post-truth adjective

> Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.
>
> *'in this era of post-truth politics, it's easy to cherry-pick data and come to whatever conclusion you desire'*
>
> *'some commentators have observed that we are living in a post-truth age'*

https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/post-truth, accessed 8th jan 2018

Oxford Dictionaries Word of the year 2016

The term post-truth, according to Wikipedia, was first used in 1992 to describe the aftermath of Watergate (Kreitner, 2016) and subsequently came again into favour in the noughties to describe the tight control of debate within US politics, what we might otherwise describe as 'spin'. What is significant about the first usage of this term is that it was about the control by politicians and the mainstream media of the terms of public debates. That this was a political issue in the UK, was evidenced by the widespread distrust of spin and the mainstream media, for example, during the recent leadership elections within the Labour Party (Raynsford, 2016). However, what is most noticeable about its usage since 2016 is the shift of focus from mainstream media to social media. That is, instead of this being about the political manipulation of spin, it is ordinary people's failure to understand 'the facts' and to be swayed by emotions in controlled posts shared on social media that came to be the focus of attention. In this case, it has referred especially to 'Leave' voters after the UK referendum on 2016. While there was indeed criticism of the Vote Leave campaign in relation to increased NHS funding,

(http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/tory-mp-sarah-wollaston-switches-sides-in-eu-referendum-campaign_uk_57587e00e4b0415143693876)

the majority concern since the result has focused on the gullibility of ordinary people as well as their xenophobia. In other words, discussions of post-truth have shifted away from politicians and elites and to social media, shadowy forces (eg Russia, China) and the irrationality of working class people on social media. This aligns with the dismay felt amongst most living in metropolitan areas where the Remain vote was strongest, and the frequently expressed inability to understand what the issues were apart from a pathologisation of the affective life of ordinary people, bringing up themes familiar to social psychology, eg mass hysteria (Blackman and Walkerdine, 2002) and xenophobia as psychological categories, along with ignorance.

In this paper, I explore how this might relate to the working-class voting patterns that relate to the 2016 Referendum about membership of the European Union, paying attention to the ways that the working class Leave vote in particular has been understood. On the basis of a small qualitative study of Leave and Remain voters in two locations in south Wales, I go on to consider the implications of this work for an understanding of methods of research that engage with working class affective practices and histories in a non-pathologising way.

Manipulation by affect

The concept of post-truth goes further than the Foucauldian idea that scientific facts are not ideology but fictions that function in truth, by developing an affective approach in which facts presented on social media in particular, away from the mainstream, offer a pernicious way of drawing in the reader, producing an effect

of contagion in which rapid sharing across vast virtual spaces makes for a sense of resistance or of not being deluded by the mainstream.

But how the concept of post-truth functioned in the case of Brexit appears to be primarily through the idea, so familiar to social psychology, first coined by Le Bon (1922), that crowds produce an effect of a group mind, a collective unconscious and contagion, suggestibility, moving individuals away from individual rationality and thus from the rational subject of democracy. In this approach, social media represent a new way of producing crowds. Through such crowding, the dangers of unreason as contagion lurk, such that people are variously 'moved to vote against their own interests' (Alford, 2014), reveal an underlying xenophobic and racist core of crowd members returning to instincts as Le Bon suggested, becoming 'turkeys voting for Xmas' (Winkler, 2016). This is precisely the way that William Davies (2018) uses Le Bon to understand the current situation. In other words, just as the elite always knew, the working class are understood as racist degenerates, too swayed by unreason to be the subject of reason, the democratic subject in action. This can be added to by shadowier approaches in which Other Powers, usually Russia, or in the case of Brexit, wealth and power, do this job – but the main issue I want to dwell on here is the assumption that the working class is pulled in and cannot see what is good for them. Indeed, since no explanation of the majority vote for Leave seemed acceptable to a metropolitan elite, it was inconceivable that the explanation could lie elsewhere. The notions of contagion and virality have come into fashion again, especially with respect to an understanding of the spreading of affects across global networks (eg Sampson, 2012 and Blackman, 2013, 2014), who also traces its relays from Le Bon to McDougall and beyond, Leys 2011, Reicher, 2001, who tracks this work towards

social identity theory). Cromby 2015) explicitly engages with manipulation of feelings by governments, see also Cromby and Willis (2104).

One may also note that in object oriented ontologies (Haran, 2002) and post humanism (Badmington, 2000), social media posts and other techniques and technologies of dispersal are understood as having their own part in the production of contagion, that does not need to pass directly through minds as in Le Bon. My aim here is less to pint to that issue and more to point to the long history of the pathologisation of working class responses, in which something is seen to pass around and between ordinary people, who are, in one way or another, understood as lacking the reasoning or capacity to stand back and engage with what we might colloquially call 'the facts'. My argument, therefore, is that that the latest turn to affect has been marshaled in support of an agenda which can be traced at least back to the emergence of liberalism as a form of governance (Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012).

How might one engage with this issue differently and what methodological resources are on offer?

Although the current interest in affect centres on the body rather than the mind (Cromby, 2014), and for many theorists contagion is produced through bodily processes, rather than a collective unconscious, nevertheless, the cognitive theories often favoured by affect studies fit perfectly well with a bodily understanding of the production of reason/unreason as an opposition. This means that we have not moved away from the understanding of liberal democracy as governed via modes of regulation in which reasoning or being reasonable win the day (Walkerdine, 1984) as Rose and Abi-Rached (2013) demonstrate in relation

to neuro science as a form of governmentality. While this situation may well be more complex than when I wrote about it over 30 years ago, the basic premise of the dangers to liberal governance of unreason still stand. Thus, what concerns me here is the way in which popular debates about working class voting patterns are being bolstered by a reference to an agenda about affect – be it as post-truth, contagion or other theories of affect, It is less the specificities of particular theories that concerns me and more the type of approach, as expressed in Davies (2018) that we are in a geopolitical context in which, as he puts it, 'feelings took over the world' and in this context, the power of social media is a concern on the one hand, but on the other, the unreason of the masses appears to be the most serious concern (eg Lazer, 2018, Brady et al, 2016), as presented in the media in relation to voting patterns on both sides of the Atlantic. [1]

While we have a different political moment and the turn to affect was in many ways a reaction to the centrality of semiotics and discourse within the 'turn to discourse', nevertheless, I wish to point to the ways in which irrationalities, feelings, emotions, virality and contagion are now presented popularly as the premier way to understand the aftermath of the vote for Brexit.

Public Meetings

In order to discuss any possibility of working with the issues about the Brexit vote in a different way, I will refer to a small piece of work undertaken in two locations in south Wales under the auspices of an ESRC Impact Accelerator Grant early in 2017 by myself and David Studdert. The two locations were the site for previous research (Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012; Walkerdine, 2010; Studdert and Walkerdine, 2016). The locations are different in that one is a de-industrialised

town the south Wales Valleys and the other is a market town, not so far from the first, but very different in character, with a relatively wealthy population, but a housing estate on the edge of the town with very high levels of poverty and exclusion from town life. The small study went back to work with residents in both locations to conduct public meetings about the feelings about and response to Brexit. I outline below the results of those meetings in order to move on to discuss how they relate to the agenda that I have set out and to think about the implications for how we understand and research affective relations.

The public meetings produced very different results in each location. Beginning, with the market town location, a meeting was held in the central area and attended exclusively by older middle class white residents. The issues raised by the meeting in many ways mirrored those in the post-truth debates. That is, hugely pro-EU, the residents expressed considerable distress at the potential loss of EU membership, including how it might affect their sense of being European, their ability to take continental holidays, for example, but also their concern about the economy and jobs. Most important for the discussion here is their acute sense of Otherness within the town. We should not forget that the residents of the housing estate felt excluded by the majority of the townspeople, yet in this meeting, middle class residents felt that they were now the excluded: they were in a minority and one incident was shared where pro-Brexit supporters had harangued Remainers so that they felt almost 'spat upon'. These experiences were placed in the context of what they understood as the failure of Leavers to read the many commentaries around and therefore understand the facts. The facts were there for everyone to see, so why had they not read them? The blame was put fairly and squarely upon the Leavers, who were also considered to be xenophobic.

A small meeting held on the estate produced entirely different views. Residents tended to vote the same way as their neighbours. No mention was made of comments on social media, possibly because many residents lacked access to the internet. Their concerns were extremely clear: jobs and benefits. They wanted 'proper jobs', not zero hours contacts and discussed how difficult it had become to access even the most minimal jobs (filling out an 8 page on-line form for supermarket shelf-stacking) and how difficult the benefits process had become. Issues of race and ethnicity were not mentioned.

In a later follow-up meeting, bringing together a small group of estate residents with a small subgroup of the middle class Remainers, the issues became even starker. The estate residents explained their lack of access to computers, the poor or non-existent literacy skills of many residents, the feelings of lack of safety in areas of the town considered middle class (ie most places) and the inability of local men to get available labouring jobs on road building because they lacked the £150 needed to get a site certificate needed for such work. The issues of accusations of xenophobia and failure to read the debates disappeared from the middle class residents' dialogue. They became concerned to understand how to help and support the estate residents. Some ideas were put forward. The concerns of the estate residents shocked the middle class Remainers but they had been evident for many years and the estate was well-known for its very high scores on the index of multiple deprivation (Studdert and Walkerdine, 2016).

In the case of the Steeltown meetings, the situation was quite different. Steeltown is an ex-steel community in the Valleys (Walkerdine, 2010; Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012). Here the class divisions are far less evident and the historical legacy not only of the works but also of strong Welsh socialism is very evident.

While some residents expressed support for Remain, most had voted Leave and lively discussions and debates were the norm in the meetings. What everyone who attended agreed on was that no benefit had come to the town via the EU. While it was recognized that the EU had provided many things, they were not what the town needed and things had not got better, but worse. For example, while an extensive road-building scheme was improving road access, it did not go through or benefit the town. In the words of one resident, 'it is great if you want to drive from Birmingham to Swansea'. It was also many years too late as this was needed while there was still industry in the town and not now. A hospital had been built but this had less beds than the two that had been closed. A further education college had been built but this was used mostly by people from out of the area, a secondary school had been built but everyone thought it worse than the previous school and they were sending their children to other schools. And lastly, funding had paid for a huge metal statue of a Welsh Dragon in the main street. This served as a constant reminder of the ridiculous waste of money as this stood in the main street while many shops were closed and boarded up around it.

These issues and the lack of local industry and jobs were cited again and again. A considerable number of residents had a clear vision of a socialist position that opposed membership of the EU and wished to return to a pre-1975 position[2] and a reinvigorated industrial base in the town. They also denied that there was xenophobia and said that the Valleys had always been a place that had welcomed people from other areas and countries to work there. What was striking about this meeting was the strength of feeling: anger at the way in which the area had simply been ignored politically for many years and the sense that local people were the only ones really concerned with their interests, unlike governments of any

complexion, be they local, regional, national or European, where other agendas were in play.

As I have discussed above, the downgrading of the role of the economy within post 1968 social theory had an effect in what became known as the 'turn to discourse', with its own further effect upon qualitative social psychology (eg Potter and Wetherell (1987), with its concentration on naturally occurring discourse, The so-called 'turn to affect' (Clough and Halley, 2007; Gregg and Seigworth, 2010) was rightly critical of what the turn to discourse had become. With its insistence on the body, sensation, flows and forces, it ushered in important changes. However, while not wishing to deny the complexities of current forms of governance and the hugely entangled nature of the global capital, how do we engage with the entanglements of economy and affect presented to us starkly by the residents of the two towns discussed above?

Let us recap what those issues are.

For the market town meetings, there is no shortage of expressed affect. In particular, expressed anger, fear, sense of being made into a minority that can be 'spat upon' emerge alongside loss, disdain and accusations addressed towards the Leavers in their imagination.

By contrast, the estate residents stress voting in the same way as their neighbours. Is this contagion? They also are very distressed about benefits and the lack of jobs. Life is hard and they struggle to get by. There is little access to the internet with poor levels of literacy.

In Steeltown, anger is expressed with some force. The vitality (Massumi, Stern, 2010) of the argumentation is in stark contrast to the muted tones of the estate residents from the market town. The anger also opens a determination to do things differently.

If we wanted to, we could squeeze these issues into an account of contagion, but this would barely scratch the surface of the issues raised in all locations.

1. class differences in the town and how these appear as opposition and lack of knowledge

2. long-standing issues about local control and lack of attention, history of socialism and sense of loss and neglect and anger felt in Steeltown.

The contagion approach does nothing for these issues. Conversely, understanding them through the metaphor of contagion and focusing only on being taken in by social media belies the issues raised in the meetings and which build upon longstanding issues in both locations. Contagion implies bodies and minds taken over or swept along by the unstoppable force of contact, creating a mass or mob (Blackman and Walkerdine, 2002). As for Le Bon's original account, there is the understanding that the forces of darkness seize people and they are easily manipulable when in such a mass. Not only do the current approaches to the Leave vote reflect this view, pathologising working class voters outside metropolitan areas, this also further situates such people as chavs, malingerers and dole bludgers so current in understandings of the poor and the underclass (Jones, 2011).

But, perhaps most importantly, the capacity to feel, think and act together as a positive force is denied. The history that produces the vote for Leave in these locations is ignored or at best understood as an explanation for the unreason of

the vote. This explanation perhaps relates more to the middle class group in the market town. Their designation of Leave voters is not so far from this way of thinking about the issue. But for the estate residents and the Steeltown residents, there is a denial of a capacity to feel and act together.

Methodologically they reduce a complex situation to leave out the very issues that are salient for this discussion. I suggest that what these do is to reduce affect in such a way as to play into a liberal and neoliberal agenda that has atomized these people and made them into chavs, deviants, underclass, misfits. It is out of that this approach to Brexit as contagion is possible. This means, as I suggested earlier in the paper, that the most important public discussions about the consequences of the Leave majority are regressive in their implicit accusations that the problem is a social-media using working class, swayed by their emotions and resistant to important economic and political truths.

The middle class residents of the market town do almost stray into this territory in their comments. But as is begun to be recognized in the follow-up meeting, the issues for the estate residents are quite different. While the small project is only suggestive, we may note the residents report voting in line with their neighbours, not using social media, the low levels of literacy and the lack of computer and internet access, alongside concerns about work and money. Thus, I suggest, we have to find a way to understand the ways in which the middle class residents feel minoritised, embattled and project onto the estate residents and other leave voters the failure to engage adequately with the political and economic issues. Conversely, the estate residents have pressing economic issues, which are not understood by the middle class residents. In addition, economic issues play a huge part in the demands and disaffection of the Steeltown residents. How then do we

understand and research the place of affect within this situation? And more precisely, how to do explore it on the ground?

<u>Affecting and being affected</u>

In many ways, the dilemma I am setting out mirrors my own clumsy attempts over many years to find a way to engage with ways of engaging with the production of subjectivities understood as inseparable from the social and material. This concern has been more recently expressed by Stenner (2017). In particular, my concern here is the continued pathologisation of working class people in such a way that there is a denial of the complexity of the specificity of the conditions of existence that produce or subjectivities, producing, a complex dynamic in which one class judges another (Walkerdine, in press) and what we might call affective entanglement (Walkerdine, 2015) with many projections, rejections and otherings that take place.

In the late noughties I developed and began working with the concept of 'affective practices' (Walkerdine, 2010, Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012)[3]. In using that term, I sought to build on my earlier work which had signaled that subjectivity and subjectification could be understood through the production of what it means to be subjected and experience subjectivity within everyday practices. In this approach, I was understanding present practices as produced through a history in which the present of the situation after the steelworks closure could be understood as one in which the workers were caught up in the plays of global capital in terms of the worldwide demands for iron and steel, the production of the work force as 'labour' within that equation alongside many other aspects of what it meant to be a worker, a pauper, the role of charity and

workhouses, the role of owners and governments, alongside what we can call an affective history (Walkerdine, 2016) in which the honing of bodies for dangerous, heavy industrial work, the development of strong unions to fight for workers' rights, the ways of keeping a community intact, of helping one another, to mention just a few of the issues (see Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012 for more detail), become entangled so that to understand them fully, we would need to explore them together, not isolating any one of them. Residents recall that during the era of the works, a number of complex practices held them together. These included supporting each other's families in concrete ways so that the town became a large family in its own right, not speaking about pain outside of the family, because everyone had their own issues to deal with and sharing this was counter-productive to the provision of necessary support, not moving to work in other locations because people in those communities looked after their own. In Walkerdine and Jimenez (2012) we explore the affective character of these practices in some detail, but suffice it to add here that such practices were also reported as being supported by a number of temporal and spatial arrangements such as the disposition of houses, mostly terraced with low garden fences over which women could talk as they put their washing out on the same day each week, the bells and whistles of work time, the joint movement of bodies through the streets at this time, the sounds of the works themselves. When residents talked about these in 2007/8, they mourned their loss and some tried to keep collectivity alive in a number of ways. I should also add here that the histories of resistance implied by the strength of socialism and the trade union movement creating other practices of affecting and being affected, should not be denied, nor what it means for bodies to become 'Labour' or for life to be subject to the fluctuation of wages

and possibilities for earning a living produced by the constant movement in the price of iron and steel on the global market. I further developed this work in 2016 (Walkerdine, 2016) by adding the term 'affective history' to understand the embodied histories of bodies in location implied within this approach.

That the Steeltown residents in their public meeting talk of socialism, local industry, a return to pre 1975 and the sense that only they can look after their interests, is entirely explicable within the complex history I attempt to begin to set out within the publications mentioned above. But, without such a complex approach, one is in danger of pathologising what may appear to some middle class commentators as contagious and politically regressive sentiments. In that sense, I argue that we cannot understand the affective issues in Brexit outside of the complex history and embodied practices and concerns of the present, but that, if we evade any consideration of the affective character of collective and community practices in relation to the economy, we have understood little.

We know well that designations of pathology have been promoted as explanations of working class practices for some time (Ringrose and Walkerdine, 2008). I mean here regulation of, for example, child-rearing practices, food preferences, etc, so often caricatured in the media via programmes such as Little Britain (Jones, 2011; Walkerdine, 2017).

In relation to the market town, things are a little different. In our original research (Studdert and Walkerdine, 2016), the divisions within the town were made concrete by the removal of working class residents from the centre to the periphery of the town during slum clearance in the 1950s and 60s. The construction of a new council estate on the edge of town, while providing a better standard of housing, produced, according to those who remember moving, a sense

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of dislocation and loss of a context in which communal life on the street was part of an array of self help and local support. By the second decade of the 21st century, the estate had become understood by many non-estate residents in the town as a no-go area, where it was dangerous to walk and where drugs and crime were rife. The estate residents had little by way of amenities and had to walk into town to do shopping with well worn footpaths making a way through various parts of the town down the hill to the centre. The work situation had also changed with the loss of the railway industries and other light industry after 1945. Thus, the estate residents, while still attempting to support and help each other in many ways, did not have the history of Steeltown, were living in the middle of a sea of wealth and class divisions, in which the working class had been deliberately removed from the centre of the town, such that virtually no amenities in the centre now cater to working class and poor residents at all. While practices of mutual support remained, these were largely denigrated by practices of local governance. In Studdert and Walkerdine (2016), we cite volunteering, vigilantism and community support for families experiencing domestic violence. Thus, we should not be surprised that when it came to Brexit, middle class residents know almost nothing about the situation of the estate, that they project onto them a number of failures, especially in relation to reading about the issues involved with the vote and feeling minoritised, frightened and embattled. By contrast, we should also not be surprised that estate residents voted with their neighbours and that they 'kept themselves to themselves', given a history of Othering in which their attempts to make public their feelings, were delegitimized.

Thus, again, it is possible to understand the affective aspects of the different positions of estate and middle class residents via a complex history that has

already produced the entanglements of economy, governance and affect, and, in this case, stark class difference?

Methodological   Developments

I have sought to outline the ways in which affective practices and histories can function as tropes for qualitative research, but I would like ot take this further by acknowledging the significance of what it might mean to research 'with' and not on participants, in order to engage with the complex dynamics (in this case of class) that involve not only plays of disciplinary power but also entanglements, projections, defences. The shifts in engagement in the market town from the middle class feeling 'almost spat upon', through designations of ignorance and xenophobia, through to an attempt at least to hear the other, sit beside strong feelings of never having been listened to by any form of government, as witnessed in Steeltown. In Walkerdine 2016 I discussed modes of co-produced research as one way forward, with many caveats about the problems involved in that. Here, as a way of ending, I explore some approaches to working with and as working class participants as a way of taking seriously the notion of qualitative research as a form of working with.

If we understand affect as an aspect of historically and contextually specific relations, produced within those relations both collectively and communally as well as through individual bodies, how do we approach this methodologically? First of all, this means that we cannot simply approach affect as sensation without understanding the place of sensation within its context. For example, Kolehmainen and Kinnunen (2016) have striven for an affective history of touch.

In order to do this, they had to work with touch in its historical and biographical context in Finland, using a technique of asking people to write 'touch biographies'. They came rapidly to understand that these biographies only made sense within the affective history of Finland in which touch had a particular place within family and community practices during what Davoine and Gaudilliere (2004) categorise as large and small histories – that is a family or biographical history also contained within what they class as broader historical events. Geoff Bright has also utilised the concept of affective history within his work with de-industrialised communities, using a technique that he has called 'ghost labs' (Bright, 2016), in which people recount memories in way that presents a kind of deep mapping (Bodenhamer, Corrigan and Harris, 2015) of the ghostly hauntings (Gordon, 1997) of industry that patrol de-industrialised communities to bring an innovative frame to *affective* aspects of communal being-ness (Studdert and Walkerdine, 2016). Bright argues that 'Often manifest only through "barely visible or highly symbolized" means, a social haunting "...registers the harm inflicted or the loss sustained by a social violence done in the past" and produces a present imperative that "something different, different from before, needs to be done". As a response to that imperative, the Ghost Labs are designed to engineer a productive collision of arts/knowledge/activist approaches as a means of opening up how contested pasts, such as the 1984-85 UK miners' strike, remain present within communities as invisibilised but still generative assemblages of material, cultural and psycho-social materialities. Reviewing how comic strip art, community radio, collaborative creative writing, sonic art and community documentary theatre have contributed to the Ghost Labs' enactment of the kind of "participatory art-philosophy-political event design" principles recently been elaborated by

Massumi and Manning (Massumi, 2015)'. Bright argues that such practices allow for the possibilities of bodies acting differently together (Massumi, 2015, 106).

In a similar vein, we can think of Rhiannon White's 'We're still here' (http://commonwealththeatre.co.uk/shows/were-still-here/), a promenade play performed by a mixture of steelworkers and professional actors in a disused warehouse in Port Talbot, Wales, to present an affective history of local experiences of attempts to close the Port Talbot steelworks. The way that this piece is performed means that the audience is physically drawn into the stories and affective histories enacted. Or finally, artist Catherine Hoffmann's performance 'Free lunch with the Stench Wench (https://www.cathoffmann.com/free-lunch-with-the-stench-wench), Kolokili, (2018) writes that in this performance, the audience is drawn into abjection and self-abjection through poverty in order to shed the shame through sharing, and to create opportunities for a common social subjectivity that refuses to be silent about the struggle of its own creation and maintenance (Kolokili, 2018). Kolokili argues that Hoffman re-weaponises shame and throws it back out at the audience, playing with the issues at stake in affecting and being affected, namely the failure to make a connection, the fear of being misunderstood (Tyler, 2013) . The 're-weaponising invites or indeed demands the audience to feel shame at their own shaming of poverty as implied in their willingness to participate in a 'free lunch', as in the saying 'there is no such thing as a free lunch'.

Margaret Crean (2018) explores affective aspects of the emergence of what she calls care consciousness amongst Irish working class women by using three methods. Beginning with auto-ethnographic reflections on her own childhood poverty, she moved on to utilise unstructured interviews and then went on to the

development of two learning circles as a third method for data collection. 'These circles were about engaging the women in theory building by discussing the ideas and findings from the autoethnographic material and the interviews. The circles were about shared learning between the researcher and the participants. They represented an attempt to avoid colonising research, which is often a feature of research on class inequality' (Crean, 2018, p7)

I have been at pains to cite these examples of innovative methods because in their diverse ways, these very different approaches present us with affective encounters that work with affective histories and practices that do not utilise nor reduce to contagion. In each case, the affective encounter cannot be understood outside of its specific locational and historical formation. Moreover, each of these pieces of work demands that the reader or audience engages with the presented affects in a way that affects them, meaning that it is more difficult to stand outside of them as a rational subject condemning the other of unreason, while having to confront injustice. This could be understood using an analytic developed by Studdert (2006, 2016) and utilised in the research in the market town (Studdert and Walkerdine, 2016) in which meanings and affects in common can be understood as an aspect of communal being-ness in acting together which derives from shared meanings, affects and actions. We also emphasise an ethics of co-production in which working class participants work WITH researchers, thus attempting to transform the dynamic and relations of knowledge production.

For us, what was important about affects in common as a concept was the way in which it allowed meanings and affects associated with a location (in this case mostly the housing estate) to exist in their own right rather than understanding subjectification as a process entirely produced through state meanings or indeed

understanding those Other meanings as resistant. By emphasizing the primacy of the growth of the communal and understanding the State as one form of communality among others (Studdert, 2006) David Studdert turns Althusser's opposition to recognition on its head. For Althusser (1975), recognition could take place only through Ideological State Apparatuses and was thus always misrecognition, but if one understands the primacy of affects and meanings derived from communality and turned into actions in common or ways of doing things, this allows recognition another place. Recognition in both Steeltown and the market town was not only codified in meanings but the common actions of, for example, taking a particular path from the estate to the supermarket in the case of the estate or in communal practices in Steeltown, such as caring for each others' families or not talking about difficult issues outside the family. This move allows us to turn contagion and indeed misrecognition, on its head. While Althusser understood meanings as entirely produced in ideological state apparatuses, meaning that no meanings were possible outside those apparatuses, thus all recognition was misrecognition. No affective practices or histories that arise out of communal experience were possible within this framework. Similarly, the concept of contagion as employed in relation to Brexit does not allow for communally derived affective encounters and actions in common. Rather, it understands movement via a metaphor of the spread of disease. While it may well be the case that dis or un ease is expressed in one way or another by the residents of Steeltown and the market town, this is far from reducible to the spread of an epidemic. Just as Kolokili argued that the Stench Wench performance 'reweaponises' shame, throwing it back at the audience, what would it mean to reweaponise contagion as a concept, throwing it back at those who claim it as an

explanation? Would this not reveal what indeed is at stake within this explanation, namely the fear of being minoritised, perhaps in affective terms 'annihilated' (eg Bick, 1968, Walkerdine, 2010) by the other, producing a contagion that may threaten to sweep them away in its path.

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1 Althusser's move to ideology after the so-called failure of the workers so join the students in May 1968 may not seem entirely relevant to the present discussion, but we might also note that this was a previous moment at which the failure of the working class to deliver what was desired by the Left gave rise to new accounts, in this case, of ideology to explain this failure. Such debates were instrumental in my own intellectual formation, and led to the interest in subjectivity, structuralism and later post-structuralism, While Althusser (1975) made a huge move away from determination by the economy towards what he called Ideological State Apparatuses, he argued that such ISA's were productive of subject-positions, or that they interpellated subjects. To do this he referred to Lacanian psychoanalysis. I think two things are important for the argument here. One is the disputed sense that in order to explain a political defeat, access to ideology and psyches of the working class had were focused on, leading to a repudiation of material conditions of work and economic aspects. When Althusser argued for a determination in the last instance by the economy, but a last instance that never comes, he opened the way to many developments that focused on ideological and later discursive processes as well as psychic resources, and concern with the economy faded from much work within the humanities and social sciences. Notwithstanding the fact that the non-participation of the workers is much-debated (eg Duhan, 2013), it is the prefiguring of the turn to affect already within the turn to discourse that I wish to gesture towards. The other is that it is the control by the state (including the media) of identities and the meanings producing those identities shifted the entire

debate over working class political participation onto the constitution of subjectivities and away from any economic debate.

[2] ie Lexit, that is, the return to the position before the 1975 referendum about continued British membership of the European Economic Community, see http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36367246).

[3] I developed the term 'affective practice' to build upon the earlier term 'discursive practice' as articulated in Henriques et al, 1984. The way that I used it attempted to work with the specificity of practices that were shared by the members of Steeltown but had a strong affective resonance (Walkerdine, 2010; Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012). As Margie Wetherell (2012) acknowledges, she took this term from me and worked with it in a very different way. Thus, when I refer to this term within my own work, it refers to the approach that I articulated in the Steeltown work and not Wetherell, 2012.