

**Slippin': A participatory and psychocultural study
of inner city youth, masculinity, race and mental
health.**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Central Lancashire.

May 2013

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Abstract

This is a study of youth and urban marginality set in the inner city neighbourhood of St Pauls, Bristol. The study centres on and around a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project undertaken with seven young Black British men aged 15 to 24, over eighteen months in the period immediately before August 2011, when rioting dramatically broke out in several English metropolitan cores, including St Pauls. The research belongs to a literary tradition in the human sciences concerned with oppression and resistance, and draws from ideas across anthropology, sociology, psychology, psychoanalysis, and cultural and critical theory more generally. It is postmodern in orientation, but engages politically with the structural inequalities and economic exclusion that shape the young subjectivities at its ethnographic heart.

In its positionality, the study tests and extends theories of participation in spaces and categories of marginality under-represented in the existing literature. It also re-politicises mental health, setting in context the behaviours, emotional states, and structure of feeling experienced by a demographic of young men consistently over-represented in acute psychiatric and criminal justice settings. But because the research is dialectical enquiry by participatory ethics, this is as much a study of the oppressors as it is the oppressed, one concerned for the enduring capacity of ideology to insert itself into everyday social, professional and economic relations by various state technologies and interpersonal techniques of power.

The voices of the young men in this study de-stabilise our ideas of what and who is healthy and pathological, oppressor and oppressed. In so doing they lay an ethical charge of (in)justice at the door of the state, one that unites their mental health with discourses on social class, participation, citizenship and democracy. Indeed, though marginalised, these are young masculinities made in the image of neoliberalism, and their crystallising economic and psychocultural exclusion is evidence of a social polarisation that will increasingly threaten the basic social contract if left structurally untouched.

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Acknowledgements

I'd like to personally thank a number of people, without whom this research would simply not have been realised. First, obviously, I am completely indebted to my co-participants; Ashley, Lawrence, Tyreese, Jermaine, Trigga, Ledley, Marcel, and Audley. I am immensely grateful for their eventual involvement, their willingness to share their perspectives and experiences with me, and for what they showed me about myself and about Bristol. I hope this thesis does them justice.

I must also thank Sauda Kyalambuka, Catherine Lecointe, Dee Johnson, Rob Mitchell and Marvin Rees, who were all in their own and various ways important to making the study happen. As were Full Circle Youth and Family Project and my employer, Off the Record (Bristol); without the support of both organisations the research would have been undoubtedly much harder to both begin and complete.

Finally, my gratitude of course extends to my supervisory team, Nigel Thomas, Alan Farrier, Jill Hemmington and Andy Bilson; always accommodating and encouraging, and always ready with a timely reference for further reading. And thanks especially to Professor Nigel Thomas, who back in 2008 offered me the opportunity to study under his supervision and to benefit from a studentship in the process. Without his initial faith and the studentship, I would never have got started.

INTRODUCTION

My overarching aim in this study was to work through a participatory approach to try and achieve a highly situated monograph and analysis of everyday life for marginalised young men living in a provincial British inner city. Set in St Pauls, Bristol, this thesis is the fruit of that basic aim. Specifically, it centres on a Participatory Action Research project through which I collaborated with seven young men, aged, at the time, between 15 and 24 years. As it happened, all were Black, British, and of third generation Jamaican extraction. And while I was keen in the genesis of this study to work with this particular demographic group, I would not have excluded any other local young men from participating had they wanted to. Within our highly situated project, I wanted the process to return the value of social research to the young men, through development of (as it turned out) a short film, and the necessary provision of training, skills and accreditation. Each of the young men would also get a one-off stipend of £100 for twelve-weeks participation in the project.

The origins of the research lie in my various experiences working in statutory Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), public mental health, and latterly, as Director of a third sector provider of mental healthcare to young people in Bristol. In very simple terms, I wanted to understand the worldview of a demographic of young men who show up statistically over-represented in the criminal justice and acute mental health systems, and who enter these settings by roads that are generally coercive. In complete contradistinction to the service cultures of my professional life, which generally peered at the issue through a biomedical and observational lens, I wanted to subject the problem to a (post)structural analysis drawn from a participatory and political epistemology. After first orientating myself to the participatory ethics I wanted to embrace, I came upon the participatory approach that made most sense to me in the context of what I hoped to achieve; Participatory Action Research (PAR).

Integrating participation, psychological affectation, critical pedagogy and social action, PAR is in essence dialectical enquiry by dialogical ethics. Through collaborative investigation of everyday life and local subjectivities - basically our

weekly group sessions - the personal experiences of my co-participants would be unveiled as shared and political; dialectically bound to those objective social and economic structures that though hidden, nonetheless fundamentally shape human consciousness and freedom. Finally, because a fundamental assumption and outcome of PAR is that a self-conscious people or persons will transform their environment by *praxis*, we would move together to social action, the final presentation of which would be left to my co-participants. For in the participatory spirit and ethics of the project, my role could be catalytic and supportive, but not dominating.

PAR appealed to me because it promised to consciously attend to power as an effect, a quality I took (and still take) to be a pre-requisite for creating the kind of physical and temporal space through which young people might reclaim the legitimacy of their own knowing. Most qualitative approaches place the researcher at the centre of the research landscape, from where their influence holds sway over the hypothesis, planning, fieldwork, analysis, and dissemination of the study. PAR's epistemological ethic destabilises this privilege and the notion of expertise embedded in it, collapsing the traditional researcher/researched and subject/object hierarchy. Encouraged by this epistemology, not only did I hypothesise that PAR would elicit 'better' research data, I felt too the approach was less likely to pathologise my co-participants than a reading of their lifeworld drawn from more orthodox observational methodologies.

The epistemology of PAR clearly opposes the schools of positivism and structuralism. It says there can be no such thing as value free research because knowledge itself can never be neutral. Consequently, PAR invites the social scientist to an unfamiliar extension of all the traditional ethical standards. Respect for persons, beneficence, justice; all become animated and meaningful ends in themselves, not just a means to the completion of the research process. This proposition, at odds with the overwhelming majority of mental health research - which remains submerged in and ideologically skewed by the natural sciences - sealed my decision to attempt a PAR project with young men in St Pauls.

The data presented in this thesis is drawn from the taped transcripts of our Friday night group sessions between June and December 2010, a much longer period than the twelve weeks I had originally set aside. Because of the way the project unfolded I was still a weekly visitor to St Pauls through the spring and summer of 2011, withdrawing just after (but not because of) the rioting that shook several English inner cities, including St Pauls. This additional period of time was largely taken up trying to encourage the completion of the short film the group had wanted to make, but inevitably, because our relationships deepened over these months, it also contributed in various ways to the development of this thesis. In the end, this enquiry is a synthesis of participatory ethnography and sociological analysis, a presentation entirely necessary and consistent with the epistemological ethic running through the fieldwork. Because PAR politicises marginality, and in this case mental health, so, out of fidelity to the voices of my co-participants, must this thesis.

What and where then does this research offer fresh insight and originality? First, the experience of applying a participatory ethic and approach in a space and across intersectional categories of 'advanced marginality' (Wacquant, 2008) raises a number of important issues for the application and rigour of theories of children and young people's participation, and for an emerging sociology of intergenerational relations. But the marginality found in this study makes not just academic exigencies, it compels political action too, where the theory and practice of participation coalesces in the constellation of psychological health, rights, citizenship, and democracy.

Second, because the study is multi-disciplinary, drawing down ideas from critical and cultural theory, anthropology, sociology, psychology and psychoanalytic theory, it provides, I think, a possible blueprint for postmodern mental health research and practice. A participatory ethic, overlaid by a poststructural reading of power, culture and psyche, is better equipped to understand, locate and respond to the aetiology of psychopathology. It is by degree also more reflexive, so a participatory ethic (described more fully in Chapter Two) in even individual contexts of practice (like assessment) can be considerably less oppressive and more culturally capable than is possible in settings and programmes drawn from natural science perspectives. It is more

political to be sure, but the case I set out for re-politicising mental health is at the same time a critique of those mental health professions and theories steeped in the de-politicising natural sciences, and it is for them to summon an adequate response to the charge of injustice my co-participants will lay at their door.

Finally, the research offers a highly situated account of marginality, and the fragmented and increasingly consumerist identities of youth, masculinity, social class and race in the inner city. This ought to have (local) utility and originality in and of itself, because what the young voices presented herein tell us about their world is important not just for theory, but because if we allow ourselves to hear them, they subvert orthodoxies about our duty of care (as adults, mental health professionals, at the centre), and they confront us too with a fundamental question and challenge of social justice and democratic citizenship. But before we can hear their challenge, it is necessary to provide a heritage for the study, and to attend to the issues of ethics and validity that must underpin or otherwise undermine it.

Graffiti tag, Dean Street.



1. ON OPPRESSION, RESISTANCE & PARTICIPATION

“Sayin’ people in St Pauls is good or bad isn’t breaking it down enough. People can be good and bad. Listen yeah, say if my family ain’t got no money to eat and I go out a rob some guy for money to feed my family; am I good or bad? Like, what’s more important, feeding my family or not being seen as bad by you?” (Lawrence).

This opening chapter serves to orientate and locate the study within the existing body of related research. The chapter that immediately follows extends this review to make explicit and defined the ethical foundations that underpin the fieldwork. Consequently, some aspects of the necessary discussion around method and ethics is left undeveloped here. I begin with an overview of the literature of oppression and resistance, teasing out the most (personally salient) antecedent works in social and psychological research. More specific theoretical currents and studies will then be cited before research and a social policy context with more immediate parallels is considered. Finally, the areas where this study might add value and extend understanding will be identified. That said, because this study in motivation, conception and application draws purposefully and selectively from diverse disciplines, what follows cannot be exhaustive. Rather than reference an entire library, this review of the literature seeks to compose an argument and heritage for the study in time, space, and then later, ethics.

Antecedents

In the search for a science of human beings studies of ‘the oppressor’ are comparatively few in number when stacked next to those that concern themselves with the lives and fate of ‘the oppressed’. Perhaps this is because ‘every need of ours involves someone else’ (O’Neill, 1972, p.3), and since institutionalised research remains largely the pursuit of the privileged at the centre, someone else invariably ends up being some exotic ‘other’ occupying a less fortunate social position at the margins. My study is not immune from this

bind. But my intention is at least to respond in this thesis to that body of research and practice that conceives 'the oppressed' in broadly reductive terms.

The kind of reductionism I am referring to occurs wherever there is an exaggerated conceptual emphasis on structure *or* agency. In either case, one or the other is dissolved, minimised, pathologised, or constructed as deviant; and inferiority is made to seem natural, inevitable, often even preferable (Furnham & Procter, 1989, Conrad & Schneider, 1992, Sumner, 1994, Carr, 2003, Rogers & Pilgrim, 2010). Among academics, such discourses are today challenged by the heterogeneous and unstable currents of postmodernism. But in the culture of mental health service commissioning and delivery; and in the status, privilege and authority ascribed to certain professions and their attendant theories and practices within these systems, reductionism holds sway.

The essence of any research, practice, service or policy platform guilty of this charge is a formulation of structure and agency anchored in a locus of assumptions that emphasise either the individual 'orientational self' or the social 'situational self'. The messy, shifting, dialectical tension in the nexus between the two is at best minimised, at worst neglected entirely (O'Neill, 1972). Across the human sciences the result has been a body of highly influential studies that have variously attributed oppression to the values and culture of the oppressed (Banfield, 1958, Moynihan, 1965, Lewis, 1968 and 1975, Rainwater, 1970, Feagin, 1972, Stein, 1974), and expressions of resistance and suffering to an inferior culture, psychology and/or biological inheritance among oppressed groups (McClelland, 1961, Pearl, 1970, Eysenck, 1973, Carr, 2003, Moreira, 2003). Bluntly then, it is the ethical issue of justice in oppressor portraits of the oppressed, specifically as this relates here to masculinity, race, class and youth, that is the central ethical motivation for this research. Moreover, it is precisely that messy and shifting dialectical tension (I refer to it in shorthand as 'the dialectic of oppression' from here on) that is the central site and concern of this study.

For Benton and Craib (2001) the purpose of critical theory is to critique and change society by investigating human capacity in relationship to this dialectic. In my own professional and academic trajectory, an appreciation of this

emerged first through an abstracted professional discomfort and then later through exposure to non-Western literature critical of imperialism (beginning with Said, 1978). First and principal among these is the psychoanalytically framed work of Fanon (1961, 1967), who vividly described the 'epidermalised inferiority' he saw and treated in the colonised peoples of Algeria and the Caribbean. His formulation that there is 'during the calm period of successful colonization a regular and important mental pathology that is the direct product of oppression' (1961, p. 201), extended for me the language of mental health in an important direction, one absent from the government programmes I was busy applying (see Department of Health, 2003, 2005). These tend(ed) toward a reified articulation of equality and institutional racism founded on statistical pictures of demographic over-representations in care; they left little room for the more subtle psychoanalytic language of oppression, or indeed for any analysis of ideology in the professional settings and cultures in which I worked. In *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), Baldwin extends epidermalised inferiority further, describing *how it feels* to be afflicted by this...

'...dread, chronic disease, the unfailling symptom of which is a kind of blind fever, a pounding in the skull and fire in the bowels. Once this disease is contracted, one can never be really carefree again, for the fever, without an instant's warning, can recur at any moment.... There is not a Negro alive who does not have this rage in his blood, one has the choice, merely, of living with it consciously or surrendering to it. As for me, this fever has recurred in me, and does, and will until the day I die' (p. 79).

It was Césaire's (1969) lyrical vignette *Return to my Native Land* that rendered most completely for me the dissonance of self created under the conditions of (racial) oppression. Césaire describes a 'perfectly hideous Negro' sat opposite him on the bus one evening, his comically ugly features inspiring Césaire to complicitous mocking laughter with a young female passenger sat next to him. After, he is shocked and dismayed to realise he has laughed only at a reflection of himself in the bus window; his features wrought ugly and unrecognisable to his own eyes by both the 'amputations of poverty' and 'all the racist attitudes that relegated him sub-human'. Césaire realises, with great pain, that in his dissociating laughter he allied himself with 'the very forces that have destroyed

him' (p. 30). His summation that 'my dignity wallows in vomit' (p. 65) is an important antecedent to this research because it makes human dignity the centre of the psychosocial world, and this idea is renascent through the ethics and analysis offered by this study.

Through the circumstances of my birth, the pathology identified by Fanon, Cesaire and Baldwin (and also the 'hidden injuries of class' described by Sennett and Cobb, 1972) is not something I have any personal experience of - this 'I' is loaded with a racial and class inferences. But its appearances in literary form allowed me to make the intellectual leap to consideration of this dis-ease as significant for the issues of psychological health and social relations that are the crucible of this study. But though I had not experienced Baldwin's 'dread disease', such colonial critiques were the first examples I came upon that were equally well concerned with the psychology of the oppressor. Foreshadowing postcolonial theory, oppression was couched dialectically, in terms of the (de)humanisation of both oppressed and oppressor (see Memmi, 2003).

For Fanon (1961), everyday life under colonialism was a 'constellation of delirium', mediating those supposedly 'normal' social relations whereupon 'the Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike, behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation' (p. 41). The humanity - and thus psychology - of the coloniser Fanon condemns as corrupted; responsible for 'a succession of negations of man, and an avalanche of murders' (ibid, p. 252). European civilisation, he says, exhibits a 'delirious state' of 'obscene narcissism' (ibid, p. 253), and 'now lives at such a mad, reckless pace that she has shaken off all guidance and all reason, and is running head-long into the abyss' (ibid, p. 252).

Fanon's psychoanalytic analyses of colonial oppression led me to a body of European and American literature examining ideology in mental healthcare. The critical ('anti') psychiatry of Laing (1960, 1961, 1967), Cooper (1967, 1968), Foucault (1965) and Szasz (1970); sociology of Becker (1963, 1964), Goffman (1961, 1963), and Cohen (1972); political psychology of Sedgwick (1982); and political theory of Marcuse (1968), were all especially helpful in deconstructing

fundamental assumptions I latently held of what constituted 'normal' and 'healthy'. For me, this was most poignantly delivered by Laing (1967):

'The condition of alienation, of being asleep, of being unconscious, of being out of one's mind, is the condition of the normal man... Society highly values its normal man. It educates children to lose themselves and to become absurd, and thus to be normal. Normal men have killed perhaps 100,000,000 of their fellow normal men in the last fifty years' (p. 24).

Critical psychiatry posited that under the existential and endemic condition of alienation, categories of pathology and disorder are simply extensions of an estranged political expediency, one animated by the contradictory ways in which capitalism sates the needs of individuals while simultaneously destroying their humanity. Marcuse (1968), for example, notes that social transformation in the west is repressed both...

'...by virtue of the actual satisfaction of needs, and secondly, by a massive scientific manipulation and administration of needs - that is, by a systematic social control not only of the consciousness, but also of the unconscious of man. This control has been made possible by the very achievements of the greatest liberating sciences of our time, in psychology... and psychiatry. That they could become and have become at the same time powerful instruments of suppression, one of the most effective engines of suppression, is again one of the terrible aspects of the dialectic of liberation' (p.182).

The 'dialectic of oppression' thus began to emerge for me in more intersectional terms, located not in some far away colonial world but in the multi-ethnic neighbourhoods I lived and worked in. Fracturing around categories of gender, class, ethnicity, race and age, I began to appreciate a central argument of critical psychiatry; that mental healthcare must involve 'the study of situations, not simply individuals', because 'you cannot take a person out of his social context and still see him as a person, or act towards him as a person' (Laing, 1968, p. 17). For critical psychiatry, mental healthcare that draws solely from the empiricism of the natural sciences is atomistic and reductive, and those engaged in its practices are not only engaged in a pseudo-science, they are

ultimately complicit in oppression. Working in mental health services the critique at first offended me. Later, I accepted and then embraced it, convinced by the argument that my role was not overtly malevolent, but rather a function of my own alienation. Indeed, it was critical psychiatry's ability to parallel social and political oppression with the ways in which mental health professionals respond to patients that extended for me the (post)colonial studies of internalised oppression to a fuller appreciation of the cultural construction of scientific knowledge and its relationship to ideology, political expediency, and social control.

'As for patients, the more they protest, the less insight they display; the more they fight back, clearly the more they need to be pacified; the more persecuted they feel at being destroyed, the more necessary to destroy them' (Laing, 1968, p. 18).

Thus, three important conceptual antecedents to this study reveal themselves in the literature cited above. First; oppression is a solvent of human dignity, effecting an everyday mental pathology among those both oppressed and privileged by the dialectical arrangement. Second; the maintenance of unjust social arrangements requires an epistemology capable of administering power in such a way that 'oppressor' categories of 'pathology' and 'normal' are naturalised and made to objectify and control the oppressed. Third; under this arrangement, decolonisation is an act of consciousness. In other words, it is resistance, what Hanh (1975) described as 'opposition to being invaded, occupied, assaulted, and destroyed by the system' (p. 209), that is the condition of dignity and thus psychological health.

Liberation psychology & critical pedagogy

Building on these conceptual bases is a lineage within the literature of oppression and resistance drawn from Latin America. Critical pedagogy and liberation psychology, two schools with their roots in the regional injustices and politics of the continent, offer a blueprint for a new epistemology and approach to the 'study of situations' central to this thesis. Both owe something of their character to liberation theology (Segundo, 1976, Gutierrez, 1988), which

emerged in the Latin American Catholic Church during the 1950s. A critique of inequality and 'structural sin' that fused Catholicism with a Marxist reading of historical materialism, liberation theology stressed that 'peace, justice, love and freedom are not private realities; they are not only internal attitudes... they are social realities, implying a historical liberation' (Gutierrez, 1988, p. 167). The transpersonal was extended by praxis (social action) to a politically charged 'preferential option for the poor', a fidelity that led its proponents to eventual admonishment by the Vatican. But much more important for this study, the influence of this theology penetrated the work of a small but highly influential number of Latin American psychologists, principal among them Ignacio Martín-Baró; a Jesuit priest, psychologist, and architect of liberation psychology.

Writing in his native El Salvador throughout the seventies and eighties, Martín-Baró was a stern critic of European and American psychology. Specifically, he condemned the professional status the discipline coveted from the natural sciences, which he viewed as debasing the epistemology and practice of psychology. Key to his critique was the rejection of a central assumption in western psychological theory; that a free standing autonomous individual, whose most important pursuit is personal happiness, should be the sole unit of psychological enquiry. For Martín-Baró (1994) this ahistorical and universalising scientism was reductive and unjust in the face of the oppression, suffering, and sacrifice he saw around him in El Salvador.

'The problem with individualism is rooted in its insistence on seeing as an individual characteristic that which oftentimes is not found except within the collectivity, or in attributing to individuality the things produced only in the dialectic of interpersonal relations. Through this, individualism ends up reinforcing the existing structures, because it ignores the reality of social structures and reduces all structural problems to individual problems' (p. 22).

Martín-Baró was neither the first nor only social scientist critical of the status quo. The Frankfurt School had begun during the thirties the intellectual labour of connecting psyche and society (see Adorno et al, 1950, Fromm, 1955, and later Habermas, 1972, 1975, Offe, 1984), and the psychoanalytically informed critical theory that emerged from this period was an important forerunner of critical

psychiatry. By the time critical psychology emerged as a defining school of thought at the Free University of Berlin in the seventies, community psychology in the United States was also attempting to unify (empirically) ecological context and pathology (Rappaport, 1977). Even leading depth psychologists like James Hillman (1992) were beginning to search for a new psychological language and vocation:

'My practice tells me that I can no longer distinguish clearly between neurosis of self and neurosis of world, psychopathology of self and psychopathology of world. Moreover, it tells me that to place neurosis and psychopathology solely in personal reality is a delusional repression of what is actually, realistically, being experienced. This further implies that my theories of neurosis and categories of psychopathology must be radically extended if they are not to foster the very pathologies that my job is to ameliorate' (p. 93).

In the sense he describes, Hillman's search was also my search. Working in an inner city government mental health service was bringing me into ever more frequent contact with young men labelled 'disordered' in some oppositional sense. My unease at their situation was partly because looking around me I saw an overwhelming over-representation of gendered, socio-economic and racial categories, a visible patterning we managed to ignore everyday. But it was aggravated further by a feeling that the behaviours we so concerned ourselves with attempting to fix and control, made a certain amount of sense in the context of the young mens experience. Martín-Baró's critique re-affirmed what (post)colonial writers and critical psychiatry had unveiled but which I felt professionally 'trapped' by on an everyday level; that I was, with the best of intentions, complicit in the obfuscation of structural inequality through identifying and labelling *in* individuals that which were little else than the effects of various oppressions. But importantly, Martín-Baró also offered me something more than the 'radical nihilism' (Sedgwick, 1982, p. 42) of anti-psychiatry; he offered a theory that was also reconstructive; a blueprint for a different kind of psychological epistemology and vocation.

In his essay *Toward a Liberation Psychology*, Martín-Baró deploys a sophisticated understanding of the cultural construction of knowledge to

anticipate poststructuralist and postcolonial critical theory. He proposes a new epistemology and praxis for psychology; re-imagining the purpose and role of the psychologist. He considers psychology to have too often 'contributed to obscuring the relationship between personal estrangement and social oppression, presenting the pathology of persons as though it were something removed from history and society, and behavioural disorders as if they played out entirely in the individual plane' (p.27). Martín-Baró understood that 'most mental health disorders have their highest prevalence rates in the lowest socio-economic class' (Kleinman 1988, p. 54), where there is least access to security, resources, adequate food, housing, and healthcare (Watkins & Shulman, 2008). In this simple objective correlation he considered it part of the psychologist's duty of care to exercise 'a preferential option' for the oppressed, and through this, to pursue goals that connected individual suffering to the wider societal context it occurs in. In service of this, Martín-Baró argued for a dialogical and participatory epistemology, one that destabilised universalising expertise.

To this end, central to the methods of liberation psychology was the work of Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (1971), and Freireian thought is equally well at the heart of this study, both in terms of the analysis of oppression it offers, and, in the contribution to participatory theory it makes. For more fully perhaps than anyone else, Freire conceptualised oppression in a dialectical language of humanism:

'Dehumanization, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human... This struggle is possible only because dehumanization, although a concrete historical fact, is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed... This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well' (1971, p. 26).

Freire lays the foundation for his theory of participation in this analysis. In common with Fanon and critical psychiatry, he offers a dialectical reading of oppression in which 'the oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of

their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves' (ibid). Consequently, participation is simultaneously epistemology and methodology in the Freireian project of liberation. Knowing and knowledge are democratised by collaborative praxis and critical reflection; a participatory enquiry 'of' and not 'for' the oppressed in which dialectical tension (or 'limit situations') between the orientational and situational self are gradually unveiled through a burgeoning critical consciousness (*conscientização*).

'Humans... because they are aware of themselves and thus of the world - because they are conscious beings - exist in a dialectical relationship between the determination of limits and their own freedom' (ibid, p. 80).

For Martín-Baró and those who later took up his call, the role of the psychologist in this praxis is 'one of convener, a witness, a co-participant, a mirror, and a holder of faith' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 26). The psychologist may bring their theories with them to the dialogue, but they will be critically evaluated and situated 'in each local arena where they may or may not apply' (ibid). Thus to approach psychological symptoms in a participatory sense, there must be analysis and mindfulness of the past five hundred years of history, scarred as it is by the rise of colonialism, its parallel in 'hierarchical and dissociative ways of thinking, and its current transmutation into neocolonialism and exploitative forms of transnational capitalism' (Shulman-Lorenz & Watkins, 2002a).

To bring this literature full circle, the conceptual framework and methodological approaches embedded in critical pedagogy and liberation psychology pursue highly situated, collaborative, and participatory projects of decolonisation. These are projects Fanon et al would undoubtedly recognise for their contribution to the 'decoding of the social lies that naturalize the status quo' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 18).

From colonialism to globalisation

The work of Fanon, Freire and Martín-Baró, anticipates that body of postmodern literature across feminist, critical race, post-colonial and post-structural studies, to which this research has more contemporary parallels. Speaking in nuanced

and heterogeneous voices about intersectionality and micro-politics, postmodern enquiry has increasingly fashioned new dialectical angles in the scrutiny of oppression. Thus it is that within feminist studies (especially influential here are Gilligan, 1982, Crenshaw, 1989, hooks, 1990, Butler, 1990, Nielsen, 1990, Weedon, 1997) a conceptual terrain for deconstructing masculinities and an emerging field of men's studies is provided for (Monick, 1987, Moore & Gillette, 1992, Kipnis, 2002, 2004, Farrier, 2005). Similarly, critical race theorists (Kapo, 1981, Gilroy, 1987, Goldberg, 1990, Hall, 1991, hooks, 1995, Zack, 1997) have carved a space and language for studies of 'Whiteness' (Frankenburg, 1993, Ware & Back, 2002, Garner, 2007, Clarke & Garner, 2010). Finally, the burgeoning of gender related enquiry with a focus on historically specific constructions of gender, sexuality, privacy and domesticity within cultural, capital and institutional structures, has encouraged interest in the social spaces occupied by children and young people (see for example Coles, 1986, James & Prout, 1990, Stephens, 1995, Jenks, 1996, Back, 1996, Sewell, 1997, Timimi, 2002, Hall & Jefferson, 2006).¹

These tributaries of postmodernism, in their many and varied combinations, flow to a greater or lesser extent toward and through this study. Indeed, the overarching postmodern thrust of this enquiry inserts itself into the various theories of gender, race and youth that run through the research, emphasising historically and geographically situated identities, and, importantly, their relationship to more dominant discourses that contain meta-narratives on each (Weedon, 1997).

Within this overall current, the conceptual framework offered by poststructuralism and phenomenology is especially important to both my formulation of oppression, my elective approach (Participatory Action Research), and its concomitant methods. De-centering and destabilising the presumed authority and expertise of the adult/psychologist/researcher (Barthes, 1967) and examining real life as it appears is a fundamental aspect of this study

¹ Though as Jenks (1996) notes, the tendency to naturalise identity is still relatively strong in relation to childhood, even if such tendencies are now rightly critiqued in relation to gender or ethnicity (Anderson, 1990, Newman, 1999). Indeed, the 'child' seems still to represent a 'last stable, grounded point in the constantly shifting field of relations and ephemeral identities that characterizes postmodernity' (Stephens, 1997, p. 8).

and will be unpacked in more detail in the next chapter. For the purposes of this review however, two poststructural ideas are especially important to note. The first is Foucault's (1969, 1980) historical reading of the 'archeology of knowledge', which spatialises knowing and extends ideas of colonisation toward a fuller picture of the ways in which forms of power are disseminated. This conceptualisation of power nourishes my analyses of mental health and participation, which imagines childhood and adolescence as examples of colonised and regulated spaces. The intersectional morass of race, class and gender converges on this space too of course, and is here given agency by the cultural production theory of Bhabha (1994), who though more usually read as a postcolonialist, deploys a useful (and credible) language of cultural syncretism and hybridity heavily influenced by the poststructuralism of Foucault (1969), Derrida (1974), and Lacan (1968).

However, the challenge remains that psychological and mental health research is overwhelmingly faithful to and financially dependent on the natural sciences, circumstances that are antithetical to the philosophical bases I draw from. There is however an important and reconstructive body of applied critical psychology emerging in the coalescence of discourses and disciplines that characterises postmodern critical and cultural theory (see Tolman & Brydon-Miller, 1997, Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002, 2005, Prilleltensky, 2003, Shulman-Lorenz & Watkins, 2002, Burton & Kagan, 2004, Watkins, 2000, 2005, Alschuler, 2006, Gruen, 2007, Altman, 2010, Siddique, 2011). In a fundamentally influential work that feeds this study, Watkins and Shulman (2008) explicitly take up Martín-Baró's psychological vocation, and, drawing from a range of disciplines and projects, they locate and name *psychologies of liberation* within the contemporary global context of widening inequality. Recycling Martín-Baró's critique of the natural science model in mental healthcare, they argue for greater urgency in the development of new psychological approaches under the condition of late transnational capitalism, noting the 'psychological effects of deepening divides between the rich and the poor, unprecedented migrations, and worsening environmental degradation that mark this era as one requiring extraordinary critical and reconstructive approaches' (p. 1). Purposively, the pair openly defect...

'...from professional interpretations focussed entirely on individuals and families, and on mental constructs separated from the cultural, social, and economic worlds in which they are embedded. We do not want to assume that the role of psychology is to help individuals and families adapt to the status quo when this present order contributes so massively to human misery, psychological or otherwise' (2008, p. 14).

Their work is significant to this study because it offers a blueprint for both psychological practice and social research that is refreshingly reconstructive, unifying concepts of political consciousness, psychological health and social change. Moreover, their formulation of a nascent discipline (liberation psychologies) encourages my attempt to extend liberatory social research in the direction of child and adolescent mental health, where, in the UK at least, there is by and large a neuro-scientific stasis (Timimi, 2002). Importantly, their blueprint furthers the case for both participatory approaches and the 'preferential option' espoused by Freire and Martín-Baró. Watkins and Shulman purposefully inhabit dialectical tension, that liminality where the orientational and situational self meets others - both oppressed and oppressor, researcher and researched. Their work equally mourns the dehumanising toll of contemporary privilege, exploring the suppression of voice and the habitual practice of bystander violence and suffering that is the price of (even relative) material privilege in today's unequal world. Importantly, they note too the somatic character of privilege; the 'disconnection, passivity, fatalism, sense of futility, and failures in empathic connection' (2008, p. 65) that call to mind the subversion of 'normal' identified by critical psychiatry and the (post)colonial analyses of the oppressor by writers like Fanon and Memmi.

'(To) be happy and well adjusted is a false ideal... when the wealthiest 20 percent of the world's people use 86 percent of the goods, and earn 74 times the income of the poorest 20 percent, it may be that those who are worried, anxious, sleepless, or depressed are having the most compassionate, healthy and realistic responses' (2008, p. 45).

Drawing heavily on poststructuralism, Watkins and Shulman call for projects that cultivate liminality; spaces that might serve as 'wellsprings for creative

restoration', moving us (at the micro level) from cultures of individualism and silenced knowing toward a more communal, humanising, and emancipatory dialogue. In order to effect recovery and social change - intertwined concepts - they contend we 'learn how to create safe and protected spaces where people can experiment with stepping outside inherited scripts and unconsciously assumed identifications' (ibid, p. 25). In this participatory encounter, this 'reflective and communal act' (Herda, 1999, p. 86), the status quo is interrogated. Specifically, its appearance and who and what has been marginalised by structures that have been normalised, naturalised, and made to seem inevitable (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002).

Echoing Freire, such liminal spaces and encounters are designed to facilitate *conscientização*; for 'when we become aware of the narrative frameworks we are embedded in, when dialogue with others causes us to question the logic of our narrative frameworks, we open up possibilities for evolution and transformation' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 141). Fundamental to this study, participation is thus central to the birth of 'a poststructuralist psychology that recognises in a postmodern world culturally constructed knowing is evolving and local, with provisional frames of reference and identifications' (ibid, p. 24).

The Freireian critical pedagogy on which Watkins and Shulman's approach is constructed unites participatory social research with psychological affectation and social action. The most faithful incarnation of this, and the approach I consequently chose above other applied models of community based participatory enquiry is Participatory Action Research (PAR); a highly collaborative, evolving and post-empirical (Nielsen 1990) approach to social research (see Fals-Borda, 1985, Rahman, 1993, McTaggart, 1997, Selener, 1997, Reason & Bradbury, 2001, Kesby, Kindon & Pain, R. 2007). My choice of PAR was especially motivated by another quality that immediately caught my attention when I came upon it in the literature, for 'there is a therapeutic aspect of participatory action research, therapeutic in the original sense of the care or attending of the soul' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 268). Original too in another sense; that PAR actually has much older roots, not just in the typically cited action research of Kurt Lewin (1951) or Gramscian 'organic intellectual' (1971),

but in many ancient and indigenous oral traditions and (now marginalised) ways of knowing (Tandon, 1988).

It is important to emphasise that PAR is not a method. Rather, *it is an approach*, an 'orientation to enquiry' (Reason, 2004) that describes a process of investigating ones everyday life and then sharing this with others engaged in the same process. Central to this process is Freire's notion of *praxis*, critical reflection followed by action followed by more critical reflection. It is through *praxis* that individual experience comes to be seen and understood as collective and as social, then in turn as political (hooks, 1994, Cahill, 2006). In this cyclical process, participants move between the conscious construction and deconstruction of their own subjectivities, and the social and material conditions of their everyday lives (Domash, 2003, in Cahill, 2004). They develop 'their power to perceive critically the way they are in the world and come to see reality not as fixed or determined, but in process' (Freire, 1971, p. 64).

It is a fundamental assumption of PAR that a self-conscious people will then progressively transform their environment by their own *praxis*. In this process 'of investigation and transformation others (outsiders) may play a catalytic and supportive role, but they must not dominate' (Rahman in Fals-Borda, 1985, p. 118). Indeed, grounded in a participatory worldview that Reason and Bradbury (2001) sense is 'emerging in this historical moment', social research of this kind is a 'democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing... and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities' (p. 1). A fuller picture of this process is painted in the next chapter, here it is sufficient to note how this method appeals to the ethic of justice in which this study was conceived, offers an ethical and methodological route to satisfying the tension inherent to the politics of representation, and provides an epistemological framework in which situated dialectical enquiry may occur.

Critics of PAR have pointed out, justifiably, that the approach is inherently political (Chambers, 1983, Frideres, 1992, Cooke & Kothari, 2001); that...

'...however much the rhetoric changes to participation, participatory research, community involvement and the like, at the end of the day there is still an

outsider seeking to change things... who the outsider is may change but the relation is the same. A stronger person wants to change things for a person who is weaker. From this paternal trap there is no complete escape' (Chambers, 1983, p. 141).

I find little to contend in this statement, but I do counter that the meshing of politics, pedagogy and psychology is already what we determine to be education and therapy:

'All education today is therapy: therapy in the sense of liberating man by all available means from a society in which, sooner or later, he is going to be transformed into a brute, even if he doesn't notice it any more. Education in this sense is therapy, and all therapy today is political theory and practice' (Marcuse, 1968, p. 191).

Frideres (1992) considers PAR not just political but also unscientific, grounded in 'an inarticulate and illogical set of statements which reflect little integration and a considerable number of disparate claims' (p. 14). This though is rather the point. The notion of some artificial and unified logic defined at the centre is harmful to any scientific method attempting to describe the uneven pattern of social relations in a postmodern world. But the critique Frideres (1992) offers builds on four other fronts worthy of consideration; that participatory research has an ideological bias that only oppressed peoples can produce facts of any objective value (thus stifling scientific critique); that there exists an overall confusion about the purpose and goals of the research; that it is light on theory and limits collective learning by focusing on a single idiosyncratic case; that it is methodologically naive, assuming all participants have equal knowledge about reality and have the necessary skills to do the data collection and analysis.

The last of these points this research experience confirmed for me to be more or less valid, more on which later. But the other criticisms Frideres articulates are formed in a fundamentally reductive view of scientific knowledge and validity. His criticism of objectivity ignores the overwhelming history, body and legacy of social research conducted the other way around, by researchers at the centre objectifying the lives of the oppressed; where positivism is little else

than a trojan horse for the embedded bias brought to bear on the enquiry. In contrast, PAR commits to making its ideological character transparent (Parker, 2006), a more scientific reflexivity that actually invites critique and makes no unrealistic claims to universal validity. The criticism that PAR suffers from confused goals betrays a poverty of imagination that social research can be both ethically and methodologically rigorous at the same time, returning the value and processes of human enquiry to participants and delivering a number of outcomes simultaneously. Finally, the contention that PAR is 'light on theory' completely negates the philosophical tradition and analyses of power and history in which it is located.

Whatever challenges PAR offers up, and there are many, its epistemology clearly opposes the detached observational method of social enquiry found in the schools of positivism and structuralism. It holds there can be no such thing as value free research in the sense Frideres supposes, because knowledge itself can never be neutral.

'PAR is... a radical epistemological challenge to the traditions of social science, most critically on the topic of where knowledge resides. Participatory action researchers ground our work in the recognition that expertise and knowledge are widely distributed. PAR further assumes that those who have been most systematically excluded, oppressed or denied carry specifically revealing wisdom about the history structure, consequences, and the fracture points in unjust social arrangements' (Fine, 2008, p. 215).

PAR actively embraces the idea of 'marginality as a site of resistance' (hooks, 1990, p. 152), and the 'preferential option' for the oppressed forborne by liberation theology and then Martín-Baró finds considerable purchase in the epistemological ethic of PAR. Some have gone so far as to suggest participatory research is a fundamental human right; 'the right to the tools through which any citizen can systematically increase that stock of knowledge which they consider most vital to their survival as human beings and to their claims as citizens' (Appadurai, 2006, p. 168). This right assumes particular resonance in relation to children and young people, who are objects of the

colonising endeavour of adults, and thus central to the memetic, ideological and actual reproduction of structural inequality.

Any thoughtful examination of social exclusion in a postmodern context encounters serious problems with the politics of representation, and though critical psychology and PAR offered me a framework for research practice of the kind I was interested in, the reality is that my co-participants simply do not appear in any comparable sense in the existing literature drawn from this tradition. In fact, the most influential, detailed, and inspiring studies to have nourished this research and engaged with the degree of marginality present are to be found in urban anthropology. In common with the polyvocality of the human sciences today, anthropology has also shifted since the 1980s; from the supposedly neutral and mimetic descriptions of 'the other' fostered by participant observation, down 'the winding and interminable path of heteronomy' that is the thrust of postmodernism (Chambers, 1994, p. 246).

This course has necessarily shaken the discipline's founding and central tenets of participant observation (method) and cultural relativism (ethic) (Lather, 2001). But it comes too with a profound health warning for a thesis such as this, particularly for my (re)presentation of my co-participants and the ethnographic data we generated. I have been especially keen and compelled to embrace self-reflexivity in this study, but radical deconstructionism has a habit of de-politicising injustice and oppression, making them impossible to categorise or prioritise (Bourgois, 2002). The more obtuse and self-conscious the presentation, the greater the risk that I will subtly deny my co-participants very real experience of pain and suffering, and I have been mindful of slipping into the kind of 'scholarly self-reflection' that soon 'degenerates into narcissistic celebrations of privilege' (p. 14). In fact, for the study to fail in this negotiation is perhaps the most serious failure I could imagine for it, and I sympathise fully with the dismay Bourgois has for...

'...the profoundly elitist tendencies of many postmodernist approaches. Deconstructionist 'politics' usually confine themselves to hermetically sealed academic discourses on the 'poetics' of social interaction, or on clichés devoted to exploring the relationship between self and other. Although postmodern

ethnographers often claim to be subversive, their contestation of authority focuses on hyperliterate critiques of form through evocative vocabularies, playful syntaxes, and polyphonous voices, rather than on engaging with tangible daily struggles. Postmodern debates titillate alienated, suburbanized intellectuals, they are completely out of touch with the urgent social crises of the inner city' (ibid).

Anticipating any propensity I might have for elitism of this kind, I have attempted to work through a more pragmatic critical realism (Bhaskar, 1989), and aspire 'to provide explanations, not simply descriptions, which have applicability beyond the confines of their specific research subjects and sites... (but) without sacrificing the hermeneutic insights into the pre-interpreted nature of (my) subject matter and the reflexive implications of (my) research practice' (Davies, 1999, p. 15). Put more simply, I have committed myself to an ethnographic authorship somewhat contradictory to the participatory approach but wholly necessary if I am to engage with inequality and animate personal agency. However, my voice should be read with a healthy degree of skepticism, and with due attention to any 'implied truths' that may have escaped and become embedded in the text, for while this study is highly situated in both time and space, voice is a struggle that runs through it completely. I am reassured however that 'even the best ethnographic texts - serious true fictions - are systems, or economies, of truth. Power and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control. Ethnographic truths are thus inherently partial - committed and incomplete' (Clifford, 1986, p. 7).

The ethnographic voices of anthropologists like Anderson (1999), Bourgois (2002), Belmonte (2005), and Wacquant (2008), have been a very substantial influence on this study for two important reasons. First, because these ethnographers (on my reading) successfully negotiate the path between self-reflexivity and authorship. Their voice, though destabilised, still manages to present structural inequality, and physical as well as symbolic violences in a manner that neither sanitises their appearance nor completely relativises the moral economy and agency of individuals both subject to and reproducing of them. Equally, their authorship provides for a presentation of 'the oppressed' achieved without essentialism or the absence of a context that would otherwise

contrive to 'blame the victim' (Ryan, 1971). For me, their renderings of inner city poverty and social apartheid come closest to a credible manifestation of what Behar (1996) called an 'anthropology that breaks your heart'; articulating an 'intermediate space we can't define yet, a borderland between passion and intellect, analysis and subjectivity, ethnography and autobiography' (p. 174). They also manage, through use of statistical and historical data, to flesh out their monographs to a fuller picture of the way economic and political marginalisation is made from above. But just as importantly, whatever their urban setting, these ethnographers offer accounts of daily life closer to the experience of marginality described by the young men in this study than anything I have found in the postmodern phalanx of literature deploying far more participatory approaches.

British social anthropology

Moving toward a conclusion, I must next briefly acknowledge a body of social research that, though much less situated by a participatory influence, has nonetheless motivated and informed this work. For at a site within the overall literature of oppression and resistance, this study lives within a tradition of British urban social research concerned *with and for* young, (Black), working class men at the margins (see Fyvel, 1961, Cohen, 1972, Cashmore, 1979, Hebdige, 1979, Pryce, 1979, Pearson, 1981, Willis, 1981, Reicher, 1984, Hewitt, 1986, Bains & Cohen, 1988, Gilroy, 1987, Back, 1996, Sewell, 1997, Macdonald, 1997, Sanders, 2005, Goldson & Muncie, 2006, Hall & Jefferson, 2006, Hill, 2007, Goldson, 2011).

As Susser (in Belmonte, 2005) notes, 'good ethnographies have long lives', and 'if the ethnography is good enough we can revisit the era, reconsider the conceptual framework, compare and contrast the descriptions and the approach, and rework the data' (p. xxvii). In this spirit, and despite its less reflexive authorship, Pryce's (1979) *Endless Pressure* is especially significant to this tradition. Set in St Pauls between 1969-74, the monograph offers a still life of young men growing up on the same streets as those captured in these pages two generations earlier. The themes of social exclusion, policing, poverty, unemployment, racism and family life Pryce explores, offer an obvious historical

counterpoint for comparison with this study, as do the structural changes in human geography, industry, economics, politics, and the assorted institutions that mediate them. And though Pryce's ethnography is made from participant observation, the ways in which the young men he describes resist structural oppression are also of particular comparative resonance to this research. Briefly and broadly, Pryce categorises the characters in his study as belonging to one of six life-style groups; *hustlers*, *teenyboppers*, *proletarian respectables*, *saints*, *mainliners* and *in-betweeners*. These six in turn belong within two broader 'life orientations'; the 'stable law-abiding orientation and the expressive-disreputable orientation' (1979, p. xii). At least on a superficial level, I was keen to assess the descriptive voracity of these in contemporary St Pauls, particularly the generally adolescent male *in-betweener* and *teenybopper*.

Another historical parallel emerges at this point, for Pryce published his study a year before the St Pauls riots in 1980, and two before the social unrest that took hold of Brixton, Handsworth, Chapeltown and Toxteth. A consequence of these events was that British social studies fixed a critical gaze on the inner city, and the eighties bore a slew of influential contributions to critical race and urban theory that with an especially British flavour foreshadow the syncretism and hybridity of culture and identity articulated in this study (see particularly Hewitt, 1986, Gilroy, 1987, Bains & Cohen, 1988). Perhaps the rioting that began in Tottenham and spread to St Pauls in the summer of 2011 will have a similarly galvanising effect on academia; either way, the social theory (particularly in relation to race) that emerged out of eighties metropolitan Britain laid the conceptual foundations for the more definitively postmodern urban studies that emerged through the nineties and beyond, and that this research consciously builds upon (Mercer, 1994, Solomos & Back, 1996, Back, 1996, Sewell, 1997).

Indeed, like cells dividing postmodern research continues to evolve, with micro-political, participatory and highly situated studies of multiple oppressions now increasingly common. Disciplines, if not dissolving, are certainly less reified, and social research (much like its subjects and co-participants) is synthesising disciplines through increasingly hybridised discourses. Consequently, the search for a science of human beings is perhaps now more emotionally literate than ever, able to articulate what this means in more subtle, reflexive, revealing,

and sometimes narcissistic ways (Repko, 2012). But it must be said again that if this is true of articulate suburban academics, the 'trickle-down' to policy and practice conceived in the same vein, is, to me at least, very much less noticeable, and I am keen this study offers real-world utility despite (or more accurately because of) its conceptual bases.

Children and young people's participation

If the effects are thus far underwhelming on the front-line, the boom in service user led movements and children and young people's participation since 2000 is maybe one indication that postmodern ideas around democratic communication are at least extending in the right direction, even if they are fragmented and most likely being driven by a consumerist state agenda around the marketisation of social and health care services (Sinclair, 2004, Thomas, 2007, Cresswell & Spandler, 2009).

More specifically, and in an applied rather than theoretical sense, children and young people's participation (in the UK at least) is more usually associated with public sector service development, delivery, and consultation within pre-defined (adult) institutional structures like youth projects, forums and councils (Clever, 2001, Thomas, 2007). The practice of participation is also increasingly a pre-requisite for funding success within a competitive commissioning framework; an existential pressure for organisations that however well intentioned conspires to fill the participation agenda with tokenism and bad practice (for a description of this see Badham, 2004, Tisdall & Davis, 2004).

Though this study is on the face of it much less concerned with or for this appropriation of the term, it certainly is concerned with its potential effects; for in the pressure and rush to participate may actually lie a long term solvent of democratic participation and citizenship. Indeed, as with more established critiques of participation within international development (see for example, Clever, 2001), it may be that poor experiences of participatory projects engender and reinforce political passivity and disengagement (Matthews, 2003), helping to recycle marginality and social exclusion. In fact, as we shall see, children and young people are far from apolitical; whatever their relative

degrees of marginality, their voices and actions not only reveal important and uncomfortable truths about unjust social relations, they have too their own political and cultural agency if we allow ourselves to see and hear it (Thomas, 2009).

The development of critical childhood studies in the postmodern vernacular has spawned and extended a plethora of diverse theories and practices concerned with children's rights, participation and democratic inclusivity that are the ethical and methodological heart of this study. But though these speak, often passionately, of inclusion, diversity and rights; in some manifestations of the word they have failed to engage with important categories and spaces of marginality. In Britain, specifically, where categories of race, gender and urban poverty intersect. Indeed, while it has been rightly noted by participatory researchers that 'much of the research on urban youth focuses upon young men, who are closely surveilled in urban public spaces and social research' (Cahill, Rios-Moore, & Threatts, 2010, p. 95), the body of literature done *with and by* these same young men at some of the extremes of social marginality in the inner city is minimal (McIntyre, 2000, Brown, 2004, Ginwright, 2008). And in what should be the closest body of comparative research against which this thesis may be examined; that contemporary body of critical childhood studies deploying PAR with economically marginalised young Black men, the relative absence of these perspectives is marked (see Cahill, 2004, 2006, Torre & Fine, 2006, Cammarota & Fine, 2008).²

My decision to work through a poststructural epistemology I have already located within the literature of oppression and resistance, and a tradition that casts the value and utility of social research in humanistic terms. These decisions are extended by discourses on children and young people's participation, which are here fixed on deconstructing the dialectic of oppression from the colonised spaces and perspectives of Black masculine youth. The first of these discourses is social, 'and speaks of networks, of inclusion, of adult-child relations, and of the opportunities for social connection that participatory practice can create'. The second, related, is 'more or less overtly political...

² Perhaps as a consequence of its antecedents in gender and feminist studies, the practice of participatory research with young people is itself highly gendered (Pratt, 2000, Pain, 2004).

(and) speaks of power, and challenge, and change (Thomas, 2007, p. 206). Both belong to a democratic meta-discourse that inhabited the micro-politics of our research collective, my textual representation of 'them' in the thesis you hold, and the macro-politics of the dialectical enquiry our research attempted. Indeed, the ontological image of participating this democratic heritage articulates speaks broadly to 'a manifestation of individual agency within a social context' (Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010, p. 380), for 'people's ability to exercise their free agency and choose in an informed and participatory way... is a necessary condition for democracy' (Sen, 2004, p. 55). And as Matthews (2003) has argued, 'participation (is) an essential and moral ingredient of any democratic society – enhancing quality of life; enabling empowerment; encouraging psycho-social well-being; and providing a sense of inclusiveness' (p. 270).

In service of this democratic heritage, and anchored in an ethic of justice that has pushed the site of enquiry to some less well explored spaces of marginality, this research asks (and to a lesser extent answers) a question put most succinctly by Young (2006); 'what (then) are the norms and conditions of inclusive democratic communication under circumstances of structural inequality and cultural difference?' (p. 6). My supposition is of course that these conditions are articulated in the destabilising epistemology of postmodernism and poststructuralism, and through a participatory ethic and critical pedagogic encounter that gives definition to subjectivities as a wellspring of (as Fanon, Freire and Martín-Baró conceived it) democratic resistance, human dignity and psycho-social health.

But in fact the research conversation between Freireian discourse and theories of children and young people's participation is somewhat underdeveloped; the latter focussing rather more on what Freire offers methodologically, while perhaps also citing *conscientização* in some vague and poorly defined conceptualisation of empowerment and social capital (Cleaver, 2001). But Freire's analysis of democratic communication and the psycho-social and political health of consciousness might actually extend theories on children and young people's participation in exciting and potentially radical new directions. For knowledge and knowing are perhaps nowhere subject to more debate and

regulation than they are in their flow to and through childhood and adolescence, and this is before we factor in any of postmodernism's variously defined intersectionalities.³ Consequently, Freire's dialectic of oppression and liberation, as well as his concept of critical consciousness by *praxis*, offers theories of participation a radical transformative edge that goes beyond the current preoccupation with service design and institutional reform. Freireian thought may even provide a conceptual language for those attempting to climb participatory ladders (e.g. Arnstein, 1969, Hart, 1992), encouraging participants to ask the right questions of their circumstances, about *who* designed the ladder they are being encouraged to climb and *why*.

Theories of children and young people's participation also divide frequently along lines of process versus outcomes. Put simply; 'is the important element the process of participation, be it taking part in an activity or decision-making, or is it the product – that is, a goal or outcome of participation?' (West, 2004, p.15). The question also haunted this research, for...

'...if the primary purpose of participation is to improve children and young people's sense of personal efficacy or self-worth, this will have different consequences for how it is done, and for how it is evaluated, than if the main objective is seen as being to improve decisions about the provision of public services. If the principal aim is to strengthen democratic citizenship, then the demands made on the process may be more complex altogether' (Thomas, 2007, p. 200).

I am certainly motivated by a 'preferential option' for the young men presented in these pages, and was keen that our work together should deliver tangible outcomes; a financial stipend, skills, confidence, a documentary film, hopefully something of a democratic consciousness (de Winter, 1997), and certainly a thesis that presented their experiences in a way that faithfully engaged with the structural inequality that shaped their descriptions of everyday life. But the therapeutic hypothesis embedded in the work done by Freire, Fanon and Martín-Baró meant I was also hoping my young co-researchers would *feel*

³ The relevance for example of Freire's (1971) critique of educational approaches that 'bank' knowledge in children is obvious here.

something; that they would be moved by the process and ‘connect individual experiences of pain and oppression to structural analyses and demands for justice’ (Torre et al, 2008, p. 24). For me, tangible outcomes rested entirely on the integrity of this process, a tension that emerges consistently in PAR projects with young people (Christensen, 2004), where ‘disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of power’ (Pratt, 1991, in Torre et al, 2006, p. 24).

That said, the poetics of emancipatory theory and research with young people often distorts what is both achievable and meaningful. The literature is full of studies that appear theoretically neat and consistent. Even where they claim not to be, it is noticeable the young people participating in them are able to engage practically and materially, and already possess certain critical faculties and an intellectual hunger that privileges the project. This privilege is though frequently difficult to discern. My own reading of it only occurred ‘after the event’, once I had applied the theories and approaches that appealed to me on paper in the field. For when I re-read some of the studies that had inspired me (for example Cahill, 2004, 2006, Torre & Fine, 2006), though there was much that still spoke to my own experience, there was also now something that left me uneasy and irritated in the presentation and language. Some of this is to do with the evangelic and urgent tone that forced me to confront my own feelings of deflation and frustration at the process I was engaged in, but mostly it was because in the ‘voice’ of these explicitly polyphonic studies, I still heard the base assumptions and confidence of relative privilege. The conclusion presented below from a youth PAR project working with young women in New York is one example of what I mean:

‘The fact that we expressed interest in participating in the research project indicated that we already showed some bravery in being willing to step outside our comfort zone. But we think that there has to be a way to reach out to people who are not yet brave enough to take such a step. How do you reach them?.. How do you reach the apathetic, those who have been sleeping for so long that they’ve forgotten what awake is and how uncomfortable growth can be? Or those who are so busy they have no time to reflect or participate?’ (Cahill, Rios-Moore & Threatts, 2008, p. 120).

It's hard not to be impressed with research where even in the final published text authorship is shared and claimed by young participants. But oppression manifests itself in many ways, some of which at the extremes of marginality destroy the personal and material resources that make participating in such projects either possible or at least easy. Certainly, it seems to me unfair to speak either of bravery, apathy or forgetting if your experience is being destroyed by the real and symbolic violences of poverty, racism, family breakdown, unemployment and so on. It is not possible to forget something you have never known or experienced; at the very least, one ought not to be condemned for being asleep, for it is not apathy when a lack of resources force you into an everyday struggle to survive in the now. Consequently, it may not actually be so brave to indulge in a PAR project where the facticity of your circumstances and psyche already privilege this.

It is not my intention or desire to tear down participatory studies with young people, but to counter the charges made by Frideres (1992) one more time, research of this kind cannot be immune from critique simply because of its authorship. My broader point is simply that social exclusion exists by degree, and functions to make participatory processes and outcomes both more or less difficult to realise and define. My co-participants had no interest in co-authorship of this thesis, sometimes they had no interest in even showing up each week, or if they did, in participating in the discussion. Nor did they particularly share my ideas about or interest in project outcomes or the integrity of the process. There was no cyclical process of action and reflection, and only occasionally (given how long we were together) were there moments of emotional growth. The standards set in the literature on children and young people's participatory research were simply not met by this project, and my contention is that this was so because this body of literature, though rooted in the radical heritage of oppression and resistance cited earlier, now fails to engage with important categories of both.

Consequently, I felt personal responsibility for delivering one outcome in particular; a thesis that rendered faithfully the experience of marginality articulated by my co-participants. In pursuit of this outcome I made a series of decisions about the ethnographic presentation that led me away from a

preoccupation with theoretical authenticity. I purposely elected to impose a degree of order on the transcripts, remaining faithful to the generative themes that had arisen but setting them in a local, historical and wider socio-economic context. It was also why, in the end, I included something of my co-participants biographies, since ironically, so much of what made them authentically complicated, contradictory postmodern beings was eliminated by the exclusion of our relationships, conversations and experiences outside the group sessions. Including descriptions of our 'social participating' (Hart, 2009), I hope these choices (by being transparent) might contribute to a sociology of politics, power and intergenerational relations (Thomas, 2007, 2009), as well as an emerging psychological anthropology (Casey & Edgerton, 2005, Timimi, 2005, Levine, 2010) of childhood and adolescence that...

'... asks how children and adolescents around the world acquire, transform, share, integrate, and transmit cultural knowledge. (For) this scientific project is central to the study of globalization and its impacts on children, adolescents and youth. Globalization processes impact all parts of the world through immigration, market economics, and politics, and it changes the roles of children and youth as well. Hence globalization demands a pluralistic, cross-cultural view of childhood and adolescence' (Weisner & Lowe, 2005, p.315).

Social policy and the historical moment

Finally, it was always my intention that this research have some utility in the real world of applied social studies and mental healthcare. To this end the study exists within a matrix of social policy, think tank research and statutory programmes variously designed to understand and 'tackle' the issues facing socially excluded young people growing up in our inner cities, and in this case Bristol.

Summarising this as briefly as possible, of personal concern and interest is that body of policy and guidance around race and mental health that first sparked my interest in this research. In particular that which has sought to deliver service reform in relation to the over-representation of Black men at the acute end of the mental health and criminal justice systems (see as an introduction to

this Fernando, 1991, Smaje, 1995, Macpherson, 1999, Barn, 2001, Department of Health, 2003, 2005, Armstrong et al, 2005, Wilson & Rees, 2006, House of Commons, 2007, Centre for Social Justice, 2011). Alongside this, the study both critiques and belongs among that current body of policy and social programmes concerned with the provision of mental health services to (particularly Black) young people (Department of Health, 2004, Street et al, 2005, Layard, 2006, Utting et al, 2006, Malek, 2011), social exclusion and urban poverty (Wilson, 1998, Office of Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008, The Young Foundation, 2009), and youth violence and gangs (see Bennett & Holloway, 2004, Fitzgerald, 2005, Youth Justice Board, 2007, Margo, 2008, Kintrea et al, 2008, Fitch, 2009, HM Inspector of Prisons, 2010, Home Office, 2008, 2009, 2011). More locally, the study compliments and contradicts a crop of local research, needs assessments and strategic programmes (North Bristol Primary Care Trust, 2004, Clement, 2007, 2009, Hoggett et al, 2008, iCoCo, 2009, Bristol City Council, 2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, Safer Bristol Partnership, 2011).

Finally, even at its apogee the structural analysis of mental health presented herein might offer something to that emerging tranche of policy orientated research exploring human needs through a prism of wellbeing, happiness and equality (see for example Layard, 2005, Hothi et al, 2008, Michaelson et al, 2009, Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010, Marmot, 2010, Bacon et al, 2010, Department of Health, 2009, 2011), as well as that building on the language of resilience and capability, particularly among children and young people (Sen, 1993, 1999, Goleman, 1995, Alkire, 2002, Luthar, 2003, Ungar, 2004, Stevenson & Zimmerman, 2005, Bartley, 2006, Schoon, 2006, Pickett & Wilson, 2007, Roberts, 2009).

Having situated the study in place, I must name one final tributary that intervened and inserted itself on the work; history. My time in St Pauls ran in total from April 2010 to September 2011, though the research collective had formally disbanded by December 2010. In August, just before I was due to formally finish in the field, rioting spread from Tottenham in North London to a number of other English inner cities, including St Pauls. As in the eighties, these events combined to refocus government and media on the crises of our poorest metropolitan neighbourhoods, and the speech made by Prime Minister David

Cameron in the immediate aftermath merits its place in this review because it has set a tone for discussion of social issues and relations that influences, in ways I cannot control, the location of this study into the future. On the Monday after the riots he delivered the following:

‘So as we begin the necessary processes of inquiry, investigation, listening and learning: let’s be clear. These riots were not about race: the perpetrators and the victims were white, black and Asian. These riots were not about government cuts: they were directed at high street stores, not Parliament. And these riots were not about poverty: that insults the millions of people who, whatever the hardship, would never dream of making others suffer like this. No, this was about behaviour... people showing indifference to right and wrong... people with a twisted moral code...people with a complete absence of self-restraint. One of the biggest lessons of these riots is that we’ve got to talk honestly about behaviour and then act – because bad behaviour has literally arrived on people’s doorsteps... we can’t shy away from the truth anymore.

This must be a wake-up call for our country. Social problems that have been festering for decades have exploded in our face. Now, just as people last week wanted criminals robustly confronted on our street, so they want to see these social problems taken on and defeated. Our security fightback must be matched by a social fightback. We must fight back against the attitudes and assumptions that have brought parts of our society to this shocking state... Do we have the determination to confront the slow-motion moral collapse that has taken place in parts of our country these past few generations?

Irresponsibility. Selfishness. Behaving as if your choices have no consequences. Children without fathers. Schools without discipline. Reward without effort. Crime without punishment. Rights without responsibilities. Communities without control. Some of the worst aspects of human nature tolerated, indulged – sometimes even incentivised – by a state and its agencies that in parts have become literally de-moralised.

I don’t doubt that many of the rioters out last week have no father at home. Perhaps they come from one of the neighbourhoods where it’s standard for

children to have a mum and not a dad...where it's normal for young men to grow up without a male role model, looking to the streets for their father figures, filled up with rage and anger. So if we want to have any hope of mending our broken society, family and parenting is where we've got to start. We all belong to the same society, and we all have a stake in making it better. There is no 'them' and 'us' – there is us. We are all in this together, and we will mend our broken society – together' (Office of the Prime Minister, 2011).

My original motive to study was seeded in my reading and applying reductive portraits of oppression and working myself within government programmes steeped in their ethics and assumptions. The riots of August 2011 inserted themselves in this study and will in future no doubt come to be seen as the catalyst and site for a plethora of research, polemic, policy and politics on our inner cities and the lives of those marginalised young people (toward whom all this will be directed) inhabiting them. Though I could not have anticipated history participating in this research in quite the way it did, it is in this context I hope this thesis exists among those trying to find meaning, understanding, and humanity amid the burnt out cars and fractured shop fronts.

Summary of research aims

The heritage I have tried to articulate for this research is no doubt incomplete. The syncretism of disciplines that appear in what follows means many important related studies are cited with but a nod in their general direction, rather than a fuller consideration of their likeness or influence. This frustration I felt frequently in composing the review. But in the end the chapter must build coherently to a description of my research aims, leaving the reader with a clear sense of how they were (conceptually, personally and scientifically) arrived at, and where they belong in the constellation of existing research, policy and practice. By way of a summary let me be clear what these consist of.

The first aim sits within contemporary theories and formulations of children and young people's participation. It is quite simply to test and extend participatory theory, and specifically Participatory Action Research (PAR), at an extreme of marginality currently underdeveloped in the existing literature, if not outside it.

Explicit focus is given to preparing the ground for this in the two chapters that immediately follow, though serious reflection is delayed until Chapter Nine so as to move as speedily as possible to the voices of my co-participants. Within this are submerged the aims and outcomes of PAR, where the value of the research process is devolved to my co-participants.

The second aim I hoped would flow from the first, though it was always possible it wouldn't, in which scenario, and working iteratively, these aims would have read quite differently (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). Nonetheless, my second aim is to present a reflexive and situated analysis of urban marginality, youth and masculinity. This is done through chapters four to seven, using extended transcripts from the weekly group discussions that were the basis of our PAR project.

The third research aim, realised in Chapter Eight, is a critical analysis of mental health that reads the ethnographic data through a poststructural lens. Specifically, the ways in which social and psychic structures come to mirror one another and mediate power is examined on both sides of the dialectic of oppression, illuminating issues of justice and social control both on the streets and in contemporary mental healthcare and social policy.

The final aim, which is the focus of Chapter Nine, is more restorative, and unites the preceding chapters under a conceptual analysis and discussion of participation. The purpose of this is not simply to reflect on the first and second aims, but to explore the theoretical territory uncovered by them, including how this relates to the ideas about mental health and power explored in Chapter Eight.

2. SKETCH FOR AN ETHIC OF PARTICIPATION

“It’s a good opportunity, you lot don’t do nothing anyways so you should sign up, you might learn something. You need to be motivated though, that is, have a motive to action” (Marcel).

This chapter is an extension of the prior literature review in the sense that it too articulates something of the study’s heritage; exploring the basic assumptions I am making in crafting my enquiry by locating their appropriate philosophical traditions. This I am doing for two reasons. First, that if it is my criticism of (mental health) research drawn from the natural sciences that its values are latent and presentation of oppression and the oppressed therefore biased and reductive, then my own assumptions and values must at least be made visible. This is on my reading of the word simply good social ‘science’. Second, my chosen approach is Participatory Action Research, which, with its emphasis on syncretism, destabilised expertise and process, necessarily submerges me in ethics; a state to which I must attend as fully as possible. That I am committed to the reflexivity inherent in making explicit these assumptions is not necessarily an endorsement of their universality, reliability or even utility in the real world as we shall see. Nor is it the point that what follows may be contested or deconstructed for its misreading of philosophy. What matters is that the sketch I render, however flawed, nonetheless visibly underpins what follows. To this end it provides both the conceptual architecture and language through which the thesis and the theoretical enquiry it (later) attempts can emerge.

Broadly then I will work from a meta-ethical description ‘inwards’. The relational and applied ethical tensions often cited as typical and problematic of postmodernism and PAR in particular, can then be recognised as consistent and coherent expressions of a broader ontological and epistemological ethic of participation that draws from the philosophical positions of existential phenomenology, (Sartre, 1939, 1943, Heidegger, 1962, Hegel, 1977),

poststructuralism (Barthes, 1967, Foucault, 1995, Derrida, 1998), and Marxist humanism (Fromm, 1955, Freire, 1971, Martín-Baró, 1994, Marx, 2007).

Being

To begin with, my sketch locates the concept of (children and young people's) participation within an existential phenomenological ontology. Thus the world, our *being-in-the-world*, and our psychic and transcendental experience of it as both an ecology and place full of others also *being-in-the-world*, are here indivisible phenomena. To begin from this manner of being, *Dasein* to borrow Heidegger's (1962) term, is to reject the reductive inclinations of the Cartesian tradition, which splits subject from object, outer from inner, mind from body, and individual from society.⁴ At the centre of this sketch then is the intentionality of consciousness in a transcendental and interconnected cosmos where 'matter and psyche always go together' (de Quincey, 1999, in Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 8). To articulate this basic platform is to suppose that we already...

'...live in a participatory world. There is a primordial givenness of being in which the human bodymind actively participates in a co-creative dance which gives rise to the reality we experience. Subject and object are interdependent. Thus participation is fundamental to the nature of our being, an ontological given' (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 8).

But the benign indifference of the cosmos does not mean we participate and experience our world indifferently. So if participation is a given, the next obvious question must be - participation in what and to what end? To unpack this we must enquire of our *being-in-the-world* as it exists under present - 'normal' - circumstances, an enquiry conveniently and best organised around the conceptual avatar of a child, who is born first biologically before physical birth 'inaugurates rapidly ongoing processes through which the child comes to feel real and alive, with a sense of continuity in time and location in space. So

⁴ From these Cartesian splits the developmental 'deficit' and 'incompleteness' of western 'childhood' is made, as are the atomistic and ahistorical theories of mind predominant in the claims of psychiatric legitimacy and contemporary mental health services more generally.

physical birth and biological aliveness are followed by the infant becoming existentially born as real and alive' (Laing, 1965, p 41).

The defining feature of our existential birth is that the particular flavour it takes is dependent on others already *being-in-the-world*. We may usefully deploy the Hegelian Master/Slave dialectic to illustrate this. For Hegel (1977), the essential nature of the Master's consciousness is independence, of *being-for-himself*, in which we may recognise a characteristic of adulthood as well as privilege. In contrast, the nature of the Slave's consciousness is dependence, of *being-for-another*, which obviously parallels both childhood as well as the experience of oppression. Our ontological security as infants, our survival and 'biological aliveness', is assured or not by our *being-for-another*. This dependency means our existential birth is animated by the objective circumstances we are borne into. Today, oppression and violence shape fundamental structures of individual and group experience, both as imbued human traits and devastating physical realities. Mediated through our *being-for-another*, the facticity of our birth precludes our bid for ontological security, and exerts a *bodymind* pressure that coerces our *being-in-the-world* to psychic and material positions and structures of relative and sometimes absolute privilege and/or oppression.

Hundreds of years of colonialism, and now neoliberalism, have led us to a time and space characterised by unprecedented migrations, environmental degradation and deepening material inequality, often in the same overcrowded postcode. This state of affairs sustains and is sustained by imagined identities (Anderson, 1983), group loyalties, and historical (mis)readings that synthesise, compete, and conflict within a value system increasingly concerned with 'having' rather than 'being' (Fromm, 1976). This basic picture of present social conditions remains to my mind best understood and organised around Marx's (2007) theory of alienation, though we may extend his humanism further, to a fuller picture of the condition as it emerges dialectically for both the privileged and oppressed.

The condition of alienation, in other words our estrangement from our humanity and the project of becoming more fully human (Freire, 1971), defines contemporary experience in the west. Surveying the social and economic

landscape of Britain in 2013, it may be that we have already 'hurtled into the abyss' Fanon (1961) foresaw for European civilisation. Alienation is our defining experience because under existing social and economic conditions, the overall persistence and widening of structural and material inequality requires of us all an extraordinary and everyday negation of human suffering and potential. Facilitated instantly by technologies that shrink our conscious world, by-standing suffering - never mind perpetrating it - is habitual, a condition that to endure requires dissociative strategies and a relational anaesthesia corrosive to our individual and collective humanity. Those both oppressed and privileged by these 'normal' everyday arrangements are less human(e) for them. Or as Laing (1967) put it; 'what we call normal is a product of repression, denial, splitting, projection, introjection and other forms of destructive action on experience... It is radically estranged from the structure of being' (p. 27).

'Hierarchy and inequality, which are so fundamental to social structures, normalize violence. Violence is the vector of cultural processes that work through salient images, structures, and engagements of everyday life to shape local worlds. Violence, thus, is crucial to cultural processes of routinization, legitimation, essentialism, normalization and simplification through which the social world orders the flow of experience within and between body-selves... The violences of everyday life are what create the "existential" (Kleinman, 2000, p. 239).

Our existential birth and ontological security (as children) cannot be properly viewed outside of this context, for what is the nature of a secure Self under such conditions? What is done to our capacity for love and authenticity, our capacity to parent and our processes of socialisation where the moral economy is animated by human relations overwhelmed by the presence of what variously emerges in the literature as 'inauthenticity' (Heidegger, 1972), 'bad faith' (Sartre, 1943), and 'false generosity' (Freire, 1971)? Returning then to the question posed by the existential phenomenological basis for this sketch, we may conclude that though participation is an ontological given, under such existential conditions as these we are generally neither free nor conscious participants.

But we could be. In this ontology exists an epistemology of human potential, of a world not fixed but in process; animated by participants that though estranged, remain agents nonetheless, 'carrying with them the capacity to reflect on the quality of their participation' (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 7). Indeed, a fundamental conceptual marker for the participatory worldview in this study is that participation is not just an ontological given, but also a metaphysical means, a kind of therapy for these social and personal relations. For such are the conditions of our time, 'a primary purpose of human inquiry is not so much to search for truth but to heal, and above all to heal the alienation, the split that characterizes modern experience' (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 11). Most fundamentally for this sketch, no healing of this kind can emerge *being-for-another* in the dialectic of oppression.

Thus freedom and consciousness turn out to be the very same thing, for both are identified with the power to consider things either as they are, or as they are not; to imagine potential, and to create plans for transformation into this potential. If we are conscious beings (i.e. conscious in our being) then we are also free (Warnock 1967). It is the making of this consciousness, of this freedom, that is here the true ontological vocation of participation.

Knowing

The Cartesian foundation for scientific knowledge privileges knowing through thinking rather than knowing through doing. The very idea of *cogito ergo sum* ('I think therefore I am') is one more example of the ontological split in Western thought, this time severing the knower from what is known, knowledge from knowing (Shotter, 1993). The existential phenomenology that underwrites this sketch suggests the Cartesian meta ethic is unsafe, contaminated by the ideologies of alienation embedded in the 'splits' and lived reality of widening inequality. Here these splits are rejected, experience *is* evidence and the knower and known are one (Husserl, 2008). In this case, and since we are already and indivisibly a part of the world and engaged in practical being and acting (Skolimowski, 1994), privileged here is a participatory epistemology of knowing through doing.

Avoiding the reductive inclinations of the Cartesian tradition, and in pursuit of that messy and shifting dialectical tension between our situational and orientational selves, an epistemological ethic of participation blends the 'objective' thrust of positivism (the supposition that there is a real world out there to be grasped and understood), with the postmodernist acknowledgment 'that as soon as we attempt to articulate this we enter a world of human language and cultural expression' (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 7). In phenomenological terms, this means simply that:

'I cannot experience your experience. You cannot experience my experience... I see you, and you see me. I experience you, and you experience me. I see your behaviour, you see my behaviour. But I do not and never have and never will 'see' your experience of me. Just as you cannot 'see' my experience of you' (Laing, 1967, p. 16).

Consequently, moving toward an exposition of the effect this epistemology has on my conceptualisation of children and young people's participation means first attending to that 'ever-present weight' of 'accumulated experience we have both as adults and children when we try to engage in participatory practice, and which must be borne in mind whenever we theorise about participation' (Thomas, 2007, p. 212). For if, as I see it, we 'have forgotten most of our childhood, not only its contents but its flavour' (Laing, 1967, p. 22), and can no longer 'begin to think, feel or act now except from the starting point of (our own) alienation' (ibid, p. 11), then adults (recalling the Hegelian dialectic) cannot meaningfully offer children and young people an authentic participatory experience in the spirit of the ontological project sketched above.

In this admittedly puritanical sense, a participatory epistemology would contend it is not enough to encourage, integrate, or assimilate children and young people's presence and experience into an (estranged) ontology of adulthood and term this participation. A Foucauldian (1980) analysis may usefully be deployed to underscore why this is:

'Once knowledge can be analyzed in terms of region, domain, implantation, displacement, transposition, one is able to capture the process by which

knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power. There is an administration of knowledge, a politics of knowledge, relations of power which pass via knowledge and which, if one tries to transcribe them, lead one to consider forms of domination designated by such notions as field, region and territory' (p. 143).

Spatialising childhood and adolescence reveals them as two of these dominated territories. A participatory epistemology is then necessarily poststructural in the sense that it attempts to address the production, organisation and ownership of adult knowledge and meaning, pursuing the deconstruction of embedded hierarchies (patriarchal, colonial, economic) in the 'archaeology' of adult knowing (Foucault, 1980, Derrida, 1998). Thus it is that we must also spatialise children and young people's participation (Kesby, Kindon & Pain, 2008), mindful of our estrangement as adults and our dominion over young people's psychic and physical spaces.

In a poststructural sense then, a participatory epistemology is a project for the decolonisation of childhood experience. Or put more simply, participation is a psychic and physical space in and through which young people may consider and define themselves in ways that engage with adult representations of them. In relation to what I will loosely term 'mental health', this is an important reclamation of the self from definition and objectification by (expert, adult) others *being-in-the-world*. Most importantly, a participatory epistemology does not suppose any inherent deficit in the knowing of children and young people, nor in their capacity to be agents. For 'agency is always partial and mediated' (Cahill, 2006, p. 6), and adults too are 'in the process of becoming – unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality' (Freire, 1971, p. 65).

The question that must now be addressed is one of method. For if experience is evidence, one may reasonably ask how it is that the experience of 'the Other' can ever be properly studied and understood (Laing, 1965). Moreover, if the very structure of children and young peoples thought is being 'conditioned by the contradictions of their concrete, existential situation' (Freire, 1971, p. 27),

then how are young people to imagine what they could be if they cannot already see who they are or may become?

Dialogical ethics in Participatory Action Research

The 'how' in best service of this sketch is Participatory Action Research (hereafter simply PAR) (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, McTaggart, 1997, Selener, 1997, Reason & Bradbury, 2001). PAR is dialectical enquiry by dialogical ethics; 'neither objectivism nor subjectivism, nor yet psychologism... but rather subjectivity and objectivity in constant dialectical relationship' (Freire, 1971, p. 32). In this dialectical movement (the Freireian *praxis*) O'Neill's (1972) orientational and situational 'tension' is *felt*. PAR then is necessarily an emotional and psychological project involving participants in the re-imagining and transformation of their lives. In this project emotion is not just 'a side effect of the process, not only fuel for the fire, but also central to the inquiry' (Cahill, 2004, p. 280). Emotion is transforming of the world (Sartre, 1939), both 'a way to see clearly' and a means gathered 'towards constructive social change' (hooks, 1995, p.18). Thus one measure of PAR can be taken from how it feels, for 'liberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one' (Freire, 1971, p. 31).

PAR couches power in the language of poststructuralism, as an *effect* rather than a zero-sum commodity (Kesby, Kindon & Pain, 2007), and seeks to create a physical and temporal space in which (young) people 'may reclaim the legitimacy of the knowledge they are capable of producing through their own collectives and verification systems' (Rahman in Fals-Borda, 1985, p. 128). In contrast, most qualitative approaches place the researcher at the centre of the research landscape, from where their influence holds sway over the hypothesis, planning (including any ethical submissions), fieldwork, analysis, and dissemination. PAR moves in the opposite epistemological direction, destabilising this privilege and the implied expertise embedded in it. Collapsing the traditional researcher/researched hierarchy, there is instead a collective, within which researchers work collaboratively and in dialogue.

In this space, the collective may appropriate different methods from as many different scientific traditions again, synthesising them into PAR's epistemological

framework. Cyclically, collaboratively and cumulatively, participants work to compose an auto-ethnographic portrait through which they 're-present themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer's own terms' (Cahill, 2004, p. 276). The fieldwork focuses on dialogue, witnessing, and accompaniment; drawing from the situated knowledge and the lived experience of subjects and agents assumed to be multiple, heterogeneous, and contradictory (Watkins & Shulman, 2008). Because of their social position(s), PAR conducted by young people is expressly pedagogic in another sense too, because 'the important lesson obtained from engaging in this pedagogical *praxis* is that life, or more specifically the students' experiences, are not transcendental or predetermined', and that:

'Once a young person discovers his or her capacity to effect change, oppressive systems and subjugating discourses no longer persuade him or her that the deep social and economic problems he or she faces result from his or her own volition. Rather, the discovery humanizes the individual, allowing him or her to realize the equal capabilities and universal intelligence in all humans, while acknowledging the existence of problems as the result of forces beyond his or her own doing' (Cammarota & Fine, 2008, p. 6).

Children and young people's ability to think, to want, and to know, typically exists set against an ontology of adulthood that through its various 'splits' constructs them as incomplete adults, framing the terms of reference for their competency, knowing and agency accordingly. PAR, underwritten by existential phenomenology, rejects this and offers instead a more horizontal research context in service of a participatory dialogue and fidelity to phenomena as they are subjectively experienced. In fact, the participatory ethic that runs through PAR is rather more concerned by the threat to the research process posed by my capacity to dominate and effect power in ways antithetical to this. Indeed, it is important to state here that I remain a researcher in this context, one keen to elicit my own research data from the participatory process. This tension is central to the politics of applying PAR, and is explored in much greater detail in both the next chapter and later, in the discussion through Chapter Nine. For now, Freire (1971) explains the nature of 'my threat' thus:

'As they cease to be exploiters or indifferent spectators or simply heirs of exploitation and move to the side of the exploited, they almost always bring with them the marks of their origin: their prejudices and their deformations, which include a lack of confidence in the people's ability to think, to want, and to know' (p. 42).

So, through the 'marks of my origin', the integrity of the participatory research landscape is made inherently fragile. Ethical competency then reveals itself in my capacity for honesty, humility, patience, listening, and reflection, both in the field and in my rendering of this thesis. For 'how can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own? How can I dialogue if I consider myself a member of the in-group of 'pure' men, the owners of truth and knowledge, for whom all non-members are 'these people' (Freire, 1971, p. 71). Authenticity means my 'sharing in the way research is conceptualised, practiced, and brought to bear on the world', since 'mere involvement implies none of this, and creates the risk of co-option and exploitation of people in the realization of the plans of others' (Mctaggart, 1997, p. 6). Ironically then, given the organic intellectualism of PAR, before the process has even begun its integrity rests on my intentions and personal capacities.

'Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on 'authority' are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be on the side of freedom, not against it' (Freire, 1971, p. 61).

There is sometimes a revolutionary zeal that surfaces when reading or talking about PAR, a product perhaps of its political heritage (Fals-Borda, 2001), but also no doubt because the ontological vocation that nourishes PAR suggests...

'...there is no historical reality which is not human...there is only history of humanity... made by people... in turn making them. It is when majorities are denied their right to participate in history as Subjects that they become

dominated and alienated. Thus, to supercede their condition as objects by the status of Subjects – the objective of any true revolution – requires that the people act, as well as reflect, upon the reality to be transformed’ (Freire, 1971, p. 111).

This revolutionary end-game has its conceptual and ethical significance, as we shall see, but to retreat from the romantic language of emancipation for a moment, participation must also be pragmatic; a real potential and lived experience in real peoples lives. Moreover, the further one travels from the centre (where these theories are made) toward the margins in either theorising or applying PAR (or indeed participation more generally), the more pragmatic one must be. And though the poetic form of a research setting where ‘no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught,’ and where people ‘teach each other in dialogue, mediated by the world, in order to name the world’ (Freire, 1971, p. 69) is very obviously appealing, as Percy-Smith and Thomas (2010) have rightly noted:

‘Participation is not an idealised process which happens in predefined ways; rather, it is a way of being, an ethic of practice, which informs how individuals and groups respond to issues and problems. A core value for meaningful participation is respect for the individuality of children and young people. Not everyone is, or wants to be, a leader or to be involved in the same way, but there should be scope for all children to make a contribution in whatever way they feel appropriate according to their own inclinations, interests and capacities’ (p. 362).

This sketch for an ethic of participation insists that alongside the aspirational (if abstracted) emancipatory meta-ethic sits a pragmatic realism that forewarns of the intersectional outcomes likely to flow from an approach like PAR. The subtleties of my co-participants must be matched by less binary language in the conceptualisation of the ways we work together and the ends toward which we travel. This temperance is best summarised by Watkins and Shulman (2008), who rightly conclude that:

'A project may succeed in being highly participatory, but lack any plan for the insights of the project to effect change in the systems that negatively impact the well-being of the participants. Research may effectively posit and achieve some liberatory changes, while pursuing the research in a manner that re-inscribes power differentials among professionals and co-participants. Rare projects will succeed in being wholly critical, participatory, and action orientated' (p. 270).

Nonetheless, in the established discourses of children and young people's participation, PAR's dialogical ethic is clear in asking the adult researcher for 'an explicit commitment... to share power, that is, to give some of it away' (Shier, 2001, p. 115). Consequently, a participatory ethic extends traditional ethical research concerns for confidentiality, beneficence, and justice, turning them into meaningful ends in themselves.

"Who owns the data?" is an ethical question that participants in laboratory studies do not think to ask. Whose interpretation counts? Who has veto power? What will happen to the relationships that were formed in the field? What are the researchers obligations after the data is collected? Can the data be used against the participants? Will the data be used on their behalf? Do researchers have an obligation to protect the communities and social groups they study or just guard the rights of individuals? These kinds of questions reveal how much ethical terrain is uncharted by official guidelines' (Maracek, Fine, & Kidder, 1997, p. 641).

A note on validity

Postmodernism's destabilising influence appears hostile to orthodox debates about validity in social research, emerging as they generally do from a positivist tradition. Authoring this sketch, it was tempting to adopt the radical deconstructionist position that questions the very validity of debates around validity (Kvale, 1989, Wolcott, 1990). And yet, however instinctively I may feel drawn to this position, to adopt it would be to reaffirm why social research of this kind never quite makes the leap to real world utility among practitioners, commissioners and policy makers accountable for allocating public resources.

A central proposition to be tested here is that PAR may contain the conceptual antecedents for a more scientific, effective, and human process of social and psychological research; one 'through which yesterdays universalizing experts begin to learn from organic histories with local participants' (Watkins & Schulman, 2008, p. 27). But for this potential to ever have any pliable purchase and real world utility, it must be articulated in a way that engages constructively with the question of validity. After all, the call for evidence based practice at the centre of current mental health commissioning frameworks does not have at its heart the epistemological ethic that would here call for more *practice based evidence*.

Put another way, the classical positivist test of validity as 'correspondence with reality, assessed by specific techniques', is re-orientated by PAR to a test of the context of research practice 'in which multiple, contradictory realities are recognized' (Tolman & Brydon-Miller, 1997, p. 598). My interest in PAR stemmed from wanting to devolve some of the value of the research process to the community of young men I wanted to work with. But it also stood out for me because it seemed reasonable that on the basis of its ethical underpinning, PAR could elicit 'better' data; after all, 'insiders simply know things that outsiders don't' (Camie et al, 2001). Most important for the mental health lens through which this study peers, I was also especially drawn to the idea that co-participants are 'less likely to pathologise themselves, and more likely to understand the ways in which different parts of their life-worlds are connected' (Fine, 2006, in Cahill, 2004, p. 283). These facets appear to me to strengthen PAR's claim to validity, while at the same time they clearly present a 'radical epistemological challenge to the traditions of social science, most critically on the topic of where knowledge resides' (Fine, 2007, in Cammarota & Fine, 2008, p. 215).

'The distinctive viewpoint of PAR (recognises that the) domination of masses by elites is rooted not only in the polarization of control over the means of material production but also over the means of knowledge production, including... the social power to determine what is valid or useful knowledge' (Rahman, 1985, p. 119).

PAR assumes that those oppressed and excluded hold specific and situated knowledge about the history, structure and effects of unjust social arrangements. It is epistemologically designed to develop and harvest this knowing, explicitly destabilising hegemonic and hierarchical assumptions about expertise and validity. Within this design, PAR is subjected to its own tests of *process validity*, upon which the broader claim to democratise and deepen scientific validity rests. *Process validity* includes tests of what Sung (1995) has termed *contextual validity* and *interpersonal validity*. The first of which relates to how appropriate the research questions are framed, and the relevance of the data collection processes and tools to those involved in the research process. The latter refers to the quality of the interpersonal conditions of trust, from which all other outcomes flow (hypotheses, methodologies, interrogation of the data, dialectical critique). This has consequences for *interpretive validity* (Watkins & Shulman, 2008), which 'increases as people in a research community experience themselves as free to discuss possible meanings of narratives and to propose alternate interpretations to one another' (p. 296).

Moving from those tests of *process validity* anchored in the micro-politics of the research experience, *catalytic validity* is critical to realising the fidelity to social action embedded in PAR's ontological project. This requires an assessment of whether the research has or will lead to personal and social change (Sung, 1995). *Catalytic validity* may be deconstructed further still, to what Prilleltensky (2003) has described as *epistemic psychopolitical validity* (what the research reveals about oppression) and *transformative psychopolitical validity* (what participants do with this information to change the status quo). The extent to which I was able to ameliorate my own 'deformations' and work with my co-participants to pass these tests of *process validity* I am not sure, and a fuller exposition of this is saved (purposely) for later so that their voices are not delayed unnecessarily. For now though I wish simply to reaffirm the provisional nature of participatory research, the results of which...

'...do not seek to be overly generalized or to make the kind of universal truth claims that natural science has accustomed us to... (PAR) actively acknowledges the local context of most of its efforts. In some ways, it is a

humble enterprise, self-conscious, self-correcting, and confessing of limitation' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 297).

That said, of particular resonance to this study is the capacity of PAR to effectively critique orthodox notions of expert psychiatric and psychoanalytic validity, challenging ideas of causality and scientific legitimacy. As a demographic group, the young men who appear in these pages are consistently over-represented in acute mental healthcare settings (Care Quality Commission, 2011). A highly situated auto-ethnographic portrait would, I hoped, test the *construct validity* of those psychological evidence bases and diagnoses disproportionately applied to this group of young men, examining this in relation to the care pathways by which this happens. Similarly, I wanted the portrait to 'speak-back', challenging those social studies and political discourses which reduce marginality to the circular logic of personal failure, and racial/cultural determinism. So in the vernacular of Prilleltensky (2003), I hoped the research data would have in the first instance very considerable *epistemic psychopolitical validity*.

The politics of representation

But in uniting these tests and extensions of validity, there is an undeniable tension between what PAR claims for itself and how these claims manifest themselves both in life and in the text. For however much I toiled with reflexivity and my 'deformations' in the field, the most significant site where I waged battle with them was in organising the transcripts of our sessions into the thesis you hold.⁵ Before I began, the very act of 'organising' the data felt antithetical the processes of PAR, and I was especially worried about reproducing a narrative that promoted 'coherence, singularity and closure' where there was none; one which 'set up a cosy camaraderie with the reader' in an 'ultimately conservative and uncritical' rendering of 'prevailing ideological and representational arrangements' (Stronach & MacLure, 1997, p. 49).

⁵ The final presentation of this is discussed in the next chapter, here I am concerned more for the ethical debate surrounding the politics of representation, participation and the idea of 'culture as text' (Geertz, 1973).

I had wanted to let the data speak for itself, and toyed with a presentation that would have run in a linear fashion consistent with the sessions and including any and all gaps. I was consciously going to omit any back story to my co-participants and the local social, economic or political context. My presentation of our group transcripts was to be rendered fully, colloquially authentic and under erasure (Derrida, 1974). I played with the idea of embedding my own narrative voice in the transcripts, as just one among many. Later I extracted it and considered a parallel narrative of my auto-ethnographic encounter split quite separately on each page (see Farrier, 2005). But having painstakingly transcribed twenty five weeks of group discussion and tested this presentation on those close to me but new to the research, it was immediately and obviously meaningless and alienating to anyone not fluent in poststructural ideas.

Strangely, despite how epistemologically puritanical my first attempt, neither did I feel the presentation an authentic representation of either my co-participants, whom I had come to know well and like, or their situation. Both the vernacular and presentation might have been theoretically authentic, but it read to me indulgently, its utility reduced to an exercise in theoretical form; appealing, in an ironic play to privilege and expert validity, only to those most literate and critical of minds at the centre. I concluded that if it is the want of the radical deconstructionist to say 'let the data speak for themselves... the trouble with that argument is, of course, that data never do speak for themselves' (Keller, 1985, p. 178), and the radical epistemological ethic running through PAR consequently consumes itself (for me) at this point.

In this thesis I do hold to the overall thrust of postmodernism and the 'de-centering' of (my)self. Here, instead of 'the self-actualising individual conceived of in humanist philosophies, selves are multiple, fragmented and subjected to the constraints of discourse' (MacLure, 2003:181). But I cannot erase either my motivation or ethnographic voice from this presentation. Moreover, I agree entirely with Percy-Smith (2005) when he cautions; 'having a voice doesn't necessarily lead to inclusion . . . and may not even give rise to any tangible outcome' (p. 1). I was worried much less about finding a narrative 'voice' among my co-participants, which experience told me would most probably already exist, and much more concerned with that voice being heard (Taylor, Gilligan &

Sullivan, 1993). A deconstructed presentation actually muted the voice of my co-participants on the page, an outcome entirely at odds with the ethic of justice in which this study was conceived and the re-politicisation of mental health I was looking to achieve.

A critical realist position accepts that in order to speak you have to be positioned somewhere, even if you are trying to un-position yourself (Hall, 1991). I certainly do want this collaborative ethnography to be experienced as a site of resistance (Scheper-Hughes, 1992), but I certainly do not want to render an inauthentic 'pornography of violence that reinforces popular racist stereotypes' (Bourgois, 2002, p. 15). De-centering my authorship permits me to at least shift some responsibility for this onto the reader, but I accept fully and most seriously my responsibility to embrace and pursue 'a contingent and modest epistemology that attempts to achieve rigorous forms of reporting alongside a reflexive consciousness of the codes, textual moves and rhetoric integral to the process of writing ethnography' (Back, 1996, p. 7). I hope the process of reflexivity that surrounds this task is able to generate theory (Way, 1997) around the dialectical tension of belonging to a privileged group (white, middle class, adult), studying with an oppressed group, without losing either voice; a presentation best summarised by Davies (1999):

'Although postmodern ethnographers are uncomfortably aware of the authorial voice and are at pains to minimize it, they do not necessarily take the classical ethnographic approach of expunging it from the text. Instead of making the ethnographer disappear, they make themselves more visible, even central in the production with the idea that in so doing, in presenting their gropings towards understanding, they undermine their own authority so that their interpretations become simply one perspective with no superior claim to validity' (p. 15).

The flip side to this is that imposing my voice on the data illuminates the text and transcripts in a certain way. I eventually organised the ethnography around the generative themes my co-participants raised; respect, gang violence, drugs, money, jobs, and racism. About three-quarters of what I recorded has ended up in these transcripts, what was omitted was a good deal of repetition, private conversation unwittingly captured on tape, and tangential discussions that have

necessarily been expunged from the final presentation for the sake of at least some brevity. This concession to coherence is also made on the basis that I was keen to politicise my co-participants voices, binding their subjectivities to public health, historical, social and statistical evidence of the structures they are compelled to negotiate and endure.

Indeed, the potency of the politics of representation is especially acute in relation to the oppressed, and Nader (1972) rightly warns anthropologists against studying 'the poor and powerless, because everything you say about them will be used against them' (p. 285). I have worried about this constantly, and in committing this thesis to paper have often been compelled to interrogate (either through supervision or by my co-participants) my propensity for self-censorship, my tactical retreats to the refuge of cultural relativism, and my occasional capacity for overwritten rhetorical/polemical flourishes. Despite resolving to 'find my ethnographic voice', the subsequent de-centering of it makes me concerned for the ways in which this text will be read, both by my co-participants (if at all - they were not so interested in the drafts), the residents of St Pauls, and the wider audience at the centre, both in Bristol and beyond. I worry most about this bind of representation in my presentation of structural and personal violences, an anxiety best described by Bourgois (2002):

'Most ethnographers offer sympathetic readings of the culture or people they study. Indeed, this is enshrined in the fundamental anthropological tenet of cultural relativism: Cultures are never good or bad; they simply have an internal logic. In fact, however, suffering is usually hideous; it is a solvent of human integrity, and ethnographers never want to make the people they study look ugly' (p.15).

I do not want to make the young men in these pages 'look ugly', but suffering is hideous and much of the experience they share is cast in this mire. My hope is that the path woven through their telling of this experience is sufficiently reflexive and contextualised that any 'ugliness' might at least stand a chance of being located in that messy shifting dialectical space between personal agency and the amputations of structural oppression and inequality, and not in either one or the other.

St Pauls, Map courtesy of St Pauls Unlimited Community Partnership, 2012



3. WELCOME TO ST PAULS

“Si, I have a question... so how much we gettin’ paid to do this?” (Jermaine).

I first met Sauda on a warm evening in the late summer of 2009, at the Easton Christian Family Centre on Stapleton Road, where I’d been speaking at a public health event. As the last people filed out of the small hall, a woman in her thirties with long dreadlocks and a kind face walked over, introduced herself and asked, apart from talking a great deal, what I was doing to effect positive change on the ground in neighbourhoods like hers.⁶ In those days I worked for the local National Health Service on a race and mental health programme, and we spoke for a short while about these issues, and about the small youth and family project she ran in St Pauls called Full Circle. At this point I had not long registered as a doctoral student, and had ambitious but still quite underdeveloped ideas about the direction I wanted my research to take.

Because of my professional life, I wanted to look broadly at youth, masculinity, race and mental health; issues I had presented on that evening and that were, at the time, the centre of a local and national concern for the disproportionate numbers of Black men in acute care (Department of Health, 2003). I was keen to see Sauda’s project, and asked if we could meet in a few weeks to discuss the potential of our working together on something participatory with local young men. Thankfully, Sauda seemed keen and we set a date for the autumn when she was due back from an extended trip to the Caribbean. It was on this chance meeting that my emerging study (such as it was) suddenly left my imagination and textbooks and started to become real.

⁶ Bristol is a city of some 430,000 residents (ONS, 2011), within this, St Pauls is a small inner city neighbourhood, home to around 3,200 people (this is up 66% on 2001) (ONS, 2011). One of the youngest (North Bristol Primary Care Trust, 2004) and two most ethnically diverse communities in the city, St Pauls is also one of the most disadvantaged across a range of indices of deprivation, ranking 284 out of the 32,482 super output areas in England (North Bristol Primary Care Trust, 2004, Bristol City Council, 2010).

My very first journal entry recalls that it was overcast and extremely windy when I left my office in Kingsdown a couple of months later to walk the half mile or so to St Pauls to meet Sauda. I wasn't familiar with the area as I was relatively new to Bristol, but I was very aware of its reputation (unfair or not) for drugs and crime, the riots in 1980, the annual carnival, and something of its earlier history that had been brought to life for me in Pryce's (1979) monograph of the neighbourhood in the mid seventies, *Endless Pressure*. I was no stranger to working in the inner city, nor with adolescents, but that afternoon as I walked through Stokes Croft I felt a little anxious that I was about to move from my books to the field. I didn't know how I was going to end up in contact with the young men I wanted to work with, or, even if they would be interested in working with me. Neither was I clear how to describe my study to Sauda, and even less sure what she would make of it. The only certainty was that I was running late, and so to make time I cut through an unfamiliar street off City Road.

I remember clearly the strength of my reaction caught me off-guard. Surveying the scene, my flight reflex gagged slightly before my ego realised my commitment to keep walking having made the turn. The street, like many in St Pauls, was a faded parade of blue, pink and yellow, two and three-storey Georgian houses, their rendering full of splits and cracks from which dandelions and other plants poked free. Each house was entered by a 'stoop', and guarded by large, rectangular, waist-high, black dustbins, that crowded the pavement and made the whole place feel unnecessarily congested. Parked cars lined both sides of the narrow road. I passed by a group of three older men, perhaps in their thirties or forties, quietly sat on their front step smoking, but it was the group fifty or so yards further on that had made me check myself. There were about a dozen, mostly boys and young men, and they completely dominated the junction that intersected a small fortified corner shop, the street I was on, and an adjacent side street. Their confident presence overwhelmed the space, and as I came upon them I caught the eye of one, who looked about eighteen. He was wearing all black, and on his cane rowed hair there lightly rested an oversized baseball cap. Perched on the back of a wrought iron bench he whistled, beckoning me over. I sensed what I thought to be inevitable and just shook my head, trying to appear simultaneously uninterested and sufficiently 'hard' to stave off any further interaction. I was a few paces on and past them

when he whistled again and called out. I thought I could feel the whole group turn and look into the back of me as I walked away. My heart began to beat in my head, anticipating what I assumed would be a confrontation certain to end badly. I pressed on and crossed the street, trying to mask my anxiety with disinterest. Someone said something I didn't hear and the group descended into fits of laughter. I reached the end of the street and took a left onto an empty Grosvenor Road, where I was alone but for a couple of small children on bikes; feeling I must confess, never more middle class and white.

Having composed myself, I met Sauda at the Learning Centre. She arrived late and suggested I buy her lunch from the small community run canteen. We got on well, and as we ate we talked about the area and the challenges of keeping a small third-sector operation afloat in such trying economic times. I told her about my experience on the way to the meeting. Her brow furrowed as she explained the notoriety Brighton Street (the site of my encounter) had acquired in the last year or so. She explained the young men I saw were not in school or college, and had been recruited into a world of drugs, violence, and high risk but 'easy money'. Sensing an opportunity, I explained to Sauda that I wanted to work with a group just like those on Brighton Street, to look with them at their lives and the neighbourhood as a whole. In return, I could offer access to skills and training, and, hopefully, a different perspective on their choices, feelings and behaviours as a result of taking part. Maybe they would make different, better, choices in their lives as a result. I remember Sauda (generously) said nothing and just smiled. But whether because she saw something in the idea, or because the paucity of resources for local young people forced her hand, she agreed it was worth a try and offered to help me set the project up.

After lunch, we walked the few hundred yards to Full Circle on Halston Drive, a square of low rise post-war social housing that frames a children's play area. Inside, the unassuming community flat opened out into a large meeting room, with a kitchen at one end, and a table, chairs, TV and sofa at the other. There was an adjacent office with two large, grey, slow looking computers; art materials were piled everywhere, and footballs, basketballs, and various other sports equipment lay about the floor. The space and location seemed to me the perfect place for the project to live, and Sauda was happy to offer me use of it

on Friday nights for a small rent. She even said it was fine to put things on the walls providing I took them down at the end of each session. As we talked I imagined my 'co-researchers' sat around the table, discussing life in animated terms and referring one another to the transcripts, photographs and newspaper clippings we had pinned around the room. This flash-forward image of the research was seeded in my imagination by previous PAR studies I had read, and it set me up completely unrealistically for what was to come. So much so, that despite my difficult first walk to St Pauls (a route I never took again), I left this first meeting with Sauda excited and more than a little complacent that the constituent pieces of my study were coming together with a certain inevitability. I was quite sure that my study would unveil itself in the rhythmic and sequential fashion typical of other examples I had read. One that would, I was convinced, build to a crescendo of social action, emancipation, and changed lives.

A disclosure

I offer the anecdote above because it reveals something important about me going into the fieldwork, and though I was sorely tempted to tidy the encounter out of the final presentation, I decided to commit it to paper in the spirit of my aspiring to the mantle of reflexive ethnographer (Belmonte 2005, Jacobson, 1991, Bourgois, 2002). I do not find self-disclosure easy or desirable, and I usually read it uncomfortably even when it's somebody else's work. But rather than expunge my experience and voice from the text, in this study it feels necessary to make myself as visible as possible. In short because who I was, and the assumptions and beliefs I brought to the project, particularly in the early weeks, are important both to the situated context of the study and to the research process itself; its dynamics, successes and failures, outcomes and interpersonal feeling. In this, it is especially important to the later analysis of participatory theory I will attempt.

Indeed, one of the central themes I struggled with throughout the research process was the distance between theory and practice, at least as I encountered it. The introduction above describes me as I was prior to the field; full of enthusiasm and an intellectual hubris that should have been dissolved the day I walked down Brighton Street and the distance between the interpersonal

The view from Full Circle



worlds I wanted to traverse was made clear to me. But at this early point there was no gap between theory and practice. I was quite sure that the comparative and (older) emancipatory literature I had read (see Cooper, 1968, Freire, 1971, Gutierrez, 1988, Martín-Baró, 1994) contained within it the requisite conceptual tools to awaken a critical consciousness among my future ‘co-researchers’. All I had to do was apply the theory in a way consistent with the apparent reflexivity and authenticity of my books. If I failed, it would be because I had failed in this application. This theoretical position was complimented (unhelpfully) by a stack of my own un-acknowledged privilege and prejudice, an equally important and related narrative through this study that the experience on Brighton Street marks one end of.

Certainly, at the time my reaction to the encounter surprised and confused me, and for many weeks my ‘radar’ was heightened whenever I walked around the neighbourhood alone. I spent a great deal of time privately reflecting on why this was, and though I was able to rationalise aspects of it, something jarred

about the feelings it provoked in me. Only much later, after a large portion of the research experience had passed, was I able to locate and verbalise what this was. At root it was simply a feeling of inauthenticity that gnawed at a research process I obsessively wanted to be authentic. The trigger for this lay in my (sadly predictable) construction of the 'dangerousness' of the young men I encountered, specifically, the racial stereotype implicitly deployed in that moment I turned onto Brighton Street, and manifest in my tripped flight reflex. And though I overcame it at the time, I also felt strangely justified as well as angered by it, since the young men had 'lived down' to the stereotype I held about them. Worse, though aggravated by this particular instance, my feelings of inauthenticity actually flowed from the fact exactly the same stereotype had drawn me to research in St Pauls. Though I was more or less fluent in the theories and language of participation, actually, I had no less objectified the area and young men in the genesis of *my study*.

On the street the stereotype was suddenly real and in my face, intimate, possessive, emasculating. And though this wouldn't be the last time my white, middle class, adult masculinity interacted with the young Black masculinities made in St Pauls in an unanticipated, and, for me, unsatisfying way, most uncomfortable of all was looking into myself and feeling embarrassment and no little shame that I might not be capable of walking the talk that Sauda had challenged me to that evening in Easton. The feelings that bubbled up in me whenever I considered this were complicated. For I am in a racially mixed marriage and had worked for four years in the race relations field, alongside many Black co-workers. I trained mental health professionals in culturally capable practice, using sophisticated models, theories and exercises to demonstrate to clinicians and service managers how knowledge is culturally constructed, and the ways in which our cultural assumptions (that may be personal, professional, and theoretical) inflect our assessments and normative constructions of risk, power, and health. I was confident drawing clear and demonstrable correlates between these constructs through history and the current overrepresentation of Black men in acute mental health facilities. I had and still have, as the cliché goes, a number of very close Black friends. This was who I thought myself: Pluralist. Progressive. Post-racial.

And yet, the old colonial ideology I railed against in my professional and personal lives still found latent psychic purchase with me. It infected the structure of my thinking and feeling in ways I was simply blind to, feeding not just a complicated (but real) fear of, but also a kind of inverted blackophilic attraction to, the Other. There was something very (post)modern about this in some ways, but there was also something much older about it. A kind of creeping, subterranean, white, liberal, narrative of guilt and emancipation that carried more than a whiff of colonial paternalism about it. But whatever the merit to my disclosing these personal features of my being at the outset of the study, the most important point is that it would be disingenuous of me to pretend that my desire to work in St Pauls was based solely on some elevated notion of social justice, or academic neutrality. For as much as the themes I wanted to study found resonance there, by the end of the project I had to accept that it was also the exoticism of the inner city racialised Other, and the latent credibility I gleaned from studying and talking about ‘their dangerousness’ in white middle class circles, that had also appealed. I will return to this theme periodically throughout the thesis, for now, it is enough simply to note it as an important personal antecedent to the research(er).⁷

Pitching participation

Having found a venue, I was keen to get started and anticipated the phase of recruitment lasting only a couple of weeks at most. Throughout the spring of 2010, I was a regular presence in St Pauls, hoping and trying to meet and recruit my young co-researchers. I made up a flyer and a consent form and put them up wherever I was able (see appendices). I met with local workers and even went on local community radio to try and drum up participants. On a handful of occasions I approached young men that I saw on the street or in the park, but this was just too awkward and I quickly gave it up. More importantly, none of this effort, that spanned several weeks, yielded a single participant. It

⁷ Working in the ‘equalities industry’, I have personally heard many white academics justify or explain their involvement in studying the poor or oppressed as founded on a fidelity to social justice. No doubt this plays some part, but it would be more honest if the researchers own instincts and psychological needs (however uncomfortable) were also acknowledged. For if social justice is indeed one’s motivation, then rather than study oppression, many more white (male) researchers would do better fixing their critical gaze on privilege and the structures that sustain it.

was becoming clearer to me that Full Circle alone was not the 'in' I really needed.

Sensing my defeat, Sauda suggested that I talk to Lawrence, the young sports coach who looked after Full Circle's football and basketball teams for the under-fourteens (there were no teams for anyone older). So, one afternoon I met with him at Full Circle, and tried to explain what I wanted to do, describing my various and always fruitless efforts at recruitment. He wasn't surprised I had struggled and counselled me against approaching anyone in the street, explaining that as an 'obviously-not-local-white-guy' it was most likely I was assumed to be undercover police. Lawrence agreed to help me recruit, though he seemed to know it would be difficult before we started. For my part, his sense of what was appropriate and possible convinced me that it was he who was most likely my 'invitation' to the community of young men I hoped to work with. Once I realised this, I simply spent most of my time each week chatting to both he and another young volunteer, Marcel, about football, music, and occasionally the project, in an attempt to cultivate their trust in me and understanding of the research.

A parallel challenge to recruiting co-researchers was in pitching PAR to those around the project whose help I was going to need. As an approach rather than a method, I found it hard to describe in anything other than alienating academic terms or emotional and political hyperbole. Frequently, sensing I had failed to describe it adequately in the former, I would retreat to the latter, deploying the emotive and political language of hope and change. At the time I thought this was simply a function of my ill-preparedness, but it never really got easier once I was conscious of the problem and had rehearsed alternative pitches. Sauda and Lawrence must have been on the receiving end of at least half a dozen of my different invocations of PAR, a problem of definition that resulted in confused and competing visions for the project, my personal frustration, and a lack of clarity for would-be participants.

An important reason for this difficulty is cultural. PAR is characterised by dialogue, a devolution of power and an investment of trust in 'the oppressed' and their ability to know, to want to know, and to act on that knowing. In these

qualities PAR stands in complete contradistinction to the deficit culture of needs and vulnerabilities that is the language and trade of professionals and organisations working with 'oppressed' groups today (see Bartley, 2006). The language of the funder (either state or non-governmental) consistently puts pressure on organisations to 'prove' (and indeed exaggerate) the vulnerability, problems and disadvantage of the communities they work with beyond that of others, against whom they compete for limited resources. This race to the bottom is the dominant discourse among those working in the inner city, determining the allocation of ever-scarcer resources, the relative success and viability of state programmes and third sector organisations, individual job security, professional identity, and, most importantly, the image a community of people or interest has of itself.

More than once I found myself trying, tactfully, to re-explain PAR for local workers I was hoping could help me recruit participants. Excited by the prospect of resources as much as the project itself, conversation would inevitably turn to how it could be run and where it could add value to other outcomes they were pursuing. In such a haze of ideas and competing priorities, participation quickly became a by-word for consultation on the pre-determined problems St Pauls faced, and, specifically, those problems identified by local workers as important and in need of resources. Not that this makes them necessarily wrong, but usually the issues on the table were those connected to peoples jobs and the financial security of the organisation. So it is not difficult to see in these instances how social issues and attempts to address them become entwined in a self-fulfilling and deterministic descent. Eventually though, real life intervened in a helpful way, allowing me to distill clearly what PAR meant and why it was important.

Late one morning I was sat with Lawrence in the Full Circle office when Sauda arrived with an elderly man in tow she introduced to us as Everton. Sauda, it turned out, had literally hauled Everton off the street in an attempt to protect, or at least delay him from himself. He had been on his way to the Coral bookmakers on Ashley Road, where many older men, mostly of Jamaican and

Somali heritage, while away their time and money.⁸ Everton was an emphatic presence, who looked, it must be said, in terrible health. His clothes were poor and he wore a greying stubble and short, dreading hair. His handshake was lifeless, and he was overweight and out of breath. More than this, in his face and eyes he seemed not just sad, but defeated; a world weariness that when his talking later turned to polemic, stirred to a kind of silent rage he didn't seem sure where to direct. At least, I felt he would have liked to direct it at me, but spared me on account of not being sure of my status. I said hello, and at Sauda's invitation told him what I was hoping to do. He didn't seem especially interested at first, but while Sauda made some coffee I asked him what he thought the issues might be for young men growing up in St Pauls today. In response, he offered Lawrence and I an unexpected exposition. As he hit his stride and I realised the gravity of his words, I got out my phone and asked if he would mind me recording a bit of what he was saying. Regrettably, I had not yet furnished myself with a digital recorder, and my phone's memory lasted all of two minutes, capturing only the following excerpt:

“See now, the trouble is the words: ‘Black Male’. Black. Male. Those words, imagine that. The Black man has a crime named for him. We a law abiding people but all my years it sit in me, inside my heart like a ball and chain... a heavy heart. And you carry it round with you. You can't get work... I get onto the bus and the white ladies hold their bag (clutches to his chest)... you can see it in them eyes, shifting in their seats... I seen it my whole life and now I believe it. The policeman knows, he made the words. You are a Black Male. Black. Male. You are the crime. What crime does the white man have for him? I feel it in me chest every day and I believe it, they are right. I come to believe it now after fifty eight years.”

⁸ Pryce (1979) describes the use of the then betting shop on Grosvenor Road in Endless Pressure as ‘intensive and continuous, until closing time at around six o'clock’ (p. 31). This description is basically applicable today, though the bookmakers has crossed the street and changed name in the intervening years.

The Coral bookmakers, City Road. (Photo by Ashley).



At the time I remember being impressed with Everton's deconstruction of language to make his point, and though he laboured it heavily (the rest of his speech covered much the same terrain) it called to mind for me the writing on internalised oppression by Fanon (1961, 1967), Cesaire (1969) and Baldwin (1955). When he had exhausted himself, Everton got up, drained his coffee and said goodbye; heading out of the flat and on in the general direction of the bookies. Sauda recalled that in his youth, Everton had been a very handsome young man popular with the local girls. In and out of prison for various stints as a pimp and drug dealer, his life and age betrayed Everton's identity as one of Pryce's (1979) original *hustlers*, climbed off the pages of *Endless Pressure* and fast forwarded thirty years in all his crumbling symbolic glory.⁹ Importantly, Everton's life and words spoke downstream of the same themes I hoped PAR could follow with younger men in this study; while his pathos, anger, and

⁹ Hustlers were those under or generically skilled men whose masculinity Pryce saw injured by the menial work on offer in post-war industrial Britain. The 'temptations of welfare and the informal economy being so great, and the rewards of regular menial employment (with its echoes of slavery) so meagre, hustlers sought autonomy and self-respect through spurning the "shit work" on offer in Britain' (Collins, 2001). From this perspective, hustlers were not so much a cause than an effect of poor economic and employment opportunities.

physical state gave the project a real life urgency and clarity. Finally, I felt able to talk in simple terms about PAR, having been gifted a living breathing muse to hang it all on. It was not the only time real life intervened to re-focus or re-direct the study in an important way.

Recruiting

The second flyer I composed directed would-be co-researchers to a date at the beginning of June where they could turn up at Full Circle to find out more about the project (see appendices). Sauda suggested that as I was an unknown, her name and number should appear on the flyer, so each week I would ask her if anyone had got in touch, and each week I was left disappointed by her reply. When the date finally rolled around, predictably, no-one showed. It was a warm Friday afternoon during half-term, with bright sunshine and blue skies full of fast moving clouds. We waited for over an hour, and just as I was thinking of going home, four young men walked in through the back door.

Their names were Sol, James, Otis and Shaz, and they were all sixteen. Sauda knew them from an earlier time, when as boys they used to come to Full Circle, and they joked that the TV hadn't been updated in the intervening eight years. I assumed they must have seen one of the flyers, but they had no idea about the project and were simply passing by when an urge had taken them to check in on the place. Sauda asked them to hear me out, and so I described the basic thrust of what I was hoping to get going, including the skills and stipend I expected to offer anyone keen to participate. Sol, a thin, wiry, mixed race lad wearing a long vest and chaotic afro, might be interested. James, who is off to join the Royal Air Force in the autumn, tells me he doesn't have time. Otis and Shaz do not live in St Pauls any longer and seem totally uninterested.

SOL - To be honest, yeah, anything I do to express myself I do outside of St Pauls.

SIMON - Why?

SOL - Because this place is suffocating man... (sighs) there's bad times. You can't express yourself or nothing.

JAMES - *Yeah. I can't get caught up here, I'm getting out in September. Um, it's getting worse, like, the generation after us now are gonna be Badmen. They never get out of here and see stuff, they just stay here. There's good stuff like this place, but not much of it, and they don't see this anyway.*

SIMON - *I was hoping that maybe we could work together for a few weeks on what that stuff is, good and bad, and think about what could happen to change things round here?*

JAMES - *Nah, I'm outta here, like, um, there's nothing for us round here no more. No offence or nothing.*

SIMON - *That's cool, I understand... You're joining the Air Force in a few weeks anyhow.*

SOL - *We all want the lifestyle. Money, good job, whatever. I'll do anything. I'll shovel shit at the zoo if it means I can get that. I just want to work. That's why I'm doing carpentry, the money is supposed to be good. The next generation, see they're not like that. When we were younger we used to get out of St Pauls for the day, just to see what it was like... we used to go out of Bristol sometimes. These next generation never leave. They see the Yardie car, the jewellery; they want the lifestyle, but there's only one way they see - to sell drugs and hustle. If that's all we saw that's all we would have wanted too.*

SAUDA - *But why? I don't want that lifestyle, the car, the house...*

SOL - *Yeah but you already have it, it's easy for you to say that! (Laughter).*

SIMON - *So how are you lot different then, what makes you not go down the road of easy money?*

SOL - *Look see, selling drugs is bad, yeah. Like, it's ok if the choice is not getting by or selling drugs, but there are cameras everywhere in St Pauls, even in the park where they ain't allowed to put them, there are cameras all around looking down into it. It's not easy, the risks are too high even if you need the money to help your mum and stuff. Basically yeah, you're gonna end up caught.*

I took Sol's number before the group slowly drifted out of the building and into the afternoon sunshine. I felt a happy relief and excitement at the exchange, but had still only really managed to (maybe) recruit one co-participant. Nonetheless, it felt like a start given the weeks leading up to that point. Lawrence suggested the following week, in the hour before we meet, he go and find some young men and physically bring them to Full Circle. His feeling was that the fluidity of their lives meant their remembering to come to a pre-arranged meeting a week ahead of time was unlikely.

A week later and Lawrence managed to fill the room with nine young men, all British, all of varying Jamaican heritage. The small community flat suddenly felt very full as the group variously sloped across the sofas and chairs, stared at phones, talked football and shared (loudly) jokes about each other. It suddenly dawned on me as I said awkward hellos that this was my moment to secure the project. To give my new digital recorder a trial run, and because I was interested in the process of participation - all of it - I decided to record what happened.

LAWRENCE - *Listen up yeah, this is Simon. He's got a project he wants to talk to you lot about.*

UNKNOWN - *Who? (Lots of background talking).*

LAWRENCE - *Simon, the guy I told you about. (Shouts). Listen up!*

SIMON - *Um, thanks for coming in. Basically I'm a student doing social work at university and I want to do some research with a group of you on what it's like for a young man growing up in St Pauls today. When I say I want to do it with you, I mean I'm looking for maybe half a dozen, maybe all of you, to become researchers with me, I don't just want to interview you or whatever. You'd actually be researching your own lives, if that makes sense. I'll train you up and if you sign up to the project you'll get paid as a researcher...*

UNKNOWN - *Oh okay, how much? (Laughing).*

SIMON - *Hold up... I'll train and pay you a one-off amount but you need to sign up for twelve weeks of group sessions where we'll just hang and talk about issues you raise, then we'll do whatever you want with what we learn. We can make a music video, do photography or a film... whatever you want. Whatever that is will be yours, not mine. I just want to record the*

group sessions we do each week for my research and work with you to make something that's useful for the community and for you guys. It would be like three hours a week for twelve weeks, that's the basic commitment I'm looking for. After that you get paid, and if we haven't finished you can carry on if you want, or leave... no pressure, no questions. You can leave anytime you like, but if you go earlier than the twelve weeks then obviously you won't get the full amount.

JERMAINE - *Si, I have a question, so how much we gettin' paid for this? (Laughter).*

SIMON - *£100. But look, over twelve weeks at two or three hours a week that's only like £4 an hour... but it's all I've got in the budget... you also get skills in research or whatever interests you, and if you want to make a film or do music I'll arrange for you to get trained up in that too if I can, so like you can get a lot out of this if you put in... I hope that by doing this together we might come to see things differently; I don't know, anything's possible I guess.*

JACOB - *Look yeah, you don't need these lot. Let's just me and you work on it Si, and you just pay me the others share. (Laughter).*

MARCEL - *It's a good opportunity, you lot don't do nothing anyways so you should sign up, you might learn something. You need to be motivated though, that is, have a motive to action.*

In closing, I suggested that anyone who wanted to take part should put their name on a bit of paper along with their age and mobile number. (I had at least thought to make up and bring a letter that set out in more detail the project and commitment I expected, and everyone who put their name down took one away with them (see appendices). I was expecting to field a few questions, but the only interest seemingly surrounded the stipend and how and when it would be paid. Indeed, my journal notes remind me how frustrated I was at this fixation.

I had made my mind up some time before I started to offer a financial stipend in return for participation in the project. I had wrestled with the ethics of this, and had no adequate answer to those who said it would simply act as an inducement. Indeed, as the period of engagement and recruitment wore on without success, I started to hope it would be. My conviction in the symbolic

potency of the stipend (which was anyway less than the minimum wage when aggregated out hourly over twelve weeks) was that I was not looking for research subjects, I was looking for co-researchers to invest their time and labour in the project.¹⁰ In fact, it felt more exploitative not to offer a stipend under such circumstances, particularly since a fruit of their involvement and thus this study (my thesis) was likely, I of course hoped, to increase my status and earning potential over my lifetime. The case for the stipend seemed to me rooted in the real world, and was certainly not without precedent in equivalent studies (see Cahill, 2004), offering confirmation of my co-researchers status in the project. I must say that even Sauda and Lawrence cautioned me against bringing money into the equation, but I held firm in the face of their warnings. Lawrence at least insisted I didn't pay out until the work had been completed. This seemed sensible enough, though I didn't think to define what 'work' meant in this context.

That afternoon I didn't let these details stymie my palpable relief that the work could at last begin after nearly five months of attempted recruitment. By this point, I wasn't inclined to interrogate individual motives very deeply, or to screen the involvement of those who had put their name down. Perhaps I should have done, but in truth, I was just very relieved to suddenly have a viable study again, and distracted by how white and middle class I sounded in the company of the group. Over the first weeks I dumbed down my language and hated myself for it, and the groups collective presence could be overwhelming, a feeling that only served to erode my confidence in my own presence and status in the beginning. In one way, I didn't have to try and collapse the research relationship, it collapsed under the weight of their combined being and my cultural disorientation. I was so distracted in fact, that it interfered with my ability to see and attend to some basic features of the project, that with hindsight, I would have been wise to. More on which in Chapter Nine.

¹⁰ This is one of the last times I will use the term 'co-researchers' in this thesis, since though this was what I was undoubtedly looking for at the outset, it does not describe adequately the role played by the young men who eventually took part. Where it appears in the text, it is done deliberately to emphasise my expectations rather than the actual role.

Introducing my co-participants

I considered carefully and at some length how, or even if, to present any background to my co-participants. I had hoped PAR would encourage self-definition and a fuller more authentic representation of self such that I would have no need to. At least, I thought the less of 'me' loaded into the representation of 'them' the better. But once I had a fully transcribed our sessions and begun the process of rendering the thesis, it became clear there was merit to my setting their words and experiences in some context; to make the young men as multi-dimensional and fully postmodern as our relationships had revealed them to me. This though is difficult terrain, the politics of representation means I am of course offering little more than crude, reductive vignettes; summaries of lives that are mostly hidden from the relationships we built as well as my own experience.

Moreover, there is very obviously a clash of academic civilisations here, and I must acknowledge that I am about to supplement the dialogical data gathered by PAR with that drawn from participant-observation (albeit from a more participatory set of relationships than is usual). This is a tension I feel I must submit to, and perhaps it's not necessarily even an unhealthy concession. I ask only that the reader acknowledge as much, and keep in mind how limiting the ethnography that follows would be without some broader sense of who is speaking.

Sol

Sol, I have already mentioned in passing, though I can expand little more on his brief appearance with James, Otis and Shaz. In fact, the first group sessions proper were rather dominated by his absence. In the days after our meeting, Sol was arrested in connection with the fatal stabbing of a young man on Stapleton Road in Easton (Bristol Evening Post, 2010), and though no charges were ever brought, the publicity surrounding his arrest mitigated his participation in pretty much anything; this despite the fact he lived with his mother in a flat close enough that one could see into it from Full Circle's doorstep. Thereafter, Sol never felt able to join the group sessions, for his status became precarious and

his face and name famous enough that he was forced to lay low throughout the summer months for fear of reprisals.

I remember very clearly how, full of anticipation and apprehension at our very first session, I arrived at Full Circle to be greeted by a fraught Sauda. She broke the news to me of Sol's arrest, and asked me a series of legal questions I could not answer. A frantic phone call later, Sauda left me to the session while she went to console and counsel Sol's mother. The last I heard was later that evening, when Sauda recounted to me Sol's devastation at events. I got word to him that the door to the project was always open, but he never returned. In fact, his exile matured to a total absence in the public life and memory of the other young men, and I have no idea if he ever realised his plan to learn carpentry, or if he left the area all together soon after.

Lawrence, Marcel & Audley

Though strictly speaking, Lawrence, Marcel and Audley were slightly older and thus outside the initial scope of this study, their involvement over the months was so central I must include them as co-participants. At the time of the project, Lawrence was twenty four, and, along with Marcel and Audley (both twenty three), they formed a kind of triumvirate of masculine authority to which pretty much every boy and younger man I met deferred to some extent. This though was by no means true of every young male in St Pauls, and Lawrence would tell me about the looks he got from local *hoodrats* weighing up whether to make a reputation for themselves.¹¹ All three carried themselves in such a way as to partially veil their obvious physicality and street smarts behind an authentic friendliness and gentle restraint, and as one available image of local masculinity, it was easy to see why this appealed to those boys and young men who looked up to them.

Of the three, Lawrence was the only one in regular, albeit part-time, employment. At the time he was the football and basketball coach, and was ambitious to earn his professional badges, but he was also involved in pretty

¹¹ *Hoodrat* is slang for a young male living, effectively, on the streets and immersed in peer relations the police and most other agencies would likely identify as a gang.

much every activity Full Circle offered. Lawrence would often joke that *hustlin'* is in the genes of St Pauls people, and though in his case I never sensed this extended to the drugs trade, his *enterprisin'* portfolio included recurring stints in the informal economy selling clothes or DVD's whenever the opportunity arose. In the formal economy, he worked extremely hard, and regularly put in hours above and beyond those to which he was contracted. This he did from a well developed sense of community responsibility and pride in the local area. In fact, by some distance Lawrence was the most politically 'aware' of all the young men I met, and his contributions to the group sessions were often very telling, validating either a tone, level of vulnerability or subject for discussion.

Lawrence became something of a confidant during the project, and was always reflective, intelligent, loyal, and relaxed about life; qualities I lent on more than once. He was tall and good looking, and always dressed immaculately in coordinated outfits that looked to my eyes as though they were brand new. Like almost all the young men in this study, Lawrence lived with his mother, and never knew his father except by name. As the weeks and months went by, I came to appreciate the role Lawrence played locally much better. For much more than either Audley or Marcel, he seemed most grounded and to relish the not inconsiderable responsibility his status and personal qualities often delivered to him.

Both Marcel and Audley gave up their time to help Lawrence run the Boys Club, a weekly after school provision for boys aged around eight to thirteen. Very occasionally, when Full Circle could afford to pay them a sessional fee, this voluntary commitment would be rewarded; though not frequently enough to explain their fidelity to it. At our Friday sessions, Audley only occasionally came by, but Marcel, like Lawrence, was an ever-present. He had grown up in foster care in Easton, and was a deep thinker, sensitive and quite mystical. (This last impression was possibly a result of his intense interest and training in martial arts). Marcel was capable of the most fantastic metaphorical pronouncements, moments that revealed a sophisticated and intuitive understanding of structure and agency. On one occasion, when I asked how his latest new job was going, he presented me with a diagram he had sketched. He was providing temporary office support in a small local company, and had carefully drawn his

responsibilities and duties to reflect the beating heart of an organism, without which the other corollary functions of the business would wither.

But for each prophecy and lyrical turn there was as much confusion, incoherence and contradiction in Marcel's words, and the scale of his ideas and thoughts often overwhelmed his vocabulary. That said, and perhaps because of his experience in care and as mixed race, Marcel had an idiosyncratic view of life in St Pauls. He seemed weary of those group discussions that dwelled on the negative aspects of local life, and was quite adamant that the short film we eventually planned should focus on something positive. His involvement dwindled towards the end of the project as he grew ever more frustrated by the inaction and the direction the film was taking, and he was keen to develop his own ideas independent of the group (though he never did, despite my encouragement). Because of his martial arts training, Marcel was physically impressive, and wore a tidy goatee beard and athletic clothing. He was also in the habit of growing his hair out from shaven to full afro, and managed this twice over during the course of the project. He lived alone in a one bedroom flat, still in Easton, but his residence seemed to move quite frequently from Easton to St Pauls to the adjacent neighbourhood of Montpelier over the coming months.

Tyreese & Ledley

Tyreese and Ledley are brothers, though they could not be more different. Tyreese was seventeen at the time of the project. He would spend time almost every day at the local gym, and as a result was muscular with well-defined arms and abdominal muscles he was never shy about showing off. His hair was always pulled, shaved or braided differently each time I saw him, and, like very many teenage boys, his preoccupation was the pursuit of girls, and, more specifically, sex. His best friend in this endeavour was Trigga, with whom he went each week to Oceana, a large nightclub in the city centre.

For a long time I struggled to understand the detail of what Tyreese said. His speech was blurred, fast, and frequently filtered bursts of Jamaican patois through an urbanised Bristol burr. Transcribing his contributions was impossible

to begin with, though he was also frequently the most honest and willing to expose his vulnerability and feelings in our sessions.

Though Tyreese had dealt drugs and involved himself in petty crime at different times to make money, he assumed no status by this and frequently told me despite the obvious rewards from 'easy money' he knew that 'the only way is straight way' (i.e. to labour in the legal economy), and he actively encouraged the un-cool in his brother as a strategy to ensure Ledley's conformity to this path. In Tyreese's attempt to access the mainstream of economic life himself, he attended the local higher education college one day a week to study business; though to what level or with what qualification he was going to hopefully emerge he didn't know. Like many young men, Tyreese was always thinking about how to *enterprise* and earn money, and had cultivated a reputation locally for fixing bicycles. He took great pride in this role, though was not above acquiring the necessary parts he needed from the bicycles chained up outside the municipal buildings in the city centre.

Tyreese was thoughtful, loyal and courageous, with well-honed street-smarts that I often worried put him (above the others) closest to peril. He was, and no doubt still is, Ledley's protector, though in his proximity to street culture's violent excesses he is possibly also Ledley's greatest danger. Ledley though would for certain regard him only as the former. When he turned up, Tyreese always impressed me with his reflexivity. He was a leader in the way his presence effected the others, and I soon learnt that how he felt on any given day was generally a barometer for how the session was likely to go. When Tyreese was engaged in the research process, all the group were engaged, and with Ashley he formed the critical axis of the projects' direction and momentum, such as it was. In their relationship to one another (a blend of masculine competition and mutual respect) and to the themes we explored, they elicited the most personal and developed ideas and reflections.

Ledley by contrast, was shy, quiet, and at two years the junior of his brother, the only one of the group still in school. He attended Cabot, a local comprehensive where he was an average student with modest ambitions (when pressed) of becoming an accountant. He wore twisted short hair, gold rimmed glasses, and

managed a personal style that betrayed a demonstrable lack of *swagga*, a fact that frequently made him the butt of the groups jokes. He was somewhat overweight and in constant deference to his brother, whom he very obviously idolised and who was his passport to the cooler social worlds that would otherwise be closed to him. Ledley was the 'straightest' of all my co-participants, and offered little by way of himself to the discussions, though he was also the only member of the group to attend each week, even when Tyreese did not.

Indeed, though he lacked the presence and street nous of the other young men, Ledley had different, more subtle strengths. He was punctual and polite, and though he was usually the punchline to someone's joke, he found it easy to laugh at himself, and seemed at ease with his apparent status in the group. Late in the project I tried to interview Ledley, for no other reason than to try and get to know him better in a more structured way, but our conversation was thwarted by his giggling. I am not sure if he suffered from a crisis of self-confidence, or if it was simply a function of his being the youngest group member surrounded by older more assertive peers, but Ledley's overall contribution to the project was minimal. That said, it is always possible that by listening each week he got much more from the process than I imagine.

Ledley's mild manner and humility are unlikely tools in helping him transcend his circumstances, and were it not for Tyreese's status shielding him, it is likely that Ledley would become a victim of other young men looking to make their reputation. And while Tyreese is desperate for Ledley to reach his potential away from street culture, to me Ledley generally seemed to have little motivation to do much of anything. From what I gleaned from their relationship, Ledley's ambition appeared as though it lived in his brother, until such time that Ledley would either claim it for himself or fall short of Tyreese's aspirations to some unknown end.

The brothers are also something of an exception in the sense that they lived with both their mother and father close to Full Circle. They moved to St Pauls when Tyreese was six and Ledley three, though shortly after the project the family moved to the (predominately white) suburb of Henbury, having been

offered an exchange on their local authority owned flat. Despite this move, throughout 2011 I still saw Tyreese in St Pauls regularly.

Trigga

Trigga was Tyreese's best friend. Seventeen at the time, he was broad in stature, and though slightly overweight, he carried it well and always dressed sharply. He lived with his mother in Clifton, who had moved them out of the area (for his sake) a few months prior to the project. But if this was done to keep him away from the influence of street culture, it had failed, since Trigga was still in St Pauls most days hanging out with friends. He never spoke to the group about his life in Clifton, and was always keen to be associated as coming from St Pauls, but it was clear he found traversing the two (very different) social worlds difficult. The group would often joke he was "wash out" (a derogatory term for selling out your race to become more white) and would mock his pattern of speech, which they imagined sounded posh, and therefore white. For my part, I found Trigga as difficult to understand as Tyreese, his speech enthusiastic, hurried and muffled to my ears. That said, Trigga certainly deployed a broader vocabulary than the rest of the group, and possessed a well defined Black consciousness that, although protecting him in one psychic sense, did nothing to help him overcome the exclusionary experience he found in Clifton, or the pull of street culture in St Pauls as a site of personal belonging.

I felt for Trigga, his mother obviously expected much of him, and had sacrificed a lot to provide the kind of educational opportunity in Clifton (away from the turmoil of inner city settings) that was out of the reach of most local young people. The strong sense of self, personal resilience and autonomy he held, he also attributed to her firm and aspirational parenting. But despite this, he seemed to me fundamentally adrift. His friendships and sense of belonging were still rooted in St Pauls, and over the summer he holidayed in the area more or less full-time. Even then, his being of this group was put in constant (apparent) jeopardy by relentless teasing, particularly from Tyreese and Ashley. Consequently, in his desire to feel connected and accepted in St Pauls, Trigga was only too ready to demonstrate his loyalty to his *bredrin* in some way, and though both Tyreese and Ashley would privately acknowledge to me that he

was smart for keeping himself out of trouble, they would play on and provoke his insecurity by attempting practical jokes that could, under different circumstances of luck, have easily ended with Trigga hurt or in police custody. Though an unreliable group member, periodically flitting in and out of sessions, I was always disappointed when Trigga failed to show, for his presence altered the group dynamic. Sometimes not in favour of constructive discussion or reflection, but generally in a dynamic way that brought things to life and light, and left me feeling positive about the session.

Jermaine

At the time of the project, Jermaine was nineteen. He was generally quiet, but nonetheless intelligent and opinionated on the rare occasions he felt compelled to demonstrate these qualities. He was utterly addicted to football, and to a video game called Championship Manager that lets you play at managing a Premier League football team. This he was glued to every night until five or six in the morning. Consequently, on more than one occasion he fell asleep during a group session and he always looked tired, with twisted hair, and old, usually oversized clothes. He lived with his mother, who has a long history of mental health difficulties and whom he cares for daily. His older brother had moved out some time ago, and in light of the fact Jermaine would never talk about him, I sensed their relationship was strained, for he was still local to St Pauls.

Though he has a couple of years on most of the other young men in the group, I couldn't tell this from Jermaine's manner or apparent maturity. In fact, he had a crippling social anxiety that under certain circumstances manifest itself in a brutal awkwardness and uncontrollable flight reflex that until I realised what was happening to him, I found infuriating. One Friday for example, I had arranged for us to attend an event at Colston Hall to listen to a famous American Hip Hop artist talk alongside a panel of local race relations celebrities. Jermaine, though a fan of the artist, had to be practically dragged from Full Circle and into the car. About half way there he made me stop and take him home, his anxiety turning to panic the nearer we got to the venue, where, incidental or not to his anxiety, his brother was also in attendance. Lawrence later told me that Jermaine often took himself away from situations where he might encounter a big group of

people, like parties or clubs, preferring the solitude of his computer or small groups he could trust. In the end, his anxiety also undermined his participation, a fact that elicited little recognition or sympathy from the others, who simply took him as he was and administered a group democracy that was just not sensitive to the variant capabilities of individual members.

Nonetheless, Jermaine was genuine, polite and approachable, and always seemed pleased to see me. Indeed, that first afternoon I spent pitching the project to Lawrence's room full of young men, Jermaine was the only one of them to approach me and say hello, shaking my hand, smiling, and going a long way to soothing my own anxiety. Although Jermaine was essentially a full-time carer for his mother, he was also enrolled at the same local college as Tyreese. He was studying computers one day a week, and just like Tyreese, he too didn't know what qualification the course would bestow upon him should he pass.

Ashley

Finally, there is Ashley, who I have come to know well over the last two years. At sixteen, he was almost the youngest in the group, and yet I would not have known this had he not told me. Born and raised in St Pauls, Ashley is slim, good looking, and stylish. Like Tyreese and Jermaine, he goes to the local college of further education where he studied media. And like Tyreese, when the Educational Maintenance Allowance was cut by the government in 2011 (BBC, 2011), Ashley could not afford the bus to Filton each week and had to give up the course. At the time of writing, some two years after project, he is still unemployed and unqualified, drifting through his dwindling adolescence into adulthood, still with hope, but a lot of uncertainty too.

At the time, Ashley was motivated, the most of all the group, and ambitious to make something of himself. At the end of 2010, he asked me to help him establish a media business, though this seemed to amount to my finding him the money to buy the equipment he needed rather than configure a business plan or help him access the professional advice he needed. I arranged for him to be mentored by a local production company, but he told me the business was on hold as he had got into making tee shirts and wanted to focus on that.

Ashley was entrepreneurial, intelligent and thoughtful. More often he led our group discussions with Tyreese, and whenever he did they were wide ranging and discursive, of the kind I had imagined and hoped for at the outset. Like the others though he was also capable of not turning up, arriving very late, or arriving and then falling asleep.

Ashley's father was murdered in revenge for an outstanding gambling debt just before he was born, and he lived with his mother and older sister in a flat just off City Road. Ashley was always frank about how hard his mother found it to make the rent and put food on the table, and was open about the fact he had sold drugs to help her out. Despite this, he was (and remains) keen that his life did not emulate that of many of his older peers.

Perhaps because of this, Ashley's great love is skateboarding, and he is very good at it too, proudly delineating the status this bestows on him in terms of his circumstances and colour, being "about the only Black skater in St Pauls... and definitely the best anyway." For Ashley, skateboarding is not just a pastime, it physically takes him away from St Pauls and across town to the Harbourside, the focus for many skaters in Bristol. There, he is surrounded by a different crowd, it is safer, and he can acquire status both for his skill and cool in the eyes of the mostly middle class white boys who gather there to skate. Ashley's identity as 'the Black Skater' is one he cultivates and revels in purposefully in both St Pauls and the Harbourside, for it is symbolically central to the cultural capital he banks from other young people in the area.

Research methods

The purpose of this chapter has been to bridge earlier discussion about the body of literature surrounding and grounding this study and its ethical framework, to the site of the fieldwork itself. In both a literal and personal sense, within this I hope the reader has some feeling for the distance between theory and practice (centre and margins) that was about to unfold. Detailed discussion of the ways in which this played out is saved for Chapter Eight and Nine, the four chapters that now follow are devoted entirely to the ethnographic portrait

our weekly group sessions produced. Some methodological housekeeping is though necessary to set this in context.

First, the transcripts that form the narrative structure of chapters four through seven have been taken entirely from the Friday night group sessions that began on June 3rd and concluded on November 26th, 2011. After this, I continued to meet with the group weekly, or at least most of them, until mid September 2011, encouraging the completion of the short documentary film that emerged from our meetings. Indeed, it's important to note that the data moves in two directions in this study; one, in the composition of this monograph; the other, (an outcome of the first) in our collective endeavour towards the writing, development and production of a short film. The film was always intended to be intellectually, creatively, and (we hoped) commercially the groups' own, and thus quite separate from this thesis.

I sought and got ethical approval to begin the process of recruiting *co-researchers* in March 2010, on the basis that as a collective we would spend some time together discussing the issues and then designing the research, undertaking any necessary training and attending to ethics prior to making a participatory submission when we were ready to begin. Because of the unfolding nature of PAR, I anticipated this could happen in stages, with our seeking approval for various research techniques as and when the process dictated. In reality it took until October, way beyond the original twelve week commitment I asked for, to get to the point where we were ready to seek approval for the series of filmed one-to-one semi-structured interviews with local men, young and old, that were to be the basis of the film. There were a number of reasons for this, which are discussed at length later, but fundamentally it was because the PAR project did not reveal itself in a way consistent with my anticipation of it.

In particular, the short film succumbed to the (understandable but nonetheless technocratic) strictures of the ethical conditions imposed on the study by my institution, and the few interviews we conducted fell well short of the quality (in content) the group was looking for, often because I was (as a condition) present, often because just as I found it difficult to recruit young men to

participate as researchers, so we found it equally challenging to get other local men to come to Full Circle each week to be interviewed (another concession).

In the spring of 2011, Lawrence and I attempted to resurrect the film idea, this time as a joint piece of work between Full Circle and Off the Record (Bristol), the third sector organisation for young people I was managing. We tried dramatising the groups ideas instead, and rehearsed scenarios with some younger boys who attended Full Circle's Boys Club on Thursday evenings. But in the end all that happened was that the messing about and lack of direction resulted in takes and tapes of film it was increasingly impossible to edit down for sheer volume. Eventually, in the summer of 2011, the last vestiges of enthusiasm for the film were extinguished and the project ended.

As a result, our weekly group discussions through 2010 were in the end perhaps the most important site for the research, yielding both the ethnographic portrait I had hoped for and a challenge to participatory theory I hadn't the imagination to anticipate. Sessions were scheduled at Full Circle from five until eight every Friday evening, and each participant was required to read and sign a consent form, which I followed up with an informal one-to-one conversation that emphasised the limits of confidentiality, my duty of care around safeguarding, and the fact and purpose of the sessions being audio recorded (again, see appendices). I always reminded the group of these parameters if conversation strayed too close to disclosure, and was always ready to turn the recorder off at the request of anyone in the group - something that happened only once. Finally, I also kept a journal for the purpose of collecting my own observations, feelings and thoughts.

The extended transcripts of these discussions have been arranged around the generative themes the group themselves identified. We actually came to these immediately, in a simple video activity designed to break the ice, but only through group dialogue over the subsequent weeks did they assume status, focus and thematic labels. I have remained faithful to these themes, across Chapter Four (*respect*), Chapter Five (gang violence), Chapter Six (drugs and money), and Chapter Seven (racism), deepening them with two additional layers, one historical, the other statistical, both usually presented in the

footnotes to prevent the narrative thrust of the chapter and theme being broken up too much.

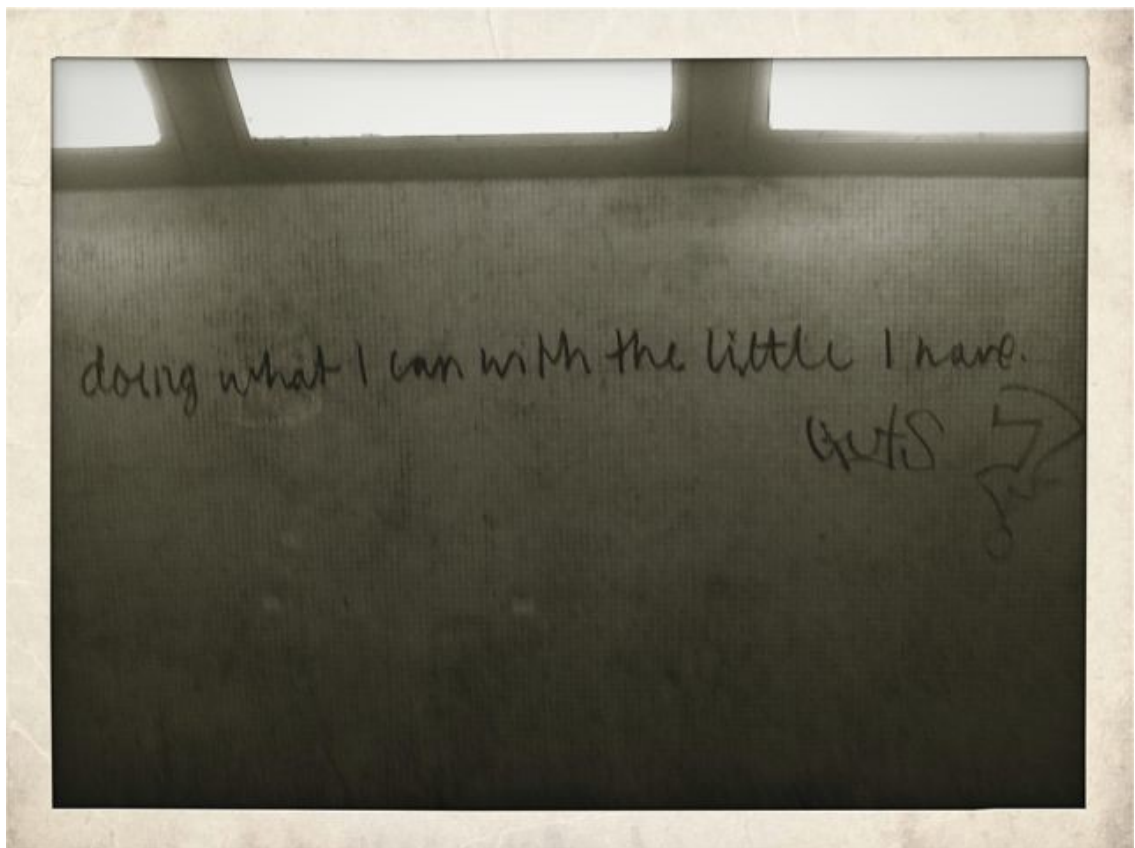
The reality of course is that even though we dedicated time to discussion of each as and when it emerged, our conversations ranged back and forth across them week to week. In the real world these experiences are not thematic or linear, they are experiential, coalescent and dynamic, and their proportionality in this text is testament to how they happened to appear in the weeks we were together. I must add that they very obviously do not define the totality of my co-participants experience, nor of all young Black men growing up in St Pauls. In the context of this thesis, the issues may be vivid and shot through with a sense of moral urgency that could easily reify them, but they are also in an important sense mundane and everyday, by which I mean only to emphasise that large swathes of my co-participants lives are ordinary and unspectacular, as are for the most part the insidious violences of structural inequality they negotiate.

Nonetheless, my presentation of these themes is done as faithfully as possible, with fidelity to the authenticity of their authorship and my co-participants voices, and due mindfulness of their contingency and differences. I transcribed our discussions each week verbatim, a painstaking task made frequently impossible by ambient noise, colloquial flourishes I could not understand, and large portions of tape surrendered to the sound of messing about. Roughly three-quarters of what I recorded (and was able to transcribe) ended up in this thesis. What was omitted was a good deal of repetition, private conversation unwittingly captured on tape, and tangential discussions unrelated to the generative themes that have necessarily been expunged from the final presentation for the sake of brevity. Where local linguistic style denotes a particular symbolic or cultural concept, I have placed it in italics so the reader may be clear the word signifies something normative in a situated sense. I have also, where it seemed appropriate and significant, offered my own experience of the process or dialogue.

I have, wherever possible, presented extended transcripts, and tried consciously not to strip voices from their context by citing overly brief snapshots of dialogue. I have though elected to deploy aliases, though not at the request

of the young men who participated, who were unbothered either way. This I have done from a position of concern for the group rooted in the issues we discussed, and how I have come to understand the street culture and moral economy they are submerged in. Just as importantly, I feel confident that their 'voice' is not lost by this decision. The audience for this thesis is specifically and purposefully at the centre, where the capacity to hear the experience of my co-participants does not rest on knowing their real names or addresses, but rather, a willingness to engage in a tangible sense with their everyday struggles for respect, belonging and dignity.

Graffiti: The Bearpit underpass into St Pauls.



4. IN SEARCH OF RESPECT

“Respect and who you know. That’s basically the tools for survival when you live in a place like this” (Ashley).

Getting and being rated

Respect, or *being rated* as the group also sometimes referred to it, emerged within only a couple of sessions as the central ‘generative theme’ in our weekly discussions (Freire, 1971). Human dignity and masculine self-worth, not to mention personal security, seemed centrifugally bound to this value, comparative examples of which can be found scattered throughout the heritage of urban studies on marginality and masculinity in the UK (Pryce, 1979, Willis, 1981, Pearson, 1981, Gilroy, 1987, Sewell, 1997, Brown, 2004, Gunter, 2010, Goldson, 2011). However, as it was for me in the beginning, so it is a potentially confusing theme for the reader and outsider. In very simple and situated terms, *respect* is best understood here as describing a particular form of culturally defined capital, key to both earning and ascribing local masculine status. Most importantly, as a site and expression of both oppression and resistance, *respect* is central to the construction of the young urban masculinities present in St Pauls, to whatever extent they mature to embrace or flee it.

MARCEL - *When you see this word ‘RESPECT’ what comes to your mind?*

ASHLEY - *Respect and who you know. That’s basically the tools for survival when you live in a place like this.*

JERMAINE - *Respect yourself first, like, take care of the way you look.*

LAWRENCE - *Reputation. Strength.*

TYREESE - *Backing your friends.*

LAWRENCE - *Respect is... it’s not even beating someone up, it’s knowing that someone couldn’t just beat you up and you wouldn’t do nothing. Say there was a group of us and I slapped Jermaine in the face and he didn’t do nothing, people would think he’s an idiot. But if he was willing to fight*

back he would show he wasn't weak. You don't have to beat no-one up but you do have to make a little example that you can't be picked on like that.

MARCEL - *The way I see it, yeah, respect is a bit about the potential something has to effect you, so if something has the potential to effect you, you got to show more respect and care. Like, it could be your environment as well, not just people.*

SIMON - *Um, so are fear and respect a bit confused? It sort of sounds like that. Like, you say it as though it's all about strength and not being seen as weak, whereas I sort of understand it more as admiring someone or something or even my own self-worth. I don't know, it sort of sounds like a negative thing the way you just described it.*

TYREESE - *Yeah, I respect loads of people who I think are idiots. Like, they get mad and they do stuff, and so you need to respect them. But then at the same time I'm not frightened of them, but I just know they're stupid. This is like I was saying, growing up here you get the aggression people and then the quieter people - they quiet but you know they can handle their thing.*

Reputation, strength, group loyalty, how you carry yourself and what you wear; these are the constituent measures of *respect*, and everyday life and adolescent masculine identity in St Pauls is given definition and expression through these. That said, Ashley's description probably best surmises the concept as I came to understand it; as a cultural tool necessary to survive a certain kind of existential landscape that is at once physical, social, and emotional.¹² This landscape has been carved from a particular experience of structural violence and social exclusion recycled over two or three generations, and *respect* as a contemporary value is thus anchored in a set of much older

¹² Pryce (1979) notes that such is the economic and social 'pressure' of life in St Pauls, 'the greatest admiration goes to the person or who can 'hold' or 'take' pressure' (p. 95). Being strong and able to manage this pressure is existentially essential, its opposite almost always involving a loss of face of some kind, e.g. losing a fight with all one's friends watching, sexual impotence, hunger, poor clothes. Pryce suggests 'the most awful plight that can befall a man in the eyes of the people... is madness or insanity' (p. 96). In such cases judgment passes that the pressure was too great for him (and he too weak) to manage it. There is here, I think, descriptively at least, something of the origins of contemporary *respect*; which is an evolution of language but a generally consistent expression of resistance to oppression and the cultural value and utility of strength (dignity).

(racist) ideas about Black masculinity. These are both inherited and embodied effects of power that are reinforced in an everyday lived way, effects I shall cover in much more detail later.

In this context, *respect* plays a central normative role in mediating street culture and power relations between local young men; and between young men and the state more generally. *Respect* is also fundamentally dialectical, the nexus which 'through cultural practices of opposition, individuals shape the oppression that larger forces impose upon them' (Bourgois, 2002, p.17). When stripped of their cultural context, the behaviours and emotional states that surround *respect* look irrational, and are very easily reduced by (adult) moralising assumptions and ideology to categories and sites of pathology and abnormality. Images of their deviance are what create the folk devils and choruses of moral panic, that, in a circular logic, provide the climate of political expediency necessary to find new techniques for their control (Cohen, 1971, 1972). In fact, when viewed in the appropriate context, the search for *respect* inspires behaviours and choices that are wholly rational and quite reasonable. And though I am wary of sounding relativist, for the suffering they inspire was horrible to hear even third hand, it is important to recognise, in context, the search for *respect* is little more and no less than the search for human dignity in a space and time where certain images and forms of this seem, and actually are, more dominant and possible than others.

In our group discussions, it often felt as though there was a ubiquitous choice for local young men stepping out of their home and into the local street culture from about ten or eleven years of age. In this, they must either submit to the normative influence and utility of *respect*, pursuing it through prescribed cultural rites of local masculine passage, or they must take another route, resisting the many pressures to conform and somehow transcending circumstance through some idiosyncratic combination of luck, sheer force of will, and/or the firm guiding hand of parents (usually, it must be said, mothers).

ASHLEY - *When your mum lets you out on your own, that's when the respect kinda has to kick in. When you get older it kind of fades away, and money kind of comes in, that's when like you're looking for a job, enterprisin'.*

TYREESE - *Yeah, when you're young respect is more important than money. You'd rather have respect when you leave your house than an X-Box in your house.*

LAWRENCE - *See, when you're thinking about money and stuff you take respect for granted. 'Cos if you don't have respect and you're making money you'll get robbed anyway. You need to have respect. Would you rather have the respect outside?*

ASHLEY - *Yeah I'd rather have the respect outside.*

LAWRENCE - *Yeah, so when you're younger, the respect is more important. Then, when you're old enough to look flash, yeah, you want the money and girls to go with it.*

ASHLEY - *And see the youngsters, they just follow the olders. You have to follow the crowd or else you're no-one.*

SIMON - *But you don't seem to.*

ASHLEY - *Not now but I used to, that's how people know me now. If I had just stayed at home and done my thing I would probably get attacked today. But because I used to follow the crowd, now I've split from them they're like 'ok, cool'. I don't know, I don't think you could teach young people any other way. There's basically a bad rep here.*

SIMON - *But people do try and teach another way don't they?*

ASHLEY - *Yeah, but when you're young respect is everything. Like, if you're known, then you can do anything.*

Over the weeks, the fuller narrative to emerge about the search for *respect* was rather more pragmatic, circumspect even, than the transcript above would suggest. The teenage years seemed to involve an almost daily negotiation of the risks (violence, ridicule, school exclusion, prison), and rewards (money, status, self-worth) inherent to *respect*. But though an individual might negotiate these choices with great care and an emphasis on staying out of the kinds of situation where a stock or *respect* could be earned or lost, the one thing everyone in our group agreed on was that *respect* fundamentally mattered; one

cannot be in their St Pauls without it. Or as Ashley put it; “you have to follow the crowd or else you’re no one.” But more than just being a no-one, if by varying degrees you’re not known or respected, then you are also made more vulnerable by this; your personal security and feeling of safety put in real jeopardy. The key to understanding this, and to how and why *respect* assumes everyday meaning, is through consideration of the different ways in which it is both earned and lost in everyday life from the age of about eight or nine onwards.

SIMON - *So how do you get known?*

ASHLEY - *Respect gets you known right, and if you’re not known in this place you could easily get trampled on. Back in the day we used to get loads of stones and film ourselves stoning prostitutes and the cars they go in. We did stupid stuff to get respect. Even when you’re really young, like eight or something and you’re playing manhunt, if you’re the guy no-one could catch you’d get ratings for that, for being cunning kind of thing.*

LAWRENCE - *Stupid stuff that starts off small like that. Like the people that didn’t do it, they were people that if you saw them you would just turn on them. Them that did it though - now they still kind of respect each other even though they don’t hang around as much. Back in the day you used to just mess about and do bad stuff, not like how the bad stuff is now. Bonfire night was one main day when everyone would do it. It would be like a two-week period on and off, then bonfire night would be a crazy night where it’s just mad and you can’t go anywhere. From little things like that people would respect you more, they won’t see you as a weak person.*

ASHLEY - *Yeah, you just do stupid stuff. Like, back in the day we used to go around in Easton with fireworks and light them off. Now that I’m more grown up I reckon that’s stupid, you’re wasting enough money on fireworks.*

SIMON - *But that gets you known?*

ASHLEY - *Yeah, or if you hit a person that’s known on the other side then you’ll get rated after that.*

SIMON - *Is Easton the other side? (Nods of agreement). Has that always been the way?*

JERMAINE - *For years, since most of us were born.*

SIMON - *So what kind of pressure makes you do that?*

ASHLEY - *Well, if you're not someone that's really known, and you want a lot of friends, older friends to know you, you'll do something. Like, um, who is it, *** and ***, all of them lot, they rushed an old... nah, he must have been 32... guy. Yeah he was perfect! He was tall, short hair - no homo! - (laughter), and, um, they rushed him and they dislocated his jaw; kind of severed a nerve or something like that. Now his jaw kind of leans to the side and he can't really speak properly.*

SIMON - *This is a local guy?*

TYREESE - *Yeah, and um, they recorded it and put it on, what is it, Youtube I think it was. This was back in the day and the olders started to respect them from then on.*

Certainly, when and the way we talked about *respect*, the stakes seemed high. Or perhaps it's more meaningful to say that the young men experienced them as high and a significant driver of their choices and behaviours. Because status and personal security are somewhat interwoven, existentially, it's critical not to be seen as weak, and, de facto, as vulnerable and of low status. Consequently, one important aspect of earning *respect* is the necessary public displays of courage and strength, ('stupidity' as the group called it), that start off small, like throwing stones at prostitutes or fireworks at Easton, but get incrementally higher as you get older. As a general rule of thumb, the more public the display (and social networking sites ensure maximum publicity now) the louder it reverberates in the community of other young (and older) men for whom it has meaning. This is a dynamic process though, and so where you stand in relation to others, determines to a greater or lesser extent the risks you may be prepared to take to integrate yourself and assume status. So, perversely for example, to better assure your own long-term security, you may need to do something that risks quite dramatically your own immediate safety. In this way throwing stones and fireworks can seamlessly graduate to *rushing* (assaulting) someone considerably older.

While planning their film the group considered the movies that were their favourites and spoke to their own experience. One of these, *Juice*, is a film starring the rapper Tupac, and touches on the lives of four Black youths growing

up in Harlem. Though culturally American, the film traces the contours of *respect*, following the day to day lives of the young men, from the mischief of their pre-adolescence to the increasingly serious and criminal activities of adolescence and young adulthood. The film focuses on their everyday struggles, from police harassment to their more intimate and private troubles at home. Other favourites like *Menace II Society* and *Boyz N the Hood*, as well as the spoof *Don't Be a Menace to South Central While Drinking Your Juice in the Hood*, which heavily parodies these, deal in similar themes.

Everyday life and the street culture that emerges from the search for *respect* is anchored in inherited racial epithets (about physicality, hyper-hetero-sexuality, phallocentrism, laziness, dangerousness) no less insidiously colonising as ideas today than in the era their memetic journey was begun in. In this, the assumptions and beliefs about maleness that underpin *respect* seemed to me quite static, though this does not mean the value was and is not dynamic in other ways. For instance, I was always interested to hear the group use the term 'back in the day' to demarcate an 'us' and 'them' through a very brief annexation of 'now' as opposed to 'then'. This demarcation was used to highlight what was considered a much more reckless generation of *youngers* (in reality only a couple of years younger than Ashley and Tyreese) who pursue a kind of hyper-inflated image of *respect* that my co-participants generally considered more reckless, idiotic, and I sensed, personally threatening.

SIMON - *One of the things Tyreese was saying on the video last week; Jacob and Ashley said it, Sol too... was about the difference between you guys and the next generation, 'kids being high and mighty' was how Tyreese put it. You guys talk about these kids as though things have got worse?*

ASHLEY - *Yeah, see now, you are getting kids who are like eleven, dressing up all in red, shouting out 'Blood Gang!' writing it everywhere, causing trouble.*

SIMON - *Is that what you meant?*

TYREESE - *No, not that... well sort of. Say you go somewhere and then you see little kids shouting out at you and making you want to chase them and beat them up. You know you're older than them yeah, but they know*

you're older than them as well. They just want to get a chase and show off in front of their people, and just act like they're hard and stuff.

SIMON - *So is that how to get respect these days, by winding you guys up and avoiding a beating?!*

MARCEL - *The weakest of them wouldn't really wind people up too much because they would be scared of getting beat up and then really shamed, which is obviously not good. So only the really toughest of them would do it.*

SIMON - *So how old are these kids?*

TRIGGA - *Like 12 to about 14, most of them are younger.*

SIMON - *So do they not have older brothers or sisters that you lot know?*

ASHLEY - *They do but they're mostly locked up.*

TYREESE - *Now these youngsters start selling drugs at like 12. They start to beat up older people, much older people, selling drugs. They find it fun to rush older people. Like, when I was younger... to rush someone was... it just looked hard, you know just looking at someone you wouldn't want to do it. But now they just look at someone and just do it, even if they get broke up they'll still do it just for the fun of it. They will go round saying they broke up this person, this age and stuff like that...*

LEDLEY - *(Interrupting)... and put it on Bebo, Facebook...*

TYREESE - *They record it as well yeah, show it after and get respect from that.*

The local character *respect* takes emanates from those interpersonal sites where the most concentrated manifestations of it may be found. In St Pauls, this means those young men who are active, public, and vociferous members of the local Blood Gang. Within these intoxicating relationships, group fealty, reputation and personal strength assume kinship-like devotion that ripples outwards across what is, after all, a small neighbourhood. The frequent and casual use of language like *blud*, *brudda*, *bredrin*, and *cuz* to describe peer relationships, demonstrates the intensity of the bonds and brotherhood that exists at this cultural, interpersonal and micro-political locus within St Pauls. For my co-participants, these bonds and their diffused effects were slightly removed but still very real. Trigga was most keen to assert his St Pauls credentials in this regard, largely because he no longer lived in the area, a move that had the

unintended effect of making him ever more desperate to hang on to the friendships he had grown up with. Though his status among the group was much more secure than I sensed he realised, Ashley and Tyreese played on his insecurity for their own amusement routinely.

For example, one sweltering evening in late August, while we waited for a pizza to arrive and debated the start of the Premier League season, Trigga burst into the room in an agitated state. Panic covered his face and he wielded a large piece of wood that looked to me like an uprooted fence post. The manner of this entrance was too much for Tyreese and Ashley, who seemed to expect it and dissolved in fits of uncontrollable laughter. Eventually, after a good ten minutes of demonstrative and alienating hysterics, things became clearer. Ashley had phoned Trigga some twenty minutes earlier from Tyreese's phone, and, impersonating a notorious Easton gangster called Big Red, told Trigga that he had kidnapped Tyreese and was "gonna fuck him up." Ashley's call drew the desired response from Trigga, who armed himself with the fence post and hurtled across the Newfoundland Road Bridge and into Easton to help his friend.

TRIGGA - *(Breathless)*. Basically I was trying to protect my bredrin and that was it. This speakin' voice comes on the phone and I was like, 'who's this?' *(Pulls a baffled face)*. 'Yo, your boy fucked my cousin, I'm gonna fuck him and you up. Big Red's lookin' for you'. *(Laughter)*.

SIMON - *Who is Big Red?*

JERMAINE - *He's in Easton bro...*

ASHLEY - *He goes to prison every other couple of months, press ups, biceps, and he's big 'nuff! Everyone doesn't mess with him because everyone in Easton is scared of him. So if he gets in a fight with someone, everyone in Easton is with him.*

SIMON - *So that's the reason you came in here with a stick, to go fight Big Red?*

TRIGGA - *Well, yeah, but I thought it would be other people too.*

It was a genuinely funny moment, though on my walk home later I realised how easily Trigga might have ended up in custody and/or hospital for the sake of a

joke. It seemed telling that a young man with so much promise, whose attentive and aspirational mother had uprooted the family to keep him safe from such moments, was so ready and willing to put his safety and future on the line for his friends in St Pauls. I couldn't help wonder if I would have showed the same courage and loyalty, and what that says about the values inculcated into me by circumstances of relative privilege. When I spoke to Lawrence about it the following week, he explained that:

LAWRENCE - Something like that would make him seem like he's kinda got respect for himself. 'Cos everyone in St Pauls, really, even if they're cool, there are certain lines which if someone crossed they'd be just like Trigga, walking around with the nearest stick they can find, looking for whoever. Those kind of people probably get more respect in St Pauls than the people that are bad all the time to be honest. If you're a cool person but people think like; 'oh, Trigga, he's cool, but if something bad happens he isn't gonna hesitate to defend who he has to defend.' In the meantime he's doing positive stuff, like working properly and stuff. That will get you more respect than people that are just being bad, or people that are just being good but who ain't gonna back anyone if something happens. The person who does a bit of both will get more respect, cos both sides will respect them.

Swagga

Another tributary to respect that provides street culture with its aesthetic order is *swagga*. On this front I thought I personally fared reasonably well, since the street brands I wore fell (after inspection) within a credible core that seemed to transmit a kind of implicit relate-ability. That being said, as Lawrence pointed out to me while we waited for the group to assemble one afternoon, *swagga* is about more than the brands, and my disheveled trainers and faded teeshirts let me down badly in this regard, no matter their insignia.

SIMON - *What does swagga look like?*

TRIGGA - *It's fresh. Haircuts and stuff.*

ASHLEY - *Yeah, it's like, if you're wearing white shoes they have to be clean... jeans.*

JERMAINE - *Swagga's everything man. If you got good swagga or bad swagga, it's about the way you carry yourself. Carry it right and other people will respect you.*

ASHLEY - *It's like Jermaine said, respect yourself and respect your image. If you respect your image and you look good, yeah, it will kinda be psychological to other people; 'ah that guy looks good I'm not gonna mess up how he looks, I'm gonna make with him and carry on with what I'm doing.'*

At its most obvious then, *swagga* is simply a public display of pride, dignity and individuality, in much the same way that fashion and image may be important aspects of identity and self-determination for young people wherever they are in the world. Lawrence, Marcel, Ashley, Jacob, Trigga and Tyreese always looked well put together, with immaculate branded trainers and teeshirts that appeared as though they had just been bought that morning. Colours were always coordinated, a well placed piece of jewellery was frequently evident, and hair was carefully worn and regularly changed. But if the majority of the group had good *swagga*, Jermaine and (particularly) Ledley apparently did not. They would be mercilessly mocked for some of the outfits they turned up in, and though this was generally funny, it carried an undertow, that, while not serious in tone, was exclusionary and clearly making a point. Indeed, humour was generally the barometer by which *swagga* was judged, defined, and regulated, and in the case of Jermaine and Ledley, their lowly position within the group seemed only to be reinforced by their apparent lack of *swagga*.

LAWRENCE - *When I was growing up that's all we used to think about you know, I'm just gonna get little paper round so I can buy the trainers, new ones that just come out. 'Cos really, when you're younger the material things are what gets you some of the respect. I even asked my friends as a joke back in the day; I said what would you do if I started wearing the Hi-Teks (trainers) and stuff? (Laughter). They was all like; 'man I wouldn't*

hang around with you'. That's how it is, just 'cos I'm not wearing the right stuff that I need to be wearing. You guys know if you wore certain stuff, people would go for you. If Ashley came in here wearing the Hi-Tek tracksuit and... (laughing)... you wouldn't even cover it up, you would just laugh in his face.

At the extreme end of this aesthetic order are those colours that hold a slightly different local significance. Red, for example, is the colour of the Blood Gang, while blue is worn by their Easton rivals. The recent local invocation of youth gangs in St Pauls and Easton have imported their look, even their names, from the street gangs of Los Angeles and Jamaica (Pitts, 2012); and a young man resident in either neighbourhood, indeed any young man even passing through these areas, would do well to be mindful of the significance and hidden contracts implied by these colours. Black too, or rather, head-to-toe black, is a signifier of some intangible 'badness' that transcends postcodes.

Among my co-participants, I couldn't help wonder how *swagga* was being maintained, since the prohibitively priced clothes and trainers - that I could barely afford on my salary - were at odds with the picture of poverty in the home that was emerging week by week.¹³ Eventually, I learned that while a few items might be bought from the high street, the majority of clothes and trainers come to young men in St Pauls by more informal economic roads, routes that can be generically gathered under the colloquial umbrella of *enterprisin'*. More on this in a moment, it's important to say first that the exclusivity of the brands that earn *respect* is primarily an entirely consistent expression of the consumerist thrust at the heart of neoliberal capitalism. Only second should it be viewed as an

¹³ Child poverty in St Pauls is acute, with 81% of children living in families that are income deprived, the worst proportion in the city and fortieth worst in the UK. Income deprived refers to households receiving income support, income based job-seekers allowance, pension credits, working tax or child tax credit, with an income below 60% of national median before housing costs. The levels for St Pauls are much higher than the Bristol average (where 15% are income deprived), though the area has improved since 2005, when 93% of children 0-15 resident there were income deprived, twentieth worst in the UK at the time (St Pauls Unlimited Community Partnership, 2011).

expression of resistance; of self-respect, dignity and economic participation in the face of often overwhelming material poverty.¹⁴

And there is also a subtler, more implicit dimension to *swagga*, that, as Ashley notes above, extends something of the protective function of *respect*. Feeding into a local symbolic code in the psychology of other young men, *swagga* is a masculine reference to inner confidence and strength that is demonstrably to do with 'how you carry yourself'. I certainly recognised this, in Ashley, Lawrence and Tyreese especially, though it is a difficult thing to commit to text without making it appear trivial or ridiculous. Suffice to say that *swagga* plays an important role in a silent language of dress, behaviour, and gesture, that would alone provide enough substance for a doctoral thesis. I peered only at the surface of such things, though the scope of this silent language is evident in the anecdote, below.

ASHLEY - Um, when you don't really know someone, the head nod is good. I know a couple of white friends and they said that when they see the head nod that means they ok with another Black person. He was telling me that he was walking through Easton and he was shit scared of everyone and one of the main guys from Easton just went like that (nods) and he felt cool the rest of the way, and never got messed with. He said 'well if he didn't give me that head nod then I would have been fucked up!'

JACOB - The head nod is a good thing though. When you see someone, and they looking at you wrong, you head nod and clear things up with them. I got a white friend, he would say if you never nodded at me I probably would have run away! (Laughter).

¹⁴ A complex and publicly contradictory relationship emerges in relation to urbanwear brands and the young men and women who live in the poorest parts of the inner city. For example, in the aftermath of the English riots of August 2011, a number of brands like Nike, Adidas and Fred Perry, who had openly marketed a 'gansta chic' in their campaigns, found themselves with a notional brand crisis as they sought to publicly disavow themselves in the mainstream from the young people who appeared in court and on television emblazoned with their logos. In the months that followed, Levi's even had to abandon an advertising campaign that showed a young man squaring up to a line of riot police. However, that these brands were among the most coveted during the looting also offers a commercial boon, investing many of these same brands with extra credibility among the same young people that aspire to their clothes (Neate et al, 2011).

Making choices

Swagga in itself is important, but not so important as to trump one's actions. Respect is not so easily earned that a flash wardrobe is all it takes to acquire status and security in St Pauls.

LAWRENCE - *Alright, what will get you more respect, what you do or the way you look?*

TYREESE - *What you do.*

TRIGGA - *Um, what you do I reckon.*

JERMAINE - *Yeah, what you do.*

ASHLEY - *'Cos when you're older you think, 'oh that's just nursery rhyme dressin'. You put a couple of clothes together and you think you look lush. It's just what you do. Like if I was younger and I made music and I was good, then I'd get way more rated than me looking good.*

JERMAINE - *True.*

MARCEL - *Yeah, when you're younger respect usually comes from what you can do. Not everything about respect is what you can do though, 'cos obviously if your looking a joke and not smelling right, and stuff like that. (Laughter). But still most respect probably is to do with what you can do when you're younger.*

'What you do' is not confined to hurling fireworks, stoning prostitutes, fighting, or other such acts of courage and 'stupidity'. It can also mean possessing a talent for something. Music and sport, particularly football and basketball, are highly prized skills that will get you rated. In Ashley's case, his ability on a skateboard he see's as not only a hobby but a source of cultural capital; a strategy for keeping himself away from trouble.

SIMON - *So what makes you different to the guys mixed up in the middle of the gang stuff?*

ASHLEY - *I do stuff that no-one else does. I skateboard. No-one knows I skate so I probably get ratings for that. Basketball, I'm good so I'll get ratings for that too. They'll say 'he doesn't need to get involved, he's doing good, let's just leave him alone.'*

Tyreese on the other hand 'gets ratings' for his knowledge of bikes and his ability to repair them for other local young people should they break. But the point is more that *respect* (and thus status) is attainable in a number of ways, not all of them of the classically destructive kind that gets professionals and policy makers excited. Very obviously then, possessing a talent for something is also protective, buying you (sometimes) a pass on engaging in the more violent and risky activities that bubble around street culture.

But such a strategy, if it really exists at all, is not sufficient. Throughout the summer we discussed the many ways in which critical and unfair choices frequently confronted young men growing up in St Pauls, and the consequences of their actions or inaction in the face of these. In fact, it was the ubiquity of these choices and the nature of right and wrong in a setting like St Pauls, that formed the basis of the film we eventually tried to plan and make together.

ASHLEY - I got offered to do a house in Barton Hill. The guy goes to this house and see what's there – he was saying they got a basement with weed plants, loads of weed plants. And 'cos it's a basement the helicopters can't detect it, so he was like; 'yeah, lets got do the house! they got X-Box, big TV's, DVD's, everything!' He was pushing me to do it next week with him. I was like; 'ok whatever'. So then they rang me up last night and was like; 'Ash, when you were talking to me today you didn't seem that interested, you want me to drop you?' I was like; 'you wanna knock me out?' And he was; 'nah, you want me to drop you from the thing so you don't have to it?' So I said to him; 'you know what, I don't want to get locked up that bad so I ain't gonna do it.'

So I went college today to get some stuff and some of my friends were there. He goes to me; 'Ashley, you such a pussy, why didn't you come into the house, you can get X-Box, TV or whatever, just come!' I was like; 'nah, I'm alright', and he changed and was like; 'what you gonna do, skate home?' It's because... I don't even know... they don't like someone saying 'no' 'cos they gotta question themselves, but it is easier sometimes to just go with it.

Self-regulation and self-reinforcement are two important and recurring themes that scholars and policy makers interested in the moral economy of marginalised young people caught up in street culture would do well to consider more fully. Within this highly situated context, saying 'no' can be an act of substantial courage and resilience, and the effect is to challenge the local structure of being out of which *respect* emerges. 'No' elicits a reaction, usually one not becoming of your personal safety, and explains why, since the opportunity to say 'no' presents itself fairly routinely, earning *respect* through a talent that buys you a pass is so cherished. I personally found judging my co-participants for not having the will to say 'no' at any given moment was like judging someone on income support for buying a lottery ticket occasionally. However rarified such choices seem to those of us by degrees closer to the centre, the probable (and actually reasonable) likelihood is that at some point, past, present or future, submission to a normatively 'wrong' or 'bad' outcome will occur. Indeed, it may even be quite rational.

Such was our group focus on this construct of *respect*, it took me a few weeks to properly realise the parallel existence of more mainstream invocations of the term. At least, the kind of respect that parents, teachers and governments recognise and are keen to promote. Indeed, competing and sometimes contradictory images of respect are present both psychically and physically in individuals and groups. For example, Ledley's response to group discussions around *respect* was always telling. He actively embraced an alternative vision of the term based on 'self-respect' and good manners. In this he sat at one end of a spectrum, and the vulnerability this might otherwise expose him to was somewhat negated by Tyreese's seat at the other end of the same scale.

SIMON - *How do you see it Ledley, what does respect mean to you?*

LEDLEY - *I dunno. Respect others. Manners.*

MARCEL - *Here's a question, whose respect is most important to you?*

LEDLEY - *Mine.*

MARCEL - *Yours?*

LEDLEY - *If I get respect it's for myself first, then my brother and family.*

MARCEL - *So what would you like to be respected for and why?*

LEDLEY - *I want to be an accountant, so I need my GCSE's.*

SIMON - *What do you make of all this other stuff about getting respect through doing bad stuff then?*

LEDLEY - *I dunno. I'm in by ten, before anything happens. My brother makes me, he keeps me away from the places where people get stabbed and stuff.*

Ledley occupied something of a privileged position, the status of his brother (particularly) and cohesiveness of his family (certainly) ensured he was able to cultivate a more introspective vision of (self) respect. His ambitions though didn't make Ledley a pariah, far from it, they actually garnered substantial *respect* from others in the group. This is a fundamentally important point, and one worth stating in concise terms because it can very easily get lost in the prism of a thesis ostensibly about street culture: the aspirations of my co-participants were far from exotic, they were quite mainstream dreams of a good paying job, family, and nice house in the suburbs (see also Gunter, 2010). As such, a quite orthodox, separate, and often competing image of respect toiled away in absolute parallel to the image and utility of *respect* fashioned by street culture.

Gassin'

Indeed, precisely because street culture's invocation of *respect* has cultural utility, it is entirely possible to have too much of it, a circumstance that presents it's own set of problems.

SIMON - *So the thing is to me it sounds as if respect is always linked to you guys keeping safe, like something that helps you just live your life without being rolled over or something?*

ASHLEY - *Yeah, it is... but then again you can have too much respect, then some people might hate and want to knock you down.*

SIMON - *This is like hype, yeah?*

TYREESE - *Yeah, gassin' is the new word; 'I'm gonna go get a gun and start spraying it'. Gassin', it's like making yourself seem better. When the Easton guys came over to fight that guy the other day they was like*

walking around going; 'no-one in St Pauls can't touch me!' And we was just laughing; 'they just gassin'.

It's a kind of organic amplification that for a few young men escalates the stakes incrementally to such a point they feel compelled to carry weapons to substantiate and protect their profile, which has burgeoned to such an extent their elevated status makes them a target.

LAWRENCE - *I think with the respect thing, see when we was growing up it was more about what you wore and stuff, people would get on you for what you looked like. Now it seems like they will get on you if you're seen as a weak person. You have to show you have a bad side while you're growing, otherwise you get run over. The thing is that you can't come to a point where if you live in St Pauls, St Pauls people don't respect you. Really, if you thought hard about all the people that you know in beef in Easton and St Pauls, people that you know you could probably knock out in one punch but their on this hype thing, and they can't even fight you to defend themselves. The pressure that they couldn't even defend themselves in their own ends has forced them into this hype and running around with a knife and stuff.*

Respect, it seems, has in very recent years hyper-inflated among a certain generation and group of adolescent young men living in St Pauls and Easton. This exaggerated influence, that always sounded like the effects of increasing desperation and social exclusion to me, creates and shapes a particular local field of experience and 'structure of feeling' (Williams, 1977) within St Pauls. The geographic space is so small and ossified, especially if you are a young Black male as we shall see, that avoiding this influence entirely requires enormous reserves and resources of cultural capital and personality. My co-participants take on why this was so pointed indirectly to a dearth of local

resources for young people, a theme that will be picked up in subsequent chapters.¹⁵

ASHLEY - *I think there needs to be more stuff for young people to do when there's no school. This six week holidays, there's nothing to do. If you're a person that does sport you be playing football or some other thing, but if you one of the people who just comes home and plays computer, doesn't really do anything, you would go do something bad. If you have one bad friend...*

TYREESE - *Yeah, and when that bad friend turns to you and gets you into trouble, then you...*

ASHLEY - *(Interrupting) ...Not even that, you have one bad friend who says; 'I'm bored', it'll start from that; small things... fireworks, knives, guns, robbing houses.*

JERMAINE - *Like, they made the swimming pool so expensive now, that no-one can afford to go round here. They idiots... the more expensive it is to go swimming, the more crime there is here.*

Street culture in historical context

In so far as we explored it then, *respect* functions as a kind of public index of masculine reputation and strength, determining individual and group status and communion among a portion of local (predominately but not exclusively) Black young men. In this it finds some resonance with an older anthropological axis, one more usually associated with monographs on Mediterranean societies; honour and shame (see for example Pitt-Rivers, 1967, Gilmore, 1985). Without overplaying this reference, and simply using the conceptual framework to organise a historically specific and situated account, *respect* bears some of the hallmarks of this notion of male honour and the various ways it is defined externally. Or to put it another way, *respect* is real because the rest of that community of young men have granted it reality (Du Boulay, 1976). Of course,

¹⁵ In a 2010 survey of 130 8-25 year olds resident in St Pauls, 80% of the respondents claimed there are days during the week when they are bored and would like something to do. 40% of these said cost was a factor that prevented them engaging in activities (St Pauls Unlimited Community Partnership, 2011).

to some extent this external dynamic exists in all societies and groups, especially among adolescent young men. What feels different, or at least highly situated, is the reified way in which *respect* is described, with a particular utility and quality that seemed, within a much broader sociological context, to create one of the few local spaces where masculine dignity and self-esteem could readily exist.

But *respect* has not appeared from nowhere, and in its contemporary form is simply the vanguard of a historical and sociological trajectory along which Black British masculinity has had to find ways to not just survive, but to flourish. The roots of *respect*, as it manifests itself in St Pauls street culture, lie in the complex meshing of five hundred years systematic subjugation and colonialism, and more recently, half a century of social exclusion and economic apartheid in Britain. These themes, overlaid with their implications for sexual and racial politics, parenting, psychic structures and peer relations, assume their own focus in later chapters. By which I do not mean to imply some homogeneous 'Black' experience such that there is no longer room for what should be self-evidently clear; that beneath a meta-narrative of history lie many histories and experiences, and that the existence of street culture and *respect* in St Pauls in the early twenty first century is just one of these (within even the neighbourhood itself). I am quite clear however, that the racialised epithets that have informed the emphasis on hypersexuality, phallocentrism, and physicality in street culture are not just real, they are inherited, embodied and memetic legacies of the colonial assault on Black masculinity some half a millennia ago, and to dislocate them entirely from this historical and sociological trajectory is to reduce them in a deterministic and quite inaccurate fashion.

5. THE BORDERS OF URBAN BELONGING

“Because of the stabbing there was all this hype, St Pauls and Easton stuff went crazy. The Easton lot was all; ‘if you come to our ends we’re gonna beat you up, any St Pauls man we see is gonna get shanked!” (Tyreese).

This chapter is organised around the generative theme of violence, which surfaced in most of our group discussions and planning, and which was almost always defined territorially (see Kintrea et al, 2008). Indeed, borders emerged as a fundamentally important aspect of the human geography of street culture, and the masculinities that find expression through it. And though there are many more borders (structural, economic, psychological, gendered) than those that separate St Pauls (BS2) from Easton (BS5); our focus was generally on the lived rather than the abstracted, and thus we spent a great deal of time discussing the ongoing violence between young men in these two neighbourhoods.

But the relationship that exists between the state, territoriality, violence, masculinity and economics in both time and place is complicated and pejoratively reduced by sole fixation on the violence of a few young men in gangs (Hallsworth & Young, 2008, Aldridge et al, 2008). Such things are much better and more accurately understood as an effect of power from above. As such, I will endeavour to augment my co-participants discussion of this theme with sociological reference to these different layers, hopefully deepening and contextualising the analysis and avoiding the kind of behaviourist slant that would otherwise paint violence as an endemic and imbued trait of all young Black men resident there.

A BS2 tag, Brunswick Square.



The human geography of territoriality

One evening in October, I gave each member of the group a disposable camera. I had hoped we might try a bit of participatory cartography, and the brief was simply to take pictures of those spaces that felt personally significant to each member around St Pauls. This could be any space where feelings of power or vulnerability, happiness or sadness were invoked. Places that told a story or that had some local significance or memory attached. Some weeks later I finally developed the only two films returned to me, one from Ashley, the other, from Ledley.

SIMON - You both photographed the bridge over the M32 on Newfoundland Road, is that a significant place?¹⁶

¹⁶ The M32 motorway was built between 1966 and 1975, with the junction and Newfoundland Road Bridge opening in 1975, effectively annexing the area from Easton.

ASHLEY - *Yeah. Everything used to happen there. Fights, fireworks, guns, stabbings, suicides; for real.*

TYREESE - *Yeah, basically crack heads live under there, um, like little kids. When I was younger I used to find it like interesting to spit over the bridge and see what happens, on cars and stuff.*

SIMON - *Is it a border with Easton?*

ASHLEY - *Yeah, and it's stupid, you can cross one bridge and everything changes. It's been happening for quite a while.*

SIMON - *Can you do that and feel safe?*

ASHLEY - *If you know a lot of people then you know it's cool. But, if you just moved to St Pauls, don't really know anyone, and you hang around with the wrong crowd, they (Easton) will catch you on your ones and they will mess you up. On the bridge, in front of your house, anywhere outside.*

SIMON - *Does that work the other way round, if you lived in Easton and came into St Pauls?*

ASHLEY - *Nah, people in St Pauls is more cooler than in Easton. There's only a couple of stupid ones that wear red, and everyone in Easton practically wears blue, so, uh, well on Stapleton Road anyway, and Stapleton Road's quite big so...*

TYREESE - *(Interrupting) ... Black, all blacked out, like black trainers, black everything. Say you have a relative in Easton, just cos you have a respect for yourself... I can't explain it... it doesn't mean you can just... it's basically trespassing because you don't live there. You don't have nothing to do over there, so what are you doing there? If you get what I'm saying, I dunno, it seems a bit harsh but that's just how it is.*

The tone of these conversations was generally sombre, and the sadness, regret and anxiety discussions on violence and territory provoked were very noticeable. In part this was because over the summer and into the autumn a series of assaults, stabbings and reprisals took place. The most significant, or at least the closest to us, occurred in July, with the fatal stabbing of an eighteen year old man in Easton (BBC, 2010). It was this incident that led shortly after to Sol's arrest, but there were other examples, more or less dramatic, and the group reflected on a number of instances where severe and organised violence was enacted across the defined territories of BS2 and BS5.

SIMON - *So do you have the confidence to go over there (Easton) ever?*

ASHLEY - *Confidence is not a lot when you are there with a broken rib.*

Hold on, here's an example, a guy called XXXX, he went over to Easton, just walking past Stapleton Road. Because he hanged around in St Pauls a couple of times, they basically destroyed him. They broke his jaw in two different places, nose broken, eyes; fuck, he nearly lost his eye!

TYREESE - *He was in a coma.*

ASHLEY - *Because... they call it slippin', when you're in someone else's ends and you don't belong there, they will mess you up.*

TYREESE - *Say if someone hangs around here, and they see you here, and you're from, I dunno, Fishponds or something, and you go to Easton, like, they'll say; 'oh you hang around with St Pauls men'. They will beat you up just for hanging around with St Pauls. It doesn't matter where you're from, like, if they know you hang around with their enemy they'll just beat you up; if one don't like you, the rest don't like you.*

ASHLEY - *A week ago someone from St Pauls was walking along Newfoundland Road, they came off the motorway and grabbed him, put him in the car boot and turned round and went back over to Easton. They took him to the park and messed him up.*

MARCEL - *What did they do to him?*

ASHLEY - *They just beat him up.*

SIMON - *'Cos he was on the wrong side of the bridge?*

ASHLEY - *No, he was on St Pauls, but because they were driving round they seen him and...*

MARCEL - *...abducted him.*

TYREESE - *They trying to catch people slippin' right now. I'll be out at like four in the morning and see people riding their bikes trying to catch people slippin'. They just come and beat you up and go back to their ends. I was up at my Aunty's house one night and I went to get my (phone) charger. I opened the door and saw three boys on their bikes riding; (looks at Ashley) Michael, Gus, and some other boy, and the way they were looking they was trying to catch people slippin'. They come through in the night trying to catch people not watching themselves, that's what they trying to do. They trying to find any boy that was like 15 and over... they're trying so people get scared. They're trying to take over St Pauls apparently.*

To what extent these incidents are verifiable, represent accurate recorded crimes, or are partial truths embellished and decorated as they are told and retold, it was hard to tell. Certainly, it seemed to me likely there was a significant amount of violent crime that went unreported, and even if the anecdotes were only partially true, the effect of them and their telling was to demarcate and harden local borders beyond mere roads and bridges.¹⁷

The Newfoundland Road Bridge might represent a physical frontier between St Pauls and Easton, but *slippin'* is more than the physical violation of this border, it is (intentionally or unintentionally) an affront (*disrespect*). In this way the physical, psychological and cultural are best understood as submerged layers of the same border, made visible in the bridge, wherein and upon young men

Newfoundland Road Bridge, seen from St Pauls. (Photo by Ledley).



¹⁷ Most crime in St Pauls falls under the banner of anti-social behaviour. In July 2011 for example, a month before the English riots, 41% of all recorded incidents in the area were of this kind, attributable, perhaps, to the kind of low level activity associated with the search for *respect*. The same month, 10% of the crime reported was violent, that's 173 offences in all; a substantial figure but unsurprising given crime in St Pauls was in the top 2% for England and Wales overall, with a rate (the number of crimes per 1000 people) of 66.06 (though this figure is falling). (Avon and Somerset Police, 2011).

engage in a number of different, mutually reinforcing roles; provocateur and defender, messenger, organiser, pacifist and/or arbiter. But it is the extent to which *respect* and territoriality (at each and all these levels) occupies public space, simultaneously resisting and reinforcing social apartheid (the most significant border present), that is the most salient point.

SIMON - *When you talk about these things how many people are you actually talking about?*

ASHLEY - *Altogether, this side and that side... Easton is big.*

TYREESE - *Easton, it's all the drug dealers.*

LAWRENCE - *Easton will come with more people. St Pauls people got loads of people, but it takes more to get St Pauls people involved, something serious.*

JERMAINE - *It takes more to get them angry.*

SIMON - *So if you were to line them up like two opposing armies? I'm just trying to get an idea of numbers.*

TYREESE - *Roughly sixty on St Pauls, two hundred on Easton.*¹⁸

LAWRENCE - *80% Easton, 20% St Pauls.*

ASHLEY - *Most of them lot in jail too, you can count them as well.*

SIMON - *So if you got your two hundred odd guys in Easton, who heads them up, are there generals or something?*

ASHLEY - *So, all the people that shot someone, or those been in prison a few years, they'll be up the front directing; 'you do this, you do that'.*

The gender profile of these groups was overwhelmingly male, and the role of young women in territoriality and *respect* across St Pauls and Easton was more ambiguous. Though we barely covered this terrain in our discussions, when it did surface it appeared as though young women were not so constrained by territoriality as young men, even if these same borders did play some role in the division and enactment of sexual and gender politics.

ASHLEY - *The girls don't get involved, but they kind of do.*

TYREESE - *They will be there to watch it.*

¹⁸ Later conversations with youth workers in Easton and the Police broadly substantiated these numbers.

ASHLEY - *They'll snitch. Say we're on the other side (Easton) and girls - we're friendly with all the girls on the other side - they come out and we'll tell them what's gonna happen. They go back to the other side and say; 'yeah this is what they're gonna do, go here, do this, do that'. It ends up being stupid.*

The position of young women is something I only experienced in relation to the masculinities in front of me and the themes that emerged, in which girls and sex were not dominant at all. The study is then obviously limited in this direction. But in relation to the generative themes of territory and violence, girls and young women were to varying degrees portrayed as both agents and spectators; responsive to the code of *respect* and the vision of masculinity it engendered, but often equally dismissive of it. Sometimes, young women were the focus of territorial disputes. For instance, Marcel attributed the long-standing 'beef' between the two neighbourhoods to a fight between two girls, one from St Pauls, the other from Easton. Indeed, where sexual politics did emerge, it was obvious that young women were frequently objectified possessions of the young men in both neighbourhoods; their bodies heavily surveilled extensions of both territoriality and *respect*, across which *slippin'* was also possible (Batchelor, 2009, Firmin, 2010).¹⁹

Despite St Pauls and Easton being separated by only the width of a four lane motorway, the process of othering was well established; our discussions quickly eliciting a set of 'Easton' and 'St Pauls' characteristics that were no doubt simultaneously both accurate and wild generalisations. Either way, the process of othering helped to reinforce the borders (spatial, psychological, peer related) and create the *field* (Bourdieu, 1992) in which particular forms of masculine cultural capital could emerge.

ASHLEY - *Easton guys are weird compared to St Pauls guys. St Pauls men are laid back compared to them.*

¹⁹ The research in this direction is very limited in the UK. Firmin's (2010) study of gang violence, sexual exploitation and gender in London is perhaps the most revealing simply because of the number of interviews with young women it contains.

TYREESE - *St Pauls man is all about making money, these Easton lot are about hypin'.*

LAWRENCE - *They're (St Pauls) just more humble. The Easton lot are walking round going; 'no-one in St Pauls can't touch me!' I was watching them the other day, thinking; 'these guys are just dumb'.*

TYREESE - *They don't fight any man by themselves. One sneaks round your back, another sneaks round the side...*

JERMAINE - *... Yeah, dishonourable fighters.*

TYREESE - *Six on one! Like, if one of them comes in and wants to fight now, we'll fight. But see if they took a fight with us, they'd be fighting one boy. If Easton see their one losing they all join in.*

But these characteristics, again, significantly structured around the notion of masculine honour, would melt away when the discussion turned unexpectedly to another dimension of local belonging.

SIMON - *So, could I walk across from here to Easton without any bother?*

MARCEL - *Yeah, basically, you'd probably just be cool.*

TYREESE - *It's just the Black boys isn't it, the Black boys.*

ASHLEY - *It depends how you dress, if you go over there dressed in all black, head to toe, they would be suspicious. If you have like a little bit of red on you, like a bandana, they would kick your ass.*

TYREESE - *They wouldn't ask no questions, they would circle you, and just batter you about. They don't care if you get injured, they don't care if you die. They just do what they do. Actually, nah, across the Bridge, it's mostly Somalis over there. The Black boys, most of them are up Stapleton Road.*

SIMON - *So are Somalis not Black?*

ASHLEY - *Is that a bit too smart for you, Tyreese!* SIMON -

Or do you mean they're not a threat to you? TYREESE -

Yeah, they're not into beating people up is all. ASHLEY -

Now they are.

SIMON - *I didn't realise you would chop it up like that, so why do young Black men beat up on other young Black men?*

ASHLEY - *I don't know. You might not like the person, they're from different ends; beef with them a while ago, nice trainers, phone, said something about your mum...*

LAWRENCE - *Stupidness basically.*

SIMON - *If the guy was Asian, Somali or white, would that still be true?*

ASHLEY - *Nah, it's just the Black race.*

SIMON - *Why?*

ASHLEY - *We got a short temper, I reckon. We take everything as an insult.*

TYREESE - *If you look at us in a funny way, we just wanna beat you up.*

Race emerged as a significant generative theme of its own, and as such a lengthier exposition on it is saved for later. But it's important to note at this point that my co-participants experienced territoriality and its relationships and borders as in large part racially bound. This is a complicated picture. Ashley and Tyreese explained it by taking anger to be simply an imbued racial trait of Black people, where actually what they described is more an internalised effect of historical, ideological and structural force, even if it is mirrored back to them in everyday life. And though within the group there existed significant variation in how race was constructed and processed, there is an undeniable racial complex to street culture and territoriality in St Pauls and Easton. However, given the size, ethnic diversity and historical context of both neighbourhoods, it would be wrong to conflate this as being of some equivalence to the American metropolitan ghetto (Wacquant, 2008); for the interplay of class, race, state and economy in Britain has clearly yielded a historically distinct structure of being and feeling in the inner city.

Borders in time and place

Consequently, some context in time as well as space is important to any discussion of territoriality and belonging in St Pauls. My co-participants, and those few young men we interviewed for the short film, were clear that the hardening of these borders, both physical and psychological, was in their experience a relatively recent development, one that had gathered momentum over the past five or six years.

MARCEL - *I think, and I don't really want to bring names into it, but from what I heard when I was younger, when it really started was with two girls, one was from Easton and one was from St Pauls. Two girls got into this fight, and then it started from there. Naturally, one guy from one side got involved and it just kind of escalated. About a week later you're hearing about a fight happening on the bridge, do you remember that, Lawrence? St Pauls versus Easton.*

I had friends in my year, I was about 15 or 16 at the time, might even have been a bit younger, in the fight. Then there was another St Pauls versus Easton war, and then obviously when things like fireworks day came around it was escalating with that as well. That's when I noticed it became something. It was kind of funny, like it was a fashionable thing. You just felt like this is unreal, lets play it out; that's the vibe I got from people involving themselves in it. This is crazy like, this is exciting, there's something happening! I could kind of understand their enthusiasm for it 'cos I'm a human being, a person myself, I like competition or whatever. I had relatives in the fight and when I heard, the way everyone was painting the picture it was like it wasn't so bad 'cos people weren't bringing knives into it. My cousin, was going up to fight or whatever, he was doing ok for himself, then the other guy from Easton, this big boss guy, rolls up in a car... everyone would explain it like it's a movie... anyway, he rolls up in this car, gets up all blacked out, walks up and punches my cousin in the belly, my cousin sucks it up, sssccheeww! and they start fighting! (Laughter). It sounds funny, so I can understand where they coming from. It got stupid but it was funny.

It's important to note the steady amplification and escalation of tensions between the two areas in the period since, although as far as Marcel was concerned, the geography is a little misleading.

MARCEL - *I know you're saying like St Pauls and Easton, but I don't think it's so much to do with the locations, it's more groups of people. Obviously, me and Lawrence, we can go to both those places. Well I definitely know I can go those places and I won't be touched. But then I'm from both areas.*

Obviously, I know people in the gangs and stuff, and both sides they probably seen me with the people in the gangs, but it's not just that. It's how you associate with the people in the gangs. It's kind of like when you're mixing with certain people in certain ways you take on certain contracts, like hidden contracts. So say for example if my man is talking about beating up Easton man, and you're caught in a video, in the background, you're kind of saying that you're in with it, do you know what I mean? You're mixin' and you're cool with it. You have to be careful about the hidden contracts that you take on.

Examples of the kinds of video Marcel is talking about, in which these contracts may be taken on and broadcast, are all over the internet.

Blood Gang music video published on Youtube (Bristol Blood Gang Hardest Out, 2010).





Marcel's perspective is in some ways unique, being slightly older and having lived in both areas he is able to traverse both neighbourhoods so long as he is careful. For younger men like Ashley and Tyreese, the borders are more ossified, the result of a particular amplification over the past five years or so. At an everyday level the group all recognised this hardening of local territoriality in relation to dwindling resources for young people, boredom, and the absence of formal structured opportunities for both areas to mix.²⁰

LAWRENCE - *When we was growing up there was more to do. Now, with these younger ones, compared to all the activities we could do they 'ain't got hardly any of it. They're (Easton and St Pauls) separated from the start. Back in the day it used to be alright. We had Fairfield was like the St Pauls school in Montpellier, and St George was like the Easton school. Through the activities and stuff they were doing they was blending together. Some of the old Full Circle pictures I seen upstairs have got Easton and Pauls guys together hugging each other! Whereas there used to be fun stuff where people used to blend, now there's nothing. So Easton guys, the younger ones, will grow up and link with the older ones, and they'll be like; 'we don't rate people from St Pauls, they're idiots'. They'll just hear that all day. Then they make friends with the older guys, then they get hurt by someone from St Pauls, which kind of confirms it for them, so then they hate everyone from St Pauls. It keeps going round like that.*

MARCEL - *It could easily escalate you know, it's so easy to go to one extreme. I noticed from the stabbing and stuff, and I don't know the reason why it happened or whatever, but I kinda noticed the streets did seem a bit quieter for a period of time. Like, I think everyone realised how fragile things were and it kinda quietened down for a little bit. I don't know if there was stuff still going on, but it just seemed everyone wasn't on the hype vibe so much. When I seen people they was quietly talking for a change.*

²⁰ There is evidence that, even within Bristol, some of the most effective strategies for tackling territoriality are diversionary (Kintrea et al, 2008). In essence, this means investing in targeted positive activities and creating opportunities for young people to mix with one another from an early age.

JERMAINE - *We used to have football matches and stuff. It just got onto bigger stuff.*

TYREESE - *Like, because of the stabbing there was all this hype, St Pauls and Easton stuff went crazy. The Easton lot was all; 'if you come to our ends we're gonna beat you up, any St Pauls man we see is gonna get shanked!'*

SIMON - *Do you guys feel like you shaped these things that happen, like you're part of it, or does it just go on around you?*

ASHLEY - *I think this generation, like mine, is trying to do the most to get out of it. What a lot of us doing is things like music, skateboarding, basketball, getting into sports more. And the Easton guys, well we was cool with them before, but then a couple of London guys came down and stirred it up a bit.*

The "London guys" Ashley cites is an inference to those opaque external influences that have a vested interest in demarcating the local inner city landscape. In St Pauls and Easton, a fundamental catalyst for territorial associations has been the (adult) organised criminal influences that control the local drug trade. Indeed, it is the relationship between economics and territoriality that is perhaps the most significant organising relationship of all. Looked at this way, the period from around 1998 onwards is especially significant in creating the conditions under which today's images of St Pauls and Easton have been made, and of course, the street culture and masculinities created therein.

When the highly addictive freebase crack cocaine arrived in Bristol during the late eighties and nineties, the multi-million pound market created in the inner city was ripe for the economics of territoriality. The (St Pauls based) Aggi Crew dominated trade in the inner city for most of the nineties, cementing St Pauls reputation (and borders) at the centre of the drug economy. But when the Aggi Crew were incarcerated at the end of the decade, it opened up the market to a new wave of criminal gangs, almost exclusively in the instances of St Pauls and Easton, Yardies. On the streets, the Yardie gangs exploited the potent mix of ethnoracial social exclusion and grinding economic apartheid. Some moved from London, many came directly from Jamaica on locally co-ordinated student

visa scams, bringing with them jobs and access to material success and status. Like any business, they quickly set about territorially defining their various shop floors, inspiring adolescent loyalty and structures that mirrored, in effect, the kind of corporate governance more typical of the mainstream private sector. These economic structures have meshed with local geographic borders to create the kind of enduring, self-surveilling, and increasingly amplified feelings of territoriality articulated in both St Pauls and Easton today. And while most young men in both areas are at the periphery of the gangs and drug trade at the centre of them, the masculine codes like *respect* fashioned by this moral economy are in an important sense a direct product of these unseen cultural and economic forces. Certainly, the local trajectory of territoriality in St Pauls and Easton is closely bound to this macro-economic context, where the exponential growth of the drugs trade flooded the aspirational and economic spaces left behind by the neoliberalism of Thatcher and then Blair.²¹

Dwindling horizons

The effects of these borders are equally real and potentially limiting, though quite how limiting depends where you find it necessary and possible to stand in relation to them. The most obvious impact is one of limited physical mobility and personal safety.²²

SIMON - *So do you go across the bridge at all?*

TYREESE - *We can go across but we just have to watch ourself, look both ways, see like if there's any boys out. Basically, when we walk through Easton we got to watch everything, be cautious, if you don't look around they could see us and come up behind us. When I plan to go somewhere I go. If something happens I'll try and get myself out of it. Like, if I have to*

²¹ In 2002, such was the value of the market, police traced over ten million pounds worth of wired money back to Jamaica (Bristol Evening Post, 2011a).

²² Wacquant (2008) notes that 'if so much violence is of the 'black-on-black' variety, it is not only because the residents of the declining districts of the metropolitan core suffer extreme levels of economic redundancy and social alienation. It is also because anonymous black males have become widely recognised symbols of criminal violence and urban danger. So that, unless they display the trappings of middle-class culture, they are de facto barred from bordering white areas where their skin colour causes them to be immediately viewed as potential criminals or troublemakers' (p. 57).

walk through Easton I'll walk through Easton to get there, another route will be longer. People that's in Easton I know from school. It's just some people I don't mind and some people I don't like.

Tyreese seemed to me closest to the potential perils of territoriality and street culture, perhaps because of his age, perhaps because his peer group dominated the warring gangs concerned; but he was also courageous and unprepared to be cowed by whatever risks did exist to his safety. He took no such chances with Ledley's welfare though, ensuring his brother was kept well away from harm. For his part, Ashley seemed quite keen to use whatever *respect* he could muster from his reputation, talent and image to keep himself away from the violence, though he admitted to me on the walk home one night he had been involved 'in a few violent things'.

SIMON - Do you feel the pressure to get involved if something goes down in Easton, to fall in behind your mates?

ASHLEY - If you're stupid. If you're one the people that sell drugs, you're probably gonna go over there. But if like, you one of the people who play sports, got a job, you're not gonna.

SIMON - You wouldn't lose respect for that?

ASHLEY - No. You don't fight because you got a football career, you go your own way. One or two people might say like; 'oh why didn't you join in, your friend got hit'. Hold on, does he have a football career? does he have it now? No.

A third effect of territoriality (after limited mobility and personal safety) concerns personal relationships, which are both strengthened and sometimes threatened by the context. This can be a subtle and sometimes not so subtle process. Trigga, for example, seemed quite willing to immerse himself in territoriality as a way of reinforcing his St Pauls friendships once he had moved to Clifton, and was explicit in asserting this loyalty and ready to fight to demonstrate it. Ashley and Tyreese on the other hand, though they were by association known to be from St Pauls, seemed more circumspect and keen to avoid being pulled into the centre of the violence. Sol, who certainly was at the centre of the violence (to whatever extent he was actually mixed up in gang conflict or was a victim of

circumstance), felt the full consequence of territoriality when he was driven completely underground by the episode of his public arrest, unable to even leave his home for fear of reprisals. By contrast, Jermaine suffered such social anxiety that he kept himself housebound anyway, but it was interesting to note his mother's tactic of buying him every expensive video game she could to keep him indoors, where he was safer playing games until dawn than out on the streets. Indeed, it seemed to me that no matter how peripheral an individual was, the effects of territoriality and the interpersonal conflict that flowed from it clearly shaped the timetables and life-patterns of every member of the group.

The pervasiveness of this interpersonal effect is complicated by the way in which geography intersects with race and identity to diminish aspirations and harden economic choices. For residents of Bristol beyond the inner city, St Pauls history at the centre of the city's drug trade, and its racialised reputation for gangs and violence, has a stigmatising and exclusionary impact for many young Black men resident there.²³ When it seems impossible to transcend this stigma, particularly in relation to access to the labour market, for those objectified by this stereotype, territoriality, not to mention the particular economic opportunities embedded in it, become one of the few spaces where, perversely, wealth, status, and a reclaimed sense of belonging seem possible.

That said, I personally found the picture more contradictory and unstable than this. My co-participants, who were peripheral to the (criminal) gangs at the centre of this St Pauls image, considered other (white) parts of Bristol as also basically hostile to them and even more unsafe to visit. At the same time, all were keen to leave St Pauls, and thought the neighbourhood at least needed more white residents in order to ameliorate its social problems, which, in a circular logic, they saw through the lens of an internalised belief in the validity of the racialised stereotype of St Pauls.

²³ The extent and impact of this stigma in the process of marginalisation cannot be underestimated. Goffman (1968) never explicitly mentioned place in his classifications for 'spoiled identity', but for young men resident in St Pauls it leads, in combination with race and masculinity, to the same spaces of marginality and experience of objectification.

MARCEL - *Everyone is trying to move out of St Pauls now. Staying in the same area you won't realise certain things until you get out there.*

ASHLEY - *Yeah but if you do and you go to the wrong place, like Knowle West!*

TYREESE - *Like, walking along in a white area it don't feel too good. Me, Jermaine, Ledley and Marvin, we went to Hartcliffe this one time. We asked these white guys where Morrisons was, we said; 'excuse me' and they just ignored us and carried on walking. I ran up to them and said; 'excuse me', and they just ignored us. I said; 'racist bastards!' and walked off! We had to call a taxi but we had no money to get home. The taxi took an hour to get to us and we bunked the fair when he dropped us off.*

Indeed, Marcel's assertion summed up a feeling among the group that whatever lay beyond St Pauls it was still important 'to get out' in order to develop a sense of perspective. This sentiment I heard expressed time and again, and it was matched by a keen sense of the correlation between the increasing voracity of territoriality in recent years and the dwindling psychic and economic horizons of many *youngers*. To recall Sol and James' words for a moment...

JAMES - *Um, it's getting worse, like, the generation after us now are gonna be Badmen. They never get out of here and see stuff, they just stay here. There's good stuff like this place, but not much of it, and they don't see this anyway.*

SOL - *When we were younger we used to get out of St Pauls for the day, just to see what it was like... we used to go out of Bristol sometimes. These next generation never leave. They see the Yardie car, the jewellery, they want the lifestyle, but there's only one way they see - to sell drugs and hustle. If that's all we saw that's all we would have wanted too.*

So an important and undeniable effect in time and space of the local amplification of territoriality and violence is a diminishing sense of a world beyond St Pauls; an internalisation and hardening of the borders (spatial, racial, gendered, economic) that becomes self-surveilling, self-excluding and self-perpetuating. Fundamentally, it was this pattern of thematic relationships

connected to place that informed the generally pessimistic and demoralising sense of the future for St Pauls.

SIMON - Is this partly the motivation for you guys saying you wanted to get out, wouldn't raise a family here and all that stuff you said in the very first session we did?

ASHLEY - If it doesn't change then yeah, I would want to get out. But I would want to move anyway, I don't wanna stay in St Pauls my whole life.

LAWRENCE - Most peoples mindset ain't like that. They just think; 'I ain't going nowhere, I'm staying here'. Not 'cos they want to, it's just their mindset says; 'I ain't never gonna get the job I need to break out of this barrier... I'm just gonna do bad stuff like and stay where I am'.

ASHLEY - Been arrested too many times to get a job anyway by then.

It's important to note that the actual number of young men who would define themselves as being members of a gang in St Pauls is small, though the conditions from which strong peer-related and regulated kin groups are able and likely to emerge is undeniably present and a significant contributing factor to the 'state of mind' Lawrence refers to. Moreover, through our discussions and the few interviews we managed, it was obvious that what for most young men amounted to little more than 'hanging out with your mates', was in police phraseology 'gang related'; a tension that hastened a disintegrating relationship between the police and the wider community of local young men. The result is mutual suspicion and the kind of interpersonal enmity that has a circular effect in the criminalisation and hardening of local borders.²⁴ But Ashley makes an equally important point, for one of the basic hazards in accumulating a stock of *respect* is arrest for some (usually petty) criminal offence. For too many young men, this has happened before they reach even fifteen years of age, and, along with the postcode they must put on their CV and the colour of their skin, precipitates their often life long exclusion from the legal labour market, and an

²⁴ Analysis of Home Office data in The Guardian newspaper, 2012, revealed Black people were 30 times more likely to be stopped and searched by police than whites (Townsend, 2012), a disproportionate experience of racial profiling and criminalisation borne out by my co-participants.

experience of structural apartheid that only serves to recycle and further entrench the borders of urban belonging made by street culture.

In those moments where we talked about violence or territoriality, at first I found it impossible to connect individual experiences to broader structural forces and patterns. My journal was full of stories and anecdotes, and I spent I am sure, far too many hours engrossed in the visceral tales of courage and brutality, stupidity, adrenaline, comedy, and seeming pointlessness of the incidents and characters involved. But I also scribbled other comments noting the group's circumspection, and the apparently careful way the borders, contracts and alliances invoked through street culture were being negotiated from an existential necessity to balance the need for money and a sense of personal safety, with friendships, belonging and dignity. What I took to be a definitive sense of agency was alive and well in this circumspection, but the tone of our sessions exploring violence and territory were filled with a kind of pathos for the inhibited and inhibiting way in which this agency was necessarily deployed. It was only when I stopped my dry deconstructionist analysis of the text and finally tuned into this tone, that I began to see the many dispiriting ways in which structural oppression imposes borders more devastating in their everyday violences than the agency of young men in BS2 on young men in BS5. Or as Wacquant (2008) puts it:

'Such internecine violence 'from below' must be analysed not as expression of the senseless 'pathology' of residents... but as a function of the degree of penetration and mode of regulation of this territory by the state. It is a reasoned response (in the double sense of echo and retort) to various kinds of violence 'from above' (p. 54).

6. THE STORY OF FAILURE

“Too much people have the story of failure round here... try and fail. Not much people can say they done this and it worked out. Once you get success you’re gone, they have to leave here. No-one stays” (Lawrence).

The everyday experience and creation of street culture is sustained by (and in turn sustains) a fundamental economic apartheid and collapse of the class structure instigated from above. Indeed, through the prism of a participatory ethnography it would be easy ‘to forget that urban space is a historical and political construction in the strong sense of the term’, though to do so would be ‘to risk (mis)taking for ‘neighbourhood effects’ what is nothing more than the spatial retranslation of economic and social differences’ (Wacquant, 2008, p. 9). Acknowledging this, the generative themes of drugs, money, and community described by my co-participants are gathered here under the broader wing of ‘economic apartheid’, which I will flesh out both historically and sociologically through the chapter. By way of context, I will first briefly sketch the trajectory of this spatial retranslation.

Economic apartheid and deproletarianisation

Bristol is undoubtedly a wealthy city on the surface of things, with a diverse economic base and a level of productivity well above the national average.²⁵ But the young and ethnically diverse city of today has a well defined economic

²⁵ Bristol’s economic output in 2008 was £11.5 billion, just under 12% of the entire wealth generated in the South West region. The UK Competitiveness Index (2010) ranks the city as the most competitive outside London (Bristol City Council, 2011c).

and social heritage rooted in the transatlantic slave trade.²⁶ Indeed, the wealth of the colonies (particularly the Caribbean) that flowed back through the port from the 16th to 19th centuries remains visible in many of Bristol's most important buildings, place names and social structures. Much of the local architecture, including St Pauls, with what is left of its imposing Georgian facades, is a monument to the wealth of imperial Britain. In fact St Pauls, in a quirk of history, was once the most desirable of all Bristol's merchant quarters. It was only after World War Two, when the centre of the city suffered badly from German bombing, that this changed. Destroyed by war, those local residents who could afford to, moved away, and as living standards slowly improved through the fifties, and St Pauls went largely un-repaired, the area experienced a considerable demographic flight of residents.

Officially encouraged by the British government's promises and policy of full employment, in-migration from the Commonwealth brought men, women and families from all over the Caribbean, and particularly Jamaica, to Bristol.²⁷ But the welcome was not what they had been told to expect, and for most it was difficult to find accommodation anywhere other than in St Pauls, where the large houses and cheap rents suited multiple-occupancy.²⁸ The quality of the housing amenities was and remained very poor, and social ills like prostitution,

²⁶ According to Bristol's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2012), there are more children under 16 living in Bristol than people aged over 65, and compared to projections for the country as a whole, Bristol's projected growth profile is markedly younger. Over 10 years to 2020 Bristol's highest growth rate is for children (under 16), an increase of over 17% (over 12,000 more children).

In relation to ethnicity, Bristol's White British population fell 7.8% between 2001 and 2011, with Black groups growing by 3.7%, Mixed ethnicity groups by 1.5%, and Asian groups by 1.7%. Today, Bristol has the fourth lowest percentage of White residents when compared to other core English cities (77.9%) (ONS, 2011).

²⁷ It was very common for the children of those first migrants to be left with family in the Caribbean, sometimes for many years until such time as parents could afford to send for them. Arnold (2008, 2012) has written extensively on the dynamics of family migration from the Caribbean to Britain, using attachment theory to organise an account of contemporary African Caribbean family life and the effects of this separation and reunion on inter-generational relations and mental health.

In St Pauls, Pryce (1979) notes that this first generation of Jamaican migrants were 'part of the traditional proletarian out-migration from Jamaica and the rest of the West Indies, in which only the propertyless, poorly educated masses take part' (p. 21).

²⁸ For notable literature on and from this period of Black British history more generally see Fryer, 1984, Arnold, 2008, 2012. With specific reference to Bristol and St Pauls, see Pryce, 1979, Burton, 2009.

homelessness and transience were rife.²⁹ Small businesses started up and failed quickly, changing owners with a frequency one city councillor remarked made them 'like a tin of worms - full of movement. They continually change hands... with rents of about 25/- a week and income about the same' (Bristol Evening Post, 5th March 1970, in Pryce, 1979, p. 29). Racism in the labour market condemned many to poverty, and most to long term under- and un-employment. The (usually overt, often violent) racism that greeted forays into white areas of the city beyond St Pauls (Dresser, 1986) also contributed to a racialised process of social and economic marginalisation, the outline of which remains surveilled and present today.

Despite the many undoubted personal and cultural victories achieved by St Pauls residents throughout the postwar period, and particularly during the sixties when civil rights assumed an international platform, the overarching trajectory of social and economic marginalisation gathered pace in the coming decades.³⁰ Inadequate and racist schooling, police harassment, enduring unemployment; all combined to effect an apartheid that drove many young men into the arms of Black nationalism, left-wing radicalism, Rastafarianism, and 'the cynicism which is rife in the world of the adult hustler' (Pryce, 1979, p. 138).

This structural apartheid created the economic, social and cultural space into which, during the late eighties, hard drugs began to flood. As the only genuine equal opportunity employer locally, the distributive trade in drugs flourished, and by the early nineties it was so endemic that hundreds of dealers openly sold crack cocaine day and night on Grosvenor Road, or 'the front line' as it came to be known locally (Cantera, 2010). But if the drug trade created employment, it also brought spiralling rates of personal addiction, criminal gangs, territoriality, guns and violence. A second generation of young

²⁹ It's worth noting that according to the police, the prostitutes themselves were all white (Cantera, 2010).

³⁰ In 1963, the West Indian Development Council and Paul Stephenson, a local youth worker, led a boycott of the (nationalised) Bristol Omnibus Company, who were refusing to employ Black or Asian bus crews. Significantly, the boycott gathered national attention, and Labour leader Harold Wilson threw his weight behind the protest. This profile seems to have been influential in the passing of the Race Relations Act 1965 and 1968, which made racial discrimination unlawful in public places, housing and employment.

Grosvenor Road, aka 'The Front Line'. (Photo by Ashley).



men, this time born and raised in Britain, lived a sociology of intergenerational relations not only wounded by the legacies of empire, migration, racism and social and economic exclusion, but also now colonised by drug addiction. This worked in two mutually destructive directions. First, in the devastating effects of personal addiction on self, parents, family and friends; the other, in the simultaneous pull of the drugs trade as a means to make money and survive financially. King Aggi, who before he reached even twenty years of age headed the most powerful criminal gang to emerge in the area during this period, recalls:

“My elders were all crackheads, if they weren’t crackheads they were probably selling it. But my age bracket were too mostly crackheads. They smoked crack. Y’know, my age were cool... not really knowing about it. Now everyone knows ‘crackhead’. But in my day it wasn’t really like that, it was more; ‘hey, y’know, he smokes crack’. It wasn’t a good thing, but it wasn’t a bad thing” (Cantera, 2010).

Today the drugs and criminal gangs, like the community, have diversified. But the economic apartheid facing a portion of third generation Black British young men remains largely un-remedied. The drug trade continues to provide job opportunities where there are none, conferring both money and local status to the young masculinities made in its image. It also performs a critical subterranean welfare function, supporting families through financial hardship and the personal effects of a shrinking welfare state.

Pryce (1979) spent much of his St Pauls monograph describing the various ways in which the young 'West Indian' was denied opportunities for employment, dignity and social mobility. The stories told by his research subjects are filled with examples of overt and covert racism, frustration at the nature of the menial industrial work on offer, a lack of apprenticeships through which to acquire a trade, and in some instances an unwillingness to submit to undertake racially subordinated work. Descriptively, there remains some substance to this three decades later. But there is an important difference to the current context of advanced marginality that is the product of contemporary power and governmentality. Fundamentally, this has been driven by the pursuit of supply-side economics and a retrenchment of social expenditure, with a redistribution of wealth upwards creating a sharp divergence in living standards and health and wellbeing between the working and upper classes. Wacquant (2008) summarises this process and the outcome of it thus:

'Employment shifts from manufacturing to education-intensive jobs, on the one side, to de-skilled service positions on the other, the impact of electronic and automation technologies in factories and even in white-collar sectors such as insurance and banking, the erosion of unions and social protection have combined to produce a simultaneous destruction, casualization and degradation of work for the residents of the dispossessed districts of large cities. For many of them, economic restructuring has brought not simply loss of income or erratic employment: it has meant outright denial of access to wage-earning activities, that is, deproletarianization' (p. 26-27).

Our PAR project took place two-years after the global banking crash of 2008, in the midst of a recession that would break all records for youth unemployment by

August 2011, the same month young people rioted over several nights in a number of English cities, including in St Pauls.³¹ During the seventies, Pryce (1979) noted that 'whenever there is a general rise in unemployment... it is young West Indian workers and job-seekers who are affected first' (p. 125). A generation later, more than half of the young Black men available for work in Britain are unemployed, and the unemployment rate since the banking crash has increased at twice the rate for Black 16-24 year olds as it has for white young people.³²

Deproletarianisation is the important historical distinction here, for in parallel to the macro-economic restructuring of the British economy, is and has been the changing character of the informal economy. The most important feature of this is its near complete de-coupling from the wage-economy, so that today there are almost no legitimate entry points to the formal economy (for a description of this in its most advanced state see Bourgois, 2002). In St Pauls, the consequence brought about by this collapse of the class structure is 'the story of failure', which for a portion of young men now seems the only narrative St Pauls is capable of reciting.

Today, the socio-spatial story is coming full circle, with the creeping gentrification of St Pauls and those areas bordering the newly redeveloped central business district over half a century after it was levelled by war. But its appeal to investors and city developers is offset by the ethnoracial marginality that has been created there, and the social problems the process of deproletarianisation brings. St Pauls remains one of the poorest neighbourhoods in the city, where half of elders and 81% of all children grow up in income deprived households (Bristol City Council, 2010); where there is around nine-years less life expectancy than in the richest, white, suburb; and

³¹ By November 2011 just over 20% of all 16-25 year olds were out of work nationally (BBC, 2011a).

³² According to the Office for National Statistics, unemployment among young Black men (16-24) doubled in three years, from 28.8% in 2008 to 55.9% in 2011 (Ball, Milmo & Ferguson, 2012), a rate higher even than in the United States (Ramesh, 2012).

where those that do 'make it' follow a historically familiar demographic flight to other more desirable parts of the city.³³

Education, street culture, and post-school drift

Looked at sociologically, the structural trajectory toward today's condition of marginality is stripped of its human character. In fact, there is no way to understand this economic and social space without consideration of the lived experiences of my co-participants, who occupy it. In relation to economics, and to the picture of street culture rendered by it, this must begin with a look at the period from school to adulthood, which is more usually understood as a period of transition but here takes the form of drift, where outcomes are much less likely to be upward, if they are anything at all. And though education only sporadically emerged in our group discussions, these experiences are important gateways to those themes of drugs and money that much more frequently did.³⁴

³³ Bristol's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2012) reveals that in the inner city overall, almost half of all children live in families receiving means tested benefits. Furthermore, the overall growth in Bristol's population has largely concentrated in this area, with a young and increasingly diverse ethnic population. For example, three of the eight inner city wards have the highest incidence of ethnic diversity in Bristol, and for children these proportions are much higher again, with 80% of pupils in Lawrence Hill and 60% in Easton and Ashley (including St Pauls) from a Black or ethnic minority group. All three of these wards have very high rates of child poverty and overcrowding.

³⁴ In 1971, Bernard Coard published a pamphlet titled *How the West Indian Child Is Made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System: The Scandal of the Black Child in Schools in Britain*. The pamphlet described the embedded bias in British schools, which treated white children as normal and led to Black children being labelled 'educationally subnormal'.

'The Black child acquires two fundamental attitudes or beliefs as a result of his experiencing the British School system: a low self-image, and consequently low self-expectations in life. These are obtained through streaming, banding, bussing, ESN schools, racist news media, and a white middle-class curriculum; by totally ignoring the black child's language, history, culture, identity. Through the choice of teaching materials the society emphasizes who and what it thinks is important — and by implications, by omission, who and what it thinks is unimportant, infinitesimal, irrelevant. Through the belittling, ignoring or denial of a person's identity, one can destroy perhaps the most important aspect of a person's personality — his sense of identity, or who he is. Without this, he will get nowhere' (cited in Richardson, 2005).

When Coard's pamphlet was first published, it was dismissed by many educationalists as extremist. At the same time, IQ tests were being developed and used by psychologists both here and the United States to justify and naturalise the educational underachievement and inferiority of Black children (see Jensen, 1969, Eysenck, 1971). In fact, far from being extreme, Coard's pamphlet describes important antecedents to today's picture of educational underachievement among Black pupils. Specifically, the insidious effects of ideology and nationalism he marks are consistent with the psychoanalytic descriptions of internalised oppression Fanon et al recorded in their work on the administration of imperialism, and the contemporary inheritance this bestows on children. More on which in Chapter Eight.

Sewell's (1997) comparative ethnography of two secondary school settings and Black masculinities offers an important window into the existential path young men like my co-participants must negotiate through this phase of their life. The group summarised this pathway thus:

TYREESE - You see a Black person in school messing about and stuff, and you want to do the same thing, to join their crew. When you're young you think you have all the time, you can mess about and it'll be ok. But you get older and it ain't like that. When you're in primary school you mess about outside and go to class, it's fun. At secondary school you got less time to play and more time to be serious in class. You mess around and then you're hyper when you go in to class. The other thing, you know when you're in secondary school, most of the boys just thinking about sex anyway, and getting girls and stuff.

LAWRENCE - Do Black people listen as good as white people in school?

ASHLEY - No, not as much.

JERMAINE - Say like you lot said respect is more what you do than what you look like. Would you get more respect for getting your... your seven GCSE's, or more respect for beating up the teachers and getting kicked out of school?

ASHLEY - Depends, if your crowd is like more mature, then, that's the GCSE part. But if you're hanging around with hoodrats, they say; 'yeah man, I just beat up a teacher', and get ratings for that.

JERMAINE - So you can get respect in both ways. That's how St Pauls is. You can get respect for getting kicked out of school and having no GCSE's, and you can get respect for getting GCSE's. When I was younger you would get more respect for being bad than being good.

This short transcript describes well the way in which street culture penetrates schooling, creating a tension Sewell organises around two objectified templates of Black masculinity; one consistent with the themes of *respect* and street culture he calls Yard Man; the other, a white construct of Black passivity, conformity and assimilation, he calls the McDonald model (after the famous

news anchor Trevor McDonald).³⁵ 'These are not necessarily accurate representations of real lives; rather they are ideals and discourses which push and pull the soul. They are dominant models which position Black boys into the madness of being either/or and nothing else' (p. 173). The socio-genesis of this tension is the economics of social exclusion in time and place, for while doing well academically certainly is a route to *respect*, this path competes unhelpfully with others that are more potent and that carry greater legacies of precedent and success. These are the economic paths made by street culture, and they are installed in an infected and racially inferiorised image of Black masculinity made by five hundred years ideological labour now internalised, embodied and self-surveilled.³⁶

None among our group had left formal education with much, there being perhaps only a fistful of middling GCSE's between everyone. Ashley, Tyreese and Jermaine were all enrolled at the local college of further education, but on the kind of entry level course that required very little of them each week in terms of attendance and endeavour, and that was never going to bestow the skills, knowledge or confidence they were going to need to overcome the facticity of their circumstances. If anything, attending college for a few hours each week effected a false sense of social mobility, one the meagre status of their qualifications (never mind the circumstances of their lives) could not possibly deliver to them. Meanwhile, during a period of record youth unemployment, two-years would pass where these three would not show up on any official unemployment statistics.

³⁵ This is not an arbitrary attack on the character of Trevor McDonald, but a reference to his appointment by the government to lead their 'Better English Campaign'. Sewell was critical of the appointment, and challenged the newsreader to stop conforming and 'propagating the notion that the key problem with English is that young people are not using it properly' (p. 173). Sewell wanted the (racialised) issues of power and discourse in what constitutes the definition of 'proper English' addressed, and was frustrated at the symbolic potency and conformity of McDonald's involvement in what he saw as an ideological project.

³⁶ A related but different view of this is offered by Fordham and Ogbu (1986), who contend that a fictive kinship exists among Black students emerging from a group experience of oppression. This kinship may be oppositional, ambivalent to academic attainment and/or fearful of selling out and 'acting white'. It's possible there is something to this, descriptively at least, but my own experience tells me the picture is more complicated and circumspect from the perspective of my co-participants, most of whom wanted quite modestly for a good job, family, and home in the suburbs, and who knew a solid education was a prerequisite for realising this.

For Marcel and Audley, the situation was even more perilous. In their early twenties, they were both unemployed and undoubtedly well into the phase of post-school drift, where the erosion of their options was starting to feel (to me at least) critical. This period is a kind of post-eighteen hinterland of dwindling youth, diminishing economic and aspirational horizons, and eroding hope. Characterised by the experience of long-term under- and un-employment, boredom and flagging self-esteem, many young men find themselves, whatever their intent, constructed out of the legal economy and pulled toward the illegal one. It is not the only story among young men in St Pauls, but it is a significant economic discourse for too many, and a lived example of the collapsed class structure and 'story of failure'.

For young men like Marcel and Audley, if they do not graduate adolescence immediately to the drug trade or one of the states various adult correctional facilities, enter this period of drift until self-worth and/or economic necessity eventually drives them to 'choices' that lead back to such places. This is not a new phenomenon, Pryce (1979) noticed it forty years earlier among local men, who, figuratively speaking at least, are the fathers and grandfathers of my co-participants and the experience they describe today.

'It is with the experience of discrimination in the post-school phase that the process of alienation begins for the young West Indian... In the first place, the black school leaver enters the competition for jobs in the community at an initial disadvantage because of his colour - a disadvantage which is quite distinct from his sub-standard educational attainment. The young West Indian must be 'twice as good' if he is to get the same job as his white counterpart. This is one of the many ways in which he may be eliminated from better-paying jobs with prospects. For indeed, the problem is not that the young West Indian cannot find any work at all; his difficulty is getting a job that provides him with interesting work with good prospects of promotion, and the opportunity to acquire a skill of his own choosing. There is a high proportion of young West Indians in dull, unskilled jobs that require little imagination' (p. 125).

Even today it is not, as Pryce points out, that there is no work available at all; though given the competition for jobs amid the context of a (double-dip)

recession that is the deepest since the war, it certainly feels that way. It is more that the work available is poorly paid, temporary, part-time, and usually in a service industry with poor prospects for promotion and an emphasis on customer service antithetical to the masculinities made by street culture and the doubly 'spoiled identity' a St Pauls address confers (Goffman, 1968). Equally, these temporary jobs suit well many of the forty five thousand or so students attending Bristol's universities, a scale of competition that was utterly dispiriting for Ashley and Tyreese, who spent the eighteen months we were together looking unsuccessfully for work of this kind. Marcel meanwhile, flitted in and out of a variety of temporary, low-skilled, part-time jobs; from office administration to working the door of a pub several miles away in Fishponds. None of these he held down for anything more than a few months.

A couple of times I asked Marcel why he didn't think about enrolling at college, but he always told me he enjoyed studying his own way, and had a busy life that didn't afford him the time. He never confided what he did that made his life so busy, becoming evasive whenever I pressed him. But in fact I came to think his reluctance was much less about ambition than literacy and confidence. For the reality is that for Marcel to make university and (perhaps then) economic mobility an attainable goal, he would have needed a five, possibly ten, year plan. This would necessarily begin with his studying for GCSE's through a remedial adult learning programme, which, aside from the affront to his pride, proffered nothing to his immediate need for an income, nor his understandable and quite reasonable desire to have his material wants sated in the present. Audley's situation was equally bleak, having been passed around various 'welfare to work' programmes for two years, he was eventually shoehorned into a plastering apprenticeship he had no interest in or aptitude for. The example of Marcel and Audley would make a fitting case study for the process of deproletarianisation that has annexed the long term life chances of a portion of young men in St Pauls. Debates about social mobility, aspiration, and the fulfilment of career are out of touch with the economic realities facing these young men. It is not exorbitant tuition fees or economic aspiration that have defeated them, but a fundamental inequality of economic opportunity that begins at birth and is at once historical, racialised, spatial, and embodied.

SIMON - *What advice would you give an 11 year old today.* LAWRENCE - *Try and stay out of the system, that's the dumbest thing they do. They get trapped in the system when they young not realising it ruins them for them later. Everything seems longer. If you do school and college properly then you only got to do two or three years at uni and then you there, where you need to be. But everyone comes out of school with nothing, goes to college and does nothing. Then when someone says to you; 'ok, you wanna do this then you got to go uni and do the lower level, then the middle level, then the high level'. They like can't be bothered, they lost too much time.*

Two generations earlier, post-school drift invariably meant 'relationships with parents enter(ed) a period of strain - over matters of late hours, choice of friends and entertainments, involvement with the law and repeated work failure' (Pryce, 1979, p.131). For parents, the shame of this 'failure' was personal, 'a betrayal... of the original purpose of their migration to Britain'. Their shame would ultimately facilitate 'the drift of the would-be teenybopper into a life... that sooner or later brings him in conflict with the law' (ibid).³⁷ This pattern still has residual resonance today, but the generational cycle of social exclusion has rotated perhaps twice or more for families since; each turn taking further cumulative toll on family and psychic structures, gender and sexual politics, aspirations, parental engagement with education, work, and the prospect of social mobility. As Lawrence says, conflict with the law begins much earlier now, as young as ten or eleven, when boys and young men start to more frequently occupy public space and pursue the anti-social and increasingly criminal acts of peer surveilled *respect*. Thus the 'story of failure' that elicited feelings of shame and personal failure for the parents of *teenyboppers* two generations earlier, is in an important sense the genesis for today's story; now very much embodied, resisted and recycled in a street culture that has multiplied and divided under the conditions of economic and social apartheid, and through which local subjectivities are made from the raw materials of their objectification at the

³⁷ For Pryce, a teenybopper 'refers, first and foremost, to a West Indian youth in his teens or very early twenties, who is male, homeless, unemployed and who, in the language of liberals and social workers is 'at risk' in the community - that is, a young West Indian who is either already a delinquent or in danger of becoming one' (p. 107).

centre (Bourdieu, 1977). So entrenched is this state of affairs, that some of the group could recall experiences where, having found work, they felt subject to the discouraging hostility of Black as well as white co-workers.

TYREESE - *If there's white people in a job and a Black person goes there, like, the white people will help him. When it's a Black person, they're like; 'I ain't helping you I don't like you'. They just look at you and they don't like you.*

LAWRENCE - *Or if you have respect they'll be; 'yeah yeah what d'you need, what d'you need.'*

TYREESE - *If there's Black people working there you need respect for them to help you, but if you don't have no respect from them, they're not gonna help you. Or they help you to do the wrong thing.*

SIMON - *Is this true, have you experienced that?*

TYREESE - *Yeah, if you're lost a white person will escort you there, a Black person will be like; 'walk up the stairs, turn left, turn right...'*

TRIGGA - *Yeah but it goes the other way to. When I went to work at this agency for a little bit, literally, since I walked in, the white guy at the front was like; 'who are you?' And everyone kept looking at me. I was literally like the only Black person there. I was like, 'why does everyone keep looking at me?'*

AUDLEY - *It depends what kind of job it is. I've got a friend that's like an accountant and he said there's not one person where he works another race than white people. He knows people there who didn't get good grades, like two-twos at uni and stuff, and he's seen Asian people come in with firsts and not get jobs over white people with rubbish grades. That's pretty blatant.*

The drugs trade as an equal opportunity employer

Coming of age in this economic landscape it's not hard to see how less formal but well worn economic paths become increasingly plausible, attractive and necessary. Central to this though is a core theme in the 'story of failure' that says this positionality is anyway the natural state of affairs for Black people; that drugs are to the young Black man what the corner shop is to the Asian family or

corporate business is to whites. This colonial echo of racial determinism retains ideological traction today (see for example Herrnstein & Murray, 1994), and is interiorised, embodied, and embedded in the core beliefs and assumptions most (not all) of my co-participants held about the world.

JERMAINE - *Seems like every race has got a marketin' plan, is what it seems like.*

MARCEL - *What about us?*

TYREESE - *We just gangsta, tryin' to hustle.*

JERMAINE - *They all hustlin' though, all peoples.*

TYREESE - *Yeah, but Asians come down here and make their own little shop and stuff, start makin' money, get a Land Rover, Porsche, a Ferrari. Then we just sit there lookin' at it. We want to get that, we want to make it, but we too dumb, we just sit there getting locked up.*

LAWRENCE - *Who would you associate with the fancy cars just in Bristol, in general?*

ASHLEY - *Asians*

LAWRENCE - *Who would you associate with running the big business in town?*

ASHLEY - *White people.*

LAWRENCE - *Who do you associate with running the local corner shops in every area?*

TYREESE - *Asians...*

JERMAINE - *...and Somalis*

LAWRENCE - *Who would you associate the Black people with?*

ASHLEY/TYREESE - *Drug dealing! (Laughter).*

ASHLEY - *Why do you think a lot of Black people do (sell) drugs?*

JERMAINE - *Black people sell the drugs yeah, mostly, people that take them are mostly white.*

ASHLEY - *That's what I mean.*

SIMON - *So is crack still the dominant drug round here?*

TYREESE - *E's, P's, all that now too. P's are like paracetamol all scrunched up.*

ASHLEY - *Who gets high on paracetamol? The whites is all about crack.*

On one occasion, after we had watched a short film about Bristol during the period of slavery, this extended to a darker kind of nihilistic and economic racism that shocked me. As the group reflected on the film, Tyreese seemed irritated. When I asked what was bothering him he replied: "I don't care about it. I'm just saying it's (slavery) a way of making money. It's just how the white man makes his money. Like the Black man sells drugs to make his money."

In this way the drug trade comes to be naturalised in the status quo, and local psychic structures thus mirror the institutional apartheid visited upon the area. Because too selling drugs is present and visible everyday, what are in fact effects of ideological power come to be self-surveilled locally through the lens of cultural and biological determinism.³⁸ In the same way, the drug distributive trade brings the aggressive capitalist thrust and regulatory structures of gang fidelity, organised violence and hypervigilance to relationships cast in a climate of mutual suspicion and competitiveness. And these qualities too end up as racial epithets in the local story of failure. This is explored in greater detail in the next chapter, here it is simply important to note that the drug trade appears to many young men as a realistic and legitimate economic vocation for reasons related to but other than pure economics. Fundamentally however, it is in fact a completely rational economic choice for many.

What the drug trade offers is an equal opportunity for material success. Work hard and there is the prospect of promotion, good wages, status, wealth, and the feeling of personal dignity capitalism installs in such things. Indeed, for those at the top the financial rewards can be staggering. The most famous example of this is King Aggi, who, through adolescence and his base in St Pauls, led the Aggi Crew to a monopoly of the regional drug trade in the nineties. In 1998, six members of the gang were arrested in possession of crack cocaine with a street value estimated at one million pounds, and King Aggi's

³⁸ Economic apartheid leaves room for the almost Jungian archetype of the gangster, the *Badman*. Adorned in the trappings of material wealth and success, this archetype assumes understandable status. His presence offers young men a visible story of material success and dignity in sharp distinction to the repeated story of failure and personal defeat. His symbolic appeal ought not to be underestimated, for it is rooted in how achievable, desirable and 'normal' his success appears next to more mainstream notions of employment.

own reflections on this period explicitly identify the only story of success (making money) visible to him growing up.

“I was like 19, the guys below me were like 16 or 17. No-one was around us showing us how to make money, except for... the only people we seen with money was the drug dealers on the front line. We just came out there and followed what was out there already. The only thing we done different was we come out there in numbers but as one. So, if we had any trouble out there, we would all step to the trouble immediately. They wouldn't be any one-on-ones. As young ghetto youth, once you get to that level you just end up buying more cars and more clothes and more gold. Understand 'cos that's the level of your thinking. By 99/2000 I was a stressful human being. I needed to go to the jail. Definitely.” (Cantera, 2010)

Such is the international context of a drug economy at the vanguard of globalisation, news of the Aggi Crew's incarceration quickly reached Jamaica, and before long Yardies from East Kingston's Hype Crew arrived in St Pauls to exploit the vacant market.³⁹ But by the summer of 2003, the Aggi Crew were all free and looking to reclaim the territory they had ceded to the Yardies. The young men picked up guns and toured local bars, including the Black Swan, Inkerman and Lebeqs, announcing they were taking over. They offered the Yardies a deal: they could stay and work, but they'd have to pay a tax of fifty pounds a day for each one that did, and one hundred pounds a day for every business they were running. Predictably, the Yardies were not inclined to accept the offer, and a violent turf war ensued. So violent, in potential as much as anything else, the police were compelled to deploy armed patrols on the streets of St Pauls (Davies, 2003). After a slew of street rip-offs, kidnappings, armed robberies and police raids, the Aggi Crew were back in prison, and the drug economy was left to the remaining Yardies, in whose ultimate control it largely remains to this day.

³⁹ In 2002, Operation Atrium, a major initiative by Avon & Somerset Police against the city's crack trade, uncovered a bogus college in the St Paul's area which had provided visas to more than three hundred Jamaicans. Of those, forty five were charged with drug offenses, eleven with weapons charges, one with rape and another with attempted murder. A further hundred and twenty one were detained on immigration offenses with the rest on the run.

Despite the innumerable tales of young men like King Aggi, who came up hard, got rich quick, but ended up dead or in prison, there is a steady stream of young men willing and compelled to take their chances. Most, like my co-participants, are circumspect, driven to the trade only at times of utmost financial need. For a few more, circumspection in the end gives way to economic pragmatism and the realisation the trade offers just about the only viable financial path open to them. For a handful, this option is wholeheartedly embraced, and an arch labour of violence and sociopathy is brought to bear in their work and ascent to the top. But even for this group of young men, like King Aggi, the problem is that street culture is an equal partner in the viability of the enterprise. Consequently, the idea of making money and then getting out of 'the game' is difficult to psychologically and practically realise. Thus does the economics of social apartheid ensure success in the drugs trade does not translate into assimilation to the economic mainstream, or even a modest degree of social mobility beyond St Pauls.

"Those things can only go on for so long. I'm not gonna lie, I should have finished with it a long time ago anyway, and just got out of it. And honest to God that was what I wanted to do, as a youth. I didn't want to keep doing it, keep doing it, shit. I got to a pinnacle and I needed to come out of it. But as a young ghetto youth, the way that they train your brain, in St Pauls, you understand, you can't really see farther than that. You can only see... the people that made it, to you still go out on the frontline. Your thinking that they've made it. They ain't made shit. But because they got the Bimmer (BMW) with the drop-top and all the gold, and you know they phat, they got cash, you think they made it. But they ain't made shit. So you just try to get to there. Once you're there, you're looking for something else now but there ain't no-one around you, 'cos your the highest man around. There ain't no-one there to show you nothing else, understand? So the only thing you do now is continue and continue. And you know it's going down. I knew I was going to prison" (Cantera, 2010).

Signs of the drug economy are everywhere if you look, from crack needles in the adventure playground and derelict buildings and alleyways, to the shuffling addict, undercover police, and Yardie in his executive car. For young men growing up in St Pauls, these symbols form part of an everyday tapestry against

which their aspirations and safety are set. None of which is to say that my co-participants did not have modest and quite mainstream ambitions, and were not desperate to avoid a life lived on 'the front line.' But there was consensus that the opportunity for work in this sector presented itself overtly and readily, and that the choice to participate or not is not one that easily conforms to middle class judgments of right and wrong, good and bad. Real world economics make moralising of this kind redundant in the collapsed social spaces of the inner city, or at least relative, since my co-participants were certainly not amoral beings and their decision to sell drugs was a fundamentally reasonable one.

MARCEL - *So why do we do the things we do (sell drugs), what are our reasons?*

JACOB - *Because life is hard out here.*

ASHLEY - *Sometimes it's not even trying to find respect from your friends (dealing drugs). It's more to try and help out your family. Some people that mug and rob people's houses, they will try to sell it. I know it's bad, but to kind of help out their mum when she's struggling on bills and all that. So it's either that your stupid that you'll rob someone, or your really desperate to get a job and you done something bad in the past which makes you have a criminal record, so you can't get a job.*

TYREESE - *You don't hardly see any white drug dealers, you see mostly Black drug dealers, they everywhere. You see them, you talk to them, and like a week later they'll give you something to sell, and you'll get into it, and like you just pick up from there. You get arrested, come out, do the same thing again. Drug dealing, you get drugs off a source, off someone yeah, and the amount of money you make, you have to give them three-quarters of it and you keep one quarter. But if you spend all of it, and they come back for the money and you don't have it; they give you one chance and if you break that chance they send someone on you, to kill you and get the money off you.*

ASHLEY - *It's not even that sometimes. You might have a job, and if you don't do bad, and go with your low minimum wage job, the people that sell drugs might say; 'what happened to you, you're not one of us anymore'. They might peer pressure you to do it, and if you don't do it, then they*

might put a hit on your life or something like that. They might send someone to do you.

SIMON - *Could that really happen?*

TYREESE - *Yeah.*

JERMAINE - *Yeah.*

SIMON - *So how hard would it be for someone selling drugs to leave that lifestyle?*

ASHLEY - *When you were doing bad and you got your money, and you seen how much you were getting, you'd want the same but in a good way, and it wouldn't come to you.*

JERMAINE - *They could make more money doing bad so why would they want to leave it.*

ASHLEY – *I remember when I used to deal drugs man. The guy I was doing it with, 'cos I was selling more than him, he got angry and was like; 'hold on, who are you going to'? And I was like; 'these are my links, don't ask me', and 'cos I had more money than him he tried to fight me and take my money. We were good friends and I was like; 'what's the matter with you? It's just money!' He's like, 'look at what money can buy you – everything'. We ain't friends no more.*

It's important to note that selling drugs is categorically not the same thing as doing drugs. Though my co-participants were fluent in the street names, effects and quality of a whole range of legal and illegal drugs, none apparently had a history of misusing them (though this again is not the same thing as saying they never used them). Drugs seemed principally to offer a source of income rather than a recreation, one the group felt had moved away from being borne out of economic necessity to simply a lifestyle for today's youngers.

ASHLEY - *The thing is, when I was young I used to get influenced by money, 'cos I used to love money... yeah I still do! (Laughter). But now, it's worse because the olders are saying; 'yeah, if you sell this to a certain person, you'll get this money and then you can buy this.' And now all the youngers we just named, they're getting their older brothers and asking; 'oh yeah, what's that stuff I seen you selling the other day, let me have some, I'm gonna make me some money.' Their brothers will give it to*

them, like, and they'll go sell it off, and that's how it basically starts from there. It wasn't even like that back in the day. When you started selling drugs it was because you were going through a hard time and you kinda had to. But now, if you sell drugs then you're one of the people you shouldn't mess with because you're either taking your own stuff or you got a weapon on you. They getting younger and younger. See people here are just about money, and if someone's getting away with making money then they obviously got to hit back. The youngers are following that, thinking I want money too 'cos I want a new game for my Xbox, so I'm gonna sell drugs, get new clothes and things.

TYREESE - These youngers start selling drugs now, like twelve and older. They start to beat up older people, much older people selling drugs, to get their piece.

With no labour laws to protect those employed in the drug economy, the work is inevitably fraught, both with the risk of arrest and the interpersonal suspicion that inevitably festers in a climate where violence functions as corporate regulation, and the sanctions can be fatal. Avoiding arrest is key, not least because once a criminal record has been acquired prospective entry to the legal labour market is dealt a terminal blow. The trouble is that crime in St Pauls is largely centred around the kind of anti-social behaviour the pursuit of *respect* and the violence and addiction of the drug trade delivers to the neighbourhood's public spaces, and this of course has elicited a particular tactical response from the police, which in its own way raises the stakes and helps feed a climate of distrust and vigilance.⁴⁰

JERMAINE - The thing is, people can have loads of money, they dress a certain way, and the police will be like; 'how do they get all their stuff'?

LEDLEY - Some police go undercover though.

ASHLEY - They dress up like a crackhead and go up to Tasties, you know, up there.

JERMAINE - Some people, they mostly know it's a police officer. You've not seen them before, and you can tell in how they act.

⁴⁰ As of July 2011, crime in St Pauls was in the top 2% for England and Wales, with a rate (the number of crimes per 1000 people) of 66.06. (Avon and Somerset Police, 2011).

TYREESE - *You'll be hanging around and they ask so many questions; 'have you got anything' and you'll be like; 'nah, we don't'. But dealers always say 'no' at first just to test you, to see what you say. If they say; 'I know you got something' they know it's police and not a real crackhead.*

JERMAINE - *When we (looking at Tyreese) were walking the other day, we knew it was a police officer. He come up to us (does shuffling impression of an addict); 'can you sort me out?'*

TYREESE - *We were like 'no' and he asked if we knew where he could score. He walked up all shuffling and when we said no he walked away all normal! (Laughter).*

Stencil, Thomas Street.



The hustle

Beyond the drugs trade and the endless search for legal employment, there is a wider informal economy, nefariously referred to as *enterprisin'*. Under this banner, which describes too a positive and sharply defined value in the structure of street culture, is gathered pretty much any informal entrepreneurial economic activity. For example, both Lawrence and Ashley had periodically sold stolen or counterfeit clothes and electronics for local 'wholesalers'. Tyreese too hustled a small and infrequent amount of money and favours from repairing bicycles. Indeed, whether by gambling, the exchange of favours, invention, selling pirated DVDs, or I dare say, participating in our sessions; *enterprisin'* described an enduring and ingenious capacity to extract money or resources from thin air.

This though should not invoke an image of some bygone working class communality, a network of personal relations and support that could be relied upon to cushion the blow of economic hardship. *Enterprisin'* describes a constellation of economic hustling, including drugs, made in the image of late capitalism. It is highly individualistic, sociopathic, and does nothing to ameliorate the local feeling of economic insecurity that creates and sustains it. Despite this, Pryce's (1979) definition of the *hustle* basically holds true today, for 'whatever else the hustle might be, judged from the reference position of the dominant society, it is certainly not a deprivation. It restores the hustler's sense of pride and his feeling of mastery and autonomy. He is in control again' (p. 68). Today, the *hustle* is a kind of byword for a worldview in which, as Jermaine says, "all peoples hustlin".

Indeed, viewed from the streets, the *hustle* has been revealed as a cultural phenomenon at all levels of society, from politicians submitting false expenses and banks mis-selling insurance and rigging money markets, to the police taking bribes from journalists. This has helped to solidify and expand the concept, as well as the sociopathy at its heart. That said, because of their positionality, it seemed to me that the *hustle* practiced by my co-participants was more righteous than its equivalent higher up the social strata, a perspective Marcel summed up for me one afternoon:

MARCEL - *It's like this, if I'm hungry and I see fruit on a tree, but you tell me you own the tree and the fruit and the land around the tree, so I can't even get the old fruit that's fallen on the floor. If I'm hungry and got no money to buy your fruit, if I'm hungry and you tell me that; sorry, I'm just gonna take the fruit.*

The gentrification of St Pauls

St Pauls borders Bristol's new five hundred million pound shopping centre, Cabot Circus, and the refurbishment of the central business district is bringing change for the local residents.⁴¹ The spatial retranslation of economic and social differences is moving into a new phase, one characterised by gentrification and population change, with all the concomitant effects on families and communities these processes bring. The most immediate manifestation of this as far as my co-participants and the wider community was concerned, was the Dove Lane re-development.⁴²

Dove Lane is a strip of bulldozered land that lies between the Full Circle community flat where we worked, and Newfoundland Road. At the time of our fieldwork, a consultation was underway and local young people were a 'voice'

⁴¹ According to Clement (2009), The Broadmead Alliance (of local authority planners and construction companies) funded and approved what would become Cabot Circus without carrying out the required Air Quality and Race Impact Assessments. 'The alliance's £250,000 allocation for community projects represented a mere 0.04% of the £550 million budget. Very early on in the project, local objections were lodged and considered irrelevant as the project was waved through... The proposed name for the new mall, The Merchant's Quarter, was withdrawn after a public campaign protested at links to the city's slave trading past in the marketing of a location still inhabited by a large African Caribbean community (Clement and Lever, 2006; Wilkes 2006). It says a lot about the local community's input to this huge development, built within one hundred meters of their neighbourhood, that they had to mount a public petition just to influence the name. 'Renamed after an earlier Bristol merchant with slaving connections, the Venetian Giovanni Cabot, Cabot Circus opened in September 2008, just days after the closure of Lehmann Brothers heralded the new recession' (Clement, 2009, p. 47).

⁴² The proposals for Dove Lane were launched by a consultation in the spring of 2007. The developers leading it put forward ambitious plans for a mixed use, inner city regeneration that would transform St Pauls. There were plans for the creation of 700 new homes, a retail park, and the creation of thousands of new jobs. At the heart of the proposal is a new hotel and a forty storey tower block (BBC, 2007). As of December 2012, Dove Lane remains a wasteland, the only visible change to the site effected by the swarms of buddleia plants that have colonised the rubble.

yet to be heard. Sauda, sensing an opportunity, asked us if we could spare half an hour one evening to talk about the proposals.

SAUDA - *I think it's an opportunity for young people to get involved, there could be jobs in construction, training, work placements.*

ASHLEY - *They don't actually give us no opportunities, this doesn't mean they'll listen to us.*

SAUDA - *I know, but I've been talking with them for a couple of years now and you should say what you want, these are things we have been talking about.*

ASHLEY - *Years? the Dove Lane only just got demolished. I ain't gonna waste my time, they probably just build it into flats and stuff.*

SAUDA - *There's gonna be houses and shops. It's going to cost millions, it's a big development. So what do you think young people want from it? Have you been to any of the consultations?*

JERMAINE - *I went but it was a waste of time. They just gonna build flats over everything... and they could just extend the park.*

TYREESE - *They build the flats 'cos more Somalians are coming into the community.*

SAUDA - *There is the possibility of extending the park, because there will be new residents. If that happened, what would you like to see in the park?*

TYREESE - *Put a business there or something.*

ASHLEY - *No, cos there's town right there!*

TYREESE - *I said business. A business where St Pauls people could go like, work and stuff.*

LAWRENCE - *What work you want, Tyreese? McDonalds already in town! (Laughter).*

The overriding feeling among the group was one of disenfranchisement, though this is not the same thing as saying my co-participants were un-interested. They simply did not believe that anyone would listen or care for their concerns about

the development, and in this assumption they were probably correct.⁴³ Again, the group self-surveilled the borders of their economic exclusion. For example, Lawrence's off-hand comment about Tyreese's prospects of work flipping burgers in McDonalds was funny, but it was also telling.

SAUDA - *Employment then, if there were jobs in construction building the site, would you do them?*

ASHLEY - *But none of us are doing construction!* SAUDA - *They're talking about providing training first.* LAWRENCE - *Nah, you know, I want it built properly! (Laughter).*

SAUDA - *It's the same with the Cabot Circus build. Only 30% of local people were involved in the development of that despite us fighting hard to get local people first chances with the jobs created. So what other opportunities...*

JERMAINE - *...There's not going to be opportunities, there's going to be flats and houses.*

SAUDA - *But what would you like to see?*

JERMAINE - *Our opinion doesn't count, they got stuff planned already, there's no point us speaking.*

TYREESE - *They can build flats and stuff but they should build a hotel as well.*

ASHLEY - *Man, what is wrong with you!?*

SAUDA - *A hotel attracts a lot of traffic and stuff, do you want more cars in St Pauls?*

LAWRENCE - *Passers in the night. You still have to pay to stay there, Tyreese, when your mum runs you out at night! (Laughter).*

TYREESE - *But it's close to the M32 isn't it?*

ASHLEY - *But they ain't gonna say; 'let's look round here see if there's a hotel'.*

SAUDA - *Why do you think we need a hotel in St Pauls?*

⁴³ Something of this has its roots in an elongated trajectory of local regeneration, where partnerships pledging to involve local people in employment opportunities and decision making have been poorly realised. For example, construction at the regeneration funded St Pauls Leisure Centre had to be stopped in 2002, when it was realised that despite partnerships promising inclusive employment practices, not a single Black worker was employed on the site (see Clement, 2009). The memory of this lives long in the skepticism of many local people regarding the opportunities Dove Lane presents.

TYREESE - *Because, to attract more people, make St Pauls look good.*

ASHLEY - *The hotel would be one and a half star!*

TYREESE - *Yeah, but obviously you build it from there, build it up.*

LAWRENCE - *Where do you think all the profits are gonna go from this thing. People in the community ain't gonna see it. We'll be putting money into it by using it or whatever, but I don't see us getting anything out of it.*

SAUDA - *There's this thing called the St Pauls Protocol, where local people get priority over other people in buying local housing. Did you know about that?*

JERMAINE - *That's a lie.*

SAUDA - *So we have policies to protect the community.*

ASHLEY - *They don't let us know that though.*

JERMAINE - *I think that's a lie. Anyway with Dove Lane, St Pauls ain't gonna feel like a community. You gonna see all these working class white people walking past, with their suitcase, racist police walking around, yes, racist police. (Laughter).*

Dove Lane. (Photo by Ashley).



Allied to the feeling of not being heard was a sense that the re-development of Dove Lane heralded the start of 'the plan'; a considered process of ethnic cleansing that, in a new spatial retranslation of economic and social difference would see the local Black community squeezed out in favour of the white middle classes and newly arrived Somalis.

JERMAINE - *It's the start of the plan, yeah, like, to move the Black people out of St Pauls. Because it's more expensive close to town, after that, one side will be full of loads of white people, not being racist, and all the Black people be this side. They'll be all intimidated to come round, which means more police around arresting Black people. White people will get friendly, get closer, closer until they take over!*

ASHLEY - *I reckon there should be houses and flats.*

JERMAINE - *I reckon someone should blow it up.*

SAUDA - *There's going to be some houses. Places you can rent from Places for People, some houses you can buy as well. Do you think there are a lot of young people at home who would like to move out of their parents and into a local flat of their own, say on Dove Lane?⁴⁴*

LAWRENCE - *They got to make them cheaper than houses are now.*

JERMAINE - *Yeah, exactly, they be right in town and more expensive, all the white working class people gonna take them. I think what we say anyway, they already have planned anyway, so it ain't gonna really matter. This is just a cover up. We care, but our thoughts don't really count. The white people already got something planned, not being racist. (Laughter).*

TYREESE - *Too much Somalians are coming into the community.*

JERMAINE - *I prefer Somalians than working class white people.*

TYREESE - *When a bunch of them around you, they can be talking about you and you don't know they be laughing about you.*

JERMAINE - *I still prefer them to any other race.*

SIMON - *Why don't you like working class white people, Jermaine?*

⁴⁴ The St Pauls area is characterised by a high proportion (21.1%) of privately rented accommodation (Bristol as a whole is 12.2%) and social housing (26.14%). Overcrowding is a substantial issue too, the population of St Pauls has grown from 1,933 in 2001 to 3,221 in 2010 (ONS, 2011).

JERMAINE - *I dunno. Cos they're racist. It's in my genes, it's carried down from my ancestors!*

TYREESE - *What it is, you see white people, and they look at you like, down on you.*

ASHLEY - *It might be how you dress, 'cos of the way I dress not a lot of white people do it to me.*

JERMAINE - *'Cos you look like a skater. (Looks at me) I don't hate white people!*

SIMON - *I'm not taking it personally, don't worry.*

ASHLEY - *If you didn't come to St Pauls for this, would you ever come here?*

SIMON - *Probably not.*

An ecology of urban neglect

My co-participants opinions of the Dove Lane development, and about their own community, reveal complicated layers of feeling in 'the story of failure'. The economic narrative sketched above has a supporting cast of ecological neglect and the psychological injuries of racism and oppression, and it takes all three of these to fully recite the story. Images of community are indelibly bound to those of self and of Black people and their economic and social position more generally, and they combine to create a 'structure of feeling' (Williams, 1977) that has implications for how local behaviours, emotional states and psychic constructs are composed. On that basis, another perspective from which to examine the social forces that shape local attitudes, masculinities and mental health, is the emic picture of St Pauls ecology described by my co-participants.

A basic rendering of this was achieved in our very first session together. To break the ice, I was hoping the idea of making something practical would appeal to the group, and with that in mind I purchased a small camcorder for us to mess about with. I wondered aloud; if the group were outsiders to St Pauls like me, what questions they might ask someone living in the area to try and understand what life is like? Eventually, after much cajoling and encouragement, we had three simple questions. Lawrence and I then acted out a mock interview to help the group overcome their apparent timidity, before we

all paired off and took turns going into the smaller adjacent room to interview one another, taking turns to use the camera, interview, and be interviewed. Afterwards, we sat down and watched them back together.

INTERVIEWER - *Do you like St Pauls?*

JACOB - *Some of the time. More times when violence happens and stuff kicks off it's not good.*

ASHLEY - *If you know a lot of people in St Pauls then you're alright. But... if you don't know too much people some really bad things can happen.*

TYREESE - *What do I like? Nothing. Because there's gang violence, there's drug dealing, there's kids that think they're too high and mighty, that type of stuff.*

INTERVIEWER - *Would you like to bring your own family up in St Pauls?*

JACOB - *Nah, I don't think I would, see... I don't want my yute to be no gun runner, no drug seller, no crackhead or nothing.*

TYREESE - *No. Because they would pick up dirty habits. Like, y'know... go round fighting other people, joining gang members, killing people, selling drugs, and thinking they're too big for their own good.*

ASHLEY - *No! Sorry. There's too much violence going on. Like, I might take part in a couple of violent acts but I wouldn't like any of my kids to be doing that.*

INTERVIEWER - *Is St Pauls stereotyped?*

JACOB - *Not really... Well, 'nuff people know St Pauls people be hard. People find it frightening but they don't need to be. I'm not afraid of nobody.*

I remember being struck by just how negative these responses were. Immediately, a picture of the neighbourhood emerged from images of violence, gangs and the drugs trade. The idea of raising a family in this landscape was met with universal displeasure, and the desire to move away was equally affirmative and strong. As the weeks went by and this basic picture matured and deepened, it started to become clear the group's negativity was largely experiential. That whatever the stereotyped image of St Pauls beyond the neighbourhood, and to whatever extent this informed their feelings and ideas about the place and themselves, the overall feeling of antipathy toward home

was motivated by their lives, the people around them and the ecology of the area.

ASHLEY - *I reckon they should re-paint the houses we got, they falling apart. And a nice garden, front and back on these houses. We ain't got any good looking gardens, and the council knows that and they don't really do them. And the streets are nasty. The other day, everywhere smelled like shit, I swear!*

JERMAINE - *Grosvenor Road stinks.*

MARCEL - *A nice piece of green too. There isn't a proper park with like a flat piece of grass to play for miles around, I swear.*

ASHLEY - *Every ground in St Pauls is patchy. We need some nice areas.*

JERMAINE - *Plus it got the smell of dog shit all over it!*

ASHLEY - *But they shouldn't make it all houses, 'cos St Pauls is small.*

One road in Bedminster is the same size as St Pauls.

TYREESE - *There's nothing good around here.*

MARCEL - *Ventures (an adventure playground in St Agnes Park), like, that place round there needs looking at, it's not safe at all.*

SIMON - *That place just won an award for being one of the best playgrounds in the country didn't it?*

TYREESE - *Probably looking wise, but I think at night it's too secluded. They don't have it lit up at night and stuff, so crackheads go there. I know a little kid who got stabbed by a crack needle playing in the sand, recently. It's not blocked off, the sand bit, you can't be seen by anyone walking past. It's a nice place to go and sit and do your thing.*

ASHLEY - *Most people from St Pauls they don't even like it how they built it. But most of the bid people (the council) they think it's good, like.*

TRIGGA - *They should come to the area and ask people what they would like, but sometimes I get why they don't bother too 'cos people just say; 'I don't know just put some swings there.'*

LAWRENCE - *Yeah, I just think it's not safe enough.*

Low-rise housing, Halston Drive.



As a stage, the fading and congested ecology delivers a suitably crumbling backdrop against which the 'story of failure' is continually remade and reinforced in the overlapping experience of physical neglect, personal insecurity and everyday violences.⁴⁵ Indeed, the playground described above was the setting for a suicide that autumn, and it's through moments such as this that even award-winning sites of significant financial investment, attractive looking sites intended to bestow local children with opportunities for play and fun, come to be tainted with symbols and memories of social and personal defeat. This is an important point, because the 'story of failure' is not an abstracted theoretical idea, it has a human face, it is known and lived. Local residents are both actors

⁴⁵ A Bristol TUC enquiry into the 1980 rioting in St Pauls describes 'a spiral of decline' that is manifest in today's 'story of failure':

'The lack of environmental improvement, the 'red light' image, derelict sights and boarded up houses and other buildings, planning blight and other factors have produced what one witness described as a spiral of decline. Derelict sites or boarded up buildings, we were told, greeted drivers who left the motorway to drive through the area, creating or reinforcing in their minds a particular adverse impression of the area' (p. 11).

and audience, and there exists a circular effect to this that cumulatively breeds the kind of passivity and fatalism that many authors have noted to varying degrees among oppressed groups (for example, Fanon, 1961, Lewis, 1966, Freire, 1971, Martín-Baró, 1994, Belmonte, 2005, Watkins & Shulman, 2008).

Of course, St Pauls is also full of love, fun, solidarity, and generosity of spirit too, and I am mindful of stoking a single story of deficit and defeat through this text. Indeed, the presentation of the 'story of failure' in lived experience does not negate the simultaneous presence of strength, dignity, and optimism in the community. But remaining faithful to our discussions and planning it would be dishonest to sanitise this picture and its potency in recycling inequality. I mean only to expand on 'the story of failure' my co-participants named, though I do not imply by this that my co-participants had themselves failed, given up, or were defeated. But peering through a psychoanalytic lens for a moment, the 'story of failure' and the street culture of resistance shaped by it demonstrates what Belmonte (2005) concluded in his study of poverty and class structure in inner city Naples. He surmised, and I concur, that 'if reality is threatening to all people, it is more threatening to the poor, and they must compensate and defend themselves accordingly. If, as R.D. Laing tells us, chronic ontological insecurity gnaws at the life force of modern man, it sucks at the bone marrow of the poor' (p. 135).

7. THE HIDDEN INJURIES OF RACE

“This ain’t nothing racist, but I reckon this neighbourhood needs more white people” (Ashley).

The title for this chapter paraphrases Sennett and Cobb’s (1972) work on ‘the hidden injuries of class’, a reference here to the way in which racism and race have penetrated the psychic constructs, worldview and *mindbodies* of my co-participants, fusing with the economic story of failure to naturalise and reproduce the status quo. The generative theme of race ran throughout our discussions. Whether about street culture, territoriality, money, drugs or community, a racial flavour was present in each. The impact of racist discourses on the young Black masculinities present in St Pauls is complex though, and I am mindful of appearing to universalise what follows. In an important sense my co-participants offer only one highly situated and fragmentary articulation of Black British culture, which nationally and in number ‘have been created from diverse and contradictory elements apprehended through discontinuous histories’ (Gilroy, 1987, p. 296). Nor has this study ventured to explore the postmodern tropism of adolescent white masculinities, particularly those made in the inner city, and their increasingly syncretic relationship to a particular image of Black masculinity expressed by street culture, and, let it be said, the consumerist white mainstream (for a good ethnographic account of this see Back, 1996).

For my part, it is no comfortable or easy thing to commit my feelings on this theme to paper, for obvious reasons of power and representation. But anyone purporting even the merest hint of some nascent post-racial age would need first to attend to the experience of my co-researchers, for whom race continues to insert a multifarious influence over their lives and life chances. Even a cursory glance at the surface of such things reveals a definitive postcolonial and ethnoracial profile to the economic apartheid spatially translated in Bristol, and I concur with Gilroy (1987) that ‘it is impossible to theorise black culture in Britain

without developing a new perspective on British culture as a whole' (p. 205).⁴⁶ With this in mind I place particular emphasis in this chapter on the ways in which racial discourse contributes to the marginality of my co-participants as an economic and political exercise from above, the interpersonal effects of which have changed and are changing the organisational capacity and dynamics of nationalism, social class, childhood and adolescence on the ground.

'Oppressed communities have had their cultural traditions, values, history and often even language diminished and assaulted. Processes of exclusion have eroded people's sense of value. Racist, dehumanizing, negative, and disempowering images of their communities and themselves have been internalized, leading to disregard of self and neighbor and a sense of fatalism in the face of daily difficulties and miseries' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 214).

Epidermalised inferiority

As has already been said, the story of failure sketched in the previous chapter is a fundamentally racialised one, and the 'hidden injuries' inflicted by it revealed themselves in two mutually inclusive ways; in the confidence, engagement, punctuality and group dynamic of the sessions; and in the qualitative descriptions of anger, anxiety, pressure and apathy my co-participants shared during them. Chapter Nine deals with the first of these more fully and in relation to theories of participation. Here, I am concerned with the latter condition of disease, the most basic and consuming presentation of which I experienced in the consciousness of my co-participants; an orientation to life that Lawrence summarised for me one evening while trying to help me understand why attendance was so poor:

LAWRENCE - *I think it's because of the stereotyping Black people. Say for example someone was driving a nice car, coming towards a group of Black kids, and you went; 'what person you think is driving that car?' They'll never say a Black man. If a Black man was driving that car, they'd*

⁴⁶ Of course, this does not negate the fact that many of Bristol's poorest outlying and largely white neighbourhoods in the south and north of the city experience many of the same features of marginality as the substantially more diverse inner city.

be, like... well you look twice. So their stereotype even stops them seeing the Black people who are doing like the right thing, like the positive stuff in the area. That's all they're focussed on now, their mindset, 'cos it's not normal to them and so they shoot that person down and cuss on them. It's not normal for them to be where they're wearing suits instead of wearing the baggy jeans and the latest name brands and stuff. So, it's not like they do it on purpose, but their mindset is so corrupted that they don't see it as normal. They try to diss the person, so then it kind of stops them from doing it too. I think that's what's happening here.

Lawrence uses the word 'normal', and the core assumptions about the world this word evokes is what veils aspiration and erodes confidence among local young men such that these qualities may be affirmed and determined largely by actions that conform and perpetuate this limited and limiting idea of normal; a (post)modern example of what Fanon called the 'epidermalisation of inferiority' (1967). This 'corrupted mindset' betrays other, more subtle injuries to the self. These are largely hidden from view, and in their presentation may frequently contribute to the mis-diagnosis by professionals of social discourse for personal disorder or failure. It's these injuries that resonate with silent trauma, the (post)colonial 'zone of non-being' (Fanon, 1967) that Everton, the elderly hustler I met some weeks before the project started, could only place as being "inside my heart like a ball and chain." Baldwin (1955) called this trauma a 'blind fever', Césaire (1969) described 'swallowed sticks and (a) maddened heart' (p. 69); but whatever adjectives are chosen, the somatic presentation is at once cultural, psychic, relational, and embodied; and continues to cast a shadow over the form and quality of a portion of the young Black masculinities made in St Pauls.

The corollary for the wider Black community of this epidermalised inferiority has been and is systemic. Older cultural narratives are being eroded by the emergence of an adolescent street culture that syncretises diasporic elements of American, Jamaican and British cultures in a subjective articulation of resistance made ultimately from the degrading and dehumanising raw materials of Black objectification at the white centre of British society. Made from such psychic and cultural matter, street culture in the end cannot help but recycle the

same inheritance, and even takes over most of the ideological labour in the process. The result is a trans-generational mutation of social and family structures, gender roles and sexual politics, and a gnawing ontological insecurity that is personal and relational; the consequence of spoiled child and adult attachments established in a landscape of contemporary marginality, migration, and an inheritance of historical trauma (see Arnold, 2008, 2012 and DeGruy-Leary, 2005). For my co-participants, this was evident in their views on the future of St Pauls.

SIMON - So what does the future hold for St Pauls then? You lot sound really pessimistic, like you can't see a positive outcome... for the neighbourhood I mean, not necessarily for yourselves.

ASHLEY - This ain't nothing racist but I reckon this neighbourhood needs more white people. The thing is, white people give a good vibe, I reckon white people give a good vibe.

TYREESE - (Pointing at Trigga) If there were more white people here you'd end up like him. (Laughter). Nah, it's a good thing, like, he stays out of trouble, and he like, thinks ahead. He always does stuff, trying to find a job and stuff, that Black people don't do.

SIMON - So why is that like white people?

TYREESE - Because he talks posh! (Laughter).

ASHLEY - White people do have a lot of patience though, you know.

TRIGGA - I have patience, it ain't that hard! You don't have to be white to have patience!

LAWRENCE - Yeah, if someone speaks a bit posh, you gun them down and say they're 'wash out.' (Mockingly) 'So let me wear my saggy trousers and stuff'. You lot just naturally think if you give a Black person a job with money, and you had a choice between the Black man and the white man working with your money, you'd rather pick the white guy just because the way you been built up to think. Like, you just think the Black guy is gonna take the money and run away. (Laughter). That's just how you think in your mind, 'cos you've been stereotyped for so long that that's just in you lots mind. Once you get out of that you'll feel better.

This exchange, much as Lawrence theorised earlier, sums up the nature of the local discourse on race, at least as I encountered it. But the most obvious and important thing to say first is that it was contested and partial even among my co-participants. Trigga and Lawrence were always irritated and vociferous whenever the ugly intonations of racial determinism appeared in our discussions. Second, undeniably, for Ashley, Tyreese, Jermaine, Ledley and Jacob, this aspect of racial determinism seemed phenomenologically real. For them the essence of 'Black' was 'impatience' and a slew of other epithets that variously drew from lingering colonial stereotypes of laziness, immediacy, dangerousness and criminality. White, in complete contradistinction to this, was for them flush with innate assumptions of positivity, lawfulness, planning, literacy, endeavour and 'good vibes'. Finally, although these antipodal positions certainly existed and were contested between the group, they alone do not tell the full story. Trigga and Lawrence, though conscious of their consciousness, were still embedded in a street culture created from their own racial and gendered objectification. And though Ashley and the others seemed to accept a narrative of Black inferiority, it was not so definitive they did not resist and subvert this discourse in idiosyncratic but important everyday ways.

Nonetheless, these personal victories and resistances are not sufficient to conceal the most insidious hallmark of the epidermalisation of inferiority; that it is completely self-surveilled and normatively policed by local young men, even those like Lawrence who are aware of it. The transcript above reveals how "staying out of trouble", "thinking ahead", "talking posh" or "doing stuff Black people don't do" can lead to out-group accusations of race betrayal - of being a "wash out". In our sessions there was too a particular sense of humour that functioned to a similar end, re-affirming in-group boundaries in ways that simultaneously regulated *respect*, and, as Back (1996) similarly noted, 'the status of individuals vis-à-vis the peer group' (p. 77).

I was never more uncomfortable in our sessions than when the messing about and *cussing* turned, generally in Trigga's direction, racial like this. It was Trigga's double-bind that his mother had physically relocated and tried to install in him a resilient Black consciousness such that he might, of all the group, be likeliest to transcend the objective circumstances of his life. And yet his human

and youthful need for belonging and the acceptance of his peers, as well as his experience of covert racism in Clifton where he now lived, compelled him to seek validity in St Pauls, in street culture, and from Tyreese and Ashley most of all. But because he spoke posh (it says something of the distance between us in this regard that he didn't sound the least bit 'posh' to me), lived in Clifton, and 'did things Black people don't do', he was frequently subjected to *cusses* like the above. Sensing my discomfort at the exchange with Trigga, Marcel tried to explain:

MARCEL - *I think what we like to do is try to break barriers and stuff. See how everyone's rippin' on each other and stuff, I don't know if a white person would do that. A white person would probably, (looking at me) I'm not sayin' every white person, I'm just sayin'... Like a lot of white people are in that middle class, they see comedy as a way of not going past certain boundaries and stuff, so you feel comfortable, do you know what I mean? So to you it seems like we're not, but some of us sometimes like to push boundaries for jokes sake, do you know what I mean? But at times it can breach, do you know what I mean?*

The use of humour as a kind of regulatory and bonding tool has already been remarked upon in relation to *swagga*, and Marcel's analysis is consistent with this. "Rippin' on each other" was a constant, beginning every session and emerging frequently throughout the evening, and though it made me uncomfortable to hear what I assumed was Trigga being excluded, in actual fact even when being labelled a "wash out" he was being simultaneously admitted to the in-group; a safe place where *cusses* are thrown about casually and without meaning of personal offence. Indeed, the fact that Tyreese and Ashley are quick to note that being "wash out" is a good thing, signifying personal qualities that are demarcated 'not Black', speaks to both this in-group boundary and the way in which their subjectivities have been dialectically shaped from the ideological content of their oppression. Consequently and contradictorily, at the same time as a racialised apartheid from above is self-surveilled and re-made, Trigga is getting exactly the existential nutriment he seeks from his peers.

Perhaps the most sustaining feature of the inferiorised image of 'Blackness' my co-participants described, is that though ultimately its sociogenesis lies in the ideological labour of the white masculine centre of British society, it only has currency because it's reflected back phenomenologically.

TYREESE - *A Black person will trust a white person more than another Black person, because Black people are too money greedy. They love money too much. If you give them two grand to hold and look after, they'll spend at least a quarter of it and say; 'ah, that's for looking after it', or some dumb excuse. You can trust a white man more with your money than a Black man.*

SIMON - *Why?*

TYREESE – *Because the Black man be jealous! Every time you walk somewhere, you see Black people moaning; 'oh! I don't have no money la, la, la'. White people don't do that. If they have five pound, they will spend it wisely. Black man will buy a bag of weed. (Jermaine is pointing at Tyreese and waving his finger in an accusing manner). I can give my (white) friend ten pounds to hold for me so I don't spend it, and I come back at lunch and he'll still have it. Black man will be like; 'me wan money!' (Laughter).*

SIMON - *But why do you think that happens, the difference?*

TYREESE - *'Cos they money greedy!*

ASHLEY - *Black Jamaican's are the worst, like, I'm sorry... Right, like, they get angry, even if you ask them for directions they're angry... (does impression to laughter).*

LAWRENCE - *(Laughing) You as an English boy is asking them for directions, no wonder they start getting angry!*

ASHLEY - *I ain't asking them for money! (Laughter). No! No! No! You do something wrong with one Black person and they just flip out! Sometimes it takes longer to learn stuff and they just don't have the patience, it seems like they don't have the time. I'm not just being on one... I don't know, it's just what I see.*

The racial epithets throughout this exchange were not extraordinary in the context of our discussions, nor is the dissociated third-person narrator Tyreese

deploys to deliver the naturalised description of laziness, stupidity, greed and untrustworthiness he considers a fitting description of Black people. However uncomfortable this reads though, it must be remembered that the description is significant to Tyreese and Ashley's experience of real life - "it's just what I see" - an experience that however limited in its frequency, is sufficient to reinforce the stereotypes he holds about himself and the Black community of St Pauls more generally.

Again, this though is not the whole picture. In apparent contradiction to the racial determinism above could be heard the kind of structural insights and social theorising I had hoped might burgeon into voices and projects of social action through PAR. But the syncretic way in which competing racial discourses jostled for parity in the worldview of my co-participants was never re-defined such that this ever seemed likely to happen, and they were anyway submerged beneath the overarching 'story of failure' that tended to confirm the deterministic; that even though there is oppression, the Black man (and this is also a discourse about masculinity) does nothing to help himself overcome it.

ASHLEY - It's probably because Black people need the money more. When you're white you might get easy job, you might listen in class, you got something to live up to. It's sort of the same with Black people, but we might have a different way of doing that. What I meant about white people having more patience... is just, I dunno, they might have a better life at home, that's why they have more patience. There might be problems at home, be bullied at school...

TYREESE - That's what most of it is really. You get bullied from a young age and like you can't take it anymore. Anyone looks at you wrong, says something about you like... Bang! Beat them up and carry on. If you get arrested you don't care, you just explain why you do it; 'cos he looked at me wrong.'

SIMON - So do you think Black people experience more stuff in their life that would make them angry?

ASHLEY - Look, it's just... Black people are never wrong. Whatever they think is true.

JERMAINE - *It's high blood pressure. Black people have more salt in their food. They have more high blood pressure which makes them more angry. It's true.*

TYREESE - *When you have high blood pressure you get stressed quick.*

SIMON - *Why do you think more Black lads are kicked out of school, or end up in prison?*

TYREESE - *'Cos the Black man don't like to learn!*

LEDLEY - *Maybe 'cos Black people get hassled by the police more.*

ASHLEY - *Black people like the easy way to make something... they like shortcuts.*

LAWRENCE - *And when we talk about Black people we talking about 'we', yeah?*

TYREESE - *Yeah.*

ASHLEY - *Yeah.*

Thus the group could readily contextualise the stereotypes that stalked them, but their experience simply affirmed in a circular logic why the context existed. So for Ashley, it was not just that Black people might experience more pressure in their lives to make them angry, it was that "Black people are never wrong"; a natural state of 'their' being (note the third person narrative) doomed to be forever angry at the world. Similarly, for Tyreese, Black boys are disproportionately excluded from school simply "because the Black man don't like to learn." In this way the subjectivities of my co-participants ossified their own objectification, de-humanising and wounding their being in a way that is at once hidden, but also psychosomatically visible.

For example, Jermaine mentions diet and the rate of high blood pressure in correlation among Black people, and while not inaccurate in this regard, his observation also chimes with the postcolonial descriptions of internalised oppression (Baldwin, 1955, Fanon, 1961, 1967, Cesaire, 1969, Memmi, 2003), which have more recently found support in the work of hypertension specialists like Mann (2003), who has written extensively on the causality of high blood

pressure and repressed emotions.⁴⁷ When these somatised expressions are loaded into the local *habitus*, they contribute to a kind of dialectical short circuit that naturalises inferiority by making it (appear) real. Thus the story of failure is in *habitus* the story of Black failure; 'embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history' (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 56).

Black (British)

This notion of embodied but forgotten history is very relevant to any discussion of Black Britishness. All my co-participants were British born third generation young men of Jamaican heritage. Though were you to ask Tyreese, Ashley, Ledley and Jermaine (in particular) to self-identify, they would say only that they were 'Black'. This is important because it is a measure of the cultural dislocation and marginality against which a portion of local masculinities are made in St Pauls. Saying this does not mean local masculinities are without depth or dynamism, only that they have been made from a particular historical arc of British nationalism and, latterly, globalisation.

This cultural exercise was begun in Britain by the children of that first wave of migration in the fifties. Their dispiriting experience of social and economic exclusion the genesis for a cultural resistance that began synthesising Black nationalism and the Pan Africanism of Rastafarianism that was emerging in America and Jamaica during the sixties and seventies. The music (particularly) of this period transcended race and penetrated the British class structure, speaking intimately to the experience of many white working class youth. Through the eighties, as these internationalist and diasporic movements began to dwindle, Black (and white) youth started to make a new and uniquely British cultural politics, developing an aesthetic that was oppositional and subverted the Black masculine folk-devils of white fantasy. But what was notionally the reclamation of stereotypes like phallocentrism, hypersexuality and dangerousness (see hooks 1990, 1995) provoked debate and moral outrage, both within and outside Black British communities. The lyrics of ragga and hip-

⁴⁷ Black Caribbean men are 50% more likely to die from stroke than the overall population, while rates of hypertension in African Caribbean born people are 3.5 times the national average, with Black Caribbean women experiencing rates six times that (Brown, 2006).

hop artists were frequently criticised and censored for their degrading, graphic and crude representations of women, sex and violence; a symbolic language critics lamented in the end did little more 'than rationalise an already existent suspicion and distrust of Black males' (Peterson-Lewis, 1991, p. 125).

Today's Black cultural aesthetic might resemble more a postmodern patchwork of constantly subdividing and multiplying multi-ethnic musical canons, technological mediums and creative influences, but for many young Black men it retains this same tension and objectification. Some commentators, like Back (1996), have argued today's Black youth, far from suffering a crisis of identity, are actively resolving the historically mutually exclusive categories of Black and British. There is I think a partial truth to this, but ultimately it would be wrong to mute the overarching trajectory of Black masculine identity over the past half century. A trajectory that begins as a powerful critique of capitalism and in two generations ends up atrophied and little more than a servant to its worst consumerist excesses (Gilroy, 1987). Consequently, amid the context of neoliberal globalisation, resolving the status of Black Britishness is actually behind the curve of the 'America-centred, consumer orientated culture of blackness (that) has (today) become prominent. In this post-colonial setting, it conditions the dreams of many young Britons, irrespective of their ancestral origins or physical appearance' (ibid. p. xvi). Put another way, it seems to me important not to confuse what are ultimately the ideological effects of discourse being marketised, for some historical victory or ascension to citizenship, particularly among those most marginalised by the process.

In St Pauls, the commodification of Black masculinity is much closer to the model described by my co-participants and by street culture. And while within this there is indeed the phenomenological space for pretty much any local young man, irrespective of race, sharing the same field of experience, this experience has a symbolic order and language that, however multi-ethnic the speakers, is the symbolic order and language of a commodified Black male identity. The important point is one of trajectory, a Black British identity, such as it is, has gone from subjugation to resistance to appropriation and commodification in barely half a century. The discourse has not changed, and the result remains an unhealthy space, for ultimately it's still one of marginality,

where the racial epithets of colonialism echo on. The biggest difference is that today, this injured discourse of Black masculine identity is also one of the few and most lucrative economic routes to the centre for many young people, though even in this the greater benefit remains to those at the centre, who have performed through objectification and slick marketing the dialectical trick of making themselves rich from the self-surveillance by Black youth of their own marginality and resistance.

Injured masculinities

The commodification of Black masculinity translates as an ideological space towards which local young men are pushed and pulled by both discourse and economics, which are in source and effect the same thing. This space is an aggregate of racial epithets that betray some core ideological assumptions about the social position of (young) Black men, and to varying degrees my co-participants were proximate to it. But much as in Chapter Four, where they describe circumspection in relation to *respect* and street culture, my co-participants were also agents resisting the centrifugal pull of this equivalent space, attempting to negotiate safe passage for their injured masculinities around (sometimes through) its objectifying lens.

This process is made more difficult by the fact that it's street culture that carries discourse into public spaces, where kinship (in part due to injuries inflicted on fatherhood and the family, as we shall see) has functionally shifted. Young men ameliorate their ontological insecurity and the psychic and social wounds they inherit through constantly re-affirming peer relations and loyalty. Terms like *bredrin*, *cuz*, *brudda*, and *blud*, are all deployed frequently to demarcate a brotherhood that is territorially defined and which necessitates a certain kind of public performance to ensure continued membership.⁴⁸ This performance might actually be antithetical to how one actually feels about something, violence for example, but these relationships represent the most significant and often stable attachments available to young men, and they must be tended to accordingly.

⁴⁸ It's worth here also remembering that, for Malcolm X, it was that 'oppression made them brothers; exploitation made them brothers; degradation made them brothers;... humiliation made them brothers' (in Wolfenstein, 1993, p. 5)

In extremis, these horizontal attachments and affectional bonds (Bowlby, 2005) are substitutes for the emotional malnourishment experienced in the private sphere. Consequently, they may assume significance and exert an influence far beyond peer relations in less oppressed circumstances. But if it's a certain racialised discourse that flows through street culture and interpersonal relations, it is economics and structural apartheid that create the existential climate for this.

Gender and sexual politics, which transcend public and private domains, are the best example of this material basis and its circular relationship to local masculinities (Lemelle, 2010). These themes appeared only fleetingly, and most often when I wasn't recording and we were simply hanging about, chatting. It was significant for me however, because in those attitudes to women expressed in these moments, I often felt conflicted and occasionally shocked. Sometimes, girls would stop by our sessions, usually in a small group. These events either ended in graphic sexualised horseplay, a slanging match, or sometimes both. In any of these events I felt awkward and unsure how to respond. Girls could most definitely be friends, but they were talked about and to principally as sexual objects and possessions. For example, one evening in late October, Ledley and I were chatting while we waited for the group to arrive. He told me he thought Tyreese and Trigga unlikely to show that week because Trigga had been arrested for punching a girl in the face the previous night. The girl was apparently unimpressed by his advances, and, horrified by something he said in rejection, she spat in his face. Trigga responded by assaulting her. Ashley laughed loudly when he heard about this, and explained that Tyreese and Trigga made the pilgrimage to the same nightclub in search of girls every weekend without fail, the motivation for which Tyreese explained to me the following Friday:

TYREESE - *If you put clothes on and look good, and smell nice, they'll just open their legs... and that's it.*

LAWRENCE - *Some of them, them that ain't been brought up right.*

TYREESE - *They been brought up right, it's just that when they have a hard time getting a man, their legs go loose! (Laughter).*

Attitudes to sex were (publicly and among the other young men in the group at least) graphic and enthusiastic, much as one might confidently predict such attitudes to be among adolescent males. They were also heightened by the omnipresence of internet pornography, which I thought viscerally corrupted gender relations between girls and boys, binding both (in the case of girls whether they were white or Black) to a harmful phallogentric and racist objectification of their bodies and (hetero)sexuality.⁴⁹ Sexual politics cast in this mire may be harmful enough, lived in tandem with a sanctification of mothers and dismissal of fathers, it is toxic.

ASHLEY - It's funny cos round here if someone said; 'your dad', you'd be; 'huh, what?' But if someone says; 'your mum', you get angry! (Laughter).

SIMON – What about your dad, is he around?

ASHLEY – He passed away. Um, a week before I was born. My mum had her own shop on Denby Street. She had a whole heap of money in her safe and then one day my dad come in and said; 'we can double the money we got now'. He took the money and went to London, and then he won, but because he took too much of the winnings the bookies didn't like it so they killed him. Yeah, they killed him. Somehow his body come back here and they had the whole open casket thing. This was like a week before I was born. When I was six my sister is telling me this and I just broke down and cried. I was like; 'why? I don't understand it'. My mum was talking to me about it the other day, at that time my mum had a lot of money.

LAWRENCE - Yeah. Everyone definitely had a mum, rarely people just had a dad. But it seemed worser for people who had dads but their mum and dad were separated and their dad's still in Bristol, sort of thing. It's like their dad was there but not there. Where for us lot we just always knew our dad wasn't there. I don't know if it was worser for them that their dad lives ten minutes away and they can't go see him and say like; 'I'm gonna go stay with my dad'. They greet and see their dad like a friend, he's all like; 'oh say hello to your mum for me'.

⁴⁹ For more on the sexual politics of race and power see Mercer (1994) and Lemelle (2010).

LAWRENCE - *Like, about Ashley's dad not being around, that's kind of weird 'cos my dad hasn't been round my whole life, and I don't think Marcel doesn't know his dad as well. That means like we're a comparison in that we all never had a relationship with our dads kind of thing... did you know your dad?*

MARCEL - *No, not at all. I remember what he looks like a bit. He was like... well obviously I was in foster care, so from one to five I was in and out of my mums home, and he was in and out of my mums home. Obviously I don't have strong memories of him, but he wasn't a very nice person so I probably wouldn't have liked to have been round him.*

LAWRENCE - *That kind of shows that maybe it made us stronger, made us think stuff through more.*

MARCEL - *Didn't have anyone do that role model thing. Apart from my older brother, but at the same time... it's weird when you look up and even the people above you need guidance and stuff.*

SIMON - *Without knowing your dad, what kind of dad would you be?*

ASHLEY - *The best. You just think 'cos he wasn't there for me I would try my hardest to be there for mine, and try to give them everything he or she needs, that's the instant thing you think.*

LAWRENCE - *Experience wise, make sure they know a bit about everything before they decide on certain things, saves wasting time doing something and it not being right. Knowing right from wrong comes from doing stuff, just being there.*

SIMON - *Do you think you guys missed that guidance?*

LAWRENCE - *Yeah, I don't know... I don't know if it would have been better if my dad had been there now 'cos I'm fine, so I don't know if I missed out or what.*

With the exception of Tyreese and Ledley, who anyway had the same father, none of my co-participants had any relationship with, or sometimes knowledge of, their dad. This mirrors the national picture, for while a quarter of all children live in single parent families (incidentally, this is treble the proportion in 1972), the figure rises to 48% among Black Caribbean families, of whom, nine out of

ten are headed by women (DWP, 2009).⁵⁰ Mothers, and to a lesser degree sisters, occupy then understandably sanctified ground. They are creator and provider, both feminine and masculine, soft and strong, confidant and disciplinarian.

LAWRENCE – *Yeah! My mum was never hard on me, never; ‘don’t do this, don’t do that’. I don’t know why, but she never shouted at me to do or not do anything. I think cos I told my mum everything I was doing, she didn’t have to ask anything.*

ASHLEY – *Same with me. My mum doesn’t shout at me. If she see’s me start to change around a certain thing she’ll sit down and wait till I get in and she’ll turn off the TV and go; ‘ok, that thing you been doing, what’s that about?’ Um, like, two years ago I started American Football and she thought the pads was like police body armour. She sat me down and goes; ‘which policeman did you steal this off!’ I said I play American Football, and she was like; ‘that’s not where that’s from’. And I said; ‘mum, it’s from there, I’m not lying to you.’ One day she saw my coach and was like; ‘see this, what’s this for?’ He gave her a leaflet and she said sorry. After that we had a good relationship.*

That being said, the incidence of depression and psychological exhaustion among many mothers was very significant and obvious. Jermaine for example, was a carer, supporting his mother’s daily struggle with depression and an unspecified ‘personality disorder’. Ashley too, confided in me more than once that his mother was extremely stressed trying to make the rent each month. Most weeks I saw Sauda counselling some distraught mother in the adjacent office, and usually their trauma was connected to their son’s troubles with the police, drugs, and/or with some other malevolent feature of street culture. In the context of their mother’s everyday struggles and stress, a kind of dissociation

⁵⁰ Ashley (the ward in which St Pauls sits) has a higher percentage of lone parent households with dependant children (11%) than Bristol (7.4%) or England and Wales (6.5%) (North Bristol Primary Care Trust, 2004). But there are substantial social class differences here it’s important to be aware of. The main reasons for non-resident fatherhood in Black families are the same as those for white families: low socio-economic status, unemployment and so on. The contextual experience of racism is also key to these, and to other factors which undermine the Black family unit: early fatherhood, poor mental health, imprisonment, having been raised without one’s own father present, and so on (see Hauari & Hollingworth, 2009).

occurs, as it functionally must, between reverence for mothers and sexual performance with lots of girls, through which an important part of street culture and their masculinity is made. Without absolving personal responsibility for fathering children, or for the violent abuses of this role that occur in some homes, the central determining ingredient in this contradictory relationship is economic.

SIMON - Define what being a man is for me?

MARCEL - It's difficult, every man is different. It's so hard to define. You're a man in relation to the woman you choose. Certain things like being the protector of your family, having enough to be a visionary, like forecast things for your family. They are the main things for me, it's not a personality thing, it's a responsibility. Women have kids and stuff like that. Women breast feed and they the one to be with the kids and you need to protect that. What do you think?

SIMON - I guess sort of the same. I think being the protector and earning money are important to me. Being strong, but in a quiet kind of way, emotionally strong, do you know what I mean? Quite old fashioned really, and I suppose like my dad was. Ashley, what if you became a dad tomorrow, what kind of pressure would be on you?

ASHLEY - The responsibility thing, it's up to you what you do, I'm not into preaching to people what you don't do. I would do my best.

JERMAINE - If you had to suddenly find a job that paid enough money...

MARCEL - I don't plan for that stuff to happen, that kind of thing would probably be so much of a challenge for me it would probably make me try harder. Now, I don't mind if I don't have food in my house, but I would be out if I had a kid.

LAWRENCE - Out doing what though?

TYREESE - Hustlin'!

The exchange above demonstrates that in actual fact there is little difference between my white middle class construct of masculinity and fatherhood, and the blueprint my co-participants are able to imagine even in the absence of their own fathers. The key difference though lies in our positionality, and the structural privilege that makes it much easier for me to realise this model of

conjugal fatherhood (protector, provider), however antiquated it may or may not be. This is an important point that speaks to the material basis for the failure of some Black fathers to support their progeny in stable, loving families. Being unemployed, low skilled, poorly educated and/or known to the criminal justice system in an economy that is high-tech, knowledge orientated and globalised, makes supporting a typical single income nuclear family near impossible.⁵¹ The retrenchment of the welfare state and a corrosive process of deproleterianisation has further consolidated masculine marginality, denying the opportunity to economically provide for and protect family life. Simultaneously, this socio-economic translation creates the existential conditions in which a contemporarily commodified (but ultimately colonial) image of Black masculinity is nourished and made a site of personal dignity.

What's happened is that street culture has emerged in the space made by economic apartheid and vacated by fatherhood. Here, depending on one's personal proximity and circumstances, young men may find refuge in the old stereotypes of phallocentrism, hyper-hetero-sexuality and violent physicality, afforded vertiginous status by an oppositional culture that nonetheless provides a framework for masculine attachments that may be horizontal and immature, but that are at least present (Bourgois, 2002).

My co-participants might be circumspect and evidence a cautious agency in the path they plot through street culture and the sociology of intergenerational relations it assaults, but ultimately the collapsed class structure ensures few are economically or even geographically mobile. The personal tragedy of this I witnessed with great sadness, though this was a useless and paternalistic feeling I never shared with the group. They understood it well enough anyway, for each was in their own way reaching that place in their youth where school or college ought to give way to employment and adulthood. And in November, the devastating personal consequences of these psycho-social injuries was brought home to all of us.

⁵¹ What's more, the drug trade proffers nothing to this end, for while it can supply an income, the basis for this is violent and insecure on a number of fronts (prison, death, addiction, risk) antithetical to a stable family unit.

One Monday, I began noticing a steady stream of 'RIP' posts on my messenger service. They were for a young man who will remain nameless here, but who obviously meant a lot to my co-participants. When I arrived for our session a few days later I had all but forgotten the posts. Being winter it was already dark outside and a constant freezing rain had me convinced and pre-occupied with the worry no-one would show up. But Lawrence, Marcel and Ashley were already waiting. They seemed quieter than usual, and as I came in out of the cold and sat opposite Marcel on the sofa I asked how things were going.

Lawrence said it had been a difficult week. The messages I had seen were in memory of his friend, who had committed suicide by hanging himself from the climbing frame in the adventure playground. Lawrence went over to the computer in the office to show me a music video his friend had made. His eyes fixed on the screen, he described the panic and hurt he felt when he got the news by text first thing Monday morning. He'd leapt out of bed, and, half-dressed, sprinted the hundred yards or so up the street towards the playground. The hanging was in plain sight of a path children and families used every morning on their way to the local primary school, and Lawrence was still angry at the distressing length of time the police apparently left the body uncovered and hanging there. Lawrence and Marcel remembered their being together as a group most days when they were boys, going to the same school, playing basketball, chasing girls. They seemed pensive, and lamented the drift in their relationship.

LAWRENCE - Definitely he was depressed. Back in the day it was so much better. Everyone was so together back in the day. Now everyone is just doing different things. No-one was around... I think he went back there (the playground) and sat down, thinking for a bit.

MARCEL - Yeah, just the place where it happened as well. It's almost a statement in itself, even if it might not be intended that way.

I had out of habit but nonetheless insensitively turned on the recorder. I turned it off almost straight away. Not because I was asked to, but because for the first and only time it felt like an intrusion, inappropriate and inauthentic. Lawrence and Marcel continued their reflections, unbothered by my crisis of ethics, and

described their friends revolving years of unemployment, drug dealing and prison; his social drift, increasing self-medication, isolation, depression and eventual suicide. It was a terrible story, a personal tragedy felt intensely by the whole community in the coming weeks, and one that seemed to draw the entire picture of life we had discussed over the months to a shattering, crystalline conclusion.

City Road, St Pauls.



8. MENTAL HEALTH AT THE MARGINS

**“I heard this news report the other day about scientists are showing now that a kid growing up in a community or family with lots of shouting, anger, tension, and stuff, the kid’s brain grows differently” (Sauda).
“Yeah but science is just an opinion, not a fact” (Jermaine).**

My co-participants and most of the young men I met were not at this extreme point of emotional despair and personal defeat. In spite of their economic and social circumstances, they were functioning, adjusted individuals, able to live lives that included highs as well as lows, laughter as well as trauma, gentleness as well as violence. Nonetheless, the preceding chapters clearly demonstrate the existential landscape in which these young masculinities are made to be cast in an experience of economic apartheid and the multiple violences of political and social marginalisation.⁵² This is a chapter that reframes mental health from a perspective that considers both ‘the objective divisions that pattern social space and the subjective visions that people acquire of their position and extant possibilities in it’ (Wacquant, 2008, p. 197). In other words, the mirroring of social and psychic structures and the consequent ‘psychopolitics’ of psychiatric legitimacy, mental healthcare provision and social justice (Sedgwick, 1982).

This then is a chapter that begins from a position stressed by critical psychiatry; that the study of mental health must involve the study of situations, not just individuals (Laing, 1968). Thus my analysis will examine the local situations described by my co-participants in the preceding chapters as they speak to ‘the

⁵² Simone Weil’s (1976) description of force offers a useful and succinct metaphor for this existential condition, describing its historical, objectifying, embodied and self surveilling qualities:

‘Force is the central factor in history, (it) is the capacity to turn another person into an object, to annihilate him. This force is the life-beat of all slums... poor people respect and even worship force. Force, after all, has made them what they are and force keeps them where they are. Force has invaded their neighbourhood’s. Historically and daily it has created havoc in their streets. It knocks hard on the doors of their homes. Force sits at the tables of families, to be honored and ingested by all, like communion’ (in Belmonte, 2005, p.144).

key constituent in the sociogenesis of psychopathology: *the unequal distribution of power in society* (emphasis mine, Prilleltensky, 1994, p. 114). Taking my conceptual cue from liberation psychologies, this analysis will not confine itself to examination of 'their' oppression alone, for this would be to study only one aspect of the dialectical situation (Martín-Baró, 1994, Watkins, 2000, 2005, Shulman-Lorenz & Watkins, 2002, Cahill, 2004, Burton & Kagan, 2004, Alschuler, 2006). Indeed, if it is 'the labour of psychologies of liberation today to restore and extend an understanding of how institutional contexts and ideological constructs affect psychological health and symptoms of distress' (Watkins and Shulman, 2008, p. 55), then it is also part of that labour to understand how these same contexts and constructs create the services, treatments and professions that emerge from them.

This exposition is not distinct or even distant from the discussion yet to be had around participation. In fact, I take the following analysis as central to preparing the conceptual terrain for a perspective on young people's participation that emerges from a reading of poststructural power and psychological wellbeing.

A statistical portrait

Race and mental health is a controversial and contested topic (see for example Fernando, 1991, 2003, Rogers & Pilgrim, 2010). In England and Wales (to be administratively consistent with the data that follows), the relationship between services and Black communities, particularly Black men, has been and continues to be poor (for a fuller discussion see Mercer, 1986, Francis, 1989, Cope, 1989, Commander et al, 1999, Secker & Harding, 2002, Prospero & Kim, 2009). There are two important aspects to this; one relates to the epidemiology of mental health difficulties among populations of people and the construct validity of diagnoses (Fernando, 2003), the other with the types of care offered by statutory services and the ways in which they are accessed (Department of Health, 2005). It can be difficult and sometimes unhelpful to disentangle the two, but an objective picture of 'who' is using services and 'how' affords at least an accurate beginning for the discussion to be had around the reasons 'why'.

The Count Me in Census ran from 2005-2010 (ostensibly as a barometer for the Department of Health's Delivering Race Equality in Mental Healthcare Programme), and offers a snapshot of life inside adult acute care in England and Wales over the period (Care Quality Commission, 2011).⁵³ Black groups are significantly over-represented, particularly Black men, who comprise 70% of this picture. And though the census tracked a mild shift from the wards toward community care (in other words the total number of inpatients fell over the period), the racial profile is pretty well stable, rising from 20% in 2005 to 23% by 2010.⁵⁴ By the time of the final census, admission rates were two or more times higher than average for Black and Black Mixed groups, and six times for Other Black groups. Detention rates (under the Mental Health Act 1983) were between 19% and 32% higher than average among Black Caribbean, Other Black and Mixed White and Black Caribbean groups, while detention under Section 37 of the act (which allows a court to send someone to hospital for treatment in lieu of a prison sentence) was between 77% and 100% higher than average for those same ethnicities. Under Sections 47, 48 and 47/49 (transfer from prison to hospital) the rate of detention for the White and Black African Mixed Group was a remarkable 107% higher than the average. Given the nature of these coercive care pathways and their flow through, in, and around the criminal justice system, it's unsurprising the median length of stay in hospital care is longest for Black Caribbean, Other Black and Mixed White and Black Caribbean men.

This picture of demographic inequality on the wards and the routes by which Black patients are delivered to the care therein is given further definition when one considers what this care looks like. The use of seclusion for example, the practice of supervised containment of a patient in a room (often locked) to protect others from significant harm, was used on White British patients 9% less than on average, where Mixed White and Black patients experienced seclusion rates 80%-90% that of the average, and Black Caribbean and Black African patients between 36% and 56% higher. The disproportionate use of control and restraint (a third higher for Black Caribbean men) and the over-medication of

⁵³ DRE was a five year mental health programme that sought to address inequalities in access, experience and outcomes for Black and Minority Ethnic groups. It emerged from the death of David 'Rocky' Bennett in 1998, a Black patient who died after being restrained by nurses.

⁵⁴ This is a proportionate increase owing to overall population changes in the period.

Black patients have also been recorded and cause for political and clinical debate (Department of Health, 2003), not least when they are periodically brought into sharper focus by a high profile death, as was the case with Michael Martin, Joseph Watts, Orville Blackwood and David Bennett.

The overwhelming picture of control and coercion that emerges from these figures is substantively reinforced by those from the criminal justice system, where, despite being only 2.7% of the total population over 10 years old in England and Wales, Black and Mixed White and Black groups are 13% of the prison population (Centre for Social Justice, 2011) and significantly more likely to occupy forensic medium-secure units (Thomas et al, 2009). Recent Ministry of Justice (2011) figures reveal that between 2007 and 2010, Black groups were 14.6% of all stop and searches, 8% of all arrests, 7.1% of all cautions, 6% of all court order supervisions and 12% of all homicides. This picture is mirrored for young Black people, who are overrepresented at all stages of the youth justice system, with an arrest rate among Black 10-17 year olds four times that for Whites. A Home Affairs Select Committee established to consider the issue in 2007, found young Black men more likely to be stopped and searched by the police, less likely to be given unconditional bail, more likely to be remanded in custody, and more likely to receive more punitive sentences than White young offenders (Home Office, 2007). By the end of our fieldwork together, a Youth Justice Board report had just been published that showed the proportion of Black young men in offender institutions had risen from 23% in 2006 and 33% in 2009/10 to 39% in 2011 (Travis, 2011, see also Ball et al, 2011).

Interestingly, research has also shown that while rates of mental disorder are apparently highest for Black young people, at 14% for 11-16 year olds (Green et al, 2004), this group are under-represented in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Malek, 2011). This though may be because a multifarious child and adolescent system has many more corners than justice for individuals to be moved to.⁵⁵ For Black boys do show up considerably more frequently in places like youth offending teams (Youth Justice Board, 2012); Pupil Referral Units

⁵⁵ The Ashley ward, and within it St Pauls, has the highest percentage of child referrals to social care in the city (43%, Bristol average 24%) as well as referrals for mental health (22%, Bristol average 11%) (North Bristol Primary Care Trust, 2004).

(Department of Education, 2011); child protection registers and in care (Owen & Staham, 2009); and/or with a Statement of Special Educational Need (Lindsay, Pather & Strand, 2006). So in general terms, from around the ages of eleven to sixteen, a disproportionately Black and Mixed White and Black procession of young men (that at one time included Ashley, Jermaine, Tyreese, and Marcel) are moved around a (largely coercive) system until all efforts have failed, statutory duty has elapsed, or they transition to an adult institution of some kind.

Following the symptoms

Kipnis (2002, 2004) has suggested this statistical picture persists because the suffering of young men is externalised more in behaviours and addictions, bringing them more frequently into contact with the mechanisms of retributive justice than with primary care or interventions like psychotherapy. Other research has suggested a biomedical and/or cultural propensity among (particularly) African Caribbean men for particular psychiatric disorders like schizophrenia (Morgan et al, 2006). But while it is true that Black people are between two and ten times more likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia than the majority white population (Harrison, 2002), this fact does not 'follow the symptoms' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008) to a more meaningful and holistic reading of their existential aetiology.

Studies exploring the relationship between economic inequality and mental health are important to this reading. Taken together, they paint a 'big picture' that reveals an important truth about psychological health and social conditions. For instance, studies have shown that Black people are more severely depressed than their white counterparts with low socio-economic status (Biafora, 1995); that poor young people are twice as likely to commit suicide as their more affluent peers (McLoone, 1996); that anxiety about debt is the best predictor of depressive symptoms in poor families (Reading & Reynolds, 2001). They have revealed that while the unemployed have generally (and predictably) poorer mental health (Stansfeld et al, 2003), those with the poorest psychological health are actually those in insecure, poorly paid and unsatisfying work (Kasl et al, 1998, Dooley et al, 2000). Then there is the relationship between poor accommodation and the stress of inhabitants (Hunt, 1990); the

increased rates of depression and anxiety in deprived and chaotic neighbourhoods (Aneschensel & Succoff, 1996), and the correlation between levels of mistrust, powerlessness and suspicion in neighbourhoods with high levels of crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour (Ross et al, 2001). Studies have also shown that socio-economic conditions are directly related to multiple morbidities in physical health (Link & Phelan, 1995), and are a better predictor of recovery from mental illness than is access to even the best treatment (Warner, 2003).

The case of schizophrenia provides an interesting distillation of this big picture, for while social class and mental illness are broadly correlate across a range of diagnostic categories, nowhere is this more pronounced than in the diagnosis of schizophrenia (Rogers & Pilgrim, 2010), which is eight times more prevalent in social situations where there is limited social belonging and a high sense of fatalism (Shulman-Lorenz 1997); in other words, situations of poverty and material want.⁵⁶ Within this, Black people are up to ten times more likely than their white counterparts to be diagnosed with the condition. This quantitative relationship between race and a particular (highly contested) diagnosis, exposes the ideological character of mental healthcare, and the power it effects in the processes of marginality described by preceding chapters (see Fernando, 2003, 2010, for a history of this).

Let's consider a recent example of this briefly. The AESOP study (Aetiology and Ethnicity in Schizophrenia and Other Psychoses), a major piece of contemporary psychiatric research into the relationship between ethnicity and psychoses, claimed the incidence of schizophrenia among African Caribbean people was nine times that for the majority white population. Gathering data from London, Nottingham and Bristol, the study also claimed rates were highest in more densely populated urban areas. The report concluded, strikingly, that 'the weight of evidence is such that there can now be little doubt that there is a genuine and marked excess of psychotic illness in African-Caribbean and Black African populations in the UK' (Morgan et al, 2006, p. 46).

⁵⁶ It is also a diagnosis most frequently given in young adulthood, and as such has a conceptual relationship to developmental psychology and a sociology of intergenerational relations that considers the normative negotiation of socialisation into adult society (Rogers & Pilgrim, 2010).

A familiar refrain is audible in this research, both in the ethnoracially bound focus for enquiry, and in the way social context slowly dissolves against the atomistic backdrop of biomedicine and its assumptions about the voracity of schizophrenia as a valid diagnosis. Emphasis in the study is unevenly placed on neurological determinants, and, in an echo of Moynihan's (1965) 'tangle of pathology', there are ahistorical nods to urbanicity, parenting, absent fathers, attachment, migration, culture, and unemployment in the discussion of causality. Moreover, inbuilt to the clinical language of 'illness' is an inference of contagion and dangerousness that plays to old colonial stereotypes of race among the audience. Ultimately though, the real problem with the AESOP study is its 'circular epidemiology' (Fernando, 2010); it does not follow the symptoms far enough to the surrounding context, is uncritical of its own conceptual architecture, and thus reduces everything to the pathology of its research subjects.

Through this circular logic, an important contradiction in mental healthcare is revealed. For while in physical healthcare there exists an inverse care law, where access to services increases the further up the social strata one goes, in mental healthcare, the opposite is true; psychiatric services are dominated by patients from lower class backgrounds and minorities. What this tells us is not that those most in need are being cared for by services which are accessible, culturally capable, and responsive; rather, it speaks to the longstanding relationship mental healthcare has to social control. Where access to physical healthcare is free and voluntary, the spectre of compulsory admission and treatment looms large in mental healthcare, even where patients might access services voluntarily (Rogers & Pilgrim, 2010). To follow the symptoms of schizophrenia to the surrounding social, historical and economic context, is to encourage the idea of structural and social remedies rather than biomedical, familial or cultural ones. As a public health cause it implies transformation of the status quo and the vested interests privileged by it. Instead, what actually happens is that through 'scientific' obfuscation, mental health services function as part of 'a wider state apparatus which controls the social problems associated with poverty' (ibid, p. 58).

An inadequate epistemology

'Environments of injustice, violence, and repression have powerful psychological effects on everyone, whether they are registered consciously or unconsciously. When there is no public language or space to discuss these effects, they may turn into painful somatic symptoms of seemingly unknowable origin that are misattributed to other factors. Such misattribution makes it impossible to address the roots of these symptoms' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 53).

I want next to briefly explore this idea of social control from an epistemological perspective, for it is certainly not the case that mental health services are full of practitioners happily and consciously engaged in a process of oppression. An epistemological assessment begins from the position that it is the Cartesian construct of 'mental illness' that conceptually misreads social conditions as personal problems, effecting 'an ideologization of reality that winds up consecrating the existing order as natural' (Martín-Baró, 1994, p. 21).⁵⁷

The most basic feature of this construct is the Cartesian foundation for knowledge, which promises fidelity to natural science and the resolution of social problems through means of science and technology. Within this paradigm, which contains the philosophical bases of colonialism and domination, values and facts are exclusive of one another. Answers to 'how' are more important than those about 'why' something is; reason is elevated above faith and the body is split off from the mind. Knowledge and knower are distinct, and the individual is removed from his or her societal context. European (social) science in this tradition is thus rendered atomistic, ahistorical and apolitical. It lacks what Martín-Baró (1994) has called 'an adequate epistemology'; indeed, it remains to this day 'founded on a series of assumptions that are rarely discussed, and even more rarely are alternatives to them proposed' (ibid, p.

⁵⁷ None of which is to deny that individuals experience real psychological distress, or that there is no merit to 'the medical model'. As Cohen (1971) put it: 'the argument is not that there is 'nothing there' when somebody is labelled mentally ill or that this person has no problems, but that the reaction to what is observed or inferred is fundamentally inappropriate' (p. 203).

21).⁵⁸ These assumptions are important for the administration of ideological power from centre to margins, and are implicit in the way marginalised social groups are portrayed and thought about at the centre, providing the requisite political expediency for their control (Cohen, 1972).

Positivism, for example, is the assumption that knowledge must be limited to verifiable facts. *Positivism* then recognises nothing beyond what is given, ignoring the metaphysical and everything prohibited by the existing reality; that is, everything that does not exist but would under other conditions be historically possible (Martín-Baró, 1994). The long history of reductive social research that flows from this works through a 'blame the victim' logic (Ryan, 1971) that conflates (much like AESOP) social and historical positioning with cultural and/or genetic determinism. Thus it is, for example, that Black people are shown to be genetically and intellectually inferior to whites, and as such more likely to occupy the lower socio-economic classes (see Eysenck, 1973, Herrnstein & Murray, 1994).

A second assumption, *individualism*, presumes the individual to be the sole and most meaningful unit of psychological enquiry. This creates difficulties (often translated into insurmountable service boundaries and transitions) not only for understanding how mind and body interact, but also for how mind and social context interact.⁵⁹ The psychologies and psychological therapies formed in this dualism have 'reconstituted the mind as an autonomous entity' and have

⁵⁸ This is not a new argument of course, critical theory in the human sciences since the sixties has challenged the prevailing Cartesian model (Becker, 1964, Cooper, 1967, Laing, 1967, Szasz, 1970). Nonetheless, the intellectual argument seems more urgent in today's 'psychological century' (Koch & Leary, 1985), where unparalleled material inequality and the commodification of mental health has seen psychologism colonise pretty much the entire constellation of human experience (Haverman, 1957). Professional savants of the human psyche; the psychologist, psychiatrist, and psychotherapist enjoy a position of significant ascribed status in Western societies, and indeed in others to whom these professions have been successfully exported (see Enriquez, 1992). Mental health professionals of one kind or another are today ubiquitous, taking up posts in prisons, schools, private business, government committees, the judiciary, military and media; advising on everything from recruitment to family and marital affairs (Prilleltensky, 1994). Indeed, throughout 'this century (and before), psychology has been under gracious dissemination - whether in school, bar, office, or bedroom; whether by book, magazine, electronic propagation, or word of mouth - to a voracious consumership' (Koch, 1980, p. 33).

⁵⁹ Freudian psychoanalysis of course puts the individual in conflict with society, 'the superego (the intrapsychic representative of society) and the id (the truest, deepest level of the individual) are destined to be pulling in opposite directions' (Altman, 2010, p. 275).

'relegated both organic and environmental variables to second place' (Prilleltensky, 1994, p. 89). Indeed, 'insofar as psychology insistently extirpates the actor from the scene, we become incapable of learning that the scene is as important in shaping the actor's performance as the actor is in shaping the scene' (Sampson, 1983, p. 96). This is an ideological supposition, a concession to the prevailing economic and political logic of capitalism that lauds self-help and measures success and failure against a 'supreme self' that supersedes the system (Altman, 2010).

In this context individual therapy may be effective for many people, but it also distracts individuals from the systemic basis of their suffering, helping them 'work out personal solutions and accommodations to much larger social issues, without affecting or even clarifying consciousness about the wider context that may require insight and transformation to prevent further psychological suffering' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 62). Consider, for example, the individual 'self-actualising' thrust of humanistic therapies (Rogers, 1972), or cognitive and behavioural approaches (which are currently popular for their capacity to support the retrenchment of the welfare state), that work toward individual 'adaptation' and the erasure of personal 'irrationality' (Beck, 1976). In fact, in today's heterogeneous postmodern world, where individuals at the diverse and crowded margins may construct and synthesise multiple selves, psychology has actually sought 'to make pathologies from experiences of fluid boundaries, unstable egos, multiplicities of selfhood, radical experiences of the interpenetration of self/other/world, and co-dependency' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 163). Consequently, *individualism* is an active agent of unjust social relations because it obscures structural oppression, reducing to personal problems and disorder that which are systemic and political in cause and effect.

Hedonism, a third assumption of psychological science, proposes that behind every action and motive is a desire for self-gratification and pleasure. Much like *individualism*, this assumption is equally well 'a concession to the profit motive that underlies the capitalist system, and as such, an attribution to human nature of something that has to do with the functioning of a particular socioeconomic system' (Martín-Baró, 1994, p. 22). Hedonism is redolent in all therapeutic modalities emerging from the Cartesian tradition, and actively undermines the

possibility for another way of being by playing to a highly individualised and seductive image of freedom.

Ahistoricism extends all other assumptions to a universal reading of human nature, one where there exist no fundamental differences between the psychic structures of my co-participants in St Pauls and, say, a white, middle class investment banker in The City. As a result, the conceptual terrain for 'disorder' and 'maladjustment' is made against the presumed context of psychological equality, and the complete absence of structural inequality and social context in time as well as space. This is also, crucially, a repression of the idea of potential and historical change, of another way of being, and legitimises not only the contradictory existence of corporate sociopathy at the centre, but also 'the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well' (Freire, 1971, p. 26).

Homeostasis, the fifth and final assumption, is a useful conceptual bridge to the analysis of power in St Pauls promised at the outset. It says that states of crisis, disruption, or disequilibrium, are anathema to what is the ideal state of psychological health: stability and stasis. The assumption extends itself to an articulation of Gramscian hegemony and the project of controlling difference and disequilibrium through a culture-personality dynamic. Resistance emanating from the margins, in all its various personal and social forms, is denied a social and political cause by this assumption. From the patient physically resisting his or her medication on the ward or the hyperactive child in the classroom, to the young men and women rioting in the inner city, *homeostasis* provides the conceptual raw materials from which labels of personal delinquency and behavioural disorder can emerge with apparent credibility and scientific legitimacy.

Together, these five assumed truths articulate an ideological vision of freedom and the emotions, over which is laid the conservative social philosophy from which mental health theories and services (in their teaching, research, governance, commissioning, design and delivery) spring forth (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2005). Collectively, in their fidelity to reason, they function to regulate the status quo - *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1977). In particular, for a sociology of

intergenerational relations, they supply the normative developmental trajectory against which socialisation is judged. 'By young adulthood, those of us who act either immorally, incompetently or irrationally will be deemed by others to be either bad or sick... (as such) mental illness can be understood as a particular form of deviancy which is not characterised by malice aforethought or motivated by personal gain or gratification, as is the case with criminal behaviour' (Rogers & Pilgrim, 2010, p. 115).

Ideology, which is sectional and unequal, is simply put the sum of the assumptions and ideals the dominant social group holds about itself, and as such the anxieties and fears it holds of others (Ricoeur, 1978). What is important to this analysis is the dissemination of this ideology across intersectional differences in society, a process that requires the administration of a distorted image of social relations and conditions, an administration of *power* (Foucault, 1980) effected by an army of highly trained professionals across a range of everyday settings and interactions, attitudes and orientations. When through medicine these assumptions insert themselves into an understanding of social relations:

'(They) express an ideology of social order as a natural phenomenon. Conformity - rather than being viewed as a social accomplishment - is elevated to the status of health. Nonconformity is disqualified as 'sickness'. This embodies a notion of a purified community and a purified identity because one cannot be both ill and well at the same time, although a person can both conform (in some things) and deviate (in others). A view of conformity and deviance as a social accomplishment, which is what any critique of the medical model entails, raises the uncomfortable question of how men construct and maintain social order and how they might reconstruct it. And these are political questions' (Pearson, 1975, p. 48).

It's these political questions I want to turn to next, for to follow the symptoms to their surrounding context is to return to that simple and objective correlate in the sociology of mental health: that most manifestations of psychological suffering have their highest incidence among the lowest socio-economic class (Kleinman, 1988). This is not the same thing as saying all those at the margins suffer

mental ill health, or that those in positions of privilege do not, and personal resiliences to adversity are important to consider. But it would be unjust to shift focus onto individual resilience, and consequently mask the patterning of adversity, when the overarching correlate *in services* is one of material inequality and poorer psychological wellbeing. But in order to ask political questions of this kind robustly enough, and from an adequate epistemology, it is necessary to learn another conceptual language; the language of political psychology, which 'we could define... as the study of the psychological processes through which persons and groups shape, struggle over, and exercise the power needed for satisfying certain interests within a social formation, the way they are mediated through the individual psyche of the various actors, and the behaviour involved in shaping, struggling over, and wielding power' (Martín-Baró, 1994, p. 55).

Power flows

The flow of power in St Pauls; the way it is exchanged, embodied, ingested, resisted and mediated by my co-participants and their peers in relation to one another and the state, is the existential life force running through their descriptions of everyday life in the preceding chapters. Exploring this flow of power in relation to the generative themes that emerged offers a perspective on mental health that 'follows the symptoms' to their surrounding context in time and place. It also offers the chance to test an alternative analytical epistemology, one that recognises 'psychology needs to learn important forms of knowledge that develop in the streets' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 22), and that takes us beyond modernist theories and their 'fixed universal characteristics of humanity that are to be reached by all' (ibid, p. 24). But let me first be clear what I mean by *power*, since I deploy it in a Foucauldian sense that requires some conceptual explanation.

First, the central point about this approach to power is that it transcends politics - it is an everyday, socialised and embodied phenomenon. Power, says Foucault (1998), 'is everywhere: not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. Power is not an institution, nor a structure, nor a possession. It is the name we give to a complex strategic situation in a

particular society' (p. 93). As such, it is helpful to think of power *as an effect*, diffuse in some spaces (communities, *mindbodies*, cultures, institutions), concentrated in others; embodied and enacted rather than possessed in a zero-sum game. Power in this Foucauldian sense is not so much wielded by people or groups through acts of domination or coercion (though it can be) as it is dispersed and pervasive; neither agency nor structure, more a kind of existential life force or 'regime of truth' that defines all social relations. A second key aspect to this poststructural reading is that power is not necessarily repressive, prohibitive, negative or exclusionary (though again it can be all of these things); it is also positive and productive: 'In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production' (Foucault, 1991, p.194).

In this conceptualisation, power is inseparable from and constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, particularly scientific knowledge, and is a major source of social control and conformity. And though Foucault was basically critical of the lack of nuance in Marxist readings of 'centrist' power, to my mind there remains important utility to Marx here, since it surely remains the case that:

'The ideas of the ruling class are, in every age, the ruling ideas: i.e. the class which is the dominant material force in society is at the same time the dominant intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time of mental production, so that in consequence the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are, in general, subject to it' (Marx in Prilleltensky, 2003, p. 31).

While Foucault's more diffuse poststructural reading of power provides realistically for ideas around participation, cultural reproduction, agency and resistance; the objective existence of material inequality begins, in the Marxist vernacular, with 'the ruling class'.⁶⁰ Descriptively, power/ideology flows from the

⁶⁰ The Marxist notion of 'hegemony' remains valid but needs extending from a sole concern with class to a more nuanced postmodern articulation of intersectional identities, including age (see Laclau, 2000).

centre outwards, toward the margins, becoming wider, less concentrated and more diffuse as it does. It eddies, gathering in spaces (geography, age, ethnicity, class, gender and so on) and times (adolescence, social unrest, recession) of resistance, difference and disequilibrium. It is administered by technologies like prisons, the police, schools, media, social and mental health services, even the family. In its 'capillary form of existence', power 'reaches into the very grain of individuals, touch(ing) their bodies and insert(ing) itself into their action and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives' (1980, p. 39). To examine what this looks like in everyday life, I will use Foucault's eight techniques of power to help organise a reading of mental health and poststructural power in relation to the field of contemporary young Black masculinities in St Pauls.

Surveillance and Regulation

'There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost' (Foucault, 1980, p. 155).

Surveillance and regulation operate at a number of personal, collective and interconnected levels that might broadly and for the sake of convenience be split in two. The first, most obvious and visible, is that concerned with those officious technologies of state discipline. For instance, despite its small size, St Pauls is home to thirty one closed circuit cameras, a figure that excludes the thirteen devices (one for every fourteen children) located in Cabot Primary School (Bristol Evening Post, 2011b). Neighbourhood wide, that's a camera for roughly every 97 residents, compared to one camera for every 554 in Bristol overall.⁶¹ The exponential growth of urban surveillance technology, what Koskela (2003) has referred to as the 'cam-era', perhaps makes this unsurprising, particularly when taken in the context of an active and substantial

⁶¹ Freedom of Information Request logged with Bristol City Council in August 2011. Population figures based on ONS (2010) Experimental Statistics.

local drug trade. Nonetheless, when for many young men this is combined with the pull of the informal economy as a source of income and the tactical nature of local policing; covert in identifying and arresting dealers and proactively aggressive in stopping and searching suspects; the officially felt gaze is very substantial and oppressive indeed.

Consider too that St Pauls is home to a police station, the offices of Bristol's Youth Offending Team, the regional Probation Service, and one of the city's four social services offices, the Welsman. The physical presence of each and all within a few hundred square yards is at the very least a signifier of the state's panopticon like presence. Then there are the local agents of *surveillance* and *regulation*; the police officer, teacher, employment advisor, social worker, probation worker and psychologist; who, through their stop and searches, attitudes, tests, and various inventories and assessments, extend and fix the state's gaze into the *mindbodies* of local subjects. Even the statutorily funded social programmes for local young people are just a more benign extension of this official *surveillance*, for in their design, monitoring and funding arrangements they all betray the object of their attention. For example, the police financed football pitches at the sports centre on a Wednesday night, or the project outcomes for the local boys club related to crime reduction, and the intensive monitoring by both projects of demographic registers that collect a disproportionate level of personal information about participants.

The significant presence of disciplinary power in St Pauls, is, lest we forget that power also produces realities, self-perpetuating. This is because it helps nourish self-surveillance: that interiorised image of self and other that functions to surveil, regulate and mediate power. This is a much more obtuse analysis to effect but is fundamentally relational and concerned with the ways young men monitor and regulate their behaviours and emotional states through epidermalisation of their inferiority and the embodied oppression they carry in their manner, dispositions and attitudes. Partly this is inherited; it is the echo of slavery, the dislocation of migration, and the cumulative effect of sixty plus years social marginalisation and racism on psychic structures, parenting and family life. But it is also an everyday lived experience that reinforces this story. Because of this, the 'angry Jamaican' (Black impatience) and 'the

Badman' (Black success) are as symbolically potent as is the policeman, teacher or psychologist in the process of recalibrating white oppression into self-surveilling Black failure.

Street culture is a highly gendered dominion over public space in St Pauls, one through which local masculinities come of age in relation to a moral economy of *respect*. 'Getting rated', if it is to mean anything at all, must at least then be observable in some sense. The use of social networking media (like instant messaging and Youtube) to broadcast power relations (for example through gang related music videos) is a new and virtual amplification of this public space and self-surveillance. The 'hidden contracts' Marcel was quick to counsel against as a result of being seen in one of these videos suggests the gaze of one's peers is both acutely felt and highly consequential. Certainly, as a site of masculine dignity, *respect* traps young men in a cycle of public *surveillance*, the focus of which is on behaviours and orientations that embody qualities like physicality, aggression, loyalty, hyper-hetero-sexuality, athleticism, musicality, and entrepreneurialism.

Swagga for instance, as a visible expression of 'how you carry yourself' in resistance to material poverty, is constantly and closely surveilled and regulated by young men. The symbolic cultural capital loaded into it in relation to both brands and significant colours, allows them to surveil and codify one another, while the territoriality of *ends* provides a spatial terrain for this consistent with the economic outline of marginality. The act of *slippin'*, the transgressing of local borders, is a visible act of both defiance and *surveillance* that can and frequently does elicit violent *regulation* (itself an embodied manifestation of power).⁶² These cultural idioms might present oppositionally, but in fact they do little more than replicate and re-inscribe those features of Black masculinity most surveilled by white cultural hegemony at the centre. It is true however that from this subjugation, these effects of power, emerge important forms of resistance and spaces of masculine dignity. For in the street culture they make, young men are active agents in shaping, reproducing and resisting racial and

⁶² Sol's disappearance from public life for fear of reprisal after his arrest is proof of both the felt scale of this surveillance and the severity of the likely regulation.

gendered stereotypes about themselves. But ultimately, even in resistance they are doing the ideological labour of the centre, since...

'...contradictorily, the street culture of resistance is predicated on the destruction of it's participants and the community harbouring them. In other words, although street culture emerges out of a personal search for dignity and a rejection of racism and subjugation, it ultimately becomes an active agent in personal degradation and community ruin' (Bourgois, 2002, p. 9).

Normalisation & Individualisation

Foucault (1980) also spoke of 'normalising judgment', shorthand for discipline by the imposition of standardised norms against which individuals may be judged and classified either normal or abnormal. *Normalisation* of this kind is pervasive throughout childhood and adolescence, for example in the national curriculum and its milestones for educational achievement, or in the standardised manuals, inventories, scaling and assessment tools of social work and mental healthcare. Examination, either in the school or the clinic, is a technique of control that combines hierarchical *surveillance* with normalising judgment, unifying power/knowledge into an accepted hegemonic 'truth' about the level of an individuals intelligence or the state of their health.

Normalisation also then controls behaviour, whether through force of study, threat of exclusion, or by prescription of a particular course of treatment. The arbiter of this, developmental psychology, has assumed truly psycho-legalistic status today (White, 1998), penetrating 'our day-to-day popular discourse about childhood, (and) conquering supreme authority with regards to every aspect of children's lives' (Cordero Arce, 2012, p. 390). From this place developmental psychology provides the arc (basically the aggregate formulation of a Euro-American middle class childhood) against which normal and abnormal are cast (Mayall, 2000, Burman, 2008). *Normalisation* is very obvious in its effects for a disproportionate number of young Black men, the outline of which is visible across the demographic profiles of numerous psychiatric diagnoses and institutional settings.

Individualisation functions in tandem with *normalisation*, for abnormality is the genesis of the pathologic process that ends with highly individualised services locating problems in an objectified personality, behaviour and/or biochemistry. Let us consider how these effects of power operate in relation to the diagnosis of behavioural and conduct disorders, labels that crystallise the idea of normative judgment and that are disproportionately applied to Black boys (Bose & Jennings, 2005). For according to the Royal College of Psychiatrists' (2012):

'A young person showing signs of conduct disorder at an early age is more likely to be male, have ADHD and lower intelligence. The earlier problems start, the higher the risk for the young person being involved with violence and criminal acts. This may also be related to friendship groups, gangs and use of illegal substances.'

Even descriptively this is a poor inventory of (some of) the personal effects of power and inequality. It offers nothing beyond this because *normalisation* and *individualisation* (particularly) are built into the assumptions psychiatry makes about mental illness, dissolving all meaningful context to the behaviours on display. In this way, embodied behaviours that are functional and adaptive in the field of St Pauls experience, like hypervigilance or hyperactivity, present normatively in the white setting of the classroom or clinic as disobedience and inattention; a basic lack of self control. Through the ideological lens of developmentalism, 'this sort of behaviour can affect a child's development, and can interfere with their ability to lead a normal life' (ibid). Inversely, the agent personally responsible for administering this judgment is helped by a counter dis-individualisation of their practice, one that smoothes the process through provision of standardised assessments and evidence based programmes for the 'treatment' and 'care' of abnormality.

At street level in St Pauls, there is a much subtler machination of normalising judgement, one very much related to the concept of self-surveillance described earlier. I am thinking here of the embodied experience of oppression, what Foucault (1998) called *biopolitics*, and the colonising image of self and community it produces that comes to be regarded by the members of that group as natural and inevitable, as normal. It was this combination of self-surveillance

and epidermalised inferiority that rendered depressive feelings of fatalism and lethargy so completely in our research together, undermining participation and the 'action' cycle of our project (more on which in the next chapter). It was also what made an individual a 'wash out' if he studied hard, that bound the image of Black masculine success to the drug trade, and that left mainstream economic aspirations seemingly confined to the stereotypically limited and limiting fields of sport and music.

The picture however is complicated by those examples of personal resistance my co-participants described. For example, Ashley's purposeful and solitary embrace of skateboarding breaks a normative expectation of him in a highly individual way, while Lawrence and Trigga would frequently challenge expressions of Black inferiority in the group sessions. But it can actually be inaction and non-participation that most definitively resists some of the more harmful norms of power mediated by street culture. Resistance to getting involved in fights or in crime of one description or another - I'm thinking particularly of the example Ashley gave in refusing to participate in a burglary - is a courageous act that publicly challenges the normative expectations surveilled by street culture and one's peers.

Classification & Distribution

Classification refers to the differentiation and naming of different groups, while *distribution* is concerned with spatially arranging, isolating, ranking and separating subjects (Foucault, 1980, 1991). Both techniques this thesis inevitably plays a part in effecting, since the verification, focus and analysis of street culture in these pages contributes to a reified *classification* and *distribution* of local experiences to the complete exclusion of those others (domesticity and femininity for example) I did not set out to encounter. Furthermore, this is, rather ironically, compounded by the reflexive 'I' through which I have tried to organise much of this experience; a choice that generally serves to hyper inflate self-other differences for the purpose of imposing some sort of significance and order. In more obvious and officious terms, these effects of power are most visible in those diagnoses and spaces young Black

masculinities are disproportionately confined to, about which enough has already been said.

For my co-participants, power in these effects might have looked very different, but it was a consistent and coherent articulation of the same discourse. Within street culture for example, there are some obvious *classifications* and *distributions* across which power is effected. Territoriality and gang *classifications* across St Pauls and Easton demonstrate a spatial translation of discourse beneath which membership is classified even further. For instance, according to my co-participants, 'St Pauls man is all about making money'; he is 'more humble' and 'laid back'; whereas in Easton, young men are 'all about hypin'; they are 'dumb' and 'dishonourable'. This *classification* helps organise street culture, in particular, the ranking of an individual's stock of *respect* and thus his relative masculinity. This was broken down still more by my co-participants, who differentiated life now compared to 'back in the day'; an inference always that *youngers*, or more specifically, *hoodrats*, were somehow different to them. A *classification* Lawrence explained as itself a function of power distributed.

LAWRENCE - *When we was growing up there was more to do. Now, with these younger ones, compared to all the activities we could do they ain't got hardly any of it. They're (Easton and St Pauls) separated from the start.*

A most notable (though this is my emphasis not my co-participants) *classification* is also related to the category 'Black', which seemed specifically to exclude, for example, Somalis. In fact, it is much more accurate to describe this *classification* as the differentiation and exclusion of other Black experiences from this particularly urban and capitalist one. For Black in this sense refers to a very particular experience, one definitively made in Britain but not (by the power of exclusion) admitted to Britishness; one steeped in Jamaican references, patterns of speech and symbols, but annexed from the Caribbean by the distributive effects in space and time of migration and three generations. This differentiation is evident only subtly, and is not so concrete that, for example, Somali boys cannot 'earn' by pursuit of *respect* the experience and some

inclusion to street culture over time - nor indeed that they couldn't or don't make their own. Nonetheless, power is in this sense very much bound up in a particular Black British Caribbean history and experience, one visible and distributed on the streets; 'across the Bridge, it's mostly Somalis over there. The Black boys, most of them are up Stapleton Road.'⁶³

Perhaps the most significant distribution of power in St Pauls has been and is the ceding of public space to the drugs trade, an effect of structural inequality and free market economics that creates the physical arenas in which local masculinities are distributed, made visible and classified against the narrative of street culture. A cartography of the drug trade reveals the extent of its *distribution*; from the crack vials in the children's playground to the young men on the corner of Brighton Street; from the undercover police by Tasties, to the young dealers stash hidden from his mother at the back of the cupboard. Finally, the Yardie, who in his expensive car and clothes remains a visible and dominant marker of Black material success, one ranked atop the local pyramid of young men searching for *respect* and similar economic dignity.

The *distribution* and *classification* of this experience of urban marginality by young men themselves, effects a kind of stigmata that comes with being a young Black male from St Pauls or Easton. The territorial stigma of living in a socio-economically segregated space, a supposed 'no-go' area like St Pauls, penetrates local relations with the police and courts, would-be employers, the welfare office, teachers and other social and health services. This ought not to be underestimated as a spatial translation of ideological power, for it is crucially important to the circular flow of *surveillance* as it moves from objective structures to inhabit local subjectivities and back again, fossilising marginality in spaces that end up as repositories for social deviances like unemployment, drugs, mental illness, single parenthood, immigration and crime.

⁶³ This is a *distribution* in time as well as place. Lawrence, Marcel and Audley, only because they are slightly older and grew up in an earlier time where the *distribution* of power was less reified, are able to traverse St Pauls and Easton more easily than Ashley, Jermaine or Tyreese. Gender also seems distributed across this common experience, since girls and young women are able to move more freely across both neighbourhoods than are young men, a *distribution* of power that extends to a complex and contradictory articulation of sexual politics.

But in the micropolitics of everyday life, my co-participants were not passive in the face of these effects. All hoped to one day leave St Pauls, for a family and house in the suburbs, and a satisfying, well paid job (see also Gunter, 2010). These modest aspirations resisted the ideological flow of power through classificatory and distributed means, as did the embodied pathos that would accompany discussions of street cultures excesses. There were many other, more or less subtle examples of the group resisting or recasting power through these technologies. For instance, when Tyreese and Ashley were not making Triggs the butt of their jokes, they would acknowledge his being 'wash-out' was actually 'a good thing', a subversion of power they managed even while being trapped by it themselves. Tyreese also effected a personal *distribution* of power in the way he made sure Ledley was kept 'away from the places where people get stabbed' and 'in by 10pm before anything happens'. This technique was also deployed by Jermaine's mother, who was willing to spend substantial amounts of her limited income on video games to keep him at home and off the streets; and by Ashley, who purposely skateboarded with the middle class white youth on the waterfront. More dramatically, Triggs's mother relocated to Clifton, a *distribution* of power he found difficult to reconcile with the effect of *classification* in both his new neighbourhood (as a highly visible young Black male) and in St Pauls, to whom he retained loyalty and a sense of (objectified/ classified) belonging.

Exclusion

Finally, *exclusion*, which Foucault describes as the demarcation of boundaries; zones of abnormality that may be cultural, biological and/or geographic. In St Pauls, *exclusion* is all these things, the cumulative effect of all other techniques of power as they are both officiously and interpersonally embodied and mediated. Distilled, *exclusion* is discourse, that reciprocal mesh of objective inequality remade in the subjectivities of the story of failure. The most devastating manifestation of which is the economic apartheid that traps individuals in a dehumanising struggle for their basic material needs, and that creates the hermetic character of street culture; excluded and at once exclusive. The 'zone of abnormality' demarcated by this apartheid in St Pauls carries across the city in exclusive stigmata that help reinforce the borders sealing it.

Indeed, pretty much everything about street culture carries an exclusionary effect of power that is at once oppositional, and at the same time reproduces the wider discourse of *exclusion* emanating from the centre. The language, symbols, values, norms and human geography can seem impenetrable to the outsider, but they also trap young men in their exclusivity such that street culture ends up self-surveilling and regulating its own *exclusion*. For my co-participants, negotiating inclusion to the cultural capital found in street culture was a necessary everyday concession; at the same time, finding opportunities for *exclusion from* street culture was equally important. This delicate interpersonal balancing act between the situational and orientational selves (O'Neil, 1972) describes well the developmental pathway through adolescence for a portion of young men in St Pauls.

ASHLEY - *But you got to adapt to your surroundings, whatever you got use it as much as you can.*

LAWRENCE - *Yeah. People say the system be messed up, but growing up here even if you're not looking for trouble sometimes trouble comes looking for you. And you have to defend your house or something, and then you get a criminal record for defending your house. Then you're in the system, you get a record that hinders you from doing certain things. Probably everyone in St Pauls has got in little situations where you could have got your friends and gone to fight for it, and for whatever reason you didn't go that time.... Sometimes it just comes straight at you.*

Straying too far or too close to the discourse of the street leads to the subjective crystallisation of *exclusion*. Too far, and there is the risk of (violent) *exclusion* by peers; too close, the risk of official sanction and permanent *exclusion* from the centre. This either/or pull of exclusionary discourse at street level is what I took to be the 'endless pressure' Pryce (1979) described, the effect of which Sol found completely "suffocating, man. You can't express yourself or nothing." Ultimately though, however cleanly this negotiation is managed through adolescence, for too many young men the weight of structural *exclusion* is such that discourse and governmentality eventually confirm for them their marginality

in the period of post-school drift. This demoralising experience has few outcomes that are not harmful, and some, as we have heard, are fatal.

In truth, despite their pragmatism and the thoughtful way in which they manage this effect of exclusionary power in everyday life, the overarching exclusionary discourse emanating from the centre is set. While much of this is inherited, school is the institution that confirms through cumulative combinations of the other techniques described above 'archetypal experiences of insider and outsider statuses, of bullying and exclusion' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p.165). In part this is a predictable articulation of the prevailing socio-economic condition of late capitalism, but it is also about citizenship, where children and young people are socialised/civilised against the trajectory of developmental psychology and inculcated to a metonymic image of the nation. Banal nationalism of this kind (Billig, 1995) is the ideological skeleton off which the embodied habits of social life, identity and citizenship are hung. 'Such habits include those of thinking and using language... (For) as a number of critical social psychologists have been emphasising, the social psychological study of identity should involve the detailed study of discourse.... (Because) having a national identity also involves being situated physically, legally, socially, as well as emotionally' (p. 9).

By these measures my co-participants found themselves situated at the furthest margins of national identity and citizenship, a position of *exclusion* they both inherited, embodied, and would be likely to pass on to their progeny. The penetration of street culture into the school setting (Sewell, 1997), and the ideological character and labour of education, combine to create the statistical picture sketched at the outset of this chapter of disproportionate exclusions across a range of settings appended to mainstream education. Being emotionally situated by this discourse of *exclusion* has more subtle but no less damaging consequences. The arrangement calls to mind Fanon's (1967) summation that 'to speak a language is to take on a world, a culture' (p. 38), a proposition that basically means for young men to situate themselves nearer to the centre, they must first submit to a discourse that has spent generations constructing them as Other than it, that has drawn a ring of *exclusion* around them demarcated by a racist typology made in the Cartesian split of the white

mind (reasoned, civilised, intelligent) ruling over the Black body (unreasoned, uncivilised, physical). A good example of this either/or tension was Trigga, who, situated in liminality, spoke both the language of conformity and the street, though neither with sufficient fluency to fully integrate him to either.

It is a specific feature of these young masculinities that exclusionary discourse flows in this dualistic way. Thus, in the end, it may be easier, indeed emotionally healthier, to situate oneself in a moral economy where *exclusion* can at least be reshaped and resisted sufficiently that a feeling of personal dignity is possible. A core feature of being pushed towards this space of marginality, one described time and again in studies of the poor and oppressed, is the sense of fatalism that accompanies it (Liebow, 1967, Lewis, 1975). Indeed, fatalism is one of the most insidious effects of exclusionary power, and one that actively perpetuates it. Martín-Baró (1994), despite the fact his critical gaze was fixed on the people of Latin America some thirty years ago, describes this in a way that remains contemporarily relevant for St Pauls:

'Fatalism is a way for people to make sense of a world they have found closed and beyond their control: it is an attitude caused and continually reinforced by the oppressive functioning of overall social structures. Marginalized children... internalize fatalism not so much because they inherit it from their parents as because it is the fruit of their experience with society... They learn to be resigned and submissive, not so much as the result of the transmission of values through a closed subculture as through the everyday demonstration of how impossible and useless it is to strive to change their situation, when that environment itself forms part of an overall oppressive social system. Hence, just as marginalization is caused by a socioeconomic system to which the marginalized, as marginalized people, belong, the attitudes and values of a culture of poverty are being continually caused and reinforced by the normal functioning of this social system, which includes the poor as members' (p. 210-11).

Fatalism, as an example of embodied *exclusion*, was visible in my co-participants attitude to the coming gentrification of St Pauls, (itself another

example of economic *exclusion* spatially translated). Consider again, for instance, Jermaine's feelings on the Dove Lane consultation:

JERMAINE - *It's (Dove Lane) the start of the plan, yeah, like, to move the Black people out of St Pauls. Because it's more expensive close to town, after that, one side will be full of loads of white people, not being racist, and all the Black people be this side. They'll be all intimidated to come round, which means more police around arresting Black people... I think what we say anyway, they already have planned anyway, so it ain't gonna really matter. This is just a cover up. We care, but our thoughts don't really count.*

Fatalism of this kind is both an effect of the wider exclusionary discourse already described, but, importantly, it also pretty accurate. For instance, Lawrence and Audley both told me of a handful of local families they knew, who, in recent months, had fallen behind on their rent. The difference, they explained, was that the city council was moving quickly to evict, a considerable change in their threshold for tolerance that translated on the street as a visible intensification of the process of *exclusion* and ethnic cleansing gentrification seemed to promise.

The mirroring of social and psychic structures

Following the symptoms to an analysis of *habitus* based inequalities and poststructural power in the lives of my co-participants, a fundamental and dialectical aspect of mental health is arrived at; the mirroring of social and psychic structures (Durkheim & Mauss, 1967, Bourdieu, 1996). The personal form this takes depends on the pattern of unevenly distributed discourse across society, but this mirroring is equally true for those privileged by the social arrangement as those oppressed by it. Both sides of this dialectical coin are distortions of a more humane image and vocation for being (Fanon, 1961), and both draw down basic psychic techniques or vents of repression, like splitting, introjection, projection, denial 'and other forms of destructive action on experience' (Laing, 1967, p. 27). As a public health issue, this correspondence

is generally anosognosic, rendered invisible by neoliberalism's ontological 'colonisation of the lifeworld' (Habermas, 1987).

For my co-participants, the institutional and discursive structures of marginalisation are flows of power they resist and shape, but that ultimately they cannot help but reproduce. Consolidated by an oppositional street culture and the temperament, behaviours and emotional states privileged by it, discourse inserts itself into the *biopolitics* of local masculinities, producing the hypervigilance, aggression and physicality of the street. The structure of feeling that emerges is more complicated, contradictory, syncretic and contingent than adjectives like abnormal, delinquent or pathological suppose. The most important feature of this psyche/social mirroring is its visibility at all levels of street culture, which for all its subversions, emphasises and packages material success and commercialism (*swagga*), entrepreneurialism (*enterprisin'*), and individualism (*respect*) in ways entirely consistent with the prevailing socio-economic system's ideology and values.

Indeed, it is worth exposing some of neoliberalism's prominent mores to psychoanalytic ideas, for in doing so it's possible to clarify the moral economy being mirrored. For instance, the strong present-time orientation of my co-participants is not a quality confined to some 'culture of poverty' (Lewis, 1967); it is the state and market that 'project the existing or near future reality as the ideal' (Sloan, 1996, p. 62). It is the neoliberal fidelity to the market that lauds self-reliance, possession, and personal gratification such that interdependency and reliance on others is moved to a site of pathology. And it is the neoliberal image of freedom that has attached the psychoanalytic notion of omnipotence to the accumulation of money (Altman, 2010). This project actively replaces 'symbolic cultural sources of meaning with mere stimulation' (Sloan, 1996, p. 131), obscuring participation and advancing instead a commodified spectatorship. This highly individualised and self-gratifying ideological trajectory means development entails a progressive schizoid differentiation of self from other, and a corresponding strengthening of ego-boundaries that is no different under conditions of material want than under those of abundance and privilege. The difference of course lies only in the capacity of the oppressor to turn the

oppressed into an object (of deviance, abnormality or pathology), and so destroy him (Belmonte, 2005).

While in many respects my co-participants seemed to me 'uncommonly resilient' (Anthony & Cohler, 1987), there is nothing noble or romantic about this in the face of their obvious oppression and suffering, even if nobility can exist in the context of both. Discourse, as it flows in and through St Pauls, not just contemporarily, but cumulatively as it has pooled and been struggled over these past forty or so years, produces a structure of being and feeling that is to varying degrees depressive, anxious, angry, traumatised, bored, desperate, aggressive, fatalistic and violent.⁶⁴ That many of St Pauls inhabitants should feel the same way is neither surprising nor evidence of some ethnographically or culturally bound epidemiological conclusion. These are feelings and behaviours made 'from above', and, in fact, under such degraded and demoralising conditions, far from pathology they at least constitute a 'humane, compassionate, healthy, and realistic response' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 45).

Any grounded analysis of existential situations such as those described by my co-participants, 'reveals that their inception lay in an act of violence - initiated by those with power. This violence, as a process, is perpetuated from generation to generation of oppressors who become its heirs and are shaped in its climate' (Freire, 1971, p. 40). The question that then arises is one of beneficence, since no teacher, psychologist, or social worker would (want to) consider their practice, motivation or selfhood in this light.

'Well intentioned professionals (those who use 'invasion' not as deliberate ideology but as the expression of their own upbringing) eventually discover that certain of their educational failures must be ascribed, not to the intrinsic inferiority of the 'simple men of the people', but to the violence of their own act of invasion. Those who make this discovery face a difficult alternative: they feel the need to renounce invasion, but patterns of domination are so entrenched

⁶⁴ Of course, this reading ought not to be mistaken to define the totality of St Pauls' character.

within them that this renunciation would become a threat to their own identities' (ibid, p. 137).

My own ethnographic story of the (at the time of writing) two years knowing and collaborating with my co-participants, was an uncomfortable exercise in untangling the ways in which my psychic structures and professional practices mirrored the social and institutional structures of privilege. This was made harder by the absence of an adequate blueprint for the process, since behaviours around privilege have received very much less critical attention than those around oppression. The most important of these for the reproduction of the status quo are the silencing of voice, and the psychic strategies of dissociation that must accompany the habitual bystanding of human suffering.

'Perhaps, if the mutilations of self that bystanding entails were more widely recognized, the courage could be gathered to confront the situations to which one otherwise capitulates. For those in colonizing cultures, colonial ideologies have contributed to dissociating the personal from the political, building a sense of private interiority that is strangely disconnected from historical and cultural context... Psychically being a bystander to injustice and violence breeds disconnection, passivity, fatalism, a sense of futility, and failures in empathic connection' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 64-65).

The psychic structure privilege creates is characterised by a constellation of psychoanalytic wounds; sociopathy, neurosis, loneliness, narcissism, mutilations of self and other, self fear and loathing, emptiness, greed, false entitlement, psychic numbing, and of course the dissociative strategies of amnesia and splitting (Alschuler, 2006, Watkins & Shulman, 2008, Altman, 2010). I walked away from St Pauls each Friday night knowing that Jermaine was going home to care for his depressed mother; that Ashley's mother was exhausted from working double shifts and struggling to find the rent that month; that Lawrence was in mourning for his friend or that Sol was in hiding for fear of his life. I smiled or laughed, complicitously, at the jokes made about someone's *swagga*, the promiscuity of local girls, and even the jokes about Trigga sounding 'wash out'. I had also to admit my own attraction to those elements of Black masculinity and street culture that expressed something it was necessary for

me to silence in my own masculinity. But ultimately, perhaps the most significant thing about all of this is that I managed these contradictions with relative ease. It was not so difficult to switch off once I returned home each night, and I felt little more than a mild introspective shame for (bystanding) behaviours which are at odds with how I should like to determine myself, and that in the end degrade and dehumanise me.⁶⁵

This kind of psychic numbing is an endemic condition of privilege, and a core part of the psychic structure 'necessary' for professional practice in settings of advanced marginality and habitual human suffering. Dissociative techniques of this kind are generally dressed as professional experience, competence, and resilience. They are also replicated and eased by training, supervision, treatments and interventions that dis-individualise the practitioner, that ask only he or she executes programmes handed down to them (Goodman, 1968). These wounds are not new, half a century of colonialism, and latterly neoliberal capitalism, has hardened these strategies into 'extremely rigid, destructive, and pathological complexes... that organize many European and American educational institutions and social discourses in ways that generate bystanding' (Watkins and Shulman, 2008, p. 75).

In much the same way that a young man at the margins risks losing *respect* and status in the context of street culture, the professional who would respond authentically to human suffering, or who would challenge the prevailing ideology and service culture in their place of work, risks losing much the same thing. Indeed, silence, by-standing and forgetting (stasis) are incentivised in the dialectic of oppression by the promise of personal reward and privilege later. In this context, 'to be an authentic professional, or try to be, is itself revolutionary' (Goodman, 1968, p. 125). Watkins (in Shulman-Lorenz & Watkins, 2002b) describes what, for me, authenticity of this kind looks like in the context of mental healthcare:

⁶⁵ Large scale community surveys in the United States have shown that lower class people are more likely to display psychotic symptoms, while middle class people display more neurotic symptoms. Langer and Michael (1963) propose the interesting dialectical idea that the neuroses of the middle classes is linked to their social positioning and the silencing of their voices and inhibition of their sexual and violent urges. The psychoses of the lower classes they ascribed to the personal experiences of material deprivation and the accompanying assaults on identity and the social structures that normatively contain relationships.

'I found myself working with African-American, Latino, and white children, living in poverty in the inner city of Boston. Not yet out of clinical psychology graduate school I performed the rituals of 50 minute hours, psychological testing, consultations to Head Start classrooms. These children - Merrie, Manuel, Antonio, Michael, Julie - entered my dreams, disturbed my sleep, my sense of adequacy, and my naive faith in clinical depth psychology. Their stories and the images in their play pointed not only to the failures of familial relationships, but to the limitations of the theories and practice I was working with. These theories did not name the traumas associated with poverty, immigration, sexism and racism, as well as transgenerational traumas associated with our country's history of genocide and slavery. Miseducation, inadequate housing and healthcare, dangerous neighborhoods, family members in prison, parents stressed beyond human capacities, were realities that registered themselves through symptoms: hyperactivity, psychosomatic illness, suicidality, excessive aggressiveness, inability to attach, clinging. I was supposed to be feeling more confident, more trained, more equipped to take my place in the medical hierarchy as a psychologist. To tell you the truth it was making more sense to me to sew a child's buttons on her shirt than to administer a Rorschach, to eat with a hungry kid than to fill out his progress notes, to make supper for a mother and her children while she slept a few hours before going to her next shift than to file a report of abuse' (p. 1).

Ultimately, within this structure of being, individuals and groups may resist and recalibrate the power that flows around, in and through them, but agency in this landscape is always partial; submerged in and mediated by the colonising vision of neoliberal capitalism. The persistence and widening of material inequality in the early twenty first century (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010) is a mark of the success this ideological project has in reproducing itself, and in this context, debates about the increasing incidences of psychopathology among young people (RCPSYCH, 2010) seem to me little more than an extension of Steve

Biko's (1986) assertion that 'the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed' (p. 43).⁶⁶

Thus to follow the symptoms of individual distress to their systemic bases and beyond, to the supporting epistemology and ontology that created the system, is to arrive at a place where existing mental health policies and remedies are not only inadequate, but part of the problem. The creation of a more structurally just and humane society is a public mental health concern, and what my young co-participants reveal to us about their marginality, and, indeed, how it is we interpret them from positions and through theories of relative privilege, is central to both recognising and acting on this contemporary 'psychopolitics' (Cresswell & Spandler, 2009).

'The oppressed are regarded as the pathology of the healthy society, which just therefore adjust these "incompetent and lazy" folk to its own patterns by changing their mentality. These marginals need to be "integrated", "incorporated" into the healthy society that they have "forsaken". The truth is, however, that the oppressed are not "marginals", are not people living "outside" of society. They have always been "inside" - inside the structure which made them "being for others". The solution is not to "integrate" them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become "beings for themselves" (Freire, 1971, p. 55).

⁶⁶ An Office of National Statistics (2005) survey in found that 1 in 10 children 5-16 had a clinically diagnosable mental disorder at any one time. Of these, 4% had an emotional disorder and 6% a conduct disorder. Bristol's Emotional Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2009-14 extrapolates this national incidence and suggests 'around 8,000 children and young people in Bristol have some level of emotional ill health which requires attention from trained workers' (p. 12).

9. PARTICIPATION IN CRISIS

“You been brainwashed by Ashley, oh my days! I put in the work, I been here every week! You know what? I don’t give a fuck about St Pauls people anyway, I only did this for the money. I had plans for that money. You been brainwashed!” (Jermaine).

The participatory ethic and approach I deployed in gathering the narratives that make up the ethnographic heart of this thesis contains important lessons for those interested in the social position of (children and) young people, and for the disciplines of anthropology and psychology more generally, which must avail themselves to the more adequate postmodern epistemology participatory social research can yield (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, Bourgois & Schonberg, 2009). This chapter then engages conceptually, and I hope pragmatically, with the issue of young people’s participation in the overall structure and dialectic of oppression.

Thus far my enquiry has been largely deconstructionist, concerned with rendering faithfully a collaborative ethnographic portrait of young urban masculinities in St Pauls, and from their perspectives, a grounded critique of the ways in which social and political issues of inequality in the inner city are reduced to and regulated as personal problems, disorders and pathology. Here, my ambition is somewhat more restorative, using the participatory experience to unify concepts of democratic legitimacy and communication (Habermas, 1987, Young, 2000), with those of social change and psychological health (Fanon, 1967, Freire, 1971, Martín-Baró, 1994, Alschuler, 2006, Watkins & Shulman, 2008). I embark on this exercise in the search for a more capable and rigorous postmodern scientific paradigm, and the creation of a more just, and humane society. On the basis of the critique offered in the preceding chapter, I purposefully frame this exercise as a mental health problem.

Drawing from the experience of the PAR project, I will suggest that participation (though not without caveats) may offer the only adequate epistemological

framework for a science of (postmodern) humans being. This assertion is grounded in the syncretism, hybridity, and contradictions of the dialectical picture of (situational/orientational) self described by my co-participants. A picture that also reveals these young men to be architects in the construction of cultural knowledge, a subversion of the European avatar of 'the child' as vulnerable, wilful and dependent, lacking in competence and reason.⁶⁷ The very postmodern picture they sketch demands we find a conceptual model equipped to negotiate capably and mindfully the heterogeneity and intersectionality in play (Gilroy, 1987, Hall, 1991, Bingham, 2001, Bhabba, 2004, Weisner & Lowe, 2005); one situated locally and inhabiting dialectical tension (O'Neill, 1972); one able to access 'indigenous' knowing that emerges on the streets, and one sufficiently reflexive to interrogate constantly the power working through its construction of scientific knowledge.

More than this, I will propose that participation offers important liberatory routes to self-definition and psychological health, indeed, that these two concepts are indelibly bound to both one another and to those of children and young people's rights more generally. Participation, because it consciously ameliorates and administers power in a mindful way, contains within it the requisite tools for transformation of the status quo (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002). For if the socio-genesis of most psychological suffering is the uneven distribution of power in society, then participatory projects certainly also have the potential to be psychotherapeutic; a dialectical intervention that may be both personally, socially, and politically transformative.

The structure of oppression in participatory practice

Prior to beginning work in the field, I invested a great deal of faith in participatory approaches to social research. Equally, the literature on children and young people's participation, particularly participatory action social research with young people, seemed to me self-evidently valid and worthwhile (Cahill, 2004, 2006, Torre & Fine, 2006, Cahill, Rios-Moore & Threatts, 2008, Cammarota & Fine, 2008, Cahill & Bradley, 2011). Two years later, though I

⁶⁷ For a summary of this in relation to the pattern of European history, see Cordero Arce, 2012.

remain compelled by the epistemological and ethical basis of such studies, I realise my initial faith, while not misplaced, was skewed by the language of emancipatory literature, the 'quality' of the participants in the studies I had read, and the reassuring way in which the research process was and is often tidied in the final presentation of the study. My own experience of participation in the inner city was much more resistant to the poetics of form found in my textbooks. This difference can be briefly summarised against what I considered at the outset to be the hallmarks of PAR in the established body of literature.

First, and despite my best efforts, there was little discernible research structure to speak of. While there was certainly a participatory 'research conversation' (Herda, 1999), there was no typically sequential 'self-reflective spiral: a spiral of cycles of planning, acting (implementing plans), observing (systematically), reflecting, and then re-planning, further implementation, observing and reflecting again' (McTaggart, 1997, p. 34). Second, our time together only so often, and after many other external variables had aligned, created the correct conditions that we 'engaged in social theorizing together, building theory from the ground up' (Cahill, 2004, p. 277). Finally, there was really no emotional and 'liberatory childbirth' (Freire, 1971), and the social action fruit of our time together, the short film, dissolved finally some twelve months later in a combined unpreparedness among the group to engage in the editing down of the footage they eventually shot. By way of an epilogue to this, two years after the research there is no visible legacy or difference in the lives of my co-participants that I could trace back to our time together, save perhaps our friendships. In fact, for each of them the circumstances of their adolescence have deteriorated in the transition to adulthood in depressingly predictable ways. Across the four domains (personal, familial, communal and institutional) Hart and Newman et al (2004) identify as necessary for a holistic evaluation of participatory practice, this example of the form seems to fall short.

While the research was ongoing I worried about what I saw as these failures constantly. The whole study seemed to me to be struggling for validity, more likely a case study in how not to do participatory social research with young people. But as the weeks passed and our relationships deepened, my anxiety retreated as I came to understand the context of my co-participants lives in

relation to a body of participatory literature across which I could find no young men who looked, sounded, or indeed shared, their positionality. In our penultimate session, Tyreese said to the group that he was going to miss meeting every Friday night: “it’s good to just chill and talk, it don’t ever happen normally. I like it.” In the room in the moment, I missed it. But when transcribing the audio of the session the next morning, I realised Tyreese was actually verbalising an outcome I hadn’t considered.

Somewhat ironically, it was I who had the moment of self-actualisation in this study. For in that moment I had to concede that all along I had been unknowingly defining outcomes on behalf of my co-participants and what I took to be their best interests. I began to re-evaluate the central tenets of participatory theory and practice I had read. Specifically, I started to ask what a context of significant social exclusion and oppression does to and means for (young) people’s capacity to participate in the kind of project I was attempting. And I was struggling to hear what the fundamentally sequential typologies and theories of young people’s participation that have evolved in the tradition of Arnstein (1969) had to say about the kind of marginality I encountered in St Pauls (Hart, 1992, 1997, Rocha, 1997, Pretty et al, 1995, Franklin, 1997, Treseder, 1997, Shier, 2001, Reddy & Ratna, 2002, Francis & Lorenzo, 2002).⁶⁸

Indeed, the ‘failure’ in the orthodox form of our research process ultimately speaks to a deficit of representation in the practice and nascent theories of children and young people’s participation. This can be summed up thus: as a failure to engage in practice with important spaces and categories of marginality, and a *de facto* epistemological weakness in the emerging theory of children and young people’s participation. Malone & Hartung (2010) summarise this weakness as the field being ‘under-theorised and over-practicalised’ (p. 33); circumstances that have lead to a lack of theoretical definition and an unhelpful

⁶⁸ I must be clear that this was part of a wider process of self reflexivity around my role and efficacy as ‘animator’ (Freire, 1971). I do not absolve from the participatory process my own mistakes and misjudgments. Certainly, I am not attempting to deflect onto theory that which was actually about my practice and person. However, my errors were usually an expression of some interpersonal dynamic rooted in the dialectic of oppression and privilege, and as such were part of the relationship between marginality and participation I am trying to describe.

binary emphasis in measuring the success or failure of participatory projects (Percy-Smith & Malone 2001).

My own experience tells me simply that engaging with advanced marginality (in this case the particular categories of urban poverty, race and masculinity) of this extent is important for the health and rigour of participatory theory and practices. Advanced marginality in all sorts of predictable as well as unanticipated ways, tests the authenticity of the participatory ethic and process, and if theories and practices of participation are not extended in this direction, they may otherwise do little more than mimic and effect those technologies and techniques of power described in the preceding chapter. Instead of opening up the dialectical situation for scrutiny and transformation, they reproduce it in an ultimately conservative and dogmatic articulation of privilege by adults (and sometimes young people) for young people at, or at least relatively nearer to, the centre.

One of the most fundamental lessons my co-participants taught me was that though positioned politically and economically at the margins, theirs is a structure of being and feeling made from the raw ideological materials and values of neoliberalism at the centre. In this sense they are not marginal, but central actors in a socio-economic script predicated on their inequality. Their positionality as young Black men growing up in the inner city is the cumulative result of five hundred years ideological effort to position them there, not an accident of their birth or failure of genes or culture. Nor even, looked at this way, a failure of the state. As for their future located in this matrix of oppression, Belmonte's (2005) prescience probably holds true:

'One might argue that as a capitalist world culture based solely on a mystique of acquisition successfully erodes those surviving sources of precapitalist value (whether grounded in kinship, religion, ethnicity, or even nationalism), the frequency of addictive and private as opposed to renunciatory and public (responsible) behaviour will increase dramatically. The vulnerability of unemployed youth to the global invasion of psychotropic substances, as well as their employment in the drug-distributive sector, is not a mark of their

marginality. Rather, they are members of a historical, ultimately suicidal, vanguard' (p. xxi - xxii).

This has important consequences for theories of social inclusion, and for those concerned with the social position of children and young people, many of which draw heavily on ideas of democratic and civic participation (Matthews, 2003, Sen, 2004). Their implicit assumption in doing so is that participation of this kind deepens the health of democracy (and of young people), somehow ameliorating the fact that the ideology behind the system dialectically relies on the existence of inequality, of winners and losers, insiders and outsiders. Arguments for social inclusion and practices of participation based on this assumption may be pragmatic and sometimes valuable, but they are fundamentally flawed, not least because they are also exclusively built around adult constructs and structures of democracy, inclusion and rights (Malone & Hartunk, 2010, Cordero Arce, 2012).

In the earlier sketch for an ethic for participation, I began from the position that to participate is an ontological given (Reason & Bradbury, 2001), albeit one submerged in the ideological project of neoliberalism. Consequently, when the argument is put that 'there should be an equal opportunity for everyone to participate in society, there is an underlying assumption... against fragmentation and difference. To 'participate' actually means to leave the margins and join the rest of 'us' (Sewell, 1997, p. 18). In this way even 'progressive' arguments for social inclusion by participatory means can effect normatively and distributively the ideological power and cultural hegemony of the centre.⁶⁹ This PAR project, and I at the centre of it, effected just such a contradictory image of inclusivity; a mesh of pluralist intent and cultural hegemony cast in the mould of philosophical neoliberalism, I did not see this for some time. Only through my experience in St Pauls and the unravelling of (something of) my privilege as a consequence, did I come to 'see' more fully my benign embodiment and administration of the discourse I believed I was at odds with. Importantly, it was not so much my theorising, but my co-participants positionality and voices that unlocked this.

⁶⁹ I must caveat this with acknowledgement of the fact I am not here principally critiquing participatory practices concerned for the ways children and young people make private decisions about their lives (Thomas, 2002). I am however keen to set even these in a broader socio-economic, structural and ideological context.

What my co-participants taught me about their lives and about social exclusion, and what I learned about my life in the process, de-stabilises, I think, any notion that there can realistically exist a unified model for evaluating the success or failure of participatory practice. However, my feeling is that a unified theory of children and young people's participation can and must exist, and through it an ethical framework for authentic practice can emerge. For this to happen, participatory theories must reflect this instability and continually test and reinforce themselves across the entire constellation of marginality and privilege in time and space. Indeed, in a world of services for children and young people where the dogma of 'evidence based practice' haunts both the commissioning and delivery of services, a unified theory of children and young people's participation must be driven instead by *practice based evidence*, and a fundamental proactivity that acknowledges young people are agents in the cultural construction of knowledge, sometimes outside of and resistant to the adult domain (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002, Cordero Arce, 2012). In short, an emerging theory must understand 'participation more broadly as a manifestation of individual agency within a social context' (Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010, p. 357).

My contribution to this process means that next, instead of tidying up the presentation of the project for this thesis, I will instead make explicit the messy, stalling, frequently frustrating and often underwhelming character of much of it. I will lay bare the tensions and contradictions we confronted, ignored, negotiated and were defeated by, and I will consider openly the outcomes both good and bad that were achieved through it. I do this on the basis Naker, Mann and Rajani (2007) propose; that 'grappling with (the) tensions and contradictions of child participation in practice, and questioning even enlightened assumptions, is likely the most important ingredient in this work' (p. 102).

Reflections on participating at the margins

The simplest way in which to organise this, is to take the 'typical' stages of a PAR project and superimpose over them that which occurred during our efforts in St Pauls. What I want to illuminate by this is something of a participatory process where categories of severe social exclusion coalesce, and, specifically,

I want to make the structure of oppression visible in the process. I will here pay special heed to the ways in which theoretical orthodoxies were subverted by the effects of oppression and my privilege, and ultimately, how they could be re-imagined and extended as a result. Consistent with the conceptual and epistemological framework of the preceding chapters, a Foucauldian consideration of power will be extended to describe this. Poststructuralism is important in this regard because it speaks to a messier notion of interpersonal power, one that is fluid and contextual in ways not always obvious or acknowledged in existing participatory practices and theories (Gallagher, 2008).

Recruiting co-participants

Beginning at the beginning, with recruitment, the struggle to engage young men in the project was my first experience of the distance between my books and real world St Pauls. I went into the fieldwork drawing heavily from studies that made the process appear obvious and simple, little more than a brief paragraph on the way to the voice of the young researchers at the heart of the study. Consider, for example, this description of the process offered by Cahill (2004), whose study with young women in New York's Lower East Side I initially considered perhaps closest to my own:

'I played various roles in the project which included the initiation of the project and ongoing facilitation of it. To begin with I recruited six young women to participate as youth researchers through neighborhood schools and community centers. Specifically, I was looking for young women between the ages of 16 and 22 who lived on the Lower East Side. Prospective researchers had to fill out an application which included a short essay about their interest in participating. A diverse group of young women were selected' (p. 274).

Unlike Cahill, I was not asking for an application form or short essay, a decision I didn't consciously make but that was at least unintentionally mindful of the literacy and confidence among the group I wanted to work with. Instead I stuck up posters, went on local community radio, met with local youth and social workers, handed out flyers, and even approached 'cold' young men on the basketball court in St Pauls Park. None of which yielded even a single

participant. But just as my struggle was appropriate and relative to the context of marginality in St Pauls and my positionality in relation to this, so the apparent absence of any difficulty gathering co-participants in Cahill's study perhaps reflects the context and positionality of the young researchers on that same scale. By which I do not mean the young women are not marginal, only that they already possessed the critical faculties and confidence necessary to engage in a research process and to articulate their world in a way commensurate with a quite orthodox definition of the term 'research'. Cahill's recruitment process explicitly privileged these qualities, in the settings she visited and the essay she required from those interested in taking part. Effecting exclusionary power in this way, the result is rather self fulfilling; a more motivated, confident, intellectually and emotionally primed research collective; qualities that are evident in the literacy of the participants and in their already nascent political consciousness.

'Those of us who have been living under the thumb of oppression have mainly suffered a lack of information, a lack of access, and a lack of inspiration; we are not taught to ask "Why?" - we are not allowed to ask the questions that lead to a stronger mind. Participatory Action Research is one of the most potent weapons against oppression, it offers an opportunity to gain both skills and knowledge, to conduct an investigation that roots out both the questions and the answers that expose injustice. In the process of simply learning how to ask questions, a researcher is able to find themselves at the heart of those questions' (Anissa, a young researcher in the Fed-Up-Honeys collective, Cahill, Rios-Moore, Threatts, 2008, p. 89).

For a number of reasons this is not a statement I could imagine any of my co-participants authoring. Partly because of literacy, mostly however because it implies a confident, progressive and sequential research momentum. The kind of momentum only really possible with certain participants under particular conditions. Of course, I do not say that Cahill's study is less valid or worthy than this, only that participatory theory and practice may be predisposed to a kind of self-fulfilling 'success' in this way. When the majority of the field is arranged to this same end, important categories and extremes of marginality go largely

unengaged in contemporary practice, and are thus perspectives absent from contemporary participatory theories.⁷⁰

Creating the conditions for collaboration

Recruitment leads inexorably to a phase of the participatory research process Fine et al (2001) describe as 'creating the conditions for collaboration' and 'building a community of researchers'. In relation to this study, it was much more necessary to create the conditions for collaboration than it ever was creating researchers. In fact, in the end, creating researchers was a minimal part of the process, and is why ultimately I decided to present the young men in this study as co-participants instead. In poststructural terms, creating these conditions involved principally two things: the creation of a safe and consistent space, and the mediation of interpersonal and *biopolitical* power (Gallagher, 2008, Foucault, 1998). For as Watkins and Shulman (2008) have noted:

'Those trained in psychologies of liberation are aware that oppressed communities may sadly replicate the dynamics of oppression they are caught in through horizontal violations and violence. The co-creation and sustaining of collaborative spaces for enquiry is the first and most necessary contribution psychologists can support' (p. 297).

The flow of power that surrounded the community flat where we met, and the street culture created by it, functioned as a solvent to the kind of emotional literacy and intellectual confidence necessary for a project of the kind I was anticipating. The self-surveilling and normalising effects of street culture penetrated the space and ensured there was no cultural capital to be earned 'bearing one's feelings' among other young men. Indeed, intimacy of this kind undermined the accumulated stock of *respect* and masculine status present

⁷⁰ There may also be a gendered dimension to this. A great deal of the Participatory Action Research to have emerged with young people in recent years has come from feminist positions, studies very frequently working with girls and young women to create private research spaces through which patriarchy as an expression of colonialism and racism is deconstructed (see Trinh, 1989, McDowell, 1992, Skelton, 2000, Domash, 2003, Harris, 2004, Cahill, 2004, 2006). The creation of a private (almost domestic) space within which research is conducted flows in the opposite direction to many masculinities constructed in spaces of exclusion and marginality, which exist and occupy public spaces and privilege qualities less becoming of more intimate participatory research processes.

among the group. Our research space flickered into life for only three hours each week, it was simply too temporary and fragile to nourish immediately and substantively a countercultural challenge to the reality produced all day everyday by the the flow of power outside. Consequently, our group sessions for many weeks were filled with cautious generalisations and third person narratives, protective strategies for managing the sharing of personal experiences within a space and set of relationships that could not (yet) be trusted or confirmed.

The space was unstable too insofar as although we met regularly, individuals in the group often came and went and came back again in any given session, and other young men not part of the formal arrangement would flit in and out of the room and conversation without warning or introduction. The borders of the space were difficult to establish and felt impossible to maintain. Eventually however, after a number of weeks meeting, it was Ashley who began self-regulating the space, pushing (sometimes physically) those stopping by back onto the street outside. Whether he did this because he sensed my frustration or because he felt his own I couldn't say. Either way, the conditions such as we had to mediate in St Pauls made the creation of a (research) space and climate that was safe and capable of nurturing those 'softer' introspective qualities and faculties, like critical reflection and active listening, a real challenge to the project. In actual fact it's probably more accurate to say that the process of creating this space *was the project*, rather than a means to some research end. The audio transcripts and my field notes, particularly from the first few sessions, illustrate the difficult course this took.

For instance, I arrived at Full Circle for our first scheduled session together full of optimism. I had not planned for the evening in any detail, instead, I was just looking forward to our being together, establishing the basis for our collaboration, attending to some ethical considerations, and the spontaneous combustion of group synergy launching the research. Principally, I was keen that in our first session we establish some sort of group contract that would bind and regulate our collaboration; my emphasis was on solidifying an agreed effort in exchange for the stipend, and on finding consensus around some basic rules of punctuality, confidentiality and safeguarding. Lawrence was waiting for me

when I arrived, and he waited with me for the subsequent hour, during which time only Tyreese even briefly passed through.

I was dismayed at this start. Lawrence felt too much time had elapsed since we'd recruited (literally a working week) and that in all probability the young men had simply forgotten. He explained that for many in the area, the absence of work or education meant their day often began at around five in the afternoon and ran through the night. I had imagined my struggles to have ended at the point I recruited participants, but this expectation was totally out of touch with the reality of every day life for the group. Nonetheless, given how few other commitments each personally had, I remained throughout the weeks astonished and irritated that to a man they could not turn up on time for three hours each Friday, particularly since they spoke so often of their boredom and the absence of local opportunities and employment. My worries that the stipend was an inducement actually turned into a hope that it would be. But in the end even this was insufficient to guarantee (or even make more likely sometimes) punctuality, a fact that made administering it extremely awkward as the weeks wore on, more on which later.

Our first session proper stuttered into life about an hour into the three set aside a week later. While Lawrence was messaging the group on his phone, cajoling them into coming, I ordered a pizza for us.⁷¹ One by one, the group eventually started to drift in. They seemed tired, as though they had just woken up rather than at the end of a day, and apparently unmotivated by the idea of two hours spent together talking. Lawrence suggested that in light of the previous week, the group all swap BBM pins with me.⁷² Ashley showed me the free instant messaging facility on my phone (luckily I happened to own a Blackberry) and we exchanged pins. In actual fact this proved to be crucial to creating and sustaining the conditions for collaboration, since I was then able to communicate with each member outside the sessions, messaging reminders on

⁷¹ Not as easy as it sounds since there was only one company that would deliver to St Pauls.

⁷² Blackberry Messenger - a free instant messaging service that attracted attention for the way it allowed young people to communicate and stay ahead of the police during the riots of August 2011 (Halliday, 2011).

Friday afternoons ahead of that evenings session. Next, having connected through technology, I tried to connect us all to a common purpose.

SIMON - So look, yeah, it feels quite important that if you're signed up to this you turn up for sessions on time like we agreed. A few people said to me that I shouldn't pay you to do this, but I think it's important that if you're going to work on something like this, I show you respect and pay you for it. It's not a lot of money when you even it out over the twelve weeks, but it's something and it needs to be earned and that means showing up each week unless you really can't for whatever reason. Last week I was here with Lawrence and no-one showed.

TYREESE - I did.

SIMON - Yeah for like a few minutes before your dinner was ready.

TYREESE - There was no-one here so I thought it wasn't happening.

LAWRENCE - So you just left? You lot got to commit to being here or else you don't get paid. You don't get paid anyway until the project's finished and we got something to show for it.

SIMON - Sorry to sound on one before we even get started knowing each other, but can we agree that if you're serious about taking part you need to be here on time each Friday as a minimum? (Some nods of agreement).

Immediately, creating the conditions for collaboration required me to sound like a teacher of the students (Freire, 1971), as I established I was surveilling, classifying and distributing the individuals in the group for the purposes of exclusion from the stipend and other benefits like training and skills. It was clear to the group that I was, for now at least, the gatekeeper of these resources, which though simply pragmatic and necessary given the start we had, was nonetheless a difficult manifestation of power to ameliorate once out in the open, and a familiar symbolic refrain the young men recognised as consistent with those other white middle class males who came in and out of their lives at various times. Nonetheless, I did try, and explained I wasn't there to teach and would not be directing them to do things in the way maybe they expected me to. I tried to encourage the idea we were there to teach each other, and that the resources for this were already within the group and our experiences.

LAWRENCE - *You need to break it down twice for these guys... they ain't too smart.*

SIMON - *Ok, well all I mean is just that I don't want to tell you what to do next all the time. The point of this is that you decide what direction we take in the research. I'm hear to listen and contribute on the same level as you as much as possible. I don't want to be on your back about timekeeping, just like I don't want to be the only one asking questions or making conversation. This research is about you and your lives so it's important you feel able to talk freely about those things. What would help that happen do you think? (Silence).*

ASHLEY - *Being on time.*

SIMON - *Ok, yeah... anything else? (Silence). Ok, so how about we agree between us that whatever anyone says in this room must stay in this room. No blabbing to anyone else what we talk about. (Silence). Um, what do you guys think? (Silence). Help me out here! I'm hoping we'll get into some deep stuff and so maybe to make sure that's ok we need to agree to make our time together confidential so we're all able to speak freely and not worry anyone will use it against us or hear about it outside.*

JERMAINE - *Ain't you writing about it anyway?*

SIMON - *Yeah, and I'd also like to record the sessions for my report. If you want I'll create aliases for you all so that when I write it up nothing you say is obviously you. You can also tell me to turn the thing off or to edit a bit out if you don't want it used, I got no problem with that, it's your call totally.*

ASHLEY - *Alias, what's that?*

SIMON - *Like a new name, so what you say isn't you.*

ASHLEY - *Whatever you think. No-one's gonna read what you write round here anyway.*

The following week I got a somewhat more mundane, though equally important, lesson in the pre-conditions for our collaborating. My new found connectivity on the phone meant the whole group arrived for the second session proper, albeit only slightly less late at about half an hour in. The session itself was equally disappointing however. The group again seemed lethargic and uninterested in participating, lounging around on the sofa, sleeping, playing on their phones, and largely unresponsive to my attempts to get started. With an hour or so left I

got frustrated and rather gave up. I decided to order some food, at which point the group immediately perked up, and suggested pizza again. While we waited and then ate, the group began discussing Sol's absence, and through it the recent stabbing on Stapleton Road. But with only twenty minutes left and the group eager to get on with their night, the session was ultimately another frustrating encounter. Reflecting on the evening on the drive home, I cursed myself at how I had overlooked the importance of food. Quite apart from the fact we were meeting between five and eight in the evening, tea-time or breakfast-time as far as the young men were concerned, the act of sharing food was a communal and sociable act. Over the weeks the value of feeding ourselves was very evident in the different atmosphere it generated and the conversation that flowed around it.

Creating the conditions for our collaboration and achieving what Sung (1995) has called *interpersonal validity*, was a steep learning curve. Apart from logistical considerations like messaging reminders and remembering to order food 45 minutes before we were due to start our session, my journal notes from these first weeks are saturated in a kind of disorientated pathos. Though this disorientation is littered with ideas and affirmations to 'be more directive' or 'try a different approach', what they actually reflect is the early stages of a process of destabilisation; both of the concepts of participation and research, and through these my own social positioning. The following passages for example, speak to the embodied way in which power in the dialectic of oppression/privilege was painfully visible to me:

'I sound so... old when I talk to the guys. I'm really aware how monotone and articulate I sound, how my language is not their language... how... posh and boring? I wonder what it sounds like to their ears - intimidating? Nerdy? I've never really considered myself in this way before, normally I would say being able to relate and engage with people from different walks of life is a strength. Not sure where to go with this feeling, if being authentic I guess I should just accept and pay attention to this difference... follow it' (June 16th, 2010).

'Some good discussions this evening but I'm having trouble transcribing the audio now because sometimes the speech and language used is really hard to

understand. Jermaine especially, but at times all the guys, seem to mumble their words a lot. There's this combination of urbanisms, patois and Bristolian that I'm finding it really hard to tune into and that makes me want to ask, excuse me? What did you say? Say that again?! It's making it difficult to get any flow because I either drop out of the conversation because I'm lost, or it comes to silence when I don't cue in' (June 23rd, 2010).

Similarly, in my concern to bridge the existential distance between us as efficiently as possible, I was wrestling rather inauthentically with my 'style' (attitude, mannerisms, clothes and language), finding myself pulled (subtly) toward 'theirs' in a bid to overcome how I heard and perceived myself in the group. Overall, this sometimes subtle, often overt, always embodied and interpersonal struggle worked both ways, and was such an embedded and substantial exercise that creating the conditions for collaboration ended up running in parallel to the actual act of collaborating. Indeed, our collaborating was in effect an ongoing and iterative experiment in the micropolitics of experience and the mediation of power through a prism of history, class, age and race. These are huge themes and complicated and contradictory interpersonal relations that cannot be rushed or supplanted by a single session on ground rules and ethics, or a training session on how to do qualitative research.

In sum, the structure of local oppression meant we began our 'research' with none of the raw materials the established participatory research literature assumes with such brevity. Ours was an experiment in democratic communication (Young, 2000) that demanded a focus on issues of power and process rather than 'outcomes' or 'research'. And as Cockburn (2005) notes, under these conditions it would actually be the absence of conflict that 'should raise suspicion' (p. 112).

Applying participatory ethics

I have already sketched an ethical framework for this study in another chapter, but applied participatory ethics offer perhaps the most obvious site of contradistinction between centre (theory) and margins (practice). There are two

layers to this, the first relates to broad issues of justice and beneficence, within which are located questions like informed consent, transparency, the research hypothesis, and (again) the nature of my relationship to my co-participants. My use of a financial stipend must also be assessed within this ethical context. The second layer is concerned more with the tensions inherent to satisfying university ethics committees, in relation to which I save discussion of respect for persons.

The most substantial task for any PAR project is to reconcile the ethical question of beneficence. In other words, does the project 'mirror my dream for the community, or the community's dream for itself' (Freire, 1989). My intention was to use dialogue as a way of negotiating this. In other words, though I had questions I was interested in, I wanted our early group sessions to be geared toward the young men identifying themselves what questions they wanted to explore through the project. But though I attended to beneficence consciously in ways such as this, in others important ways I was blind to it. For example, it did not occur to me that how I was defining and pursuing 'research' or 'participation' as outcomes, or implementing them as structures, was effecting power in ways that subtly reinforced an old colonial idea that whatever room I gave them to identify the focus of the research, I knew what was in their best interests, and consequently we would still be doing research *my way*.

If, as Watkins and Shulman (2008) suggest, it is critical 'when we reflect on proposals for (participatory) research... to ask ourselves who through the process of research is likely to gain in power, knowledge, and the capacity to transform the world' (p. 276), then consideration of such matters in this study was very complicated by the fact that at the outset I would have been convinced the weight of my efforts was in devolving power; in securing every available resource for the young men for their benefit. Only in hindsight am I able to see that this effort, however well intentioned, was blind to the obvious fact that not knowing anything of their lives or selves, I had actually no idea what would be of benefit to them. Where I got this most wrong was in relation to my assessment that research skills, training and accreditation would be of some interest or value to the group, that it would represent 'an opportunity'. In other words, I was

fundamentally trapped by a definition of research and participation made at the centre.

For their part, my co-participants were much more comfortable and able to access a meaning of participatory research I had not considered before. The closest equivalent I can find for this meaning is a form of *testimonial* Smith (1999) identifies as an indigenous expression and purpose of social research. The basic form and function of what occurred in our group was quite similar to this; a group of young men creating and using the space to share experiences, reclaiming and making local cultural and personal resources in the process. Decolonising my assumptions about what research is and isn't, I was eventually able to recognise that for the young men, utility and value to the research lay in this claiming of local culture and resources, and not in my centrally defined ideas of what action orientated research should look like and what a valid outcome would be.

What I considered an outcome to look like had ossified because of my decision to offer a financial stipend to my co-participants. As a result, I was very keen that in return we achieved something 'tangible', by which I really meant something I could show to those around but not directly involved in the project, something validatory. I was very open to what this might look like; a film, photography, a music video and so on, *but it would be something*. The more this was a struggle, the more I pursued it, partly because I was also caught in the headlights of Lawrence's words: "Too much people have the story of failure round here... try and fail. Not much people can say they done this and it worked out." Consequently, I was, more than anything else, very concerned not to reaffirm this story and so the image of failure my co-participants had shared with me. My mistake was in encouraging the pursuit of outcomes that could only be judged in these binary terms, as either a success or failure, for a film either exists or it does not, and this is especially pronounced when money is offered in exchange for participation in creating it.

My decision to offer remuneration was not itself remarkable or unusual. For example, Cahill (2004) elected to offer a financial stipend to her young co-researchers, in exchange for which they gave up twenty hours a week for one

month. In St Pauls we were limited by the availability of the room and my work commitments, to three hours every Friday evening over a period, initially, of twelve weeks. The use of a stipend I felt justified in on two fronts. First, that I was asking for an exchange of labour, and on a very basic level it seemed only fair to me that my 'co-researchers' should benefit in this way, particularly given the very real absence of local jobs. On this basis alone it seemed to me less exploitative to offer a stipend than not, though the charge that the stipend acts as an inducement under these conditions I am unable to refute. Indeed, second, I hoped that a stipend might help in the devolution and mediation of power, raising self-worth and personal investment in the project. As things turned out the effect of the stipend was rather more complicated and dramatic than I anticipated.

To begin with the money was undoubtedly an aid to recruitment, indeed I may not have recruited at all without it. And though it was not intended as an inducement to participate, as the weeks went by and participation continued to be erratic, I increasingly found myself wielding it as such in subtle and not so subtle ways, actions that always wholly undermined the goal of collaboration and a more horizontal research context. This came to a climax at what was officially the end of our twelve weeks together. I had resolved by this point to stick to my word and pay the group. Despite the challenges around attendance, punctuality and participation, I was much more keen not to withhold the stipend, even though I badly wanted to in the case of Jermaine and Ledley. By this point I was simply happy to get rid of it, and hoped that enough interpersonal work had been done that the group would continue to meet once the financial incentive was gone.

The problem was that the week before, during the October half-term, I had booked a local community production company to come down to Full Circle to help with the film making process, providing support and equipment, training and skills to the group as they worked on and shot their underdeveloped idea for a documentary. Our agreement was to meet every day of that week, at eleven in the morning (a concession to the groups late rising), and to work through most of the day. Only Ashley, Lawrence, Tyreese and Marcel turned up at all, though for Tyreese and Marcel this was erratic through the week. Ledley

did not make an appearance until the very last day, and Jermaine drifted in and out of proceedings, staying for only a few minutes at a time.

On the Friday, Ashley, Tyreese and Ledley went over to the editing suite in Easton to edit down the limited footage they had shot. What happened next I didn't expect. I was at work and received a message from Ashley letting me know that Jermaine and Ledley had quit the project and only he and Tyreese should therefore get paid. I rang Lawrence who knew nothing but said he would get hold of Jermaine and ask. The message came back that Jermaine hadn't quit at all, and he was annoyed at Ashley, having been told about his message to me by Lawrence. The session that evening, where I was due to hand out the stipend and finally be free of it, turned very quickly into a group discussion, sometimes an outright argument, about each others contributions to the project and the relative right to get paid. The final minutes of this discussion I include below.

ASHLEY - Hold on, I got to say something, Simon are you gonna pay these two (pointing at Ledley and Jermaine)... 'cos you should know that they quit.

JERMAINE - I didn't quit... hold up, he's trying to brainwash you. That's his thing...

ASHLEY - You didn't show up at all this week, you did fuck all, what have you done for this project, tell me?

JERMAINE - I been here every week...

SIMON - C'mon mate, every week, really? I was here every week, I was about the only one who was here every week.

JERMAINE - Most weeks then.

TYREESE - You don't say nothing though even when you was here, fuckin' sleeping through most of it! (Laughter).

SIMON - Look, yeah, I never ever wanted this to happen, where we got to this place. I thought offering you a few quid to participate would make things fairer. I'm committed to writing up what we've done and getting something out of this, a qualification and stuff. I wanted you all to get something out of it too, but it was difficult because half the time people didn't turn up, or fell asleep, or fucked about. So now what do we do? I

was going to just pay everyone regardless tonight and ask if anyone wanted to carry on meeting and working together. But now Rob tells me hardly anyone turned up last week to film, and I gotta tell you that pissed me off 'cos we spent nearly £2k for him to come down here and work with you on your film.

ASHLEY - How much!?

SIMON - Yeah his time and crew and equipment costs money, and he gave a lot of it away for free still.

ASHLEY - Fuck, man, I didn't know that. Look, all I'm saying is that it's supposed to be a group thing, yeah, and two of us didn't do nothing. I don't think them two should get the same as say me and Tyreese.

SIMON - So what should we do about it, I'm finding it difficult to know. Shall I just pay out to everyone equally like I was going to?

JERMAINE - Yeah, don't be brainwashed by Ashley. (Ashley shaking his head).

LAWRENCE - I got an idea, why don't we pay them that's worked hard these weeks what was agreed, and then Jermaine and Ledley, 'cos you done less you should get like sixty percent of it or something.

ASHLEY - They ain't done sixty percent of the work though.

SIMON - What about if we give Ledley and Jermaine the chance to get the other forty percent by helping to finish the film?

JERMAINE - You been brainwashed by Ashley, oh my days! I put in the work, I been here every week. You know what? I don't give a fuck about St Pauls people anyway, I only did this for the money. I had plans for that money. You been brainwashed!

LEDLEY - (To me) Ah, I'm ok with that.

JERMAINE - Nah. It's not fucking fair Ledley! (To me) You been brainwashed!

SIMON - Look you can still get the full amount no problem, everyone wants that to be the case, but these guys obviously don't think it would be fair given the effort they put in that you should get the same at this point in time. If I give everyone the same at this stage what message does that send out to these guys?

ASHLEY - It says you're a mug. (Silence).

SIMON - So this is how it's happening, like Lawrence suggested, yeah?

TYREESE - *It's embarrassing the way we've been tonight, it shouldn't be about money... man is giving us a break.*

SIMON - *So is anyone willing to carry on from this point, meeting each Friday, talking, working on the film? There's no money left but I'm up for carrying on for a while.*

TYREESE - *Yeah I want to get finished.*

ASHLEY - *Yeah, yeah. Jermaine?*

JERMAINE - *(Shrugs) Yeah.*

LEDLEY - *Yes.*

After such an intense session I was relieved that the tone shifted to one more thoughtful and conciliatory, and I was very happy that all of the group agreed they would like to continue working together on the basis there was no more money. But what this exchange says about the ethics of a stipend might be less important than what it reveals about the changing group dynamic at this (as it turned out) midway point. Certainly, this session was one of the few that ran on hard emotion, and in its own way it was catalytic, clarifying purpose, commitment and expectations in a highly participatory way. For my part it seemed I actually 'got respect' on the subject when I sounded firm around the money we had wasted, and when I didn't just give it away like "a mug." This speaks to a certain maturity around money that wasn't always obvious in our sessions together, and confirmed that the stipend had a value beyond basic currency. I later found out that Ashley had given the money to his mother for housekeeping, and that Marcel used his to pay for some driving lessons.

Perhaps the most visible distance was opened up between our worlds when it came time to satisfy the university ethics committee. Quite apart from the challenge even a more orthodox PAR project offers to committee ethics, ours was made doubly difficult insofar as the institutional boundaries concerning confidentiality, safeguarding, and my duty of care (as the adult professional in the setting), were totally out of touch with everyday life in St Pauls for my co-participants. This made negotiating them in a participatory way almost impossible, and once approved, also unhelpfully censored the few interviews the group waded through with their peers for the film. The mechanics of this centred on the presumed vulnerability of my co-participants in the eyes of the

committee, and the lengths I was committed to go to minimise and safeguard this. While understandable from a perspective at the centre, satisfying committee ethics effected several techniques of power that functioned to frighten and inhibit my co-participants and their would-be interviewees in the film, effectively bureaucratising our relationships (and theirs to their peers) in a way that unhelpfully reinforced our different social positions and invalidated the data collection method (Tandon, 1981). This wasn't in itself insurmountable, but it was enough in the context of the other challenges we were facing to ultimately end the original plan to interview other local men on film.

Consequently, as the weeks wore on my attitude to the issue of beneficence evolved still further. I began the project keen not to impose 'my dream for the community', then later realised that despite this willing I had been doing just that all along. By the end, I came to feel a real weight of responsibility for the ethnographic data our sessions had generated, a feeling in part motivated by the fact it represented the only 'hard outcome' to the process. More than this though, a central message the ethnographic data carried, that emerged time and again throughout our discussions, was the belief among the group that it didn't matter what they had to say because no-one was listening. This is very different to saying these young men do not have a voice. They do. Despite the challenging group process we endured, there is no doubt the young men were interested in their world, and the one beyond it. Theirs is absolutely not an issue of voice - *it is one of being heard* (see Gilligan, Taylor & Sullivan, 1995). By the same token this was never going to be a study co-authored by my co-participants like some (Cahill, Rios-Moore & Threatts, 2008, Torre et al, 2008), for the group had no interest in this. Consequently, by the end of our work together the ethics of beneficence had shifted away from the vague and failed emancipatory meaning of the word I began with, to a strong feeling of responsibility for faithfully rendering their voices and experience of marginality in this thesis.

Group process

Typically, PAR projects are described in cyclical phases of action and reflection (Freire, 1971, McTaggart, 1997, Fals-Borda, 2001, Kesby et al 2007a). Our

group process was not so sequential as this, and fundamentally struggled to move from reflection to action at any point. That said, whatever other measures of process validity the project fell short of, the sessions did achieve an ethnographic portrait with a high level of epistemic psychopolitical validity (Prilleltensky, 2003); in other words, our discussions did yield a deeper understanding of the interplay between psyche, history, political and economic structures. The point I wish to make about this is that although I was struggling throughout the project with concepts of participation and social action, the one concept that to me seemed immovable and self-evident was that of research. As it turned out, research was in some ways the most important concept to be destabilised by the ethic and process of participation.

None of my co-participants had any experience of social research, and though they were introduced in broad terms to the overall research process and purpose, both before they signed up to participate and again at the beginning of our first session, none were in the slightest bit interested in becoming researchers, a position that only seemed to harden as the weeks wore on and I pushed for it. Again, this is not a criticism of the group, or a judgment of their capacities as young people or cultural agents; but it is a criticism of the narrowness of the term 'research' as I wielded it in the project. In fact, the assumed confines of what is typically taken to constitute social research, what it looks like and what it produces, is what accounts for the analysis of our sessions together as a 'failure' of the form. But what actually occurred was more complicated, and encourages a substantial recalibration of the image of participatory research and its effects. There are two sides to this, one that considers the image and expectations of social research in relation to the capacity of my co-participants to engage in it, the other, related, is concerned more for describing the image and utility of participatory social research as an indigenous practice of shared cultural and knowledge production.

Beginning with the former and at a very basic level, the kind of skills, personal and intellectual faculties and qualities more orthodox visions of participatory research privilege (like literacy, confidence, planning, sociability, motivation, team work, emotional intimacy) were either very badly wounded or suffocated by the effects of street culture and the hegemonic masculinity it created.

Although PAR trades on its capacity to deploy multiple and diverse methodologies, many of them purposefully non-scholastic, my conclusion is that this alone does not overcome the kind of deficit in personal and collective confidence sixty plus years recycled social exclusions and advanced marginality will produce. My co-participants capacity and motivation to engage in the kind of structures offered by PAR was inhibited by a fundamental crisis of confidence and self-belief, one reinforced by a personal history of scholastic failure and exclusion; the normatively inherited idea Black men are 'lazy' and no good at 'intellectual' work anyway; a present-time orientation that undermined planning; and an unhealthy if realistic cynicism (based on lived experience) that anyone would listen to what they had to say anyway.

At its most tectonic level, this has to do with those archetypes of Yard man and the McDonald model (Sewell, 1997). Yard man, on which a substantial portion of local Black masculinities and street culture are founded, is an embodiment and manifestation of local power and status antithetical to both the orthodox identity and qualities of 'the social researcher'. My pursuit and structuring of a particular image and framework of research made at the centre, however participatory its aims, was in effect asking the young men to embrace the McDonald model (that white made avatar of Black masculine conformity and submission) in order to deconstruct Yard man. This I asked through subtle emphasis, administering sessional structures, prompt, questioning, and even embodied gesture; always without understanding what either crude label meant to the young men or the consequences of my asking for them to 'be' one at the expense of the other. Certainly, I/we could not at this stage acknowledge the many complex and interrelated ways in which the qualities and faculties the McDonald model broadly implies had been denigrated and assaulted, both practically and symbolically. In fact, it was actually the research framework I administered that revealed these wounds; for example, asking the group to write down questions for the interviews they hoped to do, humiliating in the process those in the group struggling with their basic literacy.

To this end, through my adherence to what I thought was authentic participatory research practice, I was effecting an exclusionary discourse my co-participants were very familiar with. For all my wrestling with language and the micropolitics

of our being together, the structure of participatory theory I applied in relation to research was insisting the young men situate themselves closer to my position at the centre in order that we could 'do research'. Although it was me making the trip to St Pauls each week, theirs was the (quite unreasonable and unfair) movement I required for 'us' to go from marginality to inclusion via the participatory research process (see Chambers, 1983, for a critique of participatory dynamics of this kind).

However, though it seems more accurate to say the structure of participation and research I engineered was a barrier to participation, (as opposed to street culture being a barrier to participation), street culture did also effect power in ways that were antithetical to the group process in general terms. Central to this is the particular hegemonic masculinity produced on the streets. Here I am submerging the multiplicity of masculinities that is obviously created by postmodernism in favour of a dominant discourse about Black masculinity that, as we have already seen, produces and is a product of a particular blend of neoliberal political and economic oppressions in time and space. In other words, 'to be a proper man, a man who is successfully masculine, is to be constrained by quite a narrow band of expectations' (Rowan, 2001, p. 113). In St Pauls, this takes a particular flavour, but is also descriptively consistent with those features of hegemonic masculinity outlined by David and Brannon (1976).

The first of these is 'no sissy stuff', an obvious counterpoint to anything that could be deemed or surveilled by other young men as feminine or homosexual. In practice, this meant sharing feelings, or making oneself vulnerable in a group setting was always going to be a challenge, for street culture reifies Black masculinity in such a way as to ossify male physicality, toughness, and autonomy, since in this field of experience they are necessities for survival. Indeed, in street culture, self-reliance, what David and Brannon call 'the sturdy oak', must be viewed through the lens of *respect*, which is a cultural idiom for the local image of a He-man. Within this is included a readiness to support others, physically (fighting alongside your mates or a gang fidelity) or economically (helping your mum with the rent by *enterprisin'*), but almost never emotionally. To offer or receive emotional support would be regarded as feminine, and thus when expressed by a young man would immediately

undermine his heterosexuality. As such, in the research setting I was fostering, the emphasis on self-reliance trumped for a long time the idea the group could be a space where one could be vulnerable, speak an emotional language, and submerge oneself in a collective effort.

David and Brannon also note two other important manifestations of a hegemonic masculinity; the need to be of or near to a position of high status, and the readiness to respond to threats, violently if necessary, in defence of identity, family and friends. The parallels to street culture here are obvious, and though my intent is certainly not to suggest my co-participants were totally defined or even trapped by this discourse, it is to say that it was sufficiently present in the Yard man archetype as to influence the fluency, tone and character of the group process and the interpersonal mediation of power within it. The group was routinely interrupted by complete absence, lateness and/or sleep. Just as frequent were the long silences, the shrugs, boredom, and incessant messing about. Even the best sessions in reality contained within them less than an hour (of the three) of actual discussion or planning. In the middle of this I was immensely frustrated by the group, and felt the project was in some ways confirming stereotypes rather than challenging them. This was most acute when we were planning the film the group 'wanted' to make.

Interestingly, a kind of cultural impasse was reached at the point where street culture nourished qualities of self-reliance and leadership, but the crisis of self-confidence and inherited failure among the constituent members of the group drained the life from this action cycle of the project. This meant that for very many weeks we were little more than a disparate collection of individuals talking in generalisations and third person narratives; my attempts to encourage planning and action cycles met, not with resistance exactly, but a weight of culture that meant individuals were keen to work alone, preferably on their own ideas, and were reluctant to lead, assume responsibilities or adopt a specific role within the collective endeavour. This is manageable if it's one or two individuals who wish to take a more supportive position, but when the whole group is effected momentum is lost.

I don't wish to suggest this was a fixed condition of oppression, for over time the group process evolved. Indeed, the *interpretive validity* of the process (Watkins & Shulman, 2008), which 'increases as people in a research community experience themselves as free to discuss possible meanings of narratives and to propose alternate interpretations to one another' (p. 296) matured very substantially. And though our sessions devoted to planning the film struggled to map out a coherent future process of the kind I anticipated, they actually were sometimes a platform for social theorising and building theory from the ground up.

SIMON - *So, Ashley, you said you had an idea for the film, why don't you tell us it?*

ASHLEY - *Um, right, it's black and white, and we go round St Pauls to different places that has like an impact on us, and, if we say has a violence happened to you in your life, and we'll have shots of vandalism, smashed windows and stuff like that.*

SIMON - *So who is your audience, who do you want to speak to?*

ASHLEY - *Everyone that thinks of St Pauls badly.*

SIMON - *So if that's your audience, what do you guys want your message to be?*

JERMAINE - *There's positive stuff going on man.*

SIMON - *Ok, cool, so what is the positive stuff? (Silence).*

ASHLEY - *Well not everyone in St Pauls is bad.*

MARCEL - *But that's like saying that some people in St Pauls aren't bad, but some people in St Pauls are bad. But how do they know how much is bad and how much is good, or does that not matter? Let's think what would actually be a positive thing to work around. (Pauses). Um... I can't think while you lot are watching!... How about, what you see as bad, might not actually be bad... why label something?*

LAWRENCE - *You don't wanna just say bad.*

MARCEL - *Yeah, it just is what it is. What you call cold is in relation to what someone else calls cold, and obviously has a different sense of what the right temperature should be... I dunno, maybe that's a bit too abstract.*

LAWRENCE - *Yeah, Jermaine don't get it! (Laughter).*

MARCEL - *Right, say for example you are standing here, and over here is freezin' cold, and over there is boiling hot, and another person is there in the middle and they think going that way is kinda hot and going that way is kinda cold, anything more in either way is a bit extreme. You only know what you know in relation to where you stand! So, transferring that to like, when someone sounds aggressive or not aggressive you know in relation to the level tone of voice that people usually use around you. Anyone who comes in with a loud voice you'll be like, who are these kids, they're kinda scary... That's just an example of what I mean.*

ASHLEY - *That was so long. (Laughter).*

JERMAINE - *You're losing us man.*

LAWRENCE - *Basically, saying not everyone in St Pauls is bad, isn't breaking it down enough. Am I good or am I bad?*

ASHLEY - *You? Bad. (Laughter).*

LAWRENCE - *Yeah, exactly, I am bad, but I'm good as well! (Laughter). That's not breaking it down enough, you're basically saying people are good or bad. But people can be good and bad. What makes people be bad, they don't just choose to be bad if they're maybe doing it for a good reason; like to feed their family. Say, if my family has no money and someone says go and kill that person for ten grand, and my family can eat, does that make me a good or bad person?*

LEDLEY - *Good person.*

ASHLEY - *You have the power of God? You not allowed to take someone's life.*

LAWRENCE - *Ok say I just got to rough them up a bit and get money. Good or bad?*

ASHLEY - *It makes you both. But it makes you more good cos you'll do anything to help your family.*

The transcript above is a good example of the kind of theorising that did from time to time occur, and this discussion eventually led to a focus for the short documentary film; once concerned for the nature of doing right and wrong, good and bad, in a moral economy tainted by substantial and enduring inequality. I thought this a brilliantly simple and disarming idea the group came to themselves in dialogue with one another, and it demonstrates they were in tune

with the dialectical tension they negotiated in their everyday choices. The group wanted to make clear that faced with the options they were confronted by, we all might behave and sound like them. From here, they developed the discussion further, to a consideration of why those choices exist in their lives and not those of others.

ASHLEY - There's one quote up there I reckon we should keep... We was talking about who was shopkeepers, drug dealers and that stuff.

LAWRENCE - We can start with that and then like, break down the reasons behind it. It's where you start stereotyping and stuff of St Pauls, the young kids and stuff. People will be shocked afterwards when they think about it.

SIMON - How will this be different to the usual stuff you see about St Pauls?

MARCEL - I had an idea. Instead of trying to show the bad of what's going on. See the value in, I dunno if you could call it natural 'cos everyone is affected by their environment and surroundings and stuff, but it is natural... the way we are cos of our environment and stuff. For me there's not enough stuff on the positives.

ROB - The environment feeds the person, what feeds the environment sort of thing.

MARCEL - I don't really mind, I just kind of... If you behave a certain a way, and you like behaving in that way, and other people disagree with you behaving that way... If it's something that's always been addressed and nothing changes, maybe another perspective on that behaviour is needed?

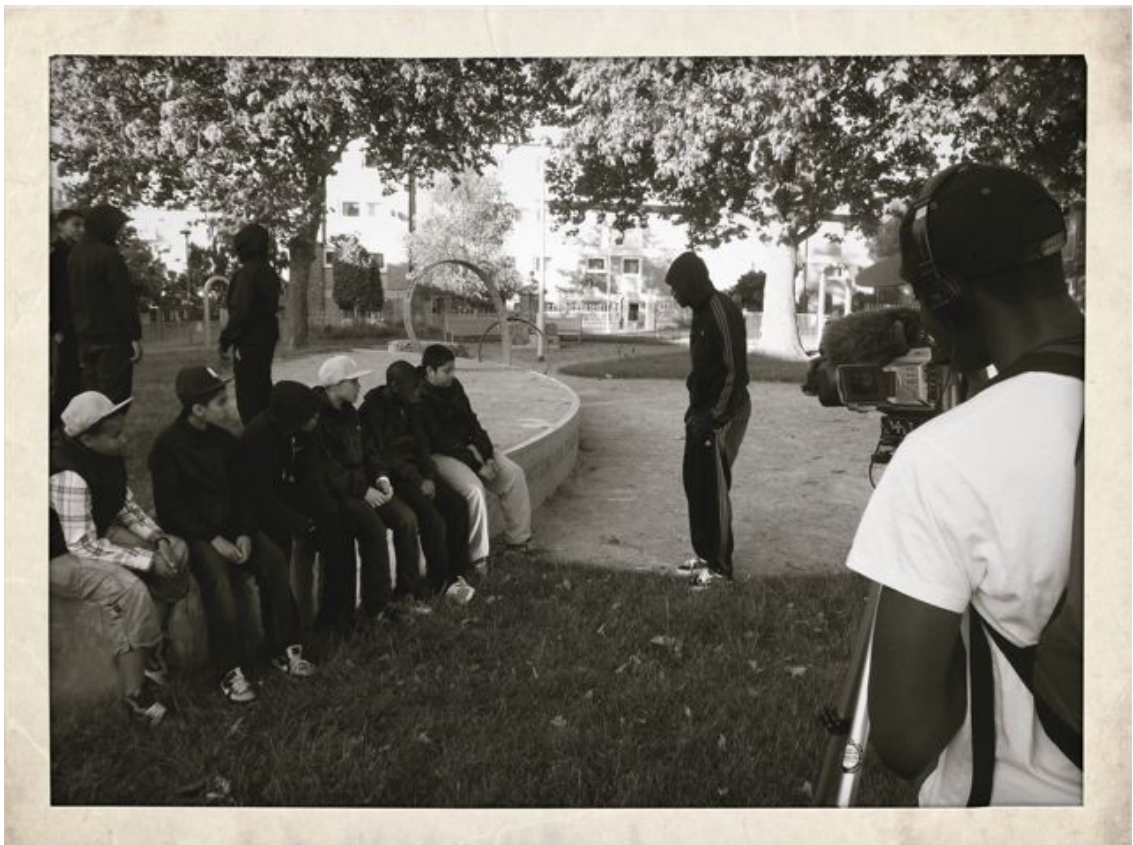
ROB - That sounds good. You've grown up in an environment that gives you certain options...

ASHLEY - Yeah, basically.

The cast of *youngers* appearing in the short film.



Lawrence acting the part of a local dealer for the film.



In the end, the decision was made to dramatise this basic idea, with excerpts from the few interviews we managed to film with other young men appended for good measure. Once again, none of the group wanted to appear on camera, or to assume prescribed roles within this new direction. The result was that we ended up co-opting those *youngers* who attended the Boys Club at Full Circle, exchanging for tickets to the local ice skating rink their (and their parents) agreement to act in the film.⁷³ By this time the film we had originally attempted to make through the study, in other words, the one we had gone through the university ethics committee to approve, had completely dissolved. It was the spring of 2011, and I had been talking to Lawrence and Ashley about not giving up on the film, about resurrecting it as a joint project between my employer and Full Circle, removing the need to appease committee ethics and hopefully finishing something that would not recycle 'the story of failure'. In the end, though we shot lots of footage, the absence of a script and the sheer number of re-takes meant editing was an impossible and expensive task that never realised a finished cut.

Social Action

The group process was something other than that I had prepared myself for and read about. It felt to me lacking in any momentum, lurching moment by moment and week by week from presence and insight to complete absence, from critical reflection and thoughtful pathos to boredom and sleep. My greatest concern was that there was no burgeoning critical consciousness, no *conscientização* that would elevate the collection of good ethnographic data to the realm of authentic liberatory social research. The transcripts above took us to the brink of realising a film, but not to social action.

Only once did I ever feel there existed sufficient emotional fuel for the social action fire, in the immediate aftermath of the suicide, when what remained of the group suddenly seemed to see some value in making a film about the issues we had discussed. Issues that had swirled about the circumstances of

⁷³ There was another logic to using *youngers*, since the group had been clear that the issue of choices and good and bad begins in essence from around the age of eleven, when young men begin to inhabit the public spaces street culture moves through.

the young man's sense of personal despair; an event that brought home the enormous personal toll and trauma of our discussions on poverty and unemployment, drugs, violence and racism.

Watkins and Shulman (2008) surmise that 'when we become aware of the narrative frameworks we are embedded in, when dialogue with others causes us to question the logic of our narrative frameworks, we open up possibilities for evolution and transformation' (p. 141). By this measure our project certainly came up short, though the picture is perhaps more complicated than this, for I often felt that the group, with perhaps the exception of Ledley, were well aware of the narrative frameworks they were embedded in. But though they seemed able to articulate and name these, as with for example 'the story of failure', or the image of Black masculine deficit and defeat; in the next breath they might reproduce them unknowingly.

This is what Freire (1971) called 'adhesion', where the 'perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by... submersion in the reality of oppression' (p. 27). Two examples come to mind. The first is Lawrence, who had a clearly evolved sense of structure and agency, and of the forces that were mitigating against young people in the neighbourhood. His political and historical consciousness didn't seem to open him up for transformation though, he simply reconciled them with his need to *enterprise* in the real world. As such he didn't (and couldn't) withdraw completely from street culture, though he was occasionally inclined to challenge it. He was simply a young man, as disengaged by mainstream politics as anyone else in the group, but with a more critical and realistic view of the objective world beyond St Pauls. The second example is Trigga, who had an equally developed sense of context, and a robust Black consciousness and pride instilled in him by his mother. This though didn't inoculate him from the cultural alienation and dislocation brought about by his move to Clifton. Though he 'spoke posh' and was industrious, he felt compelled to spend almost all his waking hours in St Pauls, submerged in and embodying street culture.

The most important question here, one I assumed at the beginning to be completely self evident, is: are either Lawrence or Trigga better off for their

critical consciousness? Are they psychologically healthier, more resilient, capable or personally transformed by it? To the extent these two represent the most likely of the group to somehow transcend their circumstances I would say so. But this is a likelihood not borne out by the lived reality of the two years since the project ended. In which case I am left to pose a supplementary question I could not have imagined at the outset: does a wider acknowledgment of the structural forces of oppression one is subject to actually feed a sense of powerlessness and diminished personal agency in settings of extreme social exclusion and marginality, where 'being awake' has little bearing on one's circumstances?

Freire (1971) calls this 'making real oppression more oppressive still by adding to it the realisation of oppression' (p. 33), though he seems to view this as a necessary phase prior to the oppressed confronting 'reality critically, simultaneously objectifying and acting on that reality' (p. 34). His summation that 'a mere perception of reality not followed by this critical intervention will not lead to a transformation of objective reality - precisely because it is not a true perception' (ibid), might well be true. The problem however, comes in reconciling the emancipatory literature of another time and place with the crises of the British inner city some forty years later. The Freireian *praxis* is a route to (violent) struggle and revolutionary social transformation of the structure of oppression, not a fifteen minute film. For however well made and powerful the film might have been, it was unlikely to transform its authors, or others, circumstances.

Indeed, my anxiety about the lack of a social action emanating from our work together was in the end tempered by my wondering just what kind of social action the group could have realistically engaged in that would have actually had an impact on the circumstances of their life. Ultimately, I am left with the inescapable feeling that *conscientização*, in anything other than the revolutionary sense Freire intended it, is a middle class fantasy completely removed from the structural and personal crises of the inner city. Worse, by emphasising personal resilience and bottom-up social action, it may even distract from more necessary and urgent discussions and decisions about wealth re-distribution, the provision of healthcare, schooling, economic

opportunity and political violence, that are, if they are not delivered by violent revolution, ultimately top-down processes.

In the end the only space left in the discussion around social action (as it relates to *conscientização* and those most dominated and marginalised by oppression in the British inner city) is one of violence and civil unrest, for the oppressed are here very unlikely to humanise their oppressor and overthrow his vested interests through their words or by participatory democracy. At the root of my co-participants disengagement from mainstream democratic communication and participation, and the absence of social action (but not social anger) in our project, seemed to me an innate appreciation of Lucy Parsons anarchic incantation 'to never be deceived that the rich will permit you to vote away their wealth' (2003, p. 34), or as Jermaine put it: "I think what we say anyway, they already have planned anyway, so it ain't gonna really matter. This is just a cover up. We care, but our thoughts don't really count."

When, in August 2011, rioting broke out across several major English inner cities, including in St Pauls, this question resurfaced for me. Not least because some of the young men in this thesis participated in it, but also because nationally the statistical picture of the 'rioters' speaks to something important about the causes of discontent. The 'average' person arrested during the riots was a young male under twenty five; White or Black (46% of arrests were Black); known to the police; not a gang member; charged with an acquisitive offence. Some 90% of those brought before the courts were male and about half were aged under 21. Of the young people involved, 42% were in receipt of free school meals compared to a national average of 16%, and two-thirds were classed as having some form of special educational need, compared to 21% for the nationwide average (Ministry of Justice, 2012). More than a third of young people who were involved in the riots had been excluded from school the previous year. Recalling for a moment that picture of statistical inequality sketched in relation to young Black men and the criminal justice, mental health, education and care systems, the correlation is very obvious.

The scale of the social action dilemma, both as it relates to the approach of participatory research and theory more generally, is demonstrated by the fact

that even this most dramatic demonstration of civil disorder has changed little on the ground, both in St Pauls, and indeed nationally. The response of the state has been, predictably, to talk of criminality and behaviourism, and to put 3,051 before the courts, imprisoning or holding on remand 1,400 of these (Ministry of Justice, 2012). The only conclusion that can be drawn from this is that it seems even when the voices of young people in the inner city are screaming loudest and most angrily, they remain inaudible to those at the centre.

Liberating psychology

In the end our PAR project was not emancipatory. Despite this, I am more convinced than ever that what my co-participants reveal about their lives and the structure of oppression, as well as about their agency as cultural architects and actors, can help liberate psychology and mental healthcare more generally from their modernist strictures. Partly this is because a participatory approach yielded very good data, partly too because the approach undid a great deal of my own conceptual and ideological baggage, an outcome very valuable in its own right for any practitioner. Finally, once I was sufficiently undone to be comfortable with the idea that the participatory ethic extended to its logical conclusion destabilised notions of both itself and of 'research', I was able to see another manifestation of social research that though understated, was meaningful and potentially psychotherapeutic for the young men.

I was keen at the genesis of this study that what I found should have some utility in the real world services I was working in. And I had imagined that at this stage in the study this would mean that I would be espousing the efficacy of some reified model of 'Liberation Psychology' I had successfully applied in St Pauls. But the heavy dose of realism inflicted by the process described above means I am more interested now in advocating for a self-conscious and reflexive participatory ethic of practice, the epistemological basis for which is sketched in Chapter Two. Embedded in the practice and theory of service design and delivery, this ethic provides a route to the liberation of psychology as a discipline, providing the conceptual and ethical architecture for a more

scientific and post-empirical understanding of the postmodern social and cultural world (Nielsen, 1990).

This study demonstrates that a participatory approach is best equipped to read the anthropological concept of culture. My own experience working through such an approach at the margins is that this is because, when pursued authentically, a participatory ethic inhabits dialectical tension. This means the data that is produced is not just a portrait of local culture, but a three-dimensional sense of the interplay between structure and agency, centre and margins, oppression and privilege. In other words, a picture of the social and the psychic structure of being and feeling, and a context for the emotional states and behaviours created in both resistance and (often simultaneously) subjugation to it. To ignore or essentialise culture in the modernist tradition, is, as the statistical picture from mental health, justice and social care demonstrates, an exclusion or misreading of 'symptoms' that allows culture to return only in pathologised forms (Burman, 2008). Modernist identities that are fixed, that polarise self and other, the normal and abnormal, create the conditions in which privilege is able to objectify difference and through force exclude, exploit and medicalise it.

Developmental psychology for example, which is constructed on the archetype of the 'average individual child of a white, middle-class, Euro-American universe' (Cordero Arce, 2012, p. 389), is utterly undermined by an ethic of participation that problematises identity. The arc of developmental psychology; those natural, universal, pre-defined phases of psychological maturation and socialisation against which power is configured in the assessments, tests and inventories of the professional, strips the young men in these pages of their context. A participatory approach to studying the lives of these same young men reveals this almost immediately, demonstrating their childhood and adolescence to be socially and culturally constructed. So in painting a more fluid, syncretic and heterogeneous picture of adolescent masculinities, and in offering examples of the local developmental pathways available to them, their horizontal attachments, evolved capacities and psychocultural health (Weisner & Lowe, 2005), the scientific claims of modernist frameworks like developmental

psychology are exposed as little more than techniques of ideological power bent conservatively towards maintenance of the status quo.

A participatory approach to social and psychological research implies 'that the whole framework of relations, practices, and goals that surrounds both quantitative and qualitative work need to be in striking contrast to many of the assumptions and practices common to the mainstream of psychology' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 271). A participatory ethic and approach also restores the power of participants to self-define, a concept that yields not only better research data because individuals are less likely to pathologise themselves and more likely to understand the various ways in which their lives are connected (Cahill, 2006), but that is also a central feature of young people reclaiming their identities, psychological health and rights from objectification and construction at the centre by adults. While the level of distress and dis-ease I found in St Pauls means I would concur with Sedgwick's (1982) demands for expanded and socialised (mental) healthcare, the nature of that demand today is absolutely not for an enlarged model of existing provision, but rather an epistemologically re-energised and re-focussed delivery fluent in postmodern identities and poststructural readings of power/ideology.

Indeed, quite apart from the utility of a participatory ethic in generating better research data, is its potency as a psychotherapeutic approach. At best, without the transcendence of disciplinary boundaries proffered by such an ethic, 'doing psychotherapy becomes limited to working out personal solutions and accommodations to much larger social issues, without affecting or even clarifying consciousness about the wider context that may require insight and transformation to prevent further psychological suffering' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 62). A participatory approach on the other hand, may be personally and collectively therapeutic precisely because it actively deals with power - reading, recasting and consciously administering and ameliorating its effects at the interpersonal and social levels. If it is indeed the uneven distribution of power in society that is the socio-genesis of mental ill-health, then approaches that engage consciously with power would seem self-evidently important as therapeutic interventions in their own right. But to recognise this process means suspending orthodox definitions of psychiatric and psychotherapeutic validity,

and allowing a participatory ethic to extend these in highly situated, indigenous, and, I dare say, ultimately more legitimate directions.

Once I had let go of the model of research and participation I was clutching throughout most of the PAR project, I was in fact able to see the value my co-participants were placing in the group and our discussions more clearly. Tyreese's announcement that he would miss the group meeting each week because "it's good to just chill and talk, it don't ever happen normally", reveals something important in its apparent simplicity - that there are few spaces available locally where young men are able, together, to reflect on and consider the world around them. Consequently, perhaps one of the reasons we seemed 'stuck' in the reflection side of the PAR 'cycle', was that reflecting was the most meaningful and helpful purpose to the sessions. In this, an alternative image and utility of social research emerges from the bottom-up, one that assimilates storytelling, testimonial, and the remembering and naming of cultural experiences and knowledge through a relational mediation of power and liminality. Here, a community of young men beset by various forms of oppression, 'whose members have suffered from diminished senses of themselves by virtue of racism and classism' could use the research space to nurture a shared understanding of themselves (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, in Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 276). To identify this as a kind of lay or folk psychotherapy made by participants in dialogue with one another is not a conceptual stretch, but it does destabilise the traditional privilege and status of the psychotherapist in western society in ways that will certainly draw criticism as such.

This kind of psychocultural space has sometimes been called a 'public homeplace' (Belenky et al, 1997, Quiñones Rosado, 2007, Watkins & Shulman, 2008), a site where marginalised people are able to claim and develop knowledge, voice and leadership through dialogue. Public homeplaces though tend in theory towards the emancipatory goals of social transformation, and veer back to the critical pedagogy of Freire. And though there were some similarities with what we did in St Pauls and the (limited) literature on public homeplaces, a much closer equivalent lies in what Brabeck (2003) calls *testimonial practice*. I use the term 'testimonial' here in quite a particular way though, to describe the subtle and modest process of my co-participants in

dialogue, organising their local oral history and symbolic order, and in doing so shaping their personal and then social worlds. According to Tandon (1988), this is an image of participatory enquiry with an ancient heritage, a history of ordinary people working together to understand their world, most often orally or through the arts rather than by formal research outputs. Because of this, 'such efforts have been largely unrecognized and delegitimized by those producing knowledge at the dominant centers of societies' (Watkins & Shulman, 208, p. 270).

It was possible to hear the testimonial process, not just in the experiences and culture the young men described, but in the way they described it (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). For instance, though it was very easy to miss, it was also possible to hear the shift in narrative voice among the group over the weeks. Beginning in the early days with a third person voice abstracted out to generalizable descriptions of life in the area, to the voice of the self, the I, describing very personal and subjective experiences by the end. Similarly, one could hear the process maturing in the voice of relationship, in how the young men individually spoke of their relationships, to each other, their peers, elders and others. The testimonial process leads in this vein from the sharing of experiences to the articulation of one experience, the experience of the collective. This distillation requires the recognition of an emerging plot, one composed of recurring words and images, central metaphors and emotional resonances. In our discussions, this plot emerged 'bottom-up' around the generative themes of *respect*, violence, drugs, money and race. For me, the plot was thickened through listening for the ways in which discourse and street culture inflected the voices and collective voice of the young men with an image of themselves and the dialectic of oppression.

To hear this it was necessary for a great many of my assumptions about participation, action and research to be dismantled first; a process of continual reflexivity that ran in parallel to the testimonial process described above, and that only unveiled its alternative view of the project at the very end. This doesn't mean I was not important to the process though. One of the most revealing aspects of this study was the inverse relationship of voice to oppression. That is, at the margins one is able to have a voice, as loud as it can be made,

precisely for the reason that no-one is listening to you. The closer to the centre one gets (and I include myself in this analysis), the more necessary it is to silence or conform one's voice, for otherwise the accumulated rewards of privilege; status, social mobility, and material wealth, are put at risk.

Consequently, my co-participants did not need me to give them a voice, but my own social position was and is useful in the attempt to get their voices heard. Moreover, without me convening and attending the group each week, it is doubtful it would have existed at all given it did not exist before. In this way, the psychologist (counsellor, youth worker, social researcher, anthropologist; whoever) plays a tangential but nonetheless important role in the process. To this end the description below is much closer to my reflections on the part I played in the project.

'The people involved in this kind of work are not only psychologists, but come from a variety of professions. They are aware of the healing functions of self-expression, communal processes of creation, the documentation of experience and history that is systematically distorted or denied... Their relations to the people in the group they are working with often leads to their own professional work, be it photographs, documentaries, and professional monographs. These are not thought of as standing in for the voice of others. Ethical issues of appropriation and of professional and financial gain are brought forward to be discerned and discussed' (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 294).

But what is therapeutic about this process and the space it occurs in? Quite apart from the dynamics of group process, there seem to me two important aspects to the psychotherapeutic qualities of a participatory approach such as I have described here. The first has to do with the liminality of the space, and the conscious amelioration of power that occurs because of this. The second, related, has to do with the focus for enquiry, which is on public as well as private issues and offers a more realistic and appropriate therapeutic focus for the personal effects (anxiety, depression, anger) of group traumas like poverty, racism and social exclusion. Finally, these sites are also psychotherapeutic because they do not yield to the inevitable fragmentation of identities and social bonds that is the thrust of postmodernism. If the approach embraces

heterogeneity, fluidity and syncretism, there is a simultaneous attempt to also unify sameness into an articulation of the objective world.

I do not claim that the particular process that occurred in this study achieved either liberatory or therapeutic outcomes, only that the participatory ethic that ran through it (sometimes partially, sometimes not at all, almost always with great difficulty) revealed enough to suggest therapeutic and perhaps liberatory outcomes are possible. Moreover, the statistical picture offered in Chapter Eight demonstrates, if nothing else, that the young men behind the numbers are not accessing support 'upstream' of the coercive and acute reaches of the mental health system. Liminal spaces engineered through a participatory ethic in the community are obviously not going to be a panacea for the structural violences and apartheid young men like those in these pages face, but they do offer a more appropriate and just forum, as well as a more scientific reading of culture and psyche as these are made in places of significant marginality. And they certainly do encourage a degree of practitioner reflexivity entirely appropriate to working in the field of mental health. Finally, they would seem psychically and socially valuable on their own terms for those stepping into them, in exploring, naming and reclaiming their world and, sometimes, the one beyond it.

Mental health, citizenship and participation

Central to the argument I wish to make for uniting psychological health with theories of children and young people's participation is the idea of self-definition. The medicalisation of social problems in young people is not only unscientific, it is fundamentally unjust and undemocratic. When young people's psychic and cultural attempts to survive oppression are reduced to labels like 'conduct disorder', mental health professionals are no less than complicit in the administration of oppression. The issue of democracy arises because this administration of power is fundamentally either dishonest or misguided about the nature of the problems present, and because the treatments and systems compelled by this reading erode citizenship and rights. And ultimately, when a child or young person 'suffers the censorship of (his or) her own childhood as abnormal, lost, marginal or dysfunctional, how is it possible for (he or) she to be

the addressee of children's rights if (he or) she does not even belong to the category of children? (Cordero Arce, 2012, p. 386).

Working authentically through a participatory ethic of practice reveals childhood and adolescence to be constructed, multiple and situated (Freeman, 1998). It also demonstrates that young people are active agents in the cultural production of knowledge. Once these two aspects are unveiled, developmental psychology can no longer lay claim to universalise childhood and adolescence, and the democratic and human rights of children and young people, their interests and their needs, can no longer be assumed and subsumed beneath such standardised ideological charters as the UNCRC, or pursued through normative outcome frameworks like Every Child Matters (see James & Prout, 1990, Wilkinson, 1996, James, 2007, Cordero Arce, 2012). Thus it is that the case for a new discourse of children and young people's rights and citizenship is the very same as that for a unified theory of children and young people's participation, a sociology of intergenerational relations, and a paradigmatic shift in the way children and young people's mental health and wellbeing is thought about and supported.

Very specifically, children and young people 'must have the right to define, as well as not to be defined' (Cordero Arce, 2012, p. 397). This simple tenet is vital to young men like those in this study, who are struggling to live within and overcome an inherited discourse of Black masculine failure and defeat, that 'epidermalised inferiority' (Fanon, 1961) that is the colonial product of five hundred years ideological labour at the centre, and that they must personally embody, resist and bear witness to daily. This basic right is then central to their emancipation from the covertly racist and dehumanising practices and assumptions of institutions and practitioners. For my co-participants, self-definition is key to a process of de-colonisation from the claims and stereotypes (discourse) adults make and enforce about them. It is also a political process, because freedom lies not just in discovering or being able to determine who we are, 'but in rebelling against those ways in which we are already defined, categorized and classified' (Rajchman, 1984, in Cannella & Viruru, 2004, p. 49). Thus it is that the twin concepts of mental health and (children and young people's) participation, which at first seem conceptually distant from one

another, are in fact indelibly bound; each requiring the emancipation of the other.

Ultimately though, I am wary of the kind of emancipatory flourishes the like of which the facts of this study can lay no realistic claim to. The kind of practice and ethics I am advocating for could very easily disappear in a meaningless and hyperliterate exercise in postmodernist deconstructionism. The reality is that a participatory ethic of practice with young people at the margins, whether in the form of social research, youth or social work, psychotherapy, psychology or psychoanalysis, is generally speaking a radical departure in the culture of practice of these disciplines. To embark down this road is to challenge the status quo, the vested interests embedded in it, and indeed, as an individual, one's own privilege. A participatory ethic, if it is to mean anything transformative at all, must imply a 'preferential option' for those oppressed by unjust social arrangements on the part of adults and professionals, and an accurate scientific reading of power as it relates to marginality. In an important sense though, alone it matters not whether a situated group of marginalised young people come to a place where they are able to articulate what they understand as their rights, because claiming these rights remains an exercise in the micropolitics of everyday life, in shaping the oppression that flows around and through them. There is, realistically and ultimately, no political liberation without equivalent economic emancipation.

Indeed, though reframed and peered at through the lens of mental health, all that has been said in this study about the conditions of marginality in St Pauls, and perhaps in the British inner city more widely, speaks to a profound crisis of citizenship that is both lived and conceptual; a crisis that must also belong to the theory and practices of participation. The structural transformations taking place under the banner of neoliberalism (deregulation, deproletarianisation, commodification, the retrenchment of the welfare state) are polarising society to a damaging personal and collective end. Material inequality is both entrenched, ever-widening (Wilkinson, 1996, Young Foundation, 2009), and crystallising in those inner city neighbourhoods, like St Pauls, to which the newly arrived and historical 'have-nots' are relegated. Young people growing up in these spaces of advanced marginality are denied the basic economic ladders that bind and

stabilise the overall social contract to a shared image of citizenship and, decreasingly, nation. The class structure is collapsed in these places; at the same time, postmodernism, through its syncretic, heterogenous every day presence, unveils itself in ways that also undermines the conceptual basis and lived meaning of citizenship and nationhood.

'Thus the question facing First World countries... is whether their polities have the capacity to prevent the further contraction and fragmentation of the sphere of citizenship fuelled by the desocialization of labour and, correspondingly, what new mediating institutions they need to invent to provide full access to and active participation in the city, in the double sense of urban setting and polis' (Wacquant, 2008, p. 38).

This then is the scale of the crisis facing citizenship, and indeed, the challenge for participatory practices and theory.⁷⁴ Throughout 2011, as I was finishing the fieldwork phase of this study, the distribution of citizenship in Britain was being revealed to mirror the distribution of material and class privilege. The public scandals that engulfed the political classes, media and police; and that finally, publicly, dissolved their integrity as institutions, pre-cursored the rioting that shook several English inner cities (Bristol Evening Post, 2011c). From top to bottom, material nefariousness appeared endemic, though it was very certainly only to marginalised youth David Cameron was referring when he said; 'this was about behaviour... people showing indifference to right and wrong... people with a twisted moral code...people with a complete absence of self-restraint' (Office for the Prime Minister, 2011).⁷⁵

⁷⁴ This cause is made for the Left to embrace, and yet the diffuse tapestry of 'progressive' movements on the contemporary Left make this an unlikely outcome, especially where the third sector now commercially overlaps so substantially with the public sector, and is very often financially and conceptually fluent in the same discourse (see Chapter Eight) running through mental healthcare more generally (see Cresswell & Spandler, 2009).

⁷⁵ That the government then sought American expertise in gang culture because "gangs were at the heart of the protests and have been behind the coordinated attacks", displayed a profound misreading of the specific historical and socio-economic project of British inner city marginality (Wintour, 2011). Worse, it actively furthered the overarching discourse of exclusion by obfuscating the issue of poverty and social exclusion (Topping, 2011), replacing it with the familiar moral panic intoned by (US inspired) gang violence.

These are questions of policy, certainly, because the processes of social and economic polarisation are what create the kinds of psychic and emotional structures that are entirely necessary for young people to burn down their own neighbourhoods (Hegarty, 2011). Left unchecked, these structures of feeling are a solvent of democracy as well as human dignity and psychological health, and the consequences of leaving them unheard and unattended are predictable on all three fronts.

Video stills from research interviews for the short film.



CONCLUSIONS

“The patterns, over the generations and stuff, everything is just repeating itself” (Marcel).

The genesis for this research lay partly in a desire to render a study that had utility and application. I was keen that the voices of a highly marginalised group of young men, who typically exist in an aura of moral panic and are generally dismissed as delinquent, disordered, and unworthy of sympathy, should participate in an analysis that engaged with those representations of them. In so doing, I wanted their voices to unveil the shifting, syncretic nature of postmodern identities in the British inner city, and the devastating and unjust effects of power and material inequality of life lived at the detached-margins of the social strata. In these spaces of advanced marginality, as we have seen, categories of victim and villain are blurred, overlapping and producing of one another (Bourgois & Schonberg, 2009). The message my co-participants had wanted their film to carry was very clear in this regard: reductive binary moral arguments mask the abusive realities of such spaces. Despite not fully realising the completion of their film, I remain hopeful their voices have achieved the same destabilising effect throughout this thesis. In which case the question of utility remains, for how then does a participatory reading of the moral economy translate into useful practice and (public) mental health interventions?

The first and most obvious conclusion, that arises simply from having tested it, is that a participatory ethic (as sketched in Chapter Two) offers the only adequate and robust epistemological framework for gathering research data of this kind. However much the resulting form fell short of the applied standards I (and the existing literature) set for it, the data itself remains, I am quite sure, substantially ‘better’ than had I spent the equivalent time in St Pauls working up a monograph drawn solely from participant-observation. The reflexivity called for by participatory ethics also encouraged me to examine structures of privilege that would likely have otherwise remained hidden beneath a veil of cultural

relativism. This has undoubtedly helped to establish a less pathologising, more holistic, contextualised and nuanced portrait of the young masculinities I encountered, and, importantly, a more accurate reading of power in their subjectivities.

The most striking consequence of this was to ground the research in time and place. This is not a study of all of St Pauls, or even of all the young Black masculinities resident there. My co-participants occupied variously rarefied positions in relation to the concentration of street cultures worst excesses of gang violence, drugs and criminality, but they were nonetheless existentially submerged in the same *habitus* based inequalities from which it emerged. Within the diverse human geography of St Pauls, what their personal negotiations of discourse demonstrate is that social class is itself fragmentary, and appended with other highly situated identities and cultural exigencies. My contention is that only a participatory ethic and approach could have yielded this picture so efficiently and reflexively. By way of second conclusion, let me summarise where I sense this has utility.

First, working through an ethic of participatory practice, health needs, and thus remedies, are more accurately located. In contrast, positivist approaches are made increasingly reductive and punitive by the realities of postmodern life, especially among the young, who live at the vanguard of this neoliberal tropism. A participatory ethic possesses the capacity to read health needs more accurately because it does not suppose any inherent deficit in the capability of young people, however marginalised, to be cultural actors able to name and make their world. It embraces the notion that among the morass of shifting postmodern identities, there is an objective world to be grasped and understood, but that as soon as we try we enter a realm of culturally constructed knowing.

This has immediate utility for the entire portfolio of conceptual theories used in mental healthcare, which, applied through a participatory framework, can be tested for their relative efficacy by practitioners *in situ*. Indeed, as it does to professional models of practice, so a participatory ethic (pursued authentically) also then does to personal structures and assumptions of privilege. The

reflexivity inspired by this approach to practice and ethics comes from the personal and intimate experience of inhabiting liminality, of tending consciously to the administration of power, and from confronting the de-colonising images and stories that emerge in the dialectic of oppression. What's unveiled by this process we might reasonably call *culturally capable practice*; professional practice that is politically conscious, fluent in the anthropological concept of culture and not some essentialising and reductive vision of it. A participatory ethic, located in whichever professional discipline (and this is true even in individual contexts of practice), helpfully destabilises practitioner certainties in a theoretical and personal sense, creating the conditions for more democratic, appropriate, effective, and efficient practice.

Such an ethic might be equipped epistemologically to accommodate postmodern identities and read and administer poststructural power, but it is not so diffuse and relativist that it cannot manifest itself in ways and projects that are pragmatic, realistic, and goal orientated. For psychologists and therapists, this means getting out of the clinic and engaging with tangible, everyday struggles at street level in participatory and collective settings; a move that would surely inspire the radical theoretical innovation and disciplinary rigour the field badly needs if it is to ameliorate the 'legitimation crisis' (Habermas, 1975) my co-participants lay at its door. Working upstream of personal breakdown and the totalising climate of the ward and clinic, 'therapy' could flourish in a new public health orientated role, where spaces and categories of marginality could be engaged earlier, more intimately, for longer, and in less stigmatising and pathologising ways. Even 'inside' the system, participatory projects may have considerable personal and systemic utility (see Reason & Bradbury, 2001 and Dadich, 2010, for examples in social and mental healthcare).

Indeed, participatory projects of this kind are highly efficient, potentially effecting any number of outcomes that may be therapeutic, community development and/or public health and policy orientated. Making the most of this would require a shift in commissioning priorities, away from expensive acute provision and the ideological therapies of the market, but the upshot would surely be that policy could be more accurately informed and resources more meaningfully and cost-effectively applied. I say all this with a certain amount of trepidation however, for

the potential to abuse participatory ethics (and thus, in a poststructural sense, power) haunts this second conclusion substantially. After all, I wielded them - if not malevolently - then at least clumsily, blind to other assumptions I was making about outcomes and the nature and value of social research. And I cannot now ignore my reading of politics in the creation and maintenance of my co-participants marginality, or the reality that 'policy choices are framed by the discursive logics of power that propel governmentality, shape subjectivities, reinforce habitus-based inequalities, and extend the reach of biopower' (Bourgois & Schonberg, 2009, p. 297). Nonetheless, I offer this conclusion so as to make clear there is a compelling real-world logic to the application of a participatory 'politico-ethic' (Cresswell & Spandler, 2009) in mental healthcare, one that cannot be relegated solely to theoretical forms.

That said, we arrive at a third conclusion; that participatory practice with young people at the margins must contribute to a unified theory of children and young people's participation and a sociology of intergenerational relations. These emerging theories will only be capable of the epistemological rigour they claim for themselves if they are tested across as broad a constellation of marginality and privilege as is available. Ironically, extending participatory practice to fields of experience and structures of feeling that have had their capacities for participating systematically assaulted by marginality, is to return to the radical theoretical home of participation in the literature of oppression and resistance (Freire, 1971, Gutierrez, 1988, Martín-Baró, 1994). In this form, participation is a dialectical project of decolonisation; a condition of democratic communication (Young, 2006), psychological humanisation, and social change as urgent for those in positions of privilege as for those at the margins.

The problem with returning to this emancipatory heritage is that although it reads the overall configuration of social relations accurately and through an appropriate epistemological lens, it leads to a place where there is little else to conclude than what must follow from the new social insight of the oppressed is (violent) revolution. For what else is to be done with *conscientização* in the face of massive structural apartheid? Where else does its utility lie if not in social change? This is a difficult bind, one that mirrors that faced by my co-participants, whose marginality is depoliticised by the very discourse that

objectifies them, even on the political left. Indeed, part of the transformative value of PAR is that it necessarily attempts to connect *habitus* based subjectivities to objective structures; it cannot help but politicise marginality. If it does not, it betrays its own heritage and epistemological basis.

Out of a 'preferential option' for my co-participants, the crises of the inner city are too urgent for this betrayal, and the relative failure of our PAR project to move to social action means I feel a weight of responsibility for the politics of this thesis. My co-participants voice(s) reveal important political truths about their social position, that, in the absence of their film, I cannot extirpate from these conclusions. Indeed, a fourth and fundamental conclusion I draw from the research experience is that my co-participants do not want for a voice, only an audience, and as such I want briefly to summarise again what can be concluded from their testimonies.

First, my co-participants subjectivities are formed from their objectification at the centre (Bourdieu, 1977). This means any attempt to moralise or reduce them 'from the centre' to personal failures, delinquency or pathology, is fundamentally unjust, and, given the coercive, involuntary consequences, undemocratic. This is not the same as saying agency or personal responsibility are relative and void as a result, or that young men from such contexts don't suffer mental ill-health. It's important that at an everyday level individuals are accountable for their actions, and that those who need emotional support are able to access it. But it does mean the political and economic structure of their marginality is mirrored in the cultural landscape of the street, the moral economy made from it, and the psychological, emotional and behavioural states these structures privilege. In fact, viewed from the perspective of my co-participants, the violences of street culture actually constitute an embodied and inherited but (socio)logical response to the massive structural violence visited upon them from above by a set of mutually reinforcing economic and sociopolitical changes (Wacquant, 2008).

These changes; the retrenchment of the welfare state, the de-socialisation of the wage labour market, the commodification of human experience and health, are polarising society in ways that simultaneously entrench and widen material

inequality and undermine citizenship and democracy. For my co-participants the class structure has all but collapsed. They, along with large swathes of the local unskilled labour force, have been condemned to long-term economic redundancy and social marginality in neighbourhoods, like St Pauls, blighted by ecological decay, overcrowding, and a clearly visible postcolonial ethnic profile. The stigma that accompanies being a young Black male resident in St Pauls, or for that matter Easton, reinforces the everyday objectification of these spaces and their inhabitants, consolidating this exclusion.

Nonetheless, while the subjectivities of young people living in such spaces might express marginality in ways it is easy to condemn and moralise over, they are ultimately coherent manifestations of the prevailing neoliberal ideology. A participatory and poststructural reading of power reveals this relationship intimately, and that social and psychic structures mirror one another, not just in situations and spaces of disadvantage and marginality, but also, dialectically, in privilege. This has important consequences for the social spaces and categories occupied by children and young people more generally, because whatever their dialectical position, ideology colonises children and young people's experience (first, in *being-for-another*, then later in what has been inculcated and socialised as a 'normal' adulthood), determining their developmental and material trajectory, and ensuring its reproduction and the maintenance of an unjust and inhumane social order.

Consequently, social transformation of this arrangement necessitates political action, and this compels us to re-politicise young people, mental health, marginality and privilege. The problem resurfaces however; because what can this possibly mean beyond a thesis? What use is a consciousness of the narrative frameworks we are embedded in if transcending these is materially and positionally impossible? In a wider context of the anosognosia inherent to this dialectical relationship, what can those young people at the margins realistically hope to *substantively* transform in the world beyond their subjectivity, when the immediate circumstances of their lives and the pattern of material inequality occupy and trap them so fully? Here, again, we must return to that place where emancipatory literature, and this thesis, either dissolves in discussions of participatory ethics, or advances the notion that only structural

and political remedies, or violent civil unrest, are likely outcomes of this increasing social polarity.

August 2011 was highly significant for this conclusion, and much less because this was when I withdrew from St Pauls to begin the process of composing this thesis. It was significant because the civil unrest that occurred made highly visible the polarisation summarised above. Both the neighbourhoods affected by the unrest and the profile of those who participated demonstrate the demographic character and social consequences of these processes. It's important to identify too that the young people involved *are the children of neoliberalism*. Theirs is that post-political age once hailed as 'the end of history' (Fukuyama, 1992), and that now seems filled with a vacuous and fragmented constellation of consumerist identities (Hall et al, 2008). Indeed, the (self-surveilled) discourse of Black masculinity that emerges from my co-participants descriptions of street culture is perhaps best understood, in its contemporary form at least, as history and resistance distilled and objectified to one of these consumerist sites. Submerged in a neoliberal culture of consumerism but denied the opportunity to economically participate, looting the high street (and even robbing each other) is an entirely coherent articulation of ideology/power made from above.

A final conclusion, which I draw from my brief experience of this marginality and the warnings of my co-participants about future generations of *youngers*, is that if meaningful policy solutions addressing material inequality are not urgently forthcoming, civil unrest of this kind will without doubt increase in frequency, participation, and perhaps too organisation. No doubt this will be accompanied and amplified by an increase in punitive techniques of social control, and the erosion of civil rights for those marginalised young men (and women) trying to eek out of their objectification small spaces of subjective dignity. But my co-participant's voices and circumstances speak to urgent crises of citizenship, democracy, and, because social and psychological contexts mirror one another, mental wellbeing. Consequently, the re-politicisation of mental health pre-supposes not only a radical expansion of post-structurally orientated and socialised (mental) healthcare, but also the re-distribution of wealth from centre to margins as itself a mental health intervention; the creation of a basic equality

of economic opportunity and citizenship that should speak intimately to the politics of the Left.

But whatever the structural remedies or policy levers that can be imagined, the utility of a participatory ethic lies first in its capacity to reveal to us these unfolding subjective and structural relationships in highly situated ways, but also, surely, in extending knowing to political action. Because forewarned, the consequences of remaining deaf to the voices of young people like Ashley, Tyreese, Lawrence, Marcel, Trigga, Jermaine, Ledley, Sol, and Audley, will likely bear a future toll the basic social contract cannot withstand.

'In many tribal cultures, it was said that if the boys were not initiated into manhood, if they were not shaped by the skills and love of elders, then they would destroy the culture. If the fires that innately burn inside us are not intentionally and lovingly added to the heart of the community, they will burn down the structures of culture, just to feel the warmth' (Meade, 1994, p. 112).

St Pau Is, August 2011.



Appendices

i) Project Flyer



The flyer features a central image of a stick figure drawn on a grey, cracked wall. The figure has a white face with two black dots for eyes, a black outline, and long, thin black limbs. The figure is standing on a dark surface. In the top left corner, there are two logos: a circular logo for 'FULL CIRCLE' with a globe and the text 'OFF THE RECORD' below it, and a red and white '@' symbol logo. The text 'HOW AM I?' is written in large, white, hand-painted letters at the bottom of the image. Below the image, the title 'WHO ARE WE?' is written in large, bold, pink letters. A horizontal pink line separates the title from the text below. The text is enclosed in a pink dashed border.

HOW AM I?

WHO ARE WE'

Full Circle and Off the Record are looking for a small group of local young men aged 15-18 to lead a project starting in June.

Using film, photography, interviews and group work, the project will research your life in St Pauls. We will offer you training, support, accreditation and expenses. You will just need an open mind and be able to commit about 3 or 4 hours a week.

If you're interested call in and see [redacted] at Full Circle or give her a call on [redacted].
Or, come along to Full Circle on Thursday 3rd June at 2pm, to find out more about the project and how you could be involved.

ii) Consent Form for PAR Co-Researcher

Off the record Bristol

2 Horfield Road
St Michael's Hill
Bristol
BS28EA
08088089120
confidential@otrbristol.org.uk
www.trbristol.org.uk



Subject: CO-RESEARCHER PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM

My name is Simon and I am a student in the School of Social Work at the University of Central Lancashire. I am also the Director of Off the Record, a support service for young people aged 11-25 in Bristol. Together with Full Circle we are doing research that explores what life is like for young men living in St Pauls.

We want to do this research with a small group of youth co-researchers, who will share in designing the project, collecting information, and understanding the information we get. This research project involves meeting once a week for two hours at Full Circle, depending on what we agree together. Although the total length of this project may be longer, I am asking you to try to commit to working on this project for three months. At the end of three months you can decide to continue working on the project or to stop.

As one of the youth researchers, you will have major input on this research project. To begin with, we will be looking at your own experiences and thoughts about life in the area. Our group discussions will become part of the data for this project. The discussions are confidential. The only time either Souda or myself will break this confidentiality is if we think there is a risk of significant harm to you or someone else. If you are under 16, to participate you will need the written consent of your parent/guardian.

As a co-researcher you will receive a one-off stipend of £100, depending on the work we decide to undertake, and based on your contributing at least two hours a week for three months. If you choose to no longer participate after the project has already begun and before the end of the three months, you will receive a portion of this stipend equal to your contribution.


In addition to the stipend, you may benefit by your participation in this study through gaining practical skills and accreditation in research, analysis, film making, photography, and/or writing. You may also benefit by having an opportunity to share your experiences, gaining not only confidence in your ideas, but also feeling that your ideas and experiences are connected to the experiences and ideas of others. One aim of this project is to work together as a group to tackle in a positive way some of the issues raised by the research.

I will publish the results of the study. Any of your work that I wish to use I will seek your permission and will credit to you in full. This is also true of any of your statements that I wish to use from the audio and video recordings of our group discussions. Unless you decide to use a false name, your name will appear in my dissertation, but if any information arises that is hurtful to you, I will create a false name for you to protect your identity. I will work with you at all times so that how you are credited in my dissertation is acceptable to you. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time with no penalty. If you have any questions about this research, you can call me on [redacted], or email me at snewitt@uclan.ac.uk. You may also contact my dissertation advisor, Nigel Thomas, at npthomas@uclan.ac.uk if you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study. Alternatively, you can talk to [redacted] at Full Circle on [redacted] or at [redacted].

iii) Consent Forms for Film Interview Participants

Off the record Bristol
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08088089120
confidential@otrbristol.org.uk
www.otrbristol.org.uk



Subject: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (Under 16)

My name is _____ and I am a researcher for a project called How Am I - Who Are We. The lead researcher on this project is Simon Newitt, who is Director of Off the Record (Bristol) and a research student in the School of Social Work at the University of Central Lancashire.

We are doing research that explores what life is like for young African-Caribbean men growing up and coming of age in St Pauls in 2010. We would like to interview you to learn about your experience of this, and your views on the community and the issues it currently faces.

During our interview, I will ask you some questions about your experiences and your ideas about St Pauls and the issues facing young men growing up here. If there are any questions that I ask that you would prefer not to answer, please feel free to tell me and we will move on to another question. If you would like to stop the interview at any time, please tell me and we will end our interview immediately.

Our interview will be on video so that I can have a record of everything that we both say and so that your interview may form part of a documentary film our project is making. There are no risks to you in this study. You may choose to go by your real name or by a false name. You may cover your face in the film to protect your identity and you may request we alter your voice or use the voice of an actor if you prefer. I will ask you again at the end of our interview if you would like to use your real name or a false name.

The documentary film that is produced will be shown publicly both to members of the St Pauls community, and those outside it. The research, including the views expressed in your interview, will also be published in a written report. Any of your statements that we use from the video recording will be credited to you, unless you decide to use a false name. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

*! **The intention in this interview is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time with no penalty.** If you or your parent/carer/guardian have any questions about this research, you can call the lead researcher, Simon Newitt, on 07833937134. Alternatively, you can talk to Sauda Kyalambuka at Full Circle on 07786994867.


Thank you for your consideration. Because you are under 16 you will need the consent of your parent, carer or legal guardian. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you to give to them. If you and they agree to your participate in this research project, please have them sign below and return the form to me:

I agree to be interviewed for this project. [circle one]: Yes / No
I agree to be video taped during this interview. [circle one]: Yes / No

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

I consent to (participant's name printed) _____ participating in this project.

Parent/Carer/Guardian signature _____ Date _____



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www.otrbristol.org.uk



Subject: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (16+)

My name is _____ and I am a researcher for a project called How Am I - Who Are We. The lead researcher on this project is Simon Newitt, who is Director of Off the Record (Bristol) and a research student in the School of Social Work at the University of Central Lancashire. Simon will be present during our interview.

We are doing research that explores what life is like for young African-Caribbean men growing up in St Pauls in 2010. We would like to interview you to learn about your experience and your views on the community.

During our interview, I will ask you some questions about these things. If there are any questions that I ask that you would prefer not to answer, please feel free to tell me and we will move on to another question. If you would like to stop the interview at any time, please tell me and we will end our interview immediately.

Our interview will be on video so that I can have a record of everything that we both say and so that your interview may form part of a documentary film our project is making. You may choose to go by your real name or by a false name. You may cover your face in the film to protect your identity and you may request we alter your voice or use the voice of an actor if you prefer. I will ask you again at the end of our interview if you would like to use your real name or a false name.

However, if you tell me that you or someone else is being or has been seriously harmed, Simon may stop the interview and want to talk to you. He will talk through what you have said and if he is still concerned for you or someone else you mention, he will need to talk to someone else, such as Social Services. He will try to work with you to make the best decision for both you and anyone else, and to understand what you would like to happen next.

The documentary film that is produced will be shown publicly both to members of the St Pauls community, and those outside it. The research, including the views expressed in your interview, will also be published in a written report. Anything you say that we use from the video recording will be credited to you, unless you decide to use a false name. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time with no penalty. If you decide to participate in this research, you will be contacted by researcher Simon Newitt, on _____

Thank you for your consideration. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you. If you agree to participate in this research project, please sign below:

I am over 16 and eligible to participate in this study. [circle one]: Yes / No
I agree to be interviewed for this project. [circle one]: Yes / No
I agree to be video taped during this interview. [circle one]: Yes / No

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Participant's name printed _____ Date _____

iv) Interview Cue Sheet for Film

Interview Cue Sheet:

- **Respect:**

Can you define the word respect for me? What does it mean to a young man growing up in St Pauls?

What kind of things do you have to do to earn respect?

Can you describe what someone's disrespect would look like?

(For 16+) Has this changed? Do you see youngsters doing the same things you once did?

(If yes) In what ways / why do you think this is?

- **Being a man:**

What about the family, what kind of pressure do you think the average family in St Pauls faces? Have you experienced any of this, and if so, how have you tried to overcome it?

Does this make it hard to be a 'man' and good father? How?

What is a man?

Who are your role models, why?

Why do you think some young men get drawn into gangs? What does being in a gang give you?

What advice would you give your younger self?

- **The community:**

What do you consider are the biggest problems facing the community today? Why?

What do you consider to be the biggest strengths of the community? Why?

Do you think racism is a factor in what you have just described? In what ways?

How do you see your future? If I interviewed you again in five years time, how would you like your life to be? What things do you think you need to get there?

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