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Affective history, working class communities and self-determination

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Abstract

Using a concept of affective history, this paper explores the common creation of everyday being-ness, producing common meanings that may have existed and been passed down over hundreds of years. Indeed, some of those meanings clearly become potent symbols binding us together. Thus, common meanings, held for many hundreds of years can have an effect in relation to the construction of communal beingness in the present. Applying this approach to research in working class communities with a history of suffering or displacement, often understood by agencies as 'hard to reach', demands that we take a creative approach to research. Methodologically, this work came out of listening to a fragmentary history of movement and exclusion that emerged out of attending to the collection of often small, anecdotal, details in conversations and interviews. This approach is explored with reference to using a co-production research framework.

Introduction

While the special issue of Sociological Review explores new ways of understanding community as relationality, producing meanings and affects held in common (Studdert, this issue; Studdert and Walkerdine, 2016), the issue of the past of those meanings and affects, what I call affective histories, has barely been explored (Walkerdine, 2014, 2015). In this paper I discuss what an engagement with affective histories might mean for an understanding of community as sociality in respect to working class communities, relating this to issues of self determination and arts-based co-produced research interventions[i].

In an earlier publication, Studdert and Walkerdine (2016) make a case for understanding community through a relational analytic which emphasizes sociality produced in co-created meanings and affects held in common. In that work, we explore some aspects of the historical generation of meaning in common that relate to one working class community on a council estate. In addition, I have also analysed what we might call the affective history of steelwork haunting a town in which the production of steel was stopped in the early 21st century (Walkerdine, 2010, Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012). By exploring further examples from those two sites, I want to draw out issues significant for working class sociality in the context of the marginalization and impoverishment of some sections of the working class in Britain.

What is an affective history?

In Walkerdine (2015), I argued that to explore the present of class, it was necessary to understand its affective landscape, and to do this needed engagement with the ways in which embodied responses to historical events are

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transmitted to the bodies of descendants and to think about the ways in which this might relate to the embodied responses to classed inequalities over generations. In other words, having understood a genealogy in which classed inequality was glossed as pauperism, and in which the poor were divided into those who worked and the indigent or idle, with attempts at reform of the latter and many modes of the policing of the former such as workhouses, how has this shaped responses and experiences passed down through generations? How might it relate both to attempts to avoid poverty in the present or to the experience of the precaritisation of work now? If present experiences are shaped by the ghosts of past experiences transmitted across generations (eg Ettinger, 1996; Pickersgill, 2014), I wanted to suggest that there is a way of invoking embodied responses to experiences of classification across generations. That is, relationships need to be understood as being the product of sociality and historical processes, rather than simply providing a context or backdrop for them.

Actions, objects, places, feelings, inter-subjective bonds – all are examples of the relationalities of community. Following this, it is the legacies of the past in the present and how that past lives on in the embodied present of community that concerns me here. In the work in Steeltown, I made an argument about the effects of two hundred years of steel work on the population of the town. In attempting to understand how the loss of steel manifested in the present relationalities, I made reference to ways that we might understand how the community held itself together through adversity and what happened when the ways of holding together were severely challenged by the loss of heavy industrial work in the present. Referring to affective experiences relating to threats to

community survival and going-on-being or ontological security, I referred to work on the skin as both a physical and affective barrier first developed by Esther Bick in the 1960s (Bick, 1968). Bick argued that in the face of what was experienced as a threat to survival, 'second skin phenomena' developed, whereby the experience of a rigid affective skin developed as if to keep from spilling out everything that was experienced as allowing a body to carry on being. Anzieu (1989) developed this work to think about a group skin, terming it an ego skin. He argued that groups suffer from not having a body and so have to imagine one. This imagination or fantasy provides a dream of symbiosis which attempts to hold everything together against the threat of its breaking apart. This can lead to a rigid community second skin aimed at preserving the fantasy of community and saving it from the threat of annihilation. Willoughby (2004) adds that within this, toleration of otherness is difficult given survival anxieties. In Steeltown, I argued, such a continuous lack of safety and threat of community disintegration and annihilation was present throughout the 200 years of steel production. In Walkerdine and Jimenez, (2012),chs 3 and 4_we give numerous examples of what could be called community second skin phenomena in Steeltown. These included various practices of communal relations, poor toleration of outsiders, strong identification with place, unwillingness to move for work because of feelings of lack of safety, for example. What is important here is that such phenomena are created out of material fears about survival, which, in this case, can be shown to have existed for at least 200 years. During that time, the idea of the formation of second skin phenomena show us sets of community meanings, practices, affects that, on the basis of the need for the community to survive, create a rigid second skin, aimed at stopping the community from spilling out,

leaking and thus risking fears of annihilation. In this framework such a history is both material – actual things were done, practices were evident, but also affective. This is not simply the sharing of feelings but a complex dynamic in which the bodily is also contained within a community vision of itself and of experiences holding it together, which are articulated in many small ways (Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012). A community that does not feel safe at the deepest existential level cannot live expansively, just as individual people cannot expand or live fully if they have to spend all their time trying to contain inside themselves anxieties about being able to survive, which threaten the very possibility of going-on-being.

In addition, hard industrial masculinities also served to keep the community safe through hard-won practices, such as unions but also through assuming the bodily strength and fortitude to withstand heavy, dangerous work. It is possible to understand such a masculinity as a communal meaning that serves to hold a community together. It could be called a fantasy, not to denigrate it but to understand that the tropes of this masculinity are what come, in many ways, to stand for what the community is. When steelwork died, this masculinity no longer had a daily role and in fact the kinds of available jobs signaled the very opposite of what that masculinity had come to stand for. This created devastating consequences for people for whom this meaning provided a support and indeed pride for going-on-being in the face of such adversity.

Let me give two examples.

A group of young unemployed men in Steeltown in 2010, who had not themselves experienced the Steelworks, which had closed in 2002, refused point blank to do any work in jobs that were traditionally thought of as 'women's

work'. Their reaction to this included trashing supermarket shelves if those shelves had been stacked by a young man and themselves refusing any work at all that needed literacy, preferring instead to hang out for heavy industrial work, which was no longer available at all. Rather than viewing such young men as dole-bludging scroungers, it is incumbent upon us to recognize the fear of annihilation that is embodied within the refusal. One young man said that, without his car, he had no life, but even so he would give up his car rather than stack shelves. It is the intensity (Deleuze, 1994) or vitality (Stern, 2010; Massumi, 2003) of this statement that should awaken us to its very strong affective content. Related to this, there were examples from older men and women making life difficult also for young men who tried to work in service jobs, such as pizza delivery and cleaning (Walkerdine and Jimenez, op cit). We can, of course, understand this as stigmatization, bullying. But to think about it as affective history shows us the depth of the threat to the possibility of life and going-on-being that these changes represent.

This is further exemplified by the many women who insisted on calling their male partners the breadwinner in the family despite the fact that it was the women and not the men who were bringing in most of the money (Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012). Such a designation kept alive the fantasy of sexual difference as it had been known. In each case, we could suggest that historically what had happened left its traces and those traces, like half lives, still lived on – what had been a response to actual threats – in particular the need for men to be very tough to withstand the work – became a response to a threat that no longer existed. That is, the threat of feminisation carried the echoes and ghosts of the past with it. Maffesoli (this issue) refers to this as a kind of splitting in the face of

the terrible loss of certainty of fixed social categories. While I think there is far more continuity than Maffesoli claims between modernity and its aftermath, nevertheless, it is as though the new work situation presenting work for men that was previously considered the province of women, has to be kept at bay at all costs. Women have to protect their men and so protect a masculinity that allows them to be women, and the young men have to desperately prevent their own feared annihilation as men and with it the loss of pride or its conversion to shame. These examples show us how something can become historically split off from the context of its production, yet still experienced as real inside an affective skin. In this way, what ensued had a material and affective history of its own in which the complex and recursive origins of the original threats to survival is replaced by a communal organization which attempts to hold something together even in the face of extreme demonization (think chavs, dole-bludgers, scroungers, welfare mothers etc) and overwhelming attempts at community reform demanding aspiration and individualization on the part of many government initiatives of various political complexions.

This has significant consequences in a social world in which a backward-looking sexism is taken to reign and the inhabitants are given up as recalcitrant dinosaurs. Such a position fails totally to grasp the central significance of the haunted bodies that people post-industrial communities. Thus, to understand the present of such communities we need to understand how that affective history shapes the present and how it is also contained in layers of meaning.

Studdert and Walkerdine (op cit) also offered examples of historical chains of community meaning in relation to the history of forced movement from the centre of the town to a housing estate on its periphery. Meanings from earlier

times circulated in the ways in which the estate community attempted to call on previous ways of being and to use these in a context in which the relationalities possible in the centre of town, no longer existed.

'Up the estate'[ii]

If we think about current approaches to community, it is all too common to present community as reactionary and backward looking (Bauman, 2001) Instead of seeing it this way, in an a-historical sense, we might begin to examine the ways in which patterns of sociality formed and contained in rural and pre-industrial communities were used as means of affective containment and safety in later eras, or how communities adapted to historical threats to going on being (Marris, 1986). Thus, in principle, we could trace affective histories of community in which we could understand the present of communal affects and meanings in the way that I have outlined. If we were to understand this, moral judgments about communities would be irrelevant because the issue would be to understand the specificity of communal meanings and thus be able to support the possibility of community empowerment   without having to propose the death of community or the inevitability of individualism (Beck and Beck Gernsheim,2001 , Giddens 1991). Thus, I am also suggesting that the historical trajectories proposed by Giddens, for example, while conveying state meanings, because they deny any agency to relationality, fail to engage with the possibilities inherent in community but also fail to correctly understand how certain community meanings and affects come to be what they are. The most recent and pressing example of this would be the vote for Brexit, where, as many have commented[iii], the post-industrial working class feels abandoned.

In denying this possibility, communities are condemned and left to rot in an enforced poverty, led on by unscrupulous politicians (Pai, 2016).

And as again many journalists have noted, pre Brexit, in such communities the common cry was, justifiably, 'no-one listens to us'.

Indeed, current anti-poverty projects, where they exist, are continually attempting to produce the poor as aspirational individuals and although community assets are recognized in some approaches (Asset based community Institute, n.d.) there is still a lingering moralism present in most kinds of schemes. Instead, I am arguing here that in failing both to recognize and to support the understanding of community past and present affects and meanings, not simply at an individual level, but at the level of the relationally produced communing itself, we deny crucial support to those communities struggling in the face of huge economic changes.

In what follows, I attempt to understand the past in the present in meanings related to one community centre on the housing estate and to go on to think about the development of a methodology for linking community past, present and future.

In Market-Town, the poor had traditionally occupied houses in the centre of the town in a street that was known as the home of the local criminals but was also a strong community within itself, often, according to one former resident, lived on the street. However, designated as slums in the 1950s, the houses were torn down and the occupants were moved to a new housing estate on the northern edge of the town. In our research (Studdert and Walkerdine, 2016), many residents of the estate told us of life now and some told us of life then. Moira told us about the street's self-policing and self reliance:

'If I say my impressions of [ ] Street were: I always knew from when I was small that it was probably the roughest, toughest street in town…..But the sense of community was absolutely unbelievable. Basically nobody had anything. If you had nothing you'd get half off somebody else. And also there was a big sense of natural justice, a wonderful sense. I can remember my grandmother saying if you clipped a child around the ear for nothing, you'd get one back. And it was that sort of street that everybody looked after everybody else'.

Inside the boundaries of the street, the community managed itself and was a world unto itself. Indeed, its sense of self-reliance was probably a threat which had to be dissipated. As many commented, this sense was lost in the enforced move. While there is no doubt that the standard of housing was much improved, the move created a huge sense of community loss and of marginalization by being removed 'out of sight', as it were (Marris, op cit). Thus, what had previously been seen as a group of criminals, 'no-goodniks', rough etc, treated with fear and suspicion, were moved to a periphery that for some middle class outsiders inside the town is still regarded as a den of crime, as a no-go area, with fear and suspicion created on both sides – for the estate residents and for the people from the south of the town. The estate is the centre of considerable deprivation, often ignored, dismissed and opposed in what is otherwise a wealthy town.   In this way, complex social relations get mixed up with painful and oppressive community and personal histories that may or may not be directly speakable. But the actions and meanings are plain to see and could be easily articulated and we uncover a web of relations in which the contested meanings of what these people were and are is lived out in the policies of the council, in the geographies of the town, in the contestation of class relations. Here the meanings in the street contrast markedly with those outside it and while the estate attempted to create a commonality of meaning, its modern

council houses could not recreate the dense activities of the street. Nor could those outside the parameters of the estate see much other than a social problem. It was common for the residents of this estate to be understood by front-line community workers and others as 'hard to reach' (Cortiz, Katz and Patulney, 2009). and apathetic (Lertzman, 2016) . In projects in which David Studdert and I have been engaged (Studdert and Walkerdine, 2016), this has often been an issue for community workers, councils and voluntary agencies. When we organized a town meeting for one project, although the working class community from the estate was well represented by people we had specifically asked to come along, no-one from the estate outside that group was part of the audience and yet, a well-represented middle class community group felt resentful of the time taken to discuss the glaring needs articulated by the estate group and felt that by contrast, their group had not been adequately listened to. Thus, there is generated a sense of the working class 'hard to reach' group as the client group as against the middle class group as a kind of agent group, often in fact the very agents with responsibility for the client group.

If we think about the town's web of relations, the complex relationalities are easy to exemplify. The history and geography of the estate form a central component of the inhabitants' being-ness. Not only does the history of the movement from the centre define them, but that centre was already understood as an enclave of crime and a sense of people who were in some way dodgy and living on the edge. Taking this to the periphery of the town means that the estate is already designated as containing undesirable elements. The present encompasses no-go areas, ASBOs, reports from middle class inhabitants that they do not feel safe there, and local reports that the area is a centre for crime, drugs and a few bad

families. It is in this sense that the inhabitants of the estate have to negotiate hostility simply by walking to the centre of the town, to do shopping for example. There is no reliable bus service and there are virtually no shops on the estate. Thus, they are made to carry a sense of exclusion and non-belonging with them, often feeling unwelcome and unsafe in the town centre. If we add to this, for example, the domination of the town council by special interests, the county council's withdrawal of services and overall politics of the area, the regional government's lip service to a client-led agenda but a complete unwillingness and inability to listen to any local estate suggestions, producing a feeling of being surveilled rather than empowered and the local community organization being run by an amalgamation of voluntary agencies with a clear agenda, which actively precludes giving local people any decision-making powers, then the web in which the estate being-ness is constructed begins to make sense. In every relation, this being-ness is further developed from the tiniest detail to the largest. It is the charting of this web and its being-nesses that is complex but crucial for understanding the 'hard to reach'.

As Studdert (2006) has argued, social capital thinking reinforces the notion of community as state server implicitly serving clients. Therefore, the sense that such people could be agents of their own organization and governance is given lip-service (rhetorics of empowerment, job creation, etc) but in practice is not attended to at all and actively opposed. In the research projects, this was attested to again and again by both community workers and local volunteers. Local attempts at self-governance and agency were simply not supported, though they happened, in a short-lived way, all the time. One example would be a local dads group, set up by fathers on the estate to give the children something to do and a

local community café, offering cheap and free cooked food. Both these developments did not fall within the remit of activities officially sanctioned but were set up by local people for themselves. This self-help is something we have found on estates in other areas of the UK as well and with it the council resistance that often led to closures of locally derived projects. With this complex history and geography, and the embodied affective bodily experiences and meanings that are created, it would not be surprising for a culture of resignation, covert opposition and so-called anti-social behaviour to be established and accepted by others in the estate as 'reasonable'.

As the social philosopher Jacques Ranciere (2004) points out, philosophers from Plato onwards have defined the poor as a separate group to be acted upon or to be urged to act (eg make a revolution; have an aspiration), arguing that they have always taught themselves and figured things out in their own way and thus could be understood as a call for self-determination[iv]. The solutions found by those who set up a community kitchen or the local dads group, were often short-lived because active opposition and limitations were put in place by the local state (Studdert and Walkerdine, op cit).

This has quite complex implications. On the one hand, we could argue that our analyses suggest that self-determination by working class communities is very important, but on the other, the complex histories at play often make that very public articulation difficult to articulate and not sanctioned unless fought for. In other words, long histories of poverty, oppression and exclusion combine to create modes of being, relating and sociality that 'work' for those involved and have, indeed, led to significant practices and possibilities not only for the construction of safety but for the creation significant spaces of appearance

(Studdert and Walkerdine, op cit) Thus, I am suggesting that what appears as non-compliance, apathy or lack of interest may be understood as an attempt to create safe spaces of appearance, free from interference. I suggest that, in such spaces, it is hard to comply with a demand to create if what appears to be demanded are actions that appear to be lacking in safety. This active attempt to create a community in which these meanings can be sustained cannot be successful in any overt or formal sense, creating at once a feeling of life and death opposition and of powerlessness. It is as though no-one will pay attention to the screaming attempts at the sustaining of communal meanings that can no longer be heard inside a web of relations that has other demands[v].

I am suggesting therefore that what is hard to reach is a history in which self-determination has been denied, in which histories of defeat, exclusion and pathologisation push into small defiant corners, the demand for agency.[vi] People did indeed complain that they were not heard or listened to. And indeed, as we saw in relation to the town meeting above, even the giving of time and space to their concerns can provoke any angry, possibly envious, attack. If no-one is prepared to hear their meanings and no-one is prepared to address their concerns, attempts to create safe communities of meaning inside which a being-ness is carried across time and space remains impossible.

Community refusals

I want to discuss examples of how we might approach the 'hard to reach' in terms of a refusal. In thinking about the affective history of non-compliance or covert refusal, I started to think in more detail about how to approach a case of a dads' group on the estate, set up the group to support their children, meeting to

play once per week in the local primary school after school hours. In one of our research projects, one of the dads was on our steering committee. It was suggested that the group might like to do some drama workshopping, leading to a performance and the dads agreed, saying that they would do it for their children. But things started to go wrong. The leader kept failing to turn up to steering group meeting, while having said that he would come on each occasion. We hear that there may be problems in getting away but we never are told these and gradually he becomes incommunicable. In a last ditch attempt to involve the group, a meeting is arranged via the leader for the group of dads to come and discuss what they might like to do. A room is booked, the male researcher turns up with food and beers but absolutely no-one turns up. It turns out that no-one knew about the meeting because the leader hadn't told them.

While trying to understand the covert refusal contained within these actions, I turned to a method used in previous research (Walkerdine, Olswold and Rudberg, 2013), which uses a technique discussed by Davoine and Gaudilliere in relation to their attempt to find a meaning to link them with an incommunicable patient. They use the concept of resonance in which they take a moment in a session that resonates affectively for them, no matter what situation comes to mind, even if it seems unrelated. This allows them to get in touch which an affect that may offer an affective link to the patient's experience, thus allowing the possibility of a meaning in common. In Walkerdine et al, we used this technique as a way in to engaging with the transcript of an interview.

In approaching the story of the dads in this way, I find that one scene insistently fills my mind, though it seems to have nothing to do with the dads. It is a scene from the time when I was doing a masters degree and I am in a seminar in which

everyone has a lot to say about class, making clever, forceful arguments, except me. I am unable to open my mouth.

I try to remember the feeling of not speaking. It is shame – shame that I have nothing clever to say, but also rage – rage because what I want to say doesn't fit and doesn't make sense in the terms that they are using, but also fear about the consequences of saying what I think for the possibility of my staying in this space. My experience of working class life is so different from what they are saying.

What seems key is that nothing I could say would make sense to them and that I can't say what is needed for fear of looking stupid.

I take this as a clue to ask what meaning is conveyed by the 'not-said'? And as we know, that is exactly how silence has been judged as the failure to mean anything and as stupidity (Walkerdine, 1985, 1986). So we have an affective history of the regulation of speech, which we can put together with every attempt to produce to produce other meanings – in the current idiom, aspiration, for example and to negate any pre-existing meanings by an absolute avalanche of pathologising discourse: chavs, scroungers, benefit cheats, ignorance, stupidity etc.

At first I think of the term 'passive aggression' to describe this refusal and then I pause and rethink. Let us consider the definition of passive-aggressive behaviour:

Passive-aggressive behavior is the indirect expression of hostility, such as through procrastination, stubbornness, sullen behavior, or deliberate or repeated failure to accomplish requested tasks for which one is (often explicitly) responsible.
For research purposes, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) revision IV describes **passive-aggressive personality disorder** as a "pervasive pattern of negativistic attitudes and passive resistance to demands for adequate performance in social and occupational situations."
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passive-aggressive_behavior, accessed 20th July, 2016)

The DSM definition gives us all we need to know when it alerts us to the fact that this is about the action of subordinates at work. Thus, this term has entered into a historical armory in which a particular action becomes pathologised as a medical condition, an illness (Foucault, 1976). This at least gives us a clue to the sense that what is at stake here is insubordination at work. So, I start to think about circumstances in which things cannot be said because of the fear of consequences. Cultivating the appearance of compliance while hiding another feeling, other relations and practices, which must go underground, is a feature of subjugation and subordination. I am very familiar with the necessity to hide opposition and illicit practices in factory work settings from my own upbringing. And it was this that led me to search further for more examples. What I found was James Scott (1990) who calls these resistances to domination through the use of what he calls 'hidden transcripts'. A hidden transcript is the opposite of a public transcript and thus is a position, view, that is the opposite of what the subordinate articulates publicly and which is known to other subordinates or subjugated peoples but can never be openly articulated outside for fear of punishment. Scott gives a wealth of examples of this over a wide geographical area and a long historical period. Using this sense of a subjugated view that has to be hidden and can never be shown to those in power, we can understand the actions of the 'dads' in a completely different way. In this approach, failure to articulate opposition, failure to turn up and yet the effect of sabotaging the project of workshopping the dads' experience for an audience, could be precisely an example of what Scott is proposing. What we do not have, of course, is access to the hidden transcript itself. It may be, that it is never articulated out loud, but we cannot know. But it completely changes how we might understand what is

described as 'apathy' or being 'hard to reach'. It does not operate as though there is nothing there but conversely proposes that what appears as apathy is a refusal based on the recognition that not only can one's view not be heard but that it is also to be protected because it may be subject to punishment or, at the very least, articulating it takes away the dads' control over their way of doing things and opens it up potentially to conflict with, in this case, middle class researchers. We know only too well that indeed the practices of normalization of working class domestic practices, for example, in their way, punish or at least shame practices not complying with current policy (see Walkerdine, 2015a and 2016), for example). This then speaks to the ways in which community services, voluntary agencies, government and research projects constantly misread and pathologise public responses or lack of response reading it through a reformist agenda that assumes that silence is equivalent to an absence -'If you say nothing, they will think you have nothing to say' (Walkerdine, 1986). If you have nothing to say, you can be filled up with something but if that nothing covers other sets of meanings, gone underground, and carefully protected, we need to understand its history, which must include an affective history linked to the effects over generations of not being able to speak your experience of subjugation for fear of reprisal.

In the final example, we will see a refusal again.

A community and project team steering group organized a festival on the site of a much-loved former open-air swimming pool. The festival did not involve any participants having to buy anything, but the idea was that they bring along a picnic. Of course, not all those who might like to come would be able to afford to supply a picnic, so we worked with a local housing association and obtained

funding from a local supermarket to supply food for the picnic for those that wanted it. What we should have understood but didn't, was that many families who would not otherwise have afforded to come, refused the offer of food, understanding it as a handout or charity. Having myself grown up with this discourse and having a strong aversion to hand-outs and charity, I should have recognized the problem with the proposed strategy. In fact, some families would rather not attend the picnic than be given free food. However, we then understood the practice of churches wanting to set up on the estate of providing a van giving away free burgers at community events run by them. Thus, failure to correctly understand past and present MICs results in unintended consequences and in misunderstanding and indeed pathologising the community, often pushing in a direction that is not only likely to fail but may make the situation worse. What was it I failed to remember? It bears on extremely strong feelings about an opposition to middle class hand-outs and charity and in my memory relates to the importance of having pride. To accept charity is to be beholden, but we are not servants and need to be beholden to no-one. We are poor but proud, we work for our money and if we receive from the state it is because it is our right, not because of charity. These feelings are still emblazoned on my heart. And I suggest that the recognition of this memory would have led me to see the difficulty of this approach. Rather, we should have created an inclusive event in which it was not assumed that people had food to bring.

This suggests to me that in developing possibilities for self-determination by the poor for the poor, we need not only to understand the long history of diverse social policies and modes of regulation, to which they have become subjected, the long history of understanding the causes of poverty in the actions, habits and

psychology of the poor themselves, but also to engage with the ways in which self-determination in the face of power, needs to be made to feel safe.

Co-produced research?

Perhaps it is because I struggled to feel safe inside an academy that constantly claimed to know me and to want to improve me that leads me to stress the importance of safety. And also because I take part in so many events that seem to claim to know and be on the side of poor and working class people that see them as radically other. This places me in a complex and difficult position. On what basis can I speak now? On what basis can I claim to know? What right do I have to tell a story, offer an interpretation, give a reading? I can appreciate the desire only to work with texts, but it is because I have struggled for so long to know how to raise the issue of the intimacies of ordinary experience, that I try here to think about what social research can look like if we take seriously the issues of the possibilities inherent in working together. Co-design and co-creation in community research was championed by the AHRC Connected Communities programme a few years ago. Moreover, this programme encouraged arts-based approaches to co-produced research. There are many ways to understand and interpret this approach (Facer and Enright, 2016) and we should not be blind to the fact that co-production has been used in the main to get poor communities to comply with a government agenda and to run services themselves (Boyle and Harris, n.d.). We should also note that many examples of co-produced research do not directly engage with or work on an agenda proposed by working class communities themselves, but rather with so-called 'community partners', who are most likely to be organizations or indeed work with moral notions about

what is best in one way or another[vii]. However, I want to ask if there is a possibility of this kind of research being used in support of self-determination. Examples such as the one with the dads, and the refusal of picnics, point to the complexities of the endeavour of co-production reflecting and supporting community self-determination.

As bell hooks put it:

"Silenced. We fear those who speak about us and do not speak with us. We know what it is like to be silenced. We know that the forces that silence us because they never want us to speak, differ from the forces that say speak, tell me your story. Only do not speak in the voice of resistance. Only speak from that space in the margin that is a sign of deprivation, a wound, and unfilled longing. Only speak your pain.

This is an intervention. A message from the space where we recover ourselves, where we move in solidarity to erase the category colonized/colonizer. Marginality as a site of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there. Enter that space. We greet you as liberators". (hooks, 1990, p343)

She said it much better than my own stumbling attempts. How do we enter that space? Is entering that space even possible for academic researchers?

In Studdert and Walkerdine (2016), we raise in several chapters the central significance of the exclusion from wider public expression the meanings and forms of communal being-ness presented by the inhabitants of the estate and the attempt to define community through the elite, who we refer to as the County Set. Keeping these meanings inside the safety of a known space, of doing things their own way and thus keeping control, stops the possibility of a public confrontation, which we know historically, is usually the object of pathologisation. As Scott

points out, when hidden transcripts become public, an eruption of energy occurs. This energy is unpredictable but the possibility of the public speaking of that which has been muted or silenced, but which nevertheless existed as meanings and communal being-ness, opens up a transformatory potential that comes from those who constitute themselves as the correct kinds of citizens, being forced to listen. Of course, listening does not mean that the excluded being-ness is still not further silenced or pathologised. But it is the opening of a space of possibility through complex and careful listening to the play of actual and silenced meanings, of discourses aiming to mute through pathologising definition and in the possibilities inherent in the results of that attention and listening that make possible a mode of research as co-production. I have tried to outline just how difficult and contradictory that listening is and the central importance of being led rather than imposing a 'progressive' agenda, making self-determination arising from shared meanings, impossible.

This does not mean that even when we listen, we hear correctly. This listening must take a form of not-knowing (Colectivo Situaciones, 2003) and therefore of constantly being open to hearing and struggling to understand and engage with what is being shared. As the Colectivo Situaciones (2003) state, 'this is theoretical and practical work oriented to the co-production of knowledges. And modes of alternative sociability, beginning with the power (potencia) of those subaltern knowledges'[viii]. I suggest that for co-produced research to have any chance of success, it is the community that must call the shots. I have been at pains to explore why this might be much more difficult than is usually presented. It is in the making together, developed through trust, that the most profound insights might be understood and actions proposed for the possibility of change

and transformation. This approach is entirely compatible with the radical desire not simply to describe the world but also to change it. However, that community members be listened to and thus potentially lead the way, is so central to this approach that it bears repeating that effective social scientific work is not possible in this tradition, without it.

That the shared meanings operating in any situation may not be immediately accessible is a central part of my analysis. A community body can scream to be heard or can hide its meanings to keep them safe from a pathologising gaze. For me, this also means being open to a psychosocial approach in which our own feelings in the field may provide a clue to a meaning that is trying to express itself, while always checking with participants that one has heard them correctly in order to move forward together (Trist and Murray, 1990)[ix], never imposing that meaning upon participants or assuming that it is correct. Thus, the young men who refuse to undertake any work involving literacy are presenting to us a meaning that screams at us, a meaning that we must work to be able to hear. Not least that creating a space in which a radical refusal takes place is a matter of life and death. In order to hear its screams effectively we must relate it to other historical analyses of the significance of such meanings as well as understanding the present web of relations. It is perhaps not surprising that actions, such as those of the young men in question, are often condemned by social scientists as backward, sexist, lacking aspiration and many other moral derogations. Such concealed 'moral' approaches hinder the detailed understanding of what the meanings are, how they are formed and means that we cannot be invited in in the way that hooks proposes. Instead of taking the position of the 'subject supposed to know' (Lacan, 1964/77), as Davoine (2007) suggests, we research

together to understand not only the historical production of meanings but also to

work for the public expression of meanings and practices of self-determination.

But no-one should be under any illusion that work in a co-production way that

takes such meanings forward is a simple task, but it surely is a vital one.

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[ii] This title is taken from the title of a play devised by the residents of the housing estate as part of the research undertaken with them.

[iii] Eg http://www.politics.co.uk/blogs/2016/06/27/labour-is-on-the-verge-of-

losing-the-working-class-forever (accessed 13th July, 2016)

[iv] Ranciere particularly opposes Bourdieu's sociology as it was applied to the French education system from the 1970s, in which a separate curriculum was designed for working class pupils, in order to engage the alienated. A similar move happened in Britain, especially in the 1970s, with that move arguably dumbing down a working class curriculum in an effort to solve problems of alienation.

[v] It could be argued that this example is reminiscent of Paul Willis' 1970s analysis of 'lads'. However, the approach taken here is not attempting to show how these young men's refusal puts them at a huge disadvantage so much as to demonstrate the historical and affective complexity of the refusal, and to ask how the meanings inside this refusal might be worked with to produce different community outcomes.

[vi] While here is not the place to dissect the results of the UK referendum on membership of the EU held in 2016, such arguments as are being developed here can clearly be applied to the working class vote in former industrial areas.

[vii] It should be noted, however, that there are other, less well-known traditions of co-produced research, for example that described by the Colectivo Situaciones (2003) as militant research, the tradition of co-research developed in Italy in the 1960s and 70s, which took the management research developed by Elton Mayo and adapted it to be undertaken by workers for themselves (Malo de Molina, 2004) and the community research developed in American community psychology (Prileltensky and Prileltensky, 2006, Fine and Torre, 2006).

[viii] Studdert and Walkerdine (2016) refer to this power or potencia as social power, though potencia carries with it the traces of its force as potential. It

should also be noted here that the Colectivo are using the term 'subaltern' in the Gramscian sense, but that it has been subject to considerable critique, viz Subaltern Studies.

[ix] The concept developed by the Tavistock Institute in this respect is the 'working note'. While this was used in management consultancy, what it does is provide a basis for further shared dialogue until meanings are worked out together.