head back and laughed and flew into a great long monologue, barely stopping for air – her eyes wide and lit with delight.*

*'Well you'll never guess who's got a boyfriend' she said to me. Without pausing for my response, she continued: 'Well, guess what we found?...Behind the toilets, at our school, behind the toilets, that's where we go, you know, just if you want to chill out. Well, we saw Jack and Amy kissing! And Jack had his top off! And I was like, two things, one put your top on, and two, we saw you kissing and we're going to tell everyone.' She laughed...*

*Joanna found one girl particularly shameless – she explained – 'You don't know her, but anyway, she said she's pregnant!'*

*April asked, 'Oh is that Sky?'*

*'Yeah', said Joanna, 'Well, she puts this jumper up her top and says she's pregnant – she said she kissed a boy and now she's pregnant!'*

*April laughed. 'That's not even what you have to do!' I asked what she meant and she laughed, 'It's disgusting'.*

Sarah's fieldnotes 20th January 2014

In this moment of gossip, the girls' identity construction is located within multiple discursive contexts. I would argue that these various discursive contexts intersect at the point of The Estate. At seven years old, the girls are located within multiple and often contradictory discourses of childhood, a categorisation which acquires different meanings in different spaces. They are located within a gendered context of femininity, the context of their raced and classed position on The Estate, the context of sexuality and a context of female kinship and friendship. The intersection of these multiple discursive contexts may be conceived of as a space of struggle, attempts to re-articulate the categorisation of the self, a struggle too located within a context – the context of respectability. Drawing upon Skeggs' analysis of respectability as an 'amalgam of signs, economics and practices assessed from different positions within and outside of respectability' (Skeggs, 1997: 15), I am interested in the ways in which the girls negotiate their behaviours and that of the other through the discourses of respectability they have access to.

The girls' identity formation is located within multiple, knotted discursive contexts. However, this locatedness refers as much to a positioning as being positioned; it is not simply that the girls are located in discourse, it is that their access to discourses is located. Thus, the girls construct their identity through a drawing upon the discursive contexts within which they are located. It is this space, I think, that focusses conceptualisation on the active role the girls take in the articulation of their identity, the agency in their performance.

The girls actively 'carve out' (Connolly, 1995) their distinct identities through distancing themselves from aspects of their discursive contexts and appropriating behaviour associated with other discursive contexts, particularly that which is taboo. In the gossip, both Joanna and April

draw upon taboo in a resistance of their locatedness within childhood discourses through a display of knowledge of adult themes. Most obviously this is in the content of their gossip, in their discussion of kissing and pregnancy, specifically in their mocking of Sky who is less informed of the requirements of pregnancy.

This is an experimentation with adult ways of knowing (Connolly, 1995), thus, the girls make unclear and often contradictory references to adult themes. April's claim that 'what you have to do' in order to get pregnant is 'disgusting' may imply knowledge of sex and reproduction, yet, when I asked what she meant, she went on to talk about 'French kissing'. Therefore, agency is not solely located in moments of knowing and being, but also moments of claims to know and claims to be, even when these may not be recognised within dominant ways of knowing.

The gossip is not only an experimentation in adult ways of knowing, but also, adult ways of doing. Specifically, adult female relationship building, through the use of gossip to facilitate communal identity, defining themselves through the discussion of an other. In this way the girls are drawing upon multiple discourses to carve out their distinct identity through defining what they are not, they push against their positioning within discourses of childhood innocence through adult ways of knowing and doing, yet they do not talk about their own sexualised behaviour, drawing upon contexts of female sexual constraint, they 'other' and police overtly sexual behaviour, as in Joanna's claim that she is 'going to tell everyone'.

Drawing upon Walkerdine (1990), I am cautious of the conflation of resistance and progressive values. Though the girls may push against their particular location within discursive contexts of childhood, girlhood and innocence, the medium through which they may perform this resistance is entrenched in discourses of respectability and sexual constraint. Thus the consequences of such resistances are often contradictory, through their reliance on discourses of gender and heterosexuality, they reinforce dominant discourses which in turn work to reify and fix them in place.

The reading of resistance as the negotiation of contextual discourses, makes overt the locatedness of the child within systems of power. Although they may draw upon, negotiate and 'play' with ways of knowing, their identity construction must be understood within their gendered, classed, raced, childhood contexts.

## Making difference

An analysis of the locatedness of individual performances within systems of power draws attention to the contradictions and often paradoxical consequences of play as resistance. In the following discussion, I explore the discomforting play of children within the Community Centre

and question its generative possibilities. I argue that through a discomforting of social space play can interrupt dominant discourses.

The following fieldnote is a moment of discomfort: my own felt discomfort as the children played in a space of moral and political unease, toying with ideas of race, difference, violence; but also, a moment of discomfort in the sense of rupture and negotiation, a discomfort of social space.

> *I was in the 'living' style room with a few of the younger kids, they are 4-5 years old – Kabir (male), Sam (male), Carly (female), and a slightly older girl, Bryony, aged 8.*
>
> *Kabir was making them laugh by pulling a face where he looked up through his eyebrows and in a mock Middle Eastern accent he was saying 'What are you doing?' and 'I shoot you'/ 'I shoot you in the head'. The younger kids were rolling about with laughter but the older girl was getting annoyed and telling them to stop laughing. Sam said he's talking in his own language – but I said he's saying 'What are you doing' in a different voice. I asked Kabir where he got the voice from and he said he made it up. One of the kids says he can speak another language, but when I asked Kabir he didn't answer.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 28th November 2013

The visibility of Kabir within the Community Centre is high; his family are one of the few Black families to use the Community Centre. He attends the Community Centre with his older sister, Tanja, who spends much of her time negotiating peace following the many conflicts her brother has with other children. Both Tanja and Kabir were born in Britain after their parents immigrated to the UK, English is their first language and they have lived on The Estate all their lives. Their visibility has formed a space within the Community Centre for Kabir as a 'character'; his energy, confidence and humour, coupled with his size and age (he is four but very small for his age) create a spectacle around his performance. He is often the centre of attention and feeds off of this energy, becoming louder and louder, his speech faster and faster, as he spits jokes and profanity.

This fieldnote refers to one such performance, a caricature of a 'foreign villain'. Kabir's performances are physical; he uses his small body and the speed of his movements for comedic effect, distorting his face and body in jerky, broken movements. His 'foreign villain' skit centred on a foreign accent and an aggressive questioning of his audience. He jumped around the room, moving to each spectator, leaning in close to their face, pointing, and declaring 'What are you doing?' Seemingly enraged by their laughter, in character, Kabir flew at his audience, crying 'I shoot you; I shoot you in the head'. His audience thrilled, continued their laughter, further encouraging Kabir's performance.

In many ways, Kabir was in a position of power within this exchange. He instigated the joke; he created the caricature of the 'foreign villain', drawing upon multiple discourses of difference and danger. In the moment of the joke, he was both idolised by the other children and ushered into their group, he re-affirmed his position as a 'character' of the Community Centre. Yet, for his audience, Kabir's performance is connected to markers of difference. Though he maintains his

coveted position of 'character' within the Community Centre, this is necessarily a position of difference. Thus, his jokes and caricatures are attached to him as another example of his difference; the accent of his 'foreign villain' becomes conflated with his Blackness, it is not a joke; 'he's talking in his own language'.

I was not the only uncomfortable witness of this exchange, Bryony, slightly older than the rest of the group, appeared frustrated and annoyed with Kabir's performance and the younger children's reaction to it. She shouted at the laughing children, telling them to 'Shut-up', yet she was also angry with Kabir, imploring him to 'Stop it'. Her discomfort appears to stem not simply from an annoyance with either the children or Kabir, rather a discomfort in the exchange between the two. Bryony recognised that the children's laughter was directed at Kabir, that there was a power dimension to this exchange; that they were laughing *at* him. Through her urging Kabir to 'Stop it', Bryony highlights the part he plays in this exchange, that his performance is at once forming alliances and building barriers.

The felt discomfort of me and Bryony may be understood as a discomforting of social space. In this moment the children, to a certain extent, occupied a space apart from regulation, away from the social norms maintained within the Community Centre. They were in the room of the Community Centre aesthetically similar to the living room of the home, set up with sofas directed at the television focal point. This room was often left unstaffed by adults, used as a place of 'chill out' by the children, away from the organised activities of 'making' and 'playing'. Of course my presence within the room shifted this; however, the children were often aware of my positioning as different from other adults within the Community Centre. They would remark that I do not 'Tell them off'; I would not challenge their behaviour, at least not in the same way as the other adults within the Community Centre, often asking them questions about what they were doing and why.

In this way, the exchange may be understood as a moment of rupture and re-negotiation of positions. Kabir's performance is for the benefit of his audience and himself, through the sharing of the joke he becomes part of the group. The act of the 'foreign villain' makes sensible the shared identity of the group; they are together in their distance from the other. However, aspects of the 'foreign villain' become entangled with Kabir's difference; that he is Black and Sam and Carly are White. Thus, the 'foreign' accent of Kabir's performance is read with his Blackness as a marker of difference, Sam cannot see Kabir's 'foreign villain' as an act, it is part of him: 'He can speak another language'. Bryony's call for the children to stop, is an interruption, she makes clear this form of humour is unacceptable. Is this a recognition of power? Is it an enforcement of social norms and values inhibiting play based on dangerous conceptions of race?

Martin, like Kabir, is upheld as a 'character' of the Community Centre. His seemingly uninhibited dancing is relished by the young people and adults alike, who often encourage him to take to the stage. Both Kabir and Martin occupy an interesting space within the Community Centre, they are at once the essence of the place, conceived of as what the Community Centre is all about, whilst seen as other, different in some way. It is this performance of difference which forms the tension in both fieldnotes, it is difference which shifts the dynamic of the moment from togetherness to distancing:

> *Sitting in the hall playing Noughts and Crosses with James, the place erupted with the thump of drum and bass, Martin was throwing shapes, and himself, manically around the stage; popping, jumping and break dancing. A crowd soon gathered around to watch, laughing and cheering him on. James was frustrated, muttering 'He's making a fool of himself'. As the cheers and bustle of the crowd subsided it became clear a group of onlookers were filming Martin. James was enraged, shouting over 'Snide', he explained to me that the film 'Will end up on YouTube'. We continued our game; soon after, Martin slumped down next to James, panting, red in the face and soaked through with sweat. James sighed, 'You know they were taking the piss out of you', Martin shrugged his shoulders.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 9th January 2014

Both Kabir and Martin perform critical roles within the Community Centre. As the personification of difference, they fit very neatly into a story of the Community Centre as a place for all, whilst their overt difference makes possible a bonding through practices of othering. It is by celebrating the 'characters' of the Community Centre that the normative is asserted, moments of recognition of difference unite the group. These processes do not go unnoticed, as observed in this fieldnote, James is aware of the distancing practices of the group, implying a power dynamic when he claims the onlookers are acting 'Snide'. As in the joke initiated by Kabir, Martin is not absent from these processes, he was aware of his audience and tailors his dance moves to incorporate known favourites; as James acknowledges 'He's making a fool of *himself*'. When confronted by James, Martin simply shrugs his shoulders, though he appears aware that the group were 'Taking the piss' out of him, he does not seem angered by this in the same way James is. There is a value attached to Martin's position as a 'character' of the Community Centre, perhaps it is this that shapes his reaction to these distancing practices, which both celebrate his difference whilst reifying them.

## Section 2: Habitus as foregrounded history

> '…the disjuncture of place, the everyday, self and interest can produce a particularly visceral sensation of shame. It is felt in the rupture when bodies cannot or will not fit the place – when, seemingly, there is no place to hide' (Probyn, 2004: 3)

In this Section I will explore habitus as affect, asking how is the habitus felt, what are the everyday consequences of being made through the markings of habitus? Developing the discussion of the previous Section, my analysis focusses in on the power of dominant discourses to make and

remake the self. I will explore the processes through which the habitus is forged through the disciplining of the body and assert that these moments of rupture form the site of identity formation. In this way, I suggest that rather than that which is forgotten as history, the habitus is the foregrounding of history; it is, as Probyn articulates, a 'particularly visceral sensation'. Therefore, my analysis draws attention to moments of reflection, accounts of a lack of fit between the bodily ease of the habitus and the dominant values of particular fields.

The data I will draw upon in this Section are taken from the time I spent in the Primary School on The Estate. I conceptualise the school as a field within which particular formations of self are produced and reproduced (Ingram, 2009; 2011). Though the school may be seen as a site of the reproduction of middle class culture, I think this is a simplification which does not account for the ongoing 'diversification' of the British education system (Exley, 2012; Ball, 2016), which enables the reformation of the school's ethos in light of ideas about what education is for. As outlined in the contextual Chapter, the Primary School became an Academy in 2013, a shift transforming conceptualisations of the schools purpose and therefore impacting pedagogical practices (see Chapter 2, Section 2: A failing market). Thus, this school is not simply reproducing middle class culture, rather, through accounts of who 'these kids' are and what 'these kids' need, the school reifies an estate culture as defined through lack.

## Moments of rupture as the site of identity formation

> 'Symbolic power works partly through the control of other people's bodies and belief that is given by the collectively recognized capacity to act in various ways on deep-rooted linguistic and muscular patterns of behaviour, either by neutralizing them or reactivating them to function mimetically' (Bourdieu, 1990: 69)

In the above quotation Bourdieu explores the connections between the individual and society, engaging with the question of how the social forms the body. He suggests that the body is controlled through 'symbolic power'; the social construction of symbolic economies, within which particular capitals, values, beliefs, behaviours are recognised as legitimate. It is the coming together of these dominant ways of being within the field which enact on the body, this collective recognition controls the body through processes of 'neutralizing' behaviour and forging the body as 'mimetic'. My interest is in this moment of being acted upon, or perhaps more accurately, moments of acting within the power dynamics of the field. Specifically, my analyses explore the experience of this making, the felt consequences of becoming.

This analytical lens is informed by a post-structural questioning that begins from the premise that categorisations 'do not precede enactments but, rather, they become knowable and come alive in repetitive acts, embodied and corporeal activities' (Nayak, 2007: 7). My analysis draws upon the work of Hollingworth (2015) which conceptualises class as a performative process, that 'class is read on the body, and thus class comes to be made through these performances and readings'

(Hollingworth, 2015: 4). In many ways, this theorisation of class as performative, as 'autonomous from 'objective' occupational classifications' (2015: 4), is in tension with Bourdieu's understanding of the social formation of the body:

> 'The body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it enacts the past, bringing it back to life. What is "learned by the body" is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is' (Bourdieu, 1990: 73)

Probyn (2004) is critical of this conceptualisation of the body, which Bourdieu contains within a 'dour and vague evocation of emotion', arguing that this 'conceptually means that the body is captured in and by the social' (Probyn, 2004: 12). Bourdieu's logic implies it is the 'feeling body that has the consequence of summoning the past'; that 'the body feels, enacts an emotion, and then brings into being the past' (2004: 12). As Probyn asserts:

> 'The exciting ideas about the body, or about agents being active within the making of their worlds, are undercut if the body that "is" just constitutes a container for what it has been' (Probyn, 2004: 13)

It is within this tension that the following analysis is located. I draw upon Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power as a force of production and reproduction of dominant ways of being, yet bring in the concept of performativity to move beyond an understanding of the body as 'a spectral past as future' (Probyn, 2004: 12).

In the fieldnote below Megan is being disciplined, Linda's punishment of Megan's behaviour indicates that her actions are unacceptable within the school. In my time at the school Megan's behaviour was often disciplined, she made sense of these encounters in conversation with me, reasoning that she would alter her behaviour in line with school expectations. Yet, in this moment of correction, Megan was unable to rationalise her position. For Megan, Linda was punishing her for an act beyond her own making; 'I can't help it'.

> *Friday home time, the class are a tense combination of excitement and exhaustion. Trying desperately to sit still in order to be called to retrieve their IPad for the weekend, the children seem to make strange involuntary movements, their bodies shaking with anticipation. Megan is finally called to get hers; she seems to melt with relief, relaxing for a moment in her seat before pulling herself up and walking to the far side of the classroom. She visibly tenses as she hits the back of a queue, as Linda the teaching assistant struggles to keep up with the demand of the children. 'For God sake' mutters Megan, frustrated. Linda explodes, 'Right Megan, that's it, you will not be taking your IPad home' her voice breaks with anger, her face reddened. After a brief moment of shock, where she appears to not even take a breath, Megan begins to wail, pleading for forgiveness. She struggles to speak, between sobs and gulps of air, Megan explains 'I-can't-help-it…it-just-came-out'. She is told to sit down.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 27th March 2014

Megan's claim that her behaviour was beyond conscious control fits neatly with Bourdieu's notion of habitus as embodied behaviours and mannerisms. The habitus is shaped by early

experiences, Megan's behaviour is an internalisation of her positioning, influenced by her family and The Estate where she lives. The school is one of the first moments Megan is confronted with difference, her behaviour may be conceptualised as a lack of fit between her self and the school. As habitus, Megan cannot account for her behaviour, she cannot rationalise her punishment, which she experiences as a challenge to her very being. However, theorisation of the habitus as semi-conscious, as forgotten history, leaves unexplored this experience. I am keen to explore these moments where we are faced with challenges to habitual ways of being, can we know our habitus and what are the affective consequences of acknowledging the perceived inadequacies of our selves?

Megan's reaction to Linda's discipline is embodied, she loses her social composure, struggles to breathe and cannot articulate her apology. The disciplining of Megan occurs within power relations; dynamic symbolic economies of value, conceptualised by Bourdieu as field. An account of the relationship between habitus and field may provide some insight into why Linda perceives Megan's behaviour to be unacceptable; socially locating Megan's behaviour as a lack of the right forms of capital, a discomfort with the 'rules of the game'. However, this analysis leaves unexplored the affective work inherent in feeling difference, understanding this difference and recognising this difference as a de-valued position. In this moment, the 'forgotten history' of the habitus is foregrounded, it is made visible in her experience of the punishment as an injustice. Despite this, Megan accepts Linda's reproach and sits down. What then does this rupture, this 'foregrounding', mean for theorisations of habitus?

This analysis makes visible a moment of change, a highlighting of difference, from which Megan's sense of self is formed. Conceptualising habitus as the foregrounding of history brings these moments of rupture into understandings of identity construction: that habitus has histories both embodied and felt in the present.

## Disciplining the self

I want to further explore this idea of habitus as foregrounded history, through an analysis of the reflexive management of behaviour. This analysis is not to challenge Bourdieu's conception of the body formed through symbolic power, rather to draw attention to agency, and to explore the affective labour involved in the making and remaking of identities. Through the following analysis, I argue that habitus may be shaped through the disciplining of the self; that the body is shaped by symbolic power, but that it is not simply acted upon. Drawing upon an interview extract with Lyla, a Secondary School aged girl, I explore the active role she takes in the management of her self in order to maintain distance and distinction from devalued embodied practices.

*Sarah: so what were you saying about how you find living on The Estate?*

*Lyla: it's good yeah, it's just the amount of language that comes out of their mouths, all I hear is f-ing c-u-n-t, it's like, shout somewhere else*

*Sarah: who's shouting that then*

*Lyla: just everyone, all the kids, earlier I saw someone about 7 years old and he was f-ing and blinding. I even told him, you're not supposed to swear at your age!*

*Sarah: so what do you think it is that's making them think that that's okay to swear?*

*Lyla: their parents, yeah*

*Sarah: what do you think that'll affect their lives, do you think if you act like that, how does that affect you?*

*Lyla: probably just makes it worse, what did you say?*

*Sarah: I said if you were going around swearing like that how do you think that's going to affect your life?*

*Lyla: I think it'll be really bad because say you go to a job interview or something, you can't just say oh I do this, you'd just start swearing, you're never going to get the job are ya and once you keep swearing then it's a habit, it turns into a habit and you swear when you don't even know*

Interview with Lyla, Secondary School aged female

My initial thoughts on Lyla's sense-making were grounded in conceptualisations of habitus, as a recognition of the processes through which habitual behaviour forges positions of difference. In this piece, Lyla constructs two moments of difference, firstly between herself and the swearing children and secondly, between the swearing children and an imagined future authority. In both moments of difference the habitus of the swearing children is de-valued, by Lyla in her claim that 'you're not supposed to swear at your age' and by the imagined authority figure in the sense that 'you're never going to get the job'. Thus, this interview extract makes visible the ways in which habitus shapes interaction through the enactment of behaviour 'when you don't even know'.

Yet, Lyla is not recounting an event, she is not re-telling a story of misfit between 'Estate habitus' and the habitus of an other. Rather, she talks of anticipated judgement. In this sense Lyla is talking of identity work; not the semi-conscious, embodied history of habitus, but active moments of the explicit making of distinction. Her recounting of the story of the swearing child forms the groundwork from which she can produce her own positioning as distanced from and superior to the 'unruly' children of The Estate. Moreover, Lyla acknowledges the development of habitual behaviour: 'once you keep swearing then it's a habit'. It is this awareness which the concept of habitus does not cover, if habitus is marked by its earliest experiences, how can we make sense of these moments of reflection, body management and disciplining of behaviour?

## Distinction/Disagreement

Continuing this line of analysis, I now want to consider the ways in which moving between fields foregrounds habitus, in the making visible of differential valuing across space. Through my

analysis of the following extract taken from an interview with two Primary School aged children, Jack and Rosetta, I explore the interrelation of fields and argue that dominant discourses may be drawn upon as resources introducing markers which shift symbolic power within the field.

In this moment Jack and Rosetta partake in identity work together in order to forge distance between their self and their positioning as Primary School pupils. The interview took place at the Community Centre, forming a dynamic within which both children had to negotiate multiple identities, that is identifications and dis-identifications, with both people and place.

*Sarah: I know what I was going to ask you Jack, about that Performance Based Learning (this refers to an anonymised learning programme implemented by the school), do you like that?*

*Jack: no I hate it*

*Rosetta: it's quite easy but not that much*

*Sarah: you don't like it either?*

*Jack: the teachers have to say it over and over again and it keeps getting (laughs)*

*Rosetta: (in dramatized sing-song voice) put four in the maths table put six on the resource table, take them away, ohhh I need this (laughs)*

*Sarah: and you don't like it?*

*Rosetta: it's alright, it happens every day, and if we start talking we have to do it every day in play too*

*Jack: to practice it*

*Sarah: do you all stay in the same class to do it or do you have to move?*

*Rosetta: no have to change class, I have to go to year six to do it, because I'm too clever (Rosetta is in Year Three but has her maths lesson is with the middle ability Year Four group)*

*Jack: no that's her learning group*

*Rosetta: no that's for maths and also for literacy*

*Jack: I'm in my normal class*

*Rosetta: yeah, that's the babyish class (laughs)*

*Jack: no it's not*

*Sarah: how do you think they choose who goes in what class?*

*Rosetta: they choose who's the cleverest*

*Sarah: how do they know?*

*Jack: no they don't!*

*Rosetta: they check our old maths see who is the best, me and my friend Annie*

*Jack: the goodest*

Interview with Primary School aged Male and Female

Jack and Rosetta utilise the social space formed by the interview to mock the 'Performance Based Learning' of the School. The Community Centre is both physically and socially distanced from the school, specifically the performance based learning of the classroom. Thus, the children negotiate their position within the interview as both school pupils and Community Centre members, drawing upon the multiple and varied values and discourses of the two places to inform their construction of the practice of performance based learning. Jack makes a joke of the repetition of his teacher, calling out the script like teaching practice: *'the teachers have to say it over and over again and it keeps getting (laughs)'*. Rosetta takes this play further in an appropriation of her teacher's sing-song act, a performance which unites the children in laughter and in opposition to their in-school self's.

The distance between the children in the interview and in the classroom forms space for critical reflection, a space for performance and negotiation with me and each other that they are more than their in-school self. This space was particularly relished by Rosetta, taking the opportunity to carve out an alternative identity, she utilises her embodied ease with performance based learning to mimic her teacher; as she claims, 'it's quite easy'. In this way, the distance between the school and the Community Centre became blurred in the very act of discussing the Primary School within the interview. Therefore, despite a communal distancing through Jack and Rosetta's mocking of the performance based learning, the discussion introduced another school discourse of distinction into the interview. My questioning of Jack about performance based learning introduced a tension between his Community Centre self and his in-school identification, and between his experience and that of Rosetta. My introduction of school as a topic of discussion to the interview shifted the dynamic between Rosetta and Jack, enabling Rosetta to draw upon school discourses to undermine Jacks position and valorise her own within the interview. Rosetta informs me with particular glee that Jack is in the *'babyish class'* and that they *'choose who's the cleverest'* to go into the top classes, a group she positions herself within. Rosetta's access to school discourses of ability acts as a resource through which she positions Jack within binaries of clever/not clever, babyish/mature.

Though Rosetta constructs the foundations of her claims of distinction upon dominant school discourses of ability, Jack refuses her positioning of him. He refutes her claim that his class is '*babyish*', further rejecting that groups are allocated based on ability, insisting they select who is '*goodest'*. Jack disagrees with Rosetta's claims to distinction, undermining her assumed high ability, he rejects the dominant school discourse of ability, highlighting the conflation of ability with behaviour; Rosetta is not clever, she is only good.

This analysis demonstrates how distinction is produced in and through struggle where fields are not tightly bounded and are inherently relational. As such, although the interview was conducted

within the Community Centre, dominant school discourses of ability remain powerful in the positioning of actors beyond and between the field of the school. Moving between fields foregrounds the habitus through the making visible of differential valuing of behaviour, speech and other embodied practices. My introduction of school discourses into the interview shifted the dynamic between Jack and Rosetta, enabling Rosetta to draw upon her embodied ease with school practices to challenge Jack's relatively dominant position within the Community Centre. Rosetta's challenge to Jack's position brings to the fore the very different ways his behaviour is valued in the school and the wider estate. For example, Jack's embodiment of masculine adult behaviours are valued within the Community Centre, as discussed previously, adult like practices were often encouraged and praised. This was framed in a very different way than many popular and academic representations of the 'hurried child' (Elkind, 2001), in that it was interpreted as a reinforcement of the position of the child. The parody of adult behaviours by children strengthened their distance from these embodied practices. Rather than making sensible what they are not through play, these practices are read as problematic within the school in their opposition to dominant representations of the ideal child. It is this in school reading of the children's behaviour that I know want to turn to, in order to explore the processes by which the embodiment of habitus, fixes particular bodies, undermining possibilities for the active negotiations of positionality within the field.

## 'These kids don't play'

> 'Working-class childhood is problematic because of the many ways in which it has been pathologized over the last century and a half…the children of the poor are only a measure of what they lack as children: they are a falling short of a more complicated and richly endowed "real" child' (Steedman, 1986: 127-128)

One of the things I was told about 'these kids' whilst at the school was that they 'don't play'. This was repeated to me by the teacher of the class I was in and other staff on 'playground duty'. I found this statement jarring, not only because it was not how I made sense of the children's behaviour, but because of the inherent de-valuing of what the children were doing in its lack and distance from what it means to be a child. Play is central in representations of childhood, entwined with assumptions around childhood as a natural state of innocence and being carefree. As such, the reading of the children's behaviour as in essence not play is a symbolic violence, in that 'these kids' come to represent the antithesis of childhood. The process of renaming the acts of children within the school as not play involves a particular imagining of the subject, their motivations and experience of playful behaviours. The recognition of an action as play implies something about its purpose and consequences, play suspends meaning; it is distanced from necessity and everyday mundanity. Therefore, as the fieldnote below demonstrates, it was not that the children were not partaking in play like behaviours, rather there was something implicit in the evocation of "these kids" by the teachers which made their play an impossibility. In the following analysis, I focus

on this questioning of who 'these kids' are and what are the processes through which their play is renamed as not play?

> *The school playground was filled with the roaring noise of a contained mass, senses overloaded, sounds slip into silence. In an attempt to focus my thoughts, I look around noting the various groups of children. The majority of the playground is engulfed with a sprawling game of football, teams swelling well above eleven-a-side, all boys except one girl who plays each break time. Under the gazebo, commando crawling down the steps, Tommy barks orders at his 'men', visibly frustrated that they don't quite understand the rules of warfare – 'Obviously you die, use your nut!' Around the side of the main school building where the playground narrows into an almost private corner, I see the commotion of ongoing feuds. As if ritual, these playground fights follow the same pattern, instigated by boys, defused by girls.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 28th March 2014

My writing of this fieldnote, as an attempt to capture the happening of the playground and was informed by my reading of feminist academics who talk about working class childhood as defined against childhood itself, as defined by lack (Reay, 2000; Steedman, 1986). I thought that by exploring what these kids did I may better understand what was considered 'proper' play. In a way I was working backwards, based on these theoretical claims to explore what was unsaid in claims that 'these kids don't play' – namely what do these kids lack that makes their play not play?

I will focus on the example of a group of boys who each play time organised complex computer style army games. The teacher continually focused his claims of absent play on these boys. They were identified as 'naughty' as a group with Tommy being seen as beyond 'bad' behaviour understood simply as absence of behaviour, he was often described as apathetic, lazy, bored, embarrassed.

Yet, in play Tommy was the leader of the pack, he commanded his peers, beginning each play with a delegation of roles and an enforcement of rules. The game was an imaginary war game, based around Call of Duty, a computer game all the boys idolised whether they played it or not. Their game spread across the playground and developed a narrative across multiple play times. Their behaviour was visible to the teacher yet was not understood as play.

One way I thought about the adult interpretation of their 'play' as an absence of play in the examples of football and fights is that it didn't fit the conventional view of child's play as imaginary. In these examples the kids were not playing as they were just doing: they were doing football, doing fighting.

But this explanation doesn't seem to fit the example of the warring boys, I think Skeggs' discussion of the 'condensing, sticking and fixing process' of identity formation is helpful here (Skeggs, 2004: 2). She talks about the embodiment of identity as a power relation. Using the

example of 'being cool' and 'acting cool' she argues signifiers of cool may be attached and detached from the privileged white body yet are read as inherent on the black body. In this way some bodies may propertise their personhood, in the sense that it becomes what they possess rather than who they are. This enables them to utilise the value associated with identities, to attach and detach symbolic markers of identity in order to achieve relative positions of power within the field. The coming together of multiple privileges at the site of the body, endows these structurally produced bodies with the ability to do. As a possession, privileged bodies are conceptualised as agentic, they are a source of power from which to act with purpose and meaning. The bodies of the structurally de-valued carry the weight of their disadvantage. For the marked body, all action collapses into a naturalisation of bodily difference. Therefore, action is understood as inaction, as a manifestation of their being.

We may understand play in this same way, the boys' actions may be thought of as being not playing. The violence and hypermasculinity of their war game is so entrenched within their embodied identity of white working class that it cannot be detached from their selves and understood as play, they just are: these kids don't play.

This process of making through the marking of bodies has been most clearly articulated by Hall in his theorisation of race as a floating signifier. Hall conceptualises race as:

> 'a signifier which can be linked to other signifiers in a representation. Its meaning is relational and it is constantly subject to redefinition in different cultures, different moments' (Hall, 1997)

The idea of a sign can be understood as formed of two components: the signifier and the signified. As Lentin explains, the 'signifier is a representation', this can be a word, drawing, symbol, or even body language, 'the signified on the other hand is the idea or object represented by the signifier' (Lentin, 2008: 25). Therefore, Lentin (2008) notes, race is a signifier which represents something else. In other words, race is a system of thinking about the differences between different bodies; this difference is invoked as a signifier, and what is signified is a social position. In this way, knowledges about bodily differences we think of as 'racial' shift and change across time and space, race is therefore an ideology which creates and maintains systems of domination. Hall asserts that:

> 'differences exist in the world, but what matters are the systems of thought and language we use to make sense of the difference' (Hall 1997)

Thinking back to the example of Tommy and the warring boys, their raced, classed and gendered bodies act as signifiers of intangible aspects of who they are understood to be. For example, their bodies come to signify danger, violence, and disorder:

> '…signifiers refer to the systems and concepts of the classification of a culture to its making meaning practices. And those things gain their meaning, not because of what they

> contain in their essence, but in the shifting relations of difference, which they establish with other concepts and ideas in a signifying field (Hall, 1997)

As such, conceptualising the body as a floating signifier, helps us to think through the ways in which difference is read onto the body within a social context. That the body, as a site of distinction, is relationally produced and reproduced within the field. Therefore, classifications do not arise from the individual, as some essential quality of who they are, rather they come into meaning through structured relations of difference. These relations are structured in the sense that the signifying field is the coming together of dominant discourses which are historically, socially and culturally located within systems of domination.

## Embarrassment as resistance

I would like to continue this analysis by further exploring Tommy's position within the school, particularly, the difficulty with which he embodies the 'ideal learner'. I will be drawing upon Hollingworth's (2015) analysis of the ways in which the reverence of performances of White middle class identities within the education context produces readings of some classed and raced performances and antithetical to educational success. I will explore the ways in which Tommy's 'comportment, demeanour and behaviour come to construct [him] as the impossible learner' (Hollingworth, 2015: 1241), building upon Youdell (2003) and Rollock's (2007) ethnographic work in schools where certain ways of walking or talking are viewed as confrontational.

Tommy appeared to experience school as a series of embarrassing events, a continuous undermining of his position as 'leader of the pack', experiencing a demotion each time he entered the school. In the time I spent with Tommy in both the playground and the Community Centre he exuded confidence and ease, yet in the classroom Tommy was non-descript, neither 'bright' nor 'challenging'. He was described as 'disengaged' by his teachers, placed in low ability groupings, Tommy slowly disappears from view as he sinks lower into his seat, his few contributions confined to huffs and puffs of exasperation.

There seemed to be a significant lack of fit between the identity work Tommy invested in and valued highly, modelled on a specifically adult form of masculinity and heterosexuality, and the performance based learning he experienced within the school. The school had recently introduced a new teaching model, highly embodied, learning is performed through sing-song repetition, with key concepts represented through flamboyant actions. Such performances require a particular embodied and affective relationship with learning. Engagement necessitated a rhythmic body, gentle movements and measured speech patterns. Mirroring the teacher, the children perform sentences; each word assigned a gesture, each said in slow, soft, musical tones. Moreover, the structure of the teaching model required an affective relationship of trust between the child and the teacher. The teaching model delivers content in small, short stages, thus the child remains in

ignorance of the purposes of the activity, the rationale a safely guarded secret until the grand reveal.

The pedagogy of the teaching model centres on assumptions of childhood as an empty state, a neutral condition awaiting the imparting of knowledge. The children are imagined as blissfully ignorant, happily following the teacher through each stage, not questioning the meaning or purposes of what they are learning. Tommy's overtly adult, masculine identity work is necessarily in opposition to this. His affective response to the teaching is not the joy of anticipated enlightenment; rather he is sceptical and self-aware. He refuses to participate in the body management required, he does not soften his voice to sing his response; he joins in with monotone, truncated speech. He does not keep up with the flow of arm gestures, his body appears heavy, his head rarely unsupported by his hand, elbows on desk.

I am unsure whether Tommy is above or below this teaching: his adult-like mannerisms and disinterested defiance appear to position Tommy above the embarrassment of performance based learning, yet his teachers informed me of his low ability; that he is below this learning, he simply cannot participate. Perhaps, this distinction is irrelevant, what can be said is that in some way Tommy is distanced from the performance based learning of the school. Furthermore, this distancing is entangled with affect; Tommy's embarrassment of performance based learning is both a consequence and a response to his positioning. Thus, embarrassment becomes an affective position from which Tommy may form his identity. His embarrassment of school activities, from performance based learning in the classroom to singing in assemblies, is a tool with which he carves out his masculine adult identity in opposition to the assumed childhoods of 'school children'.

As with the girls' gossip, Tommy's resistance is necessarily contradictory. Though his embarrassed performance may reassert his position amongst his peers, through an undermining of his de-valuing within the school, this very performance feeds into this de-valuing. Tommy's distance from performance based learning is understood as a distance from childhood itself. His apparent rejection of childhood identity work means that his behaviour can only be known as lack; childhood as with all categorisations is connected to the body; the body and behaviour are often conflated, thus in moments where body and behaviour contradict, action is read as non-action. Tommy's investment in masculine adult behaviours does not make sense when read on his child body, therefore, this behaviour may only be conceived of in the negative: as the absence of child behaviour and the capacity to learn 'properly'.

# Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have drawn upon my ethnographic data to further explore and illuminate a theorisation of identity as relationally constructed. Working within the tension outlined in my theoretical Chapter, my analysis of everyday performances considered the importance of a bifocality that recognises the interconnection between agency and structural inequality. Drawing upon Bourdieu's habitus as a conceptual tool to explore the ways in which the body is shaped by the social and the possibilities of individual bodies to reshape the social, I think with post-structural theorisations of identity as performance to explore habitus as 'foregrounded history'. This conceptualisation of habitus as 'foregrounded history' builds upon feminist works with Bourdieu, which emphasise the affective nature of the habitus (Probyn, 2004). Developing this, in the second Section of this Chapter, my analysis focussed on the affective consequences of habitus formation. I explored moments of rupture, the making visible of one's habitus through its lack of fit with dominant values within the field, through an analysis of processes of body management and the affective labour associated with this.

# Chapter 7: The Community Centre

## Introduction

In this Chapter I explore the Community Centre as manifestation of community. The Community Centre formed the key site of my ethnography, in many ways I came to know The Estate through the Community Centre's positioning within it. Thus, there are many absences within my analysis; my experience of The Estate was mediated through the dominant discourses of the Community Centre. I focus this Chapter on the constitution of community within the Community Centre. Working with the theoretical developments of my previous analysis Chapters of being place(d) (see Chapter 5) and relational identity construction (see Chapter 6), I explore moments of identification as located within imagined histories and futures of The Estate and the Community Centre's role within it.

The Chapter is structured so as to zoom in to the Community Centre as a key site of The Estate. Beginning with a more abstract account of the discursive construction of the Community Centre; I then move on to explore the field dynamics which produce and reproduce conceptualisations of community.

I begin, in Section 1, with an analysis of the connection between the individual and the communal; exploring the processes by which personal narratives are weaved within broader narratives of community. Furthering this conceptualisation, I complicate dominant discourses of decline, considering the ways in which multiple narratives of cycles of decline feed into, contradict and confuse an overarching story of decline.

In Section 2, I introduce a theorisation of the Community Centre as contact zone as a way of thinking about the processes by which community is produced within moments of negotiation within unequal power dynamics. I think about the Community Centre as a space of normative identity construction but also of resistance, agency and disagreement. I question whether the researcher is able to know difference drawing upon a visiting researcher's apparent ontological block and my own interview as a discomforting telling.

## Section 1: The Community Centre as discursive construction

In this Section, I further my account of the discursive construction of The Estate, through an analysis of the social production of dominant discourses of it. Drawing upon my conceptualisation of discourse outlined in the contextual Chapter (see Chapter 2, Section 1: Fictionalising The Estate), and the theorisation of 'being place(d)' developed within the first analysis Chapter (see Chapter 5), I explore the entwinement of structure and agency in place making. Through a focus on an analysis of everyday talk about the Community Centre, I suggest that dominant discourse

is produced and reproduced in everyday interactions, and that knowledge of the Community Centre is constructed through the active weaving together of multiple representations. There are inherent power dynamics at play in the production of dominant discourses, but these are not simply top-down, rather cyclical and diffuse. I conceptualise power as the possibility of individuals and institutions to access discourse as a resource. I suggest that power lies in the ability to name; to claim to know; and to resist and redefine such positionings. Discourse is therefore socially produced, in that it is shaped by histories which structure its reproduction, and is formed inter-relationally, through connections between personal and 'community' narratives.

I start by exploring the process through which personal experiences are made sense of and given meaning through their connections to histories of the Community Centre. I argue this process is not simply the positioning of one's experience as the same or different from wider social trajectories; rather, this telling of the Community Centre shapes the experience of being there, these processes are entwined.

I then focus on one dominant discourse that circulates within The Estate, which is a narrative of decline. I do this in order to explore in detail the dynamic between structure and agency in the formation of dominant discourse. Applying Butler's (1990) concept of performativity, I discuss the production of this dominant discourse as an object of belief, that it is produced in moments of enactment. Through an account of the weaving together of individual and community stories, I argue that dominant discourses may be thought of as a 'structuring' structure.

## The production and reproduction of dominant discourses

Here I explore the production of shared identity. I suggest that the Community Centre is a space within which dominant discourses of The Estate are produced and reproduced through the telling together of the personal and the communal, the present and the past. I argue that dominant discourses are formed by and formative of everyday lived experiences. This Section engages with extracts taken from interviews with Joe, a youth worker at the Community Centre, and Lyla, a Secondary School aged young person who attends the youth club there. I focus my analysis on the active production of dominant discourses of community formed and performed within the interview.

In this first extract, Joe talks about the value attached to Estate identity within the Community Centre. He draws upon notions of shared history as the foundations of community, to argue that it is his and Sharon's positioning which is the source of respect from the kids.

> *Joe: yeah what you find is uh with Sharon, being here for so long, Sharon has got that respect from all of the kids, she's been here fifteen years and I mean, like I said, their parents would have come here. Even if they've just moved to the area, they know who*

*Sharon is and they have that respect for her and they trust her and she's like a mother figure to the majority of this estate and you know whether that's fifteen years ago or today the respect for her hasn't changed, um maybe the attitudes of the young people have changed but they know what she's like and they know not to push her too much as she'll bite back, but she is just a mother figure of this estate and it hasn't changed from when it first opened, fifteen years on and she's still the same*

*Sarah: and how do you think people react to people coming from the outside to work in the Community Centre, do you think that they react better to people that are local or...*

*Joe: yeah with me, what I've seen personally, obviously me being local, from The Estate, growing up round here, um sort of where it's worked in my favour, sort of Sharon living round here works in her favour, I've seen youth workers who work here before and they've just never been able to make a connection with the young people because they're not from this estate they don't know how to challenge you, they don't know how to work that much*

Interview with Joe, Youth Worker male

Sharon is inextricably linked to The Estate, her connections are not simply individual relations, as a 'mother figure' of The Estate her relationships are necessarily interconnections. Sharon is embedded in The Estate's collective memory; generations have attended the Community Centre, 'it hasn't changed from when it first opened, fifteen years on and she's still the same'. In Joe's discussion he uses representations of Sharon and the Community Centre interchangeably; 'it' (the Community Centre) hasn't changed because 'she's' (Sharon) has stayed the same. One cannot be without the other.

For Joe, his own history on The Estate is seen to have worked in his favour, he argues workers not from The Estate find it difficult to make a connection with the kids: 'they don't know how to challenge you, they don't know how to work that much'. It is clear, for Joe, the Community Centre plays a role in the shaping of behaviour of the young people. As a youth worker on The Estate you need to know 'how to challenge', 'how to work', specific values Joe attaches to an Estate identity. This is a claim to communal identity; Joe argues it is his emdeddedness within Estate culture which enables him to work well with the kids. Moreover, his understanding of Estate culture not only endows him with the respect needed to 'challenge' the kids but also the cultural knowledge necessary to locate his 'challenge' within broader stories of The Estate. When to 'challenge' kids, and over what behaviours, is a negotiation Joe must make, he draws upon his own identity and claims of being part of The Estate, but also The Estate's history beyond his own experiential knowledge.

In the interview, Joe draws upon two broad stories of The Estate; the respect for Sharon, and the decline of The Estate, exemplified in the changing attitudes of the kids. These two themes are both located within Joe's own story and stories of The Estate beyond him. In many ways, the respect for Sharon Joe identifies is within his own story. As a child he attended the Community Centre, growing up with Sharon as a 'mother figure'. Sharon later supported Joe through his Youth Work training and continues to be a major support throughout his adult life. Yet, this story of respect moves beyond Joe's own experience. It is a story with a deeper history, a story recognised beyond The Estate, a story re-told. Sharon's respect is a story upon which the Community Centre is built, an ethos which permeates its past, present and future. In its foundation the Community Centre was positioned against similar council run centres. It was respect for Sharon which differentiated the Community Centre from these other services. As a 'mother figure' of The Estate, Sharon was looked up to, because the commitment was fundamentally reciprocal. The story in its conception was not only one where Sharon was respected but one where, as a member of the community, Sharon respected The Estate. This is a success story, a story of collective action, of grass roots change. However, it is a story located within power relations. It is a story constructed under Labour's 'New Deal for Communities' and again under the Coalition's 'Big Society', a story reflecting the devolution of responsibility. It is a story that must be continually performed in order to access necessary resources to keep it running.

Parallel to the story of Sharon's respect is a story of decline where 'the attitudes of the young people have changed'. Again this is a story both located with Joe's own experiential story and within broader tellings of The Estate. Here Joe must reconcile these two conflicting stories of decline and permanence on The Estate.

I want to elaborate on this active production of dominant discourses, that is, the work individual actors engage in to tell a coherent story of their self and their relations with others. Through an exploration the ways in which the personal and the communal are related within this next interview extract. I focus on the everyday discursive construction of the Community Centre.

The following extract is taken from an interview conducted at the Community Centre, with Lyla a Secondary School aged girl, where she talks about the role the Community Centre plays in her life. For Lyla, the Community Centre is a place of comfort and stability, a place she feels to be a constituting part, in the sense she would be missed if she were not there. The belonging she feels within the Community Centre is placed in opposition to those who try to break in and vandalise the space. She is troubled by motivations of those who would, as she says, steal from themselves.

*Sarah: what do you think people on The Estate think about the Community Centre?*

*Lyla: I don't know, sometimes I think they could take the mick, take the mick a bit just do what they want, literally, well but when people break into the Community Centre does Sharon ever call the police?*

*Sarah: I don't know*

*Lyla: well they take the mick a bit then as well coz it's like they have no respect and even Sharon said all of this, that's in, everything of this, is all of ours, community, and they're basically stealing from themselves*

*Sarah: yeah*

*Lyla: that's what Sharon says, so I don't know, it's bad*

*Sarah: do you feel like this is yours as well?*

*(interruption)*

*Lyla: I feel comfortable, then if I didn't I probably wouldn't come here, I feel welcome and even when Sharon is here because I've been coming here for a long time so she wondered why I don't come here, so even once when I'd had an argument with my mum, I still came down here because I felt like I could come here whenever I need to and when my brother and my sister were coming here it was open every day, all day, just like open whenever you want come in whenever you want and you could come on the dance mats or game things or all of them*

Interview with Lyla, Secondary School aged female

Lyla's account of community is synonymous with the Community Centre, the two are inextricably linked. For Lyla the Community Centre is a physical manifestation of the community: 'everything of this, is all of ours, community'. Thus, Lyla cannot comprehend the vandalism and theft that takes place at the Community Centre: if we are all members of the community and the Community Centre is all of ours then taking from the Community Centre is 'basically stealing from themselves'. Lyla's reasoning is, I think, profound, in the connections she makes between the actions of the self and others, not only in the present but also in possible futures. Nevertheless, as Lyla reflects, her understanding is embedded within broader discourses around the decline of The Estate: 'that's what Sharon says, so I don't know, it's bad'.

Lyla's reflection on the Community Centre's position within The Estate draws upon a dominant discourse, firmly locating it within the storying of the Community Centre's recent history and troubled futures. Though Lyla's reflection is grounded in her experiences, the comfort she feels in the Centre and the connections she has with the people there, she also links this personal account with a history, that despite not being part of, she feels intimately connected with: 'when

my brother and my sister were coming here it was open every day, all day, just like open whenever you want come in whenever you want'. It is through drawing upon these stories of the Community Centre's past that Lyla constructs her present experience of feeling 'like I could come here whenever I need to'. Lyla's own experience is of the Community Centre being open for two evenings a week for a Primary School aged after school club followed by a Secondary School aged youth club. Yet, through her re-telling of the Community Centre as a place you can always go, she shapes her being at the Community Centre beyond structured access during the youth club, as a 'natural' part of her being in the world.

Yet again, Lyla's story is not an account of individual experience; it is embedded within a storying of The Estate and of the Community Centre's position within it. Lyla locates herself within this imagining of The Estate's history, a positioning which represents a moment within a downturn on The Estate. In the tellings of The Estate, the present is illuminated through a re-telling of the past. As such the momentary now is referred to in its distance from a constructed past. I refer to this past as constructed in that it is a collective image of The Estate's history, continually formed and reformed in negotiations of the telling and re-telling of 'their' stories. In this way, Lyla makes sense of her being on The Estate through a drawing upon discourses of decline that inform dominant tellings of The Estate. Through the idea of decline, Lyla may distance herself from the behaviour of those she conceives of as 'taking the mick'. She need not reconcile the paradox of members of the community attacking the community, why they would 'basically steal[ing] from themselves'.

It is through these everyday enactments that dominant discourses construct the Community Centre. Though Layla may draw upon dominant discourses of decline as a resource to legitimise her positioning within The Estate, this enactment is located within broader structures of power, and in this way, her struggle for distinction within The Estate feeds into and reproduces these structuring discourses. As structurally produced and structuring in their reproduction, an analysis of dominant discourses explores the moments in-between structure and agency. This analysis enables me to question of how representations shape lived experiences.

## State of decline: the everyday production of dominant discourses

My analysis now focuses in on the dominant discourse of decline in order to explore how discourse is produced and reproduced in the everyday. My aim is that, an account of the ways in which dominant representations of the Community Centre are mediated and reproduced within The Estate, may further understandings of how the social position of being on The Estate is experienced. By emphasising the process through which the personal is connected to the communal and the present is connected to the past, my analysis works within the tension of structure and agency.

By dominant discourses of decline, I refer to the storying of The Estate within a downward trajectory: from golden-era of collectivity to dystopian dislocation. As a discourse of decline, this does not map neatly onto the passing of time; moments are extended and compressed, repeated and sometimes forgotten. Moreover, there are multiple cycles of decline, moments of personal and communal crisis, which sit uneasily within an overarching story of descent. This is not a story of The Estate, it is not a personal or even a communal story: it is the making sense of The Estate's position within broader national and global contexts. Dominant discourses may form in moments of collision where ideological shifts change policies, shaping the day-to-day of The Estate, from the physical and material; as houses are bought and sold; services closed down; and the moving out and the moving in of those in 'need'. Yet, dominant discourses may also be thought of as less tangible shifts in the mood of The Estate: a residue of disquiet left behind after moments of media hype, the feelings of apathy associated with talk of austerity, the fear of change, a suspicion and distancing from unknown others.

The following fieldnote captures one moment where the everyday pace of the Community Centre was disrupted by a break-in. In the analysis that follows, I explore how this extra-ordinary moment was actively brought into a broader narrative of the Community Centre.

> *When I got there Joe told me the club had been broken into during the night.*
>
> *They had broken through the window of the living room by forcing it open but had been unable to get in any further because that door was locked. They had tried to get in through the kitchen window too but hadn't been able to. Joe said they'd also tried getting into the football office, they hadn't got in but had forced the door inwards and so it couldn't be opened.*
>
> *Sharon said she'd got a call at 3 in the morning saying it had been broken into – she had gone there and called the police – they took nearly an hour to get to her. She said she was disgusted that she had been left there on her own for so long.*
>
> *She said it was pitch dark and she couldn't tell if they were still there or not. She said when she phoned to complain she was told she was lucky they turned up at all.*
>
> *She said she wouldn't have even cared if they had phoned her and said the whole thing had burnt down.*
>
> *At the end of the Primary session that day, Sharon was telling me and the two arts and crafts ladies that she doesn't know what will happen to the club when she can no longer do it.*
>
> *She said there's no one to take over from her and if it's not someone from the community – someone's who's respected then the place will get trashed just like the other Community Centre.*
>
> Sarah's fieldnotes, 24th February 2014

Break in attempts at the Community Centre and minor acts of vandalism were commonplace during my time on The Estate. Though often unnamed, the perpetrators of these attacks were

understood to be members of the community: they were young people who attend the youth club at the Community Centre. As such these acts did not produce a state of fear, of an unknown or unpredictable threat; rather this violence was met with the frustration of the inevitable. This inevitability of attacks on the Community Centre was understood through and in turn fed into dominant discourses of the decline of it.

It is within this storying of decline that the present of The Estate can be understood. The attacks on the Community Centre are conceived as a condition of this time, as the epitome of this moment within The Estate's history. The story of decline draws upon multiple discursive contexts which read valuelessness onto the place and the people of The Estate (see Chapter 5, Section 2). Therefore, the young people of The Estate are reified as abject: attacks on the Community Centre are inevitable as this is seen as the natural occupation of estate youth. Although this appears to fit within an all-encompassing story of decline, there are moments of rupture, moments that are retold across time, cycles of decline that run parallel to this overarching storying.

Ruptures – cycles of decline

Narrative of decline
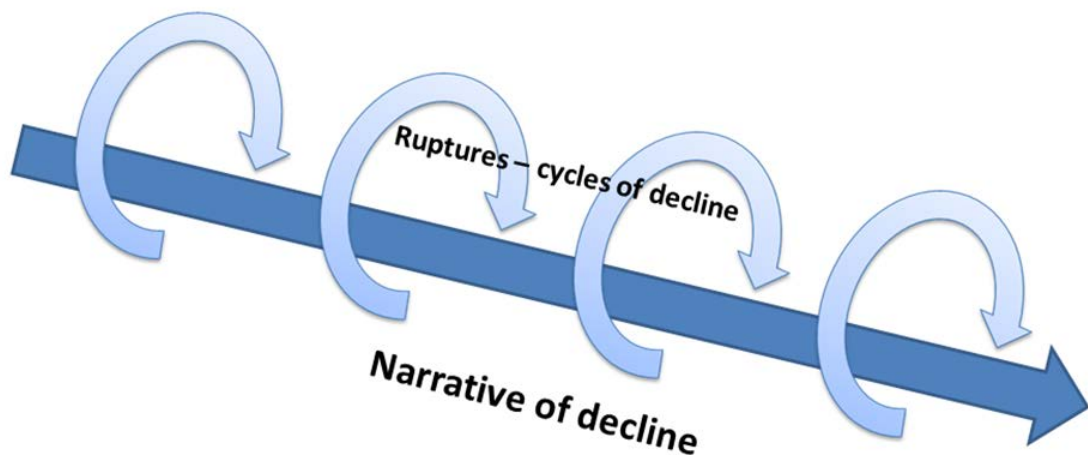
What I mean by this is that the dominant discourse of decline is formed through the telling together of multiple cycles of decline. These more isolated cycles necessarily involve their own 'golden-era' of celebrated histories. Yet the framing of these more positive moments within the discourse of decline, constructs a precarious present. In this way, the inherent contradiction of opposing histories remains unexpressed. Despite the inadequacy of the discourse of decline to capture the complexity of lived experience, difference and change is subsumed within the dominant discourse. The cyclical nature of discourse production means that dominant discourses

inform how the social world is experienced, by structuring meaning, the dominant discourse of decline forms the present as precarious: it is defined by its possibility of decline.

Thinking back to the fieldnote, Sharon positions her apathy within a story of decline. Her claim that she 'wouldn't have even cared if they had phoned her and said the whole thing had burnt down' is constituted as the climax of this narrative. However, this is not a simple story. There are complexities within Sharon's telling of The Estate. Fitting uneasily within the dominant discourse of decline is the Community Centre's own cycle of decline. Sharon's concern that 'the place will get trashed just like the other Community Centre' alludes to this complexity, though the present of the Community Centre is located within the story of decline. This story is fragmented and confused in tellings of multiple moments of cycles of decline.

Therefore, Sharon must reconcile her telling of The Estate's ongoing decline with her description of the Community Centre as a moment of rupture. Thus, it is not simply that the present of The Estate is located within a moment cumulative crisis, the result of ongoing decline. Rather, the everyday of The Estate is made sense of in its relation with the narrative of decline. In this way multiple and complex accounts of The Estate are layered within a consistent storying of it.

As a dominant discourse, the narrative of decline does not necessarily represent the social and material condition of The Estate, yet its performative nature constitutes The Estate's decline as an object of belief. The discursive construction of The Estate as in decline through multiple reiterations, provides a continuity of The Estate storying within which personal narratives may be located. As such, tellings of The Estate may be located both within the overarching narrative and a more localised, present cycle of decline. It is because the dominant discourse does not map neatly on to social, material or temporal shifts, that ruptures within this narrative necessarily feed back into the constitution of The Estate.

To contextualise this idea, when I first began my fieldwork, my initial understanding of the Community Centre was as positioned within a moment of crisis, that I had entered in the culminating moments of years of decline. I was told over and again about the way things were, what used to be; that today it was just not the same. These sentiments, a shift in the feel of the place, were evidenced through cultural artefact and anecdote, and as such experienced vicariously by those who had not been 'there' at that 'time'. There were traditions upheld within the present of the Community Centre which I was told were never going to be the same as they once were: seasonal celebrations and trips, though repeated year on year, could not re-capture the glow of the past. I was shown photographs, documentaries, music videos created at various points within the Community Centre's history, yet they were merged together as evidence for an imagined time gone by. It was only in my being there that I began to notice the integration of 'my time' within this construction of the Community Centre's celebrated history and condemned future. For

example, moments which I had been a part of were retold, woven within the storying of the Community Centre's imagined past. The selective telling of these stories creates an intense and vivid account of the way things were: funny anecdotes, fun times, and the extraordinary were told together producing a heightened version of 'that time'.

What I hope this analysis has demonstrated is that, though there may be shifts in the material and social composition of The Estate, that of course The Estate is affected by national changes to housing and welfare policy, the storying of these changes into a narrative of decline is a process by which the present is defined in its opposition to an imagined history. Through reading The Estate's present as that which is other than the way things were, The Estate is told as perpetually in decline. Thus, ruptures in the day-to-day of The Estate, moments where change is overt, sudden and important as they may seem, necessarily feed into the overarching discourse, as further evidence of its reality. This is not a natural or neutral phenomenon. We must ask: why are these ruptures of the everyday not used as evidence of the general stability of The Estate?

The structural devaluing of The Estate through wider societal discourses mediate the ways in which these localised discourses are formed and circulate. Dominant discourses of The Estate are reproduced within The Estate: they feed into one another; together constituting the decline of The Estate as an object of belief.

## Section 2: The Community Centre as contact zone

Having located the Community Centre within a broader dominant discourse of decline, this Section will consider the field dynamics within the Community Centre which produce and reproduce notions of legitimate community. I begin with an exploration of moments of community enactment, through an analysis of community consultations, I suggest that an authentic 'being' community is placed in tension with an active 'doing' community. Developing this idea, I draw upon the concept of a 'contact zone' in order to theorise the dynamic power relations which construct and reconstruct community within the Community Centre. Finally, I explore possibilities of resistance and subversion of dominant representations of the needs of the community, arguing that though agency is bounded by dominant discourses, they may be drawn upon as resources to resist devalued positionings.

### Legitimising community

The following fieldnote reflects the enactment of community consultations within the Community Centre. This was a practice which disrupted the everyday, requiring a stepping away from daily tasks of being community and a stepping into a more formalised construction of the doing of community. Furthering the theorisation of 'being' and 'doing' developed in the previous Chapter (see Chapter 6, Section 2: 'These kids don't play'), my analysis explores the complexity of

positionings of 'being' which are at once valued as authentic whilst becoming reified and fixed within unequal power relations.

> *I was annoyed at Robert (community development worker) at this session, he had come to the Community Centre to have a meeting to consult with parents about something. What annoyed me was that he did not seem to take into consideration the role these women had in maintaining the Community Centre. He asked them to talk in the office for an hour, which meant they were not able to help with the children.*
>
> *Amy who has a 14-month old boy was one of the mums and so I was left to "keep an eye" on him – that is along with the 50 odd other kids.*
>
> *The next time I saw Carly she said it was a waste of time because nothing is ever taken seriously or taken further. She had suggested they take the kids camping in the summer – Robert told her he would leave it with her – she said she had no idea where to start.*

<div align="right">Sarah's fieldnotes, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014</div>

The foundation of community consultation on the imagining of an authentic voice assumes a natural state, a way of being in the world from which the community may speak. As such, the women's presence in the Community Centre is viewed as part of their being: it is who they are. Being at the Community Centre for these women is not valued as an act. It is conceived only as being not as doing. In this way, community consultations are legitimised not only as non-interruptions but as positive introductions to doing. What I mean by this, is that the work of the women within the Community Centre is not considered valued work in moments of community consultation: no apologies were made for interrupting the women's daily tasks and no arrangements were made to cover the work of the women whilst they were taking part. Yet, it is not simply that the women's role within the Community Centre is not valued within these moments of community consultation. There is a moral undertone to these community consultations which attribute value to the act; unlike the *being* of the Community Centre the consultations represent the *doing* of community.

The value attributed to moments of community consultation shifts notions of community. These moments become valued in and of themselves, the legitimate work of community occurs within moments of community consultation. It is this which signifies that this work is being done. Thus, there is apathy within both parties of this exchange. As Carly reflects: 'It was a waste of time because nothing is ever taken seriously or taken further' and for Robert, he 'would leave it with her' knowing that this community work had been done.

This performance of community consultation is one enactment of a 'contact zone'; a social space where 'cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power' (Pratt, 1991: 34). Despite the explicit asymmetry of power, the moment of contact is a negotiation, a coming together and grappling between different cultural values. Thus, in the moment of contact there is space for the subversion and critique of dominant discourses. In

this way the formalities of community consultation may work to contain the intrusion of authority in the Community Centre. The women of the Community Centre agree to take part in these consultations despite their scepticism around whether their suggestions will get taken further. Their participation is part of a recognition of the power embodied by Robert in his role as a community development worker where they make some attempt to manage this.

In some ways the performance of community consultation was a negotiation between Robert and the women of the Community Centre. Together they carved out a space within which to enact this form of legitimate community work, whilst maintaining a distance, preserving cultural distinctions and managing potential conflicts. For Robert, this formalisation of community work contained his responsibilities to moments of community consultation: his work with the community occurred within this highly regulated space. For the women of the Community Centre, the space of community consultation provided a barrier between their being community and the legitimised doing of community. By doing community within moments of community consultation the women protected their space of being community, the Community Centres daily routines. More than this, the women recognised the potential power of the community consultation and the possibilities it opened up for them to access resources.

Therefore, the conceptualisation of these moments of community consultation as a contact zone enable a more complex analysis of the power dynamics at play, moving beyond a representations of active / passive, dominant / dominated.

## Researching the Community Centre: speaking across ontologies

I want to draw upon another example of community consultation in order to further explore how the production of knowledge of the community is constituted within the power dynamics of the contact zone. The fieldnote below provides an account of research conducted within the Community Centre and specifically, the power dynamics forged within the focus group.

> *The Primary aged club was used as a platform for a focus group about parenting issues, part of a city wide research project funded by the local council. In exchange for sitting in on the focus group I was asked to encourage parents to come. Unfortunately, there were no parents around. I approached one woman in the park who was sitting of a bench smoking whilst her kids played. She said she was waiting for a lift. Another man stood nearby leaning against the railings smoking while a woman sat on the floor with three young children. I asked him about the parenting debate and he apologised and said he can't as he is having a supervised meeting with his kids. I felt awful for having interrupted this personal moment, but it made me think about the added personal strain many of the people I would like to talk to are going through.*
>
> *I was further agitated by the woman who was running the focus group. She appeared very anxious to achieve what she expected from the focus group – a large group of people talking about the stresses of parenthood.*
>
> *The group consisted of the female researcher, Robert (community development worker), a woman, Katherine, who is a parent but not from the area and who works as a service*

*provider, a woman called Trisha who is a member of the neighbourhood council who lives at the bottom of The Estate (I assume owner occupied), Janet who lives on The Estate and volunteers at the club, Carly who is Sharon's daughter, a mum who lives on The Estate called Lauren, and me.*

*The main tension within the group was between two women, Lauren and Carly, and the female researcher and Robert acting as 'chair'.*

*This was manifest in the organisers' attempts to control/limit/manage the conversations, which often resulted in them shutting down what was being discussed rather than exploring where it might have led.*

*One specific issue for the female researcher was the apparent lack of separation the mothers made between their issues as parents and the needs of their kids. Rather than exploring this as a need that bridges the gap between parent and child's needs, for example a child needs activities, the activities occupy the child, therefore the parent's need for rest is met. This was highlighted as the wrong thing to talk about: 'We are here to discuss parent's needs'.*

*I felt uncomfortable that the rich biographical stories the women were sharing were not being given the value they deserved and this was something I talked to the female researcher about after the group ended.*

*She commented that this was not what she was looking for and that she really needed a larger group, assuming some form of diversity of experience and thus a more 'complete'/ 'true' picture.*

*I said that I thought that the richness of the qualitative data would be of fantastic value and highlighted that the two women who shared the most are not often engaged in the Community Centre and therefore she was getting some access to marginal perspectives – she returned to her concern of numbers.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, Parenting Debate, 8th July 2013

This fieldnote reflects my obvious frustration with the researcher. In many ways her presence in the Community Centre made visible the discomforts I felt about conducting my own research. This is most notable in my shame at interrupting the man in the park having a supervised visit with his children. For me, this moment epitomised my concerns around the burden of research on participants and, most uncomfortable, the implicit arrogance of interrupting people's lives (a concern I discuss in Chapter 4, Section 2).

Despite this focus, the fieldnote also provides some insight into the relationship between the community and external others. Official measures of deprivation and social exclusion construct The Estate as a devalued space. This recognition, paradoxically, endows The Estate and therefore its residents with a specific value. This value is contained and limited, it is not a value to be exchanged, rather it is a valuing of, a use value. The particular form this value takes is an endowment of authenticity by privileged others onto estate residents. The Estate residents are valued in moments of community consultation, their being on The Estate is imagined as a natural state, they are the people of this land and thus they know it. These moments of community consultation, therefore resemble a 'show and tell' where the expertise of the local people may be

drawn out and up with the expectation that this will in turn trickle down; that community consultation informs policy which in turn informs practice.

However, community consultations are of course located within the inherent power relations of service provision, interwoven with discourses of what legitimate needs are and who lays claim to them. Thus, community consultation is a highly structured performance, one where problems are identified by external others and interaction with internal members of the community are controlled and formalised. In this moment, the problem identified by the local council was a lack of provision for parents. Having identified this as an area of concern the research sought to draw upon the 'expertise' of the community through a focus group with parents.

Who was considered a 'parent' within this space, and thus a valued participant, was contested. Both Trisha and Janet were parents and members of the community, in that they lived on The Estate but also members of what may be thought of as the more formal Community; that is, they were active in community work. However, their children were grown up and therefore their experiences did not fit within the account of parenthood as defined through childhood dependency. As such these women's stories of the continual centrality of parenthood to their lives was delegitimised as an expression of parental problems. Their voices were literally silenced as the researcher set the parameters of the focus group. This was not a forum for what she considered wider social issues. These women, essentially excluded from sharing their own stories, could only participate tangentially, sharing anecdotes of more legitimate parenthoods.

A further tension emerged within the group between Lauren and Carly on the one hand and the female researcher and Robert on the other. Although these women fitted more neatly the dominant notion of parent, in that they were the primary carer of dependent children, their expression of parents' issues was not considered appropriate within the parents' focus group. Of particular frustration to both the female researcher and Robert was the lack of conceptual clarity the women had of parents' issues, most notably their conflation of children's issues with parents' issues. Their reflections were continually interrupted by both the researcher and Robert in their need to clarify that this focus group was for the discussion of parents' issues. These interruptions hung in the air: both sides sighed with the frustration of a fundamental misunderstanding. They were talking across competing and juxtaposed ontologies.

For the women the focus group presented them with an impossible task, a reimagining of their sense of self as if it were capable of being dislocated and disentangled from their children. The researcher and Robert faced not only a misunderstanding and therefore failing of their focus group, but also the frustrations of an expression of a devalued life. The moral position of the researcher and Robert was explicit, the lack of separation the women articulated between their self and their children was both unhealthy and annoyingly unhelpful in their targeted community

consultation. Their research was founded upon the assumption that parenthood is a relationship between two autonomous individuals, the parent and the child, that each has their individual sense of self and therefore individual needs and wants that would best be supported through separate service provision. Thus, the women's discussion undermined the basic assumptions of their research. Both sides were contained within their ontological understanding of parenthood unable to comprehend or accept the value of each other's perspective. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that this was a moment of entrenched power. It was a moment of disagreement, yet this disagreement was shaped by the authority embodied in the behaviour of the researcher and Robert as more legitimate.

The researcher and Robert were in positions of power not simply in this focus group exchange but in their very presence within the Community Centre. Robert, as a community development worker was a fairly regular visitor to the Community Centre, yet his visits were never part of day to day routines. Rather they were an interruption, the suspension of daily work, either in the form of celebration or, as in this instance, community consultation. Robert's body marked his distinction in his interactions with the Community Centre. As a middle aged professional man he was unlike anyone within this space of predominantly women, with the only male youth worker being in his early twenties. The researcher too was marked by distinction, her formal dress and researcher props (clip board, consent forms, Dictaphone etc.) all indicated her distance. Her reason for entering the Community Centre was explicit. The researcher did not interact with anyone within the space of the Community Centre beyond the focus group. She did not arrive early to introduce herself and made for the door as soon as her dictaphone finished recording. The Community Centre is a place of discomfort for Robert and the researcher, they are visible in their being there, in their difference and their privilege.

It is within these moments of difference that the self is made through processes of relational identity construction (see Chapter 6, Section 1). However, these momentary exposures do not occur in isolation, they are entangled within histories and processes of domination that reach far beyond the moment of contact. As such, analysis of this interaction requires a bifocality: as at once interested in the moment of construction whilst maintaining an interest in the contexts within which this moment is located and thus interpreted (Weis and Fine, 2012). By this, I mean to highlight the importance of power in the maintenance of structures, whilst allowing the possibility of subversion and resistance in moments of contact.

Thinking in this way, the parents focus group may be conceptualised as a moment of contact. It was a space within which women from The Estate were met by outside others. The power dynamic within the group, though complex was founded upon a positioning as 'expert' of the external others, encapsulated either in their role as service provider or researcher. Despite the concept of

community consultation inferring a valuing of 'authentic' voice, this is only ever within the parameters set by the 'experts'. Thus, the women's reflections on their experiences was not positioned as an alternative perception of parenthood, simply dismissed as an unhelpful conflation of the categories of parent and child. The women were positioned as in deficit, their sense-making was not valued as a representation of alternative ways of being. Rather, they were assumed to be inarticulate, unable to reflexively present their self, in effect requiring the experts to 'take it from here'. It is in this taking further that the seeping and 'expert' power, present but not explicit in moments of contact, becomes manifest.

In the moment of contact both Lauren and Carly made their position clear and continued to rebuke the claims being made by the researcher and Robert, that parents issues are separate to and different from children's issues. In their refusal to talk within the parameters of the focus group, the women resisted the 'experts' gaze and together worked to redefine their sense of self, specifically, their claim that parenthood is a way of being in the world which shapes relationships with others beyond the moments of caring for dependent children. However, my closing discussion with the researcher made clear to me that these stories would not be taken further. They were confined to the space formed in the moment of contact. It is this that maintains structures, the power to ignore, the power to silence.

## Possibilities of resistance

Continuing this analysis of moments of contact, I want to move my account of 'Contact Zones' beyond a clash between the 'community' and outside 'others', to explore the Community Centre as a space where community is constituted within moments of contact of dominant discourses. In the following analysis, I discuss the processes that form and regulate normative behaviour within the Community Centre. Through an account of sexual health testing at the Community Centre, I argue that though dominant discourses reify through definitions of 'need', this is mediated through micro social connections, which redefine meanings attributed to acts. It is this negotiation of dominant discourses and the momentary meaning attached to action that opens space for resistance; by re-storying the purpose and motivation of acts, dominant discourses may be subverted.

> *The young people at the Secondary School aged club were being encouraged to take chlamydia tests. Sharon explained to me that 'Sexual Health' had been Dave's role and that since he had left it had come to light that this 'work' had not been 'done'.*
>
> *Sharon was in the living room with a group of girls and boys, aged 11-15. She wanted all of the young people over 13 to take a chlamydia test. The boys were crowded around Sharon as she handed out tumblers for them to wee into. Lots of the boys came back into the room showcasing their product – commenting on its colour and generally joking around.*

*Sharon said she needed more to take the test and encouraged the young people, reassuring them that the results will be sent to their mobile so no one at home would know about it.*

*A group of older girls, aged 14-15, were much more reluctant to take the test and one girl started to cry. Her friends took her out of the room.*

*When Sharon left the room the young people began talking about the test. A group of them who had not taken the test explained that it had nothing to do with them, they were too young. A few of the joking boys who had been keen to take the test joined the conversation, laughing they said they thought it would be funny to take the test but they weren't worried about it as they were virgins.*

*The older girls came back into the room and sat together, protective of their friend, whose eyes were still puffy from her tears. They listened to the conversation and appeared uncomfortable with the younger kids' discussion. One girl was particularly angered and said that this was completely inappropriate and that she is not stupid. If she needed to do a chlamydia test she would go to the Sexual Health Clinic.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 23rd January 2014

This is a moment of a complex shifting of dynamics not simply between Sharon as a youth worker, the young people and me as an interruption, an observer, but also between and within the young people as an imagined collective. There is a discomfort in the moment as each of us experiences a visibility in the normative construction of our positions.

Sharon's role as a youth worker was highlighted within this moment as she distanced herself from notions of bad practice attributed to Dave and negotiated her own attempts to do this 'work' with the overt pressures to get it 'done'. My presence in this moment intensified this making visible of Sharon's youth worker role, her shift from 'being' to 'doing', in its opposition to my passivity, my non-doing. My lack of action in this moment produced a tension, a recognition that my non-doing was an act of distancing, a moment of negotiation of my role within the Community Centre. By not acting in this moment I carved out a space between the young people and Sharon as a youth worker, I was not part of the testing and neither was I being tested. However, this space was not one of comfortable distance; my lack of action was entangled with power relations inherent in the act of participant observation. Through non-doing I made a claim of distance from the actions of Sharon, I marked distinction between my role as observer and the work of the youth worker. Of course my role as participant observer is always in tension with other normalised roles within the Community Centre, yet my participation, or in this case non-participation, marks out the moral and social parameters of my being there. By not participating in this act I marked this 'work' as 'dirty work', an aspect of the Community Centre in which I would not participate.

In this way, the affective load of ongoing negotiations between me and Sharon were resolved in our retreat into our established positions of active youth worker and distanced researcher. Many of the young people too sought the comfort of established positions, taking part in the testing as

they would any other activity set out in the Community Centre. For the group of joking boys, the chlamydia test was simply another thing to do, it was the selected activity of the day, and as young people they played within it.

It was the play of the joking boys in stark contrast to the distress of the older girls that formed the source of my discomfort. My initial reading of this moment was informed by the physical requirements of the chlamydia test alongside the many feminist commentaries on the domination of women founded upon discourses of 'respectability' (Skeggs, 1997). The testing method offered to the boys required a urine sample, whereas the option the girls were given was a lower vaginal swab test. This physical difference in the tests for me mirrored the social difference between encouraging boys to openly take the test and encouraging girls.

My reading of the girls' distress and the boys' play was founded upon this logic. For the girls, openly taking the test would not only make public the act of physically undertaking the intrusive test but also align themselves with both sexual activity and the specific form of sexuality associated with the taking of Sexually Transmitted Infection tests. The implication for the girls was not simply a recognition of sexuality but an entanglement within gendered discourses of promiscuity and the social production of dirt and danger connected to this.

Of course the boys too made this claim in their taking of the test, yet read within the context of male heterosexuality, their claims to sexual activity are claims to power. Moreover, understood within social norms of responsibility (for health and contraception) within heterosexual sex falling on the female, the active role these boys were taking in their 'testing' of their sexual health was praised and further connected them with the male heterosexual adult ideal.

I think this social context is important, locating the dynamics of this group within broader histories of sexual domination. However, it was through further conversations with the young people that I better understood the meanings of their actions within this moment. The joking boys, who appeared to revel in their sexual prowess, a confidence I felt as a claim to power, an action I located within a history of male domination, later explained their position as one of ignorance. This group of boys were not only distanced from the shame associated with female sexuality. They were also distanced from male adult heterosexuality: they were virgins.

Thus, although their position within a context of male heterosexuality legitimated a space within which they could play with their position as sexualised without the stigma associated with female sexuality, this does not capture the complexity of their position. Perhaps because of their distance from the act of sex, the boys were able to suspend the values attached to their taking of the test and formulate their own meaning, a counter-discourse which may in some way disrupt the dominant discourse of top down sexual health advice.

In a similar vein, the older girls' actions may be understood both as located within histories of female oppression whilst demonstrating a level of agency in their reasoning of their position as in opposition to dominant discourses. The girls experienced discomfort both with being publically asked to take the chlamydia test but also with being confronted with the younger groups' exposure to this. When encouraged to take the chlamydia test one of the girls began to cry, together in their affective connection of friendship, the group experienced this trauma and distanced themselves from the public scrutiny of their sexuality by leaving the room.

On returning to the room, the girls experienced a further discomfort in the conversation between the younger groups, commenting that they were too young to be involved with this. In this sense the girls experienced this moment very differently from the boys: the act of publically asking girls to engage with sexual health tests understood within the context of female oppression makes visible the power dynamics shaping action. Nevertheless, it is the girls' own reflection on this moment which highlights the ways in which their distancing from overt sex talk was not founded in ignorance, as the boys' participation was, rather in knowledge and experience. This is not to deny that their experience of this moment is located within contexts of heteronormative constructions of female sexuality, rather it is to provide space for resistance of these constructions. The girls resisted their positioning as in need of sexual health tests, not on the basis that they were ignorant but rather that they were informed and capable of accessing services beyond the Community Centre. For them the utilisation of the Community Centre to access them as a perceived vulnerable group was insulting; as one girl articulated, 'she is not stupid, if she needed to do a chlamydia test she would go to the Sexual Health Clinic'.

In this way the group of joking boys and older girls resisted and subverted dominant discourses of young people's sexual activity. The service provided by the Community Centre offering free chlamydia testing to all young people over the age of thirteen is founded upon these dominant discourses which conceptualise the sexual activity of young people within a framework of risk. My interest lies in the moments between these dominant ideas and the young people's sense of self. The provision of chlamydia testing for young people at the Community Centre may be founded on an actual or imagined need. However, it was the structuring of the provision, which set targets for the Community Centre to ensure all young people are tested, which worked to fix and reify the young people as a deviant sexual group. The de-legitimation of the young peoples' sexual identity within dominant discourse was refigured within this moment at the Community Centre, through an attempt to suspend of the values attributed to the taking of the test in Sharon's need to just get it 'done'.

Thus, the young people were positioned in tension between awareness of dominant discourses surrounding the taking of chlamydia tests and their affective and social connections with Sharon.

The entanglement of this service with Sharon resulted in a pressure to simple do it, for her. Nevertheless, the Community Centre is a space within which young peoples' sexual activity continues to be understood within dominant discourses of risk and danger. Therefore, the only legitimate motivation for taking the test was for Sharon, taking the test as an aspect of being sexually active remained taboo, resulting in the exclusion of the older girls.

How then can we make sense of the older girls' behaviour? Was it that they felt unable to act, trapped between dominant discourses which would de-legitimate them if they were to take the chlamydia test and their knowledge that Sharon needed them, as young people, to take it? This reading can only understand their behaviour as non-action; that their position was one of constraint, they could not act. However, I think there was agency in the girls' behaviour. They were critical of the imposition of this service upon them and of Sharon's role within this. They resisted their positioning as young people in its entanglement with notions of ignorance and naivety, particularly pushing against this as a homogenising categorisation, making clear their perceived distinction from the other young people, who were both 'too young' and inexperienced. Through their claim that they would go to the Sexual Health Clinic if they needed to take a chlamydia test, the girls resisted the intrusion of these services in the Community Centre and its implied simplification of their identity; they could be both young people, part of the Community Centre and responsible individuals enacting 'safe sex' through accessing the Sexual Health Clinic.

This analysis demonstrates the process through which normative values are reproduced within the Community Centre. Through a focus on the active role individuals take in negotiating dominant discourses, I suggest that everyday resistances may redefine and subvert the meaning attributed to action. The Community Centre is positioned within structured discourses which fix and reify through the imagining of 'need'. Yet, these dominant discourses come together at the site of the Community Centre with more localised understandings. As such, new meanings are formed within moments of negotiation. I do not wish to suggest that the localised values of the Community Centre are by nature in opposition to dominant discourses, they are necessarily shaped by them and often reproduce them. However, the mediation of dominant discourses through localised value systems does produce some space within which to critically reflect on the assumptions informing top-down initiatives which are founded upon particular notions of the community. The girls' behaviour makes evident their critical opposition to being defined as in need of enforced sexual health screening. Through their refusal to take the test, the girls resist their positioning within dominant discourses as 'risk'. Nevertheless, the potential of their resistance is located within localised discourses where sexual activity is associated with a devalued status, in this way, their refusal feeds back into discourses of respectability. This dynamic nature of discursive reproduction moves beyond structural accounts to incorporate agentic responses and everyday resistances into the social construction of normative behaviour.

## Conclusion

This Chapter has considered the formation and reformation of the Community Centre within dynamic discursive structures and everyday power relations. I began the Chapter, in Section 1, by exploring the ways in which a telling together of personal and communal stories produces and reproduces dominant discourses of the Community Centre. Through an account of dominant discourses as formed by and formative of the everyday, I built up an understanding of the process of the Community Centre's discursive production. In order to exemplify this process, I reflected upon the dominant discourse of decline as a structuring structure, a discourse produced within the tension of structure and agency.

In Section 2 the analysis moved from this more conceptual account of the discursive construction of the Community Centre to an analysis of the field dynamics within the Community Centre. I developed the concept of a 'contact zone' as a way to theorise the Community Centre as a site of the production and reproduction of legitimate community. Thinking through the example of sexual health screening at the Community Centre, I suggested this conceptualisation of 'contact zone' enables an analysis of the possibilities of resistance and subversion.

# Chapter 8: Conclusion

## Introduction

This thesis has been built upon eighteen months of ethnographic research conducted on a British council estate between 2013 and 2015. The research aimed to explore the everyday lives of those who live on The Estate, through a questioning of the processes by which their identity is shaped through their 'being there'. Generated in conversation with class theory (Bourdieu, 1977; 1980; 1983: Skeggs, 2001; 2004; 2015), this thesis explores the formation of class on The Estate as 'communal beingness' (Walkerdine, 2010).

The research traces the material and social constitution of The Estate within the particular socio-political context of 'austerity Britain'; arguing that established sociological classifications of class do not fully capture contemporary processes of de-valuing which shape The Estate as a people and a place. In this way, I practice a discomforting questioning of class as an analytic tool that may make visible the representational power of classifications. Thinking with Butler's conceptualisation of identity categories as inherently normative, and therefore exclusionary, I explore the possibilities of using the concepts of class subversively, by displacing them from 'the contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power' (Butler, 1992: 17).

Therefore, this research is a deconstruction of the concepts of class. Through maintaining a political commitment to representations (of ideas) of difference and dissensus (Rancière, 1998; 2006), I focus my analysis on the processes by which class is constituted as an object of belief (Butler, 1998; Lucey, 2010). Through the employment of a bifocal analytic lens, this attention on the everyday moments of class formation enables difference to be explored at two levels.

At one level, a shift in attention to classifications as formative, produces conceptual space for the representation of difference. By this I mean that approaching class analysis from a post-structural perspective brings to the fore agency, so that the making of class is conceptualised as an active process, where the possibilities of resistance, rupture and reformation are located within the everyday. This analysis requires a stepping back from other conceptualisations of class, in order to question how class is produced. Foregrounding difference, this analysis problematises the connection between material position and social position, exploring everyday processes of making self together.

At another level, the analytical positioning of difference within a structuring 'distribution of the sensible' (Rancière, 2004) provides a reflection on the ways categories are (re)produced. In other words, though a bifocal analysis may illuminate difference, the conceptualisation of class as an object of belief describes the way that difference is written out of accounts of class. As a result of

the co-constitution of structure and agency, difference is bounded through its legibility within the 'distribution of the sensible'; particular classed performances become unknowable through their location outside of the parameters of class as an object of belief. Therefore, by drawing my analytical lens back out to view structuring discourses of class, I may reflect on the dynamic of structure and agency in the formation of The Estate.

I conceptualise these two levels of analysis as bifocal in order to capture a transformation of visibility produced in focusing and refocusing, seeing together the micro and the macro. As my understanding of structure and agency is interelational, these two processes of analysis are enacted simultaneously in order to explore the co-constitution of the individual and society. This analytic bifocality informed my research questions, which sought to understand how connections between the material and the social are formed:

1. What are the connections between material position and social position?
2. What are the processes through which these connections are formed on The Estate?
3. What are the material and social conditions which produce and legitimate knowledges of these people and this place?

As a practice of discomforting questioning, my research questions were designed to make visible some of the assumptions underlying class theory and to facilitate a deconstruction of classifications. In this way, my research questions informed my approach to sociological enquiry; at once seeking to know the social world, whilst locating this knowledge within structuring processes of discourse production. Therefore, this Chapter seeks to revisit the themes of my thesis, outlining the core arguments emerging from the ethnographic research, and reflect upon the ethical dimensions of this knowledge production.

The Chapter is organised into three Sections: theoretical (re)constructions, methodological possibilities and an alternative analytic. The aim of the Chapter is to bring together the arguments that thread through this work and indicate the theoretical and methodological contributions the thesis makes to the sociological study of classed lives.

## Theoretical (re)constructions

In this Section, I outline the theoretical contributions of this thesis to the sociological conceptualisation of class. I have categorised these contributions into two themes: the first is a theorisation of The Estate, which develops conceptualisations of the connection between place and identity; the second theme advances a sociology of community, deconstructing authenticity through a theorisation of community as formed within moments of 'contact'.

## Classifying people and place: a theorisation of The Estate

This thesis develops a conceptualisation of class which weaves together post-structural theorisations of identity (Butler, 1988; Hall, 1996; Nayak, 1997; Nayak and Kehily, 2006) and place (Massey, 2005). This post-structural turn is located within a history of class analysis defined by a struggle to reconcile structure and agency in conceptualisations of class. Thus, my theorisation of class is founded upon the dualism of structure and agency as advanced by Bourdieu (1977; 1994; 2004). However, it moves beyond this relational transcendence of the objective/subjective through an attention to the intersubjective (Barnes, 2000). This shift in attention redefines the object of research as the relationship between structure and agency. In other words, it re-focuses on the processes through which one becomes classed.

In this thesis I have asserted two theoretical developments that emerged through the analysis of my ethnographic data: the notion of 'being place(d)' and the foregrounding of affect within the concept of habitus.

My focus on class as process required a re-conceptualisation of the tension between structure and agency from the abstract to the everyday. The ethnographic methodology of this research enabled moments of negotiation between the individual and the material to be explored, redefining the tension between structure and agency as a felt consequence of being in the world. A core theme emerging from my data was the telling of conflicting commentaries in the making and marking of boundaries (see Chapter 5, Section 1). I have argued that this storying of self and place forms a site of struggle, as the individual negotiates their positioning within the tension of structure and agency. Thus, I developed the notion of 'being place(d)' as a conceptual tool which enables an analysis of the processes whereby the individual threads personal narratives into broader 'tellings' of The Estate (see Chapter 5, Section 2).

By providing a way to think the moments in-between structure and agency, the analytic tool of 'being place(d)' contributes to class analysis, furthering work connecting landscape and identity (Rogaly and Taylor, 2009; Rooke and Gidley, 2010). It generates an account of the social production of this connection. Grounded within a post-structural ontological frame, 'being place(d)' is a process which is 'open, porous and the product of other places' (Massey, 1995: 59). This challenges conceptualisations of class as a process of socialisation where one learns to be through being of a particular place. Rather 'being place(d)' is the positioning in place through being in moments of difference. Thus, the concept enables the thinking of structure and agency concurrently; drawing attention to the ways in which individuals are actively engaged with the formation of place and self, whilst contextualising this agency within the material and structural.

Therefore, an account of 'being place(d)' is not simply the reading of agency within structural constraint, it is also an analysis of the making of the material. By this I mean, the structural is

mediated through the agentic. It is made and re-made through the actions and inactions of individuals.

Drawing upon the conceptual tools developed in the work of Said (1978) and Massey (2005) of place as process, I further an account of place making, through an analysis of processes of discursive construction. Theorising the interconnections between the material and the discursive, I have argued that the experiential of being on The Estate may be mediated and transformed through the discursive. My analysis of the everyday production of narratives of The Estate, put forward an argument that dominant discourses which act upon and circulate within The Estate shape experiential being. Thus, dominant discourses of The Estate produce an interpretive repertoire within which particular soundscapes and landscapes give meaning to the structural materiality of The Estate (see Chapter 5, Section 2: Producing The Estate as a place of fear, for detailed analysis of the co-constitution of the material and the discursive). As such, I expand the concept of place to encompass both the material conditions of being in the world and the social values attached to this, building upon the spatial turn within class analysis to suggest the formation of The Estate is the classifying of a people and a place.

This conceptualisation of place raised questions of the ways in which signifiers of people and place conflate. How does the body carry its place and how does place form the body? In order to engage with this question, I build upon Bourdieu's notion of habitus as a tool with which to imagine 'the individual agent [as] a world within the world' (Bourdieu, 1990: 56). As a response to Lane's (2012) critique that an analysis of the 'visceral affective reactions against one's social fate and the attempts to escape they can generate would necessitate a significant reformulation of Bourdieu's theories of habitus and class' (Lane, 2012: 3), I asserted an analytic shift in attention away from 'continuity and regularity' to a focus on moments of contradiction and complexity (see Chapter 6: Introduction).

The reformulation of Bourdieu's conceptualisation of habitus, forms the second theoretical contribution of this thesis. Through an analysis of identity formation within everyday interactions (see Chapter 6, Section 1: Making self, together) I have outlined an argument that the habitus is an affective foregrounding of history. It is, as Probyn articulates, a 'particularly visceral sensation' (Probyn, 2004: 3). This (re)construction of the habitus builds upon Bourdieu's account of the social forging of the body through 'symbolic power' (Bourdieu, 1990: 69), by incorporating the concept of performativity (Butler, 1990), to move beyond an understanding of the body as 'a spectral past as future' (Probyn, 2004: 12). Informed by a post-structural questioning that begins from the premise that categorisations 'do not precede enactments but, rather, they become knowable and come alive in repetitive acts, embodied and corporeal activities' (Nayak, 2007: 7), I suggest the site of identity formation may be understood as a moment of rupture (see Chapter 6,

Section 2 for analysis of everyday (dis)ruptions of the self). Therefore, thinking habitus as foregrounded history, enables an analysis of the affective consequences of becoming, through an account of moments of acting within the power dynamics of the field (see Chapter 6, Section 2 for an analysis the Primary School as a field within which particular formations of self are produced and reproduced). In this way, habitus as foregrounded history, together with Bourdieu's conceptual tools of field and capital, provides a way to explore the affective consequences of the social formation of the self 'in and through difference' (Bourdieu, 1998: 31).

My hope is that these two theoretical (re)constructions contribute to contemporary class analysis through a shift in analytic attention to the relationship between structure and agency; the processes through which people and place become classed. Together the concepts of 'being place(d)' and habitus as foregrounded history produce a theorisation of class as a material, discursive, social, embodied and affective position. As such, this work builds upon a tradition of deconstructive theorisations of identity within a sociology of gender and race (Butler, 1990; Hall, 1996), to think class formation within a post-structural ontology.

## A sociology of community

Located within a spatial turn in the sociology of class analysis (Raisborough and Adams, 2008), this thesis advances the use of the concept of community as a tool to explore the process through which classed identities are produced and reproduced across time and space (see Chapter 7: Introduction). I furthered a sociology of community, deconstructing authenticity, through an analysis of the everyday formation of knowledge of people and place within the Community Centre (see Chapter 7, Section 1 for detailed analysis of the discursive construction of the Community Centre). Here I reflect on the contribution a theorisation of the Community Centre as 'contact zone' may have for class analysis.

Throughout this thesis I contend that discourse is formative representation. In my analysis of the everyday, I have demonstrated that dominant discourse is produced and reproduced within interactions, arguing that knowledge of the Community Centre is constructed through the active weaving together of multiple representations. Yet, these representations are located within power dynamics which shape the possibility of individuals and institutions to access discourses as resource (see Chapter 7, Section 2: Legitimising community). Power lies in the ability to name, to claim to know and to resist and redefine such positionings. Discourse is therefore socially produced, in that it is shaped by histories which structure its reproduction, and formed inter-relationally, through the connections between personal and communal narratives.

Drawing upon Pratt's (1991) notion of 'contact zone', I proposed that the Community Centre forms a site of the discursive construction of community, as a social space where 'cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power'

(Pratt, 1991: 34). Despite this explicit asymmetry of power, the moment of contact is a negotiation, there is space for resistance, agency and disagreement (see Chapter 7, Section 2). The mediation of dominant discourses within everyday social interaction opens up space for the enactment of dissensus. This dynamic nature of discursive (re)production moves beyond structural accounts, to incorporate agentic responses and everyday resistances, through an analysis of the transformation of the purpose and motivation of action. For example, my analysis of Sexual Health screening (see Chapter 7, Section 2: Possibilities of resistance) illustrated that processes which form and regulate normative behaviour are mediated through everyday resistances that may redefine and subvert the meaning attributed to action.

The conceptualisation of 'contact zone' within this thesis provides an analytic tool with which to explore the everyday production of classed cultural practices. The core contribution of this analysis to the study of classed lives is the sociological imagining of the site of cultural production as a negotiation. Therefore, class production and reproduction are interconnected as each moment within a 'contact zone' is a negotiation within dynamic power relations; as performative, dominant discourses of community come into being through their enactment (see Chapter 7, Section 1: The production and reproduction of dominant discourses).

## Methodological possibilities

As a method, methodology, analysis and text, ethnography produces a particular form of representation; shaped by an analytical focus on the 'production of everyday life' (Lather 2001: 481), and the connection between 'meaning, social structure, power relations and history' (2001: 481) and a textual representation of the research.

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that ethnography is distinguished from other forms of qualitative research through an ontological and epistemological commitment which transcends the doing of research to encompass the representation of research (see Chapter 1, Section 1: Introducing the research). For me, the ontological and epistemological foundations of ethnography within a conception of the everyday as producer of structure, invites a critical stance on the ethnography itself as a powerful representation, a writing into being. This critical engagement with the practice of ethnographic writing as only ever 'partial truths' (Clifford, 1986), opened up questions around the transformative potential of ethnography; that as formative representation, ethnography may produce alternative ways of knowing.

In this Section, I want to explore the methodological contributions of this thesis to a feminist politics about 'how we should do research' (Skeggs, 2001: 4). Revisiting my discussion of ethnography as text, I will suggest that this thesis contributes to the study of class through the

development of two methodological tools: representation as politics; and post-structural theory as resistance.

## Representation as politics

The troubling of representation threads throughout this thesis, informed by the inherent tension in my project that seeks to deconstruct conceptualisations of class whilst inevitably producing new knowledges of classification (see Chapter 3: Theorising The Estate). Here, I want to reflect on my core argument that attention must be drawn to the moment of representation, as a moment of 'politics' (see Chapter 1, Section 1: 'Austerity' and the visibility of class). Thinking with the work of Rancière, I suggest that the methodological tools of representation are political in the sense that they define 'what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak' (Rancière, 2004: 7).

Enacting representation as 'politics', I explored the methodological possibilities of the analytic practice of 'lyrical sociology' (Abbott, 2007) to disturb the normative practices of social scientific enquiry (see Chapter 4, Section 1). Bringing together Abbott's 'lyrical sociology' and the 'poetics of the social sciences' of Rancière, I asserted two methodological disturbances: the introduction of the affective into social science research; and, disagreement as a 'practice of equality' (Pelletier, 2009: 273).

Conceptualising methodology as an act, 'building a stage and sustaining a spectacle' (Pelletier, 2009: 280), science may be thought of as 'constituting the world rather than understanding it' (ibid). Thus, the enactment of methodological disturbances have profound implications for knowledge production. I have argued that the practice of lyrical sociology may build upon narrative formations of representation, which provide an account or explanation, through the sharing of the researcher's 'intense reaction to some portion of the social process seen in a moment' (Abbott, 2007: 76). This theorisation of affect as the object of study shifts analytic attention from fixing the ethnographic moment within 'larger' social entities, to a commitment to 'maintaining the dispositional quality of the object of analysis, its position in the social world as it – the object – sees that world' (Abbott, 2007: 92). Therefore, the practice of lyrical sociology enables an engagement with Rancière's notion of disagreement, giving status to the speakers themselves; 'as speakers who speak, rather than emit noise or ventriloquize' (Pelletier, 2009: 276).

I have framed this discussion around the notion of methodological disturbances as I continue to question the ontological implications of a practice of equality for my work within the tension of structure and agency. Nevertheless, throughout this thesis I have argued for a particular analytic sensibility to affect and disagreement, founded upon the belief that 'the determination of a present

situation by something outside it is no reason not to celebrate or investigate or understand it in and of itself' (Abbott, 2007: 88).

## Post-structural theory as resistance

As a feminist ethnography, this thesis is founded upon an affinity between political interests and methodological possibilities. For me, the methodological disturbances of post-structural theory redefine ethnography as an act of politics. Through a focus on the everyday life of participants this research made visible 'hidden' knowledges and resistances (see Chapter 6, Section 1: Agentic possibilities of taboo play), producing a sociological imagining of the ways in which agency produces structure (Willis, 1997). Thinking with post-structuralism as a methodological tool, enabled a recognition that 'if the subject is constituted by power, that power does not cease at the moment the subject is constituted, but is subjected and produced time and again' (Butler, 1992: 13).

Therefore, this thesis developed an argument that the exploration of classed subjectivities through post-structural theory is not a move away from class as a structural and therefore material location; 'to take the construction of the subject as a political problematic is not the same as doing away with the subject' (Butler, 1992: 15). Rather, through deconstructing the subject I have explored the 'linguistic functions it serves in the consolidation and concealment of authority' (1992: 15).

As such, thinking with post-structural theory allows for the exploration of the processes through which the subject is constituted, furthermore, providing space within my analysis for subversion of classed categories (see for example, Chapter 6, Section 2: Embarrassment as resistance). Drawing upon Butler's assertion that 'identity categories are never merely descriptive, but always normative, and as such, exclusionary' (1992: 15-16), I have argued that a deconstruction of classifications enables me to 'continue to use them, repeat them, to repeat them subversively, and to displace them from the contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power' (1992: 17).

# An alternative analytic

> 'It is this liminal condition, suspended in a threshold between knowing and unknowing, that prevents wonder from being wholly contained or recuperated as knowledge, and thus affords an opening onto the new' (MacLure, 2013: 228)

Within the introductory Chapter of the thesis (see Chapter 1, Section 2: From seeking to know to embracing wonder), I outlined a commitment to 'question the ways in which such "examples" and "paradigms" serve to subordinate and erase that which they seek to explain' (Butler, 1992: 5). Throughout this thesis, I have sought to rupture knowledge production in the enactment of wonder as a methodological tool, creating a space where I may talk of what I do not know or at least cannot represent. In this final Section I want to recapture my discussion of the ethics of

representation, through a redirecting of analytic attention onto everyday expressions of happiness, something that has only been 'implied' thus far. As such, I hope this closing Section acts as a facilitator for further thinking on the role of the researcher in producing knowledge of everyday life.

## Everyday happiness, liveable lives

The alternative lens I suggest in the following analysis is a shift in attention towards the everyday enactments which produce the Community Centre as a place of joy. I argue, this is where resistance is located, in the everyday refusal to be defined purely by material conditions. I want to use this final analysis to open up some methodological and empirical questions: questions about my role as ethnographer to represent everyday life and questions about the significance of these moments for the knowledge that is produced of these people and this place.

When I think of the Community Centre, it is moments of joy that come to my mind very often. The visceral quality of these memories flood my senses, I can feel these moments, re-live them. However, reading back through my fieldnotes, the moments that constitute so vividly my experience of being there, are rarely detailed. In my writing of them, they lost such a glow as though I abandoned them. I was unable to represent the complexity of humane experience. Here, I reflect upon a moment I inadequately captured. I explore why such moments are so often left unsaid within my fieldnotes and I suggest that it is important to foreground moments of everyday happiness within ethnographic representations as agentic, nevertheless.

The formation and maintenance of relationships within the Community Centre were often founded within a particular conceptualisation of the gift. As an everyday practice, gift exchange is rarely foregrounded in my representations of the Community Centre within my fieldnotes. Rather, it forms the backstory of interaction, the unsaid and assumed of connections between people (Malinowski, 1996). The absence of the gift within my fieldnotes is a reflection of the veiled practice of gift giving that is enacted within the Community Centre.

> *Sharon seemed completely exasperated with the multiple leaning towers of ham that filed her fridge. 'You have to take some of these' she said to me, 'I don't know what to do with them', she was pleading with me now, 'I'm sure your mum could use them up'.*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 8th May 2014

From my experience of receiving gifts and re-tellings of the act of giving, the practice of gift giving is veiled through the repositioning of the burden of the giving and an obscuring of the source of the gift (Mauss, 1954). The conceptualisation of the gift in this form draws upon ideas of the gift as selfless and is deeply rooted in a paradox of being informed by discourses of 'need', yet discomfort with giving as 'charity'. By this I mean to highlight that there remains a distinction

between those who give and those who receive, the rejection of notions of charity and the investment in distancing performances are necessarily located in the construction of those in need.

As such, the giver invests in a performance of distancing from the gift; the purpose of this affective labour is to reposition the gift as a burden on them which the recipient may relieve them of through their acceptance of the gift. This performance undermines traditional constructions of the gift as reciprocal, distinguishing this formation of the gift from other more formalised gifting. In the everyday gift giving within the Community Centre there is an insistence that the gift need not be reciprocated, it is in effect reconceptualised as something other than a gift; there is a necessity and urgency attached to the everyday gift that separates it from the more indulgent gifts of Christmas and Birthdays. These gifts are often in the form of food or other 'essentials' such as toiletries. In this way the recipient is overtly defined as in need, yet the narrative provided by the giver allows a re-negotiation of 'need' by both giver and recipient, so as the giver may be conceived of as in 'need' of the recipient to accept the gift.

It is in this way that I think of gift giving practices as key in the production of liveable lives (Butler, 2004). Gifting within the Community Centre demonstrates the processes through which the material conditions of The Estate are inherently mediated through cultural practices that resist, subvert and reform meanings.

Therefore, I suggest that through an analysis of the agentic production of liveable lives, I may draw attention to the everyday consequences of structural inequality whilst maintaining an ethical commitment to representing participants in their lived complexity. The last moment I wish to represent, is positioned firmly at the edges of my ability to capture the feel of ethnography. Yet, rather than shy away from this encounter that I do not quite understand, and feel I fail to fully express, I wonder at its importance.

> *Two women came to the Community Centre with two girls with learning difficulties that they care for. When no one was playing any music one of the women put on 'Young Hearts Run Free' (by Candi Staton). I was playing pool with Josie. As soon as the song started her pace quickened, she moved with a slight wiggle around the table and muttered into her cue, 'uh-huh', as she took her shot. Growing in confidence, she began singing. Starting to strut now, she said 'My mum has this on CD'. Through the hatch to the kitchen Josie's mum smiled at me, she was singing too.*

> *'What's the sense in sharing*

> *This one and only life*

> *Endin' up just another lost and lonely wife*

> *You'll count up the years*

> *And they will be filled with tears*

> *Love only breaks up, to start over again*

*You'll get the babies, but you won't have your man*

*While he is busy loving every woman that he can, uh-huh*

*Say I'm gonna leave a hundred times a day*

*It's easier said than done*

*When you just can't break away'*

Sarah's fieldnotes, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2013

I often think of the moment I shared with Josie and her mum, it feels important; of consequence. It is a moment in which de-valued ways of being are valorised, bought to the fore as the most important, dynamics of the making of liveable lives. The affective connection between Josie and her mum, the pain and sadness of heartbreak, the hopefulness of youth, the power of experience and the value of 'woman' beyond associations with 'man'. This moment is a carving out of space of resistance to dominant discourses of 'single mother'; it realigns categorisations, re-positioning identities of 'mother' as a source of value. The lyrics of the song facilitate a pause in the everyday where de-valued positions are re-imagined as sources of knowledge. This form of subtle rupture may not produce anything, there may be no change, and there may be no conversation, no debate or dissensus. However, for me, moments such as these are the production of the possibilities of liveable lives. They are moments of reflection and in this sense they are agentive:

> 'I am constituted by a social world I never chose. That my agency is riven with paradox does not mean it is impossible. It means only that paradox is the condition of its possibility' (Butler, 2004: 3)

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