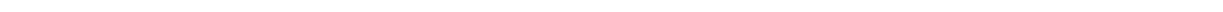# Ghosts on the Tyne: The Past as a Resource for Young Working-Class Men in the Post-Recessionary Present

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Abstract

This thesis explores how young working-class men living in a former shipbuilding community – Walker in the East End of Newcastle-upon-Tyne - think about the interlinked and overlapping eras of industrialism and deindustrialisation. This includes the ways in which they remember industrial work and its loss, the strategies that they use to frame and comment upon this shared past, and how they draw on and invoke this history to help them understand the present and imagine the future. The experiences of thirty participants are explored to understand how their engagement with the shared past impacts upon their everyday lives and lived experiences in the post-industrial city. I argue that the young men who I researched remain connected to the past in multifarious ways and that they invoke and mobilise this history to help them navigate a socio-economic landscape whose contours have been shaped by the 'Crisis Decades' of deindustrialisation and our present 'Age of Austerity'.

This thesis makes three significant contributions. The **first** is demonstrating that the industrial past remains an important aspect of the lives of my participants. This builds on existing research and argues that although some of the young men with whom I worked tended towards thinking about the past in atavistic and reactionary ways, they were just as capable of engaging with it in a critical and nuanced manner. The **second** contribution explores the myriad of ways in which the participants remain connected with their shared past. These links to the past include familial connections, sensory recollections that are part of their personal biographies and engagements with material cultures of the home. Together this has established ongoing connections with industrial work in a community in which it is difficult to draw a clear division between an industrial past and a post-industrial present. The **third** contribution reveals how deindustrialisation represents an equally important part of the lived experiences of participants. Of particular interest is that although the closures and redundancies of industrial decline continue to cast a long shadow in Walker, the young men with whom I worked engaged with in creative ways, drawing on the past to imagine themselves as more than passive and victimised cogs in the machinery of capital.

Acknowledgments

Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In *Requiem for a Nun* (1951: 7), William Faulkner – best known as a chronicler of a Deep South that was on the verge of disappearing – penned arguably his most famous line: 'the past is never dead, it's not even the past'. Faulkner is telling the reader that bygone eras and experiences continue to shape people and the world around them in profound and subtle ways. This thesis, explores how young working-class men living in a former shipbuilding community, Walker in the East End of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, think about the interlinked and overlapping eras of industrialism and deindustrialisation, the ways in which they remember industrial work and its loss, the strategies that they use to frame and comment upon this shared past, and how they draw-on and invoke this history to help them understand the present and imagine the future. The experiences of thirty participants will be explored and interrogated to understand how their engagements with the shared past impacts upon their everyday lives and lived experiences in the post-industrial city. I argue that the young men that I worked with remain connected to the past in multifarious ways, from familial connections in the form of grandfathers and fathers who worked in the shipyards through to personal memories of the dying days of shipbuilding. The ways in which they invoke and mobilise this history are shaped by their needs and circumstances in the present, which are defined by a precarity and uncertainty that accompanied deindustrialisation. The participants cast their present situation in contrast with the industrial era in which secure and well-remunerated work predominated and use the decline of the mid-twentieth-century economy and way of life as a resource to help them navigate and survive the deficit-cutting policies of the 'Age of Austerity' (Cameron, 2010). They also frequently talked about this shared history in complex and nuanced ways, showing a deep and personal understanding of both its positive and negative aspects.

This thesis engages with recent work that has emerged from the intersection of research into 'smokestack nostalgia' (Linkon, 2002; Linkon, 2013; Linkon, 2014; Linkon, 2018; Rhodes, 2013: Strangleman, 2001; Strangleman, 2013; Strangleman, 2016; Strangleman, 2017A; Strangleman, 2017B; Strangleman *et al*, 2013; Strangleman & Rhodes, 2014) and studies of class in the post-industrial present (Byrne, 1995; Evans & Tilley, 2017; Gest, 2016; Russo & Linkon, 2005; Todd, 2015).

These works argue that, while the children and grandchildren of coal miners, shipbuilders, and steel workers rarely have any direct experience of working in the kinds of industries that the identity and prosperity of their communities were built on and through, the norms, myths, stories, and values of this era continue to shape their lives in a multitude of ways. Of particular relevance is the longing for 'good' work', employment that is seen as having been readily-available, secure, well-remunerated, and skilled and physical, something that must be understood in relation to the difficult situations faced by many young working-class men contemporarily. Their present circumstances have in many ways been shaped by two broad and ongoing socio-economic processes, the first being the proliferation of insecure, low-skill, low-wage, and precarious work in the post-Fordist, post-industrial economy, the second being their further exclusion and marginalisation in line with the demands and requirements of the austerity politics that have predominated in Britain for the last decade.

This thesis seeks to contribute to this arena of debate in a number of ways, and it offers three key takeaways. **Firstly**, it shows that while the yearning for 'good' work is undoubtedly an important facet of 'smokestack nostalgia', it should not be reduced to this alone. The young working-class men that I interviewed frequently discussed their longing for institutions and spaces such as trade unions and working men's clubs that provided a socio-cultural context for communities such as Walker. Further, they were less prone to sanitising and simplifying their shared past than is suggested by those such as Orange (2014: 5) and it was not uncommon for them to talk about the dangerous and dirty nature of industrial work and the aggressively conformist and exclusionary nature of communities organised along Fordist lines to the rhythms of the factory, the shipyard, or the steel mill. **Secondly**, it will more comprehensively explore the ways in which people remain connected with their shared past. It will engage with the familial links, material cultures, and the built environment that the participants discussed, and it will seek to add a depth and complexity that is often missing by exploring things like matrilineal connections to and with industrial work and the importance of changing engagements with sites of industrial ruination over the life-course. Crucially, it will draw out the fact that industry is less firmly resigned to the realms of the distant past than is suggested in writings such as those of Dudley (1994). Deindustrialisation was not a discrete historical event but an ongoing and incomplete process that has been further complicated in recent years by a degree of reindustrialisation, meaning that industry

interacted and intersected with many personal biographies to this day. **Thirdly**, it will expand the idea of 'smokestack nostalgia' to include creative responses to deindustrialisation, the unexpectedly positive ways in which the participants engaged with the closures and redundancies that came with industrial decline to help them survive in a present whose socio-economic contours have been drastically redrawn by the demands and requirements of austerity politics.

1.2 Thesis Overview

This thesis aims to understand the ways in which young working-class men living in a decaying shipbuilding community remember industrial work and its loss, the strategies that they use to frame and comment upon this shared past, and how they draw on and invoke this history to understand the present and imagine the future. Themes of belonging, class, nostalgia, and survival are all interwoven with these ideas. In terms of structure, this begins with a literature review (Chapter Two) and a methodology (Chapter Three) which contextualise and frame the empirical findings and discussions (Chapters Four, Five, and Six) which follow. Before moving on to these chapters, however, I will offer an overview of what is contained within them.

1.2.1 Research Aims

To explore how my participants engaged and interacted with their shared past in the crisis-laden post-industrial present (Gest, 2016: 10), I have developed one broad and overarching aim that my research interrogates, that being:

> To explore the ways in which young, working-class men engage with, invoke, and (re)construct the eras of industrialism and industrial decline in a precarious and uncertain present.

This has been further divided into four more specific aims. The **first** of these aims is to understand how the ways that my participants talked and thought about their shared past relates to their present circumstances. In communities such as Walker, the last decade has been characterised by a dramatic redrawing of the contours of the socio-economic landscape in line with the demands and requirements of austerity politics. Hall (2013: 15) considers this one of the most far-reaching and transformative processes of the last fifty years, placing it alongside the deindustrialisation of the 'Crisis Decades' in terms of its consequences for working-class communities. Given

the profundity of its impact, I wanted to find out how the children and grandchildren of factory and shipyard workers were responding to it in light of their shared past and how their understanding of industrialism and industrial decline experiences in the present. While works on 'smokestack nostalgia' have explored the relationship between this tendency and the circumstances and requirements of working-class people contemporarily, there has been little consideration of how it is changing in light of one of the most definitive and profound socio-economic process of the last decade.

The **second** aim is to explore whether the participants go beyond the tendency to sanitise and simplify when it comes to discussions around their shared past. Orange (2014: 5) is among those who argues that, when it comes to nostalgia for the industrial past, people tend to ignore or overlook the painful complexities of the historical working-class experience and look back at it with 'rose-tinted spectacles', emphasising the secure and well-remunerated nature of the work while ignoring things like the damage that it inflicted on the health of people and the environment alike. The idea that the deep and intimate attachments that people such as my participants have with their shared past is not critical or complex is rarely challenged and denies their agency and selfhood. Even more sympathetic accounts from those such as Gest (2016) tend to focus on a straightforward longing for 'good' work. This is an understandable tendency and my participants did frequently discuss the desirability of work in the industrial economy, but it nonetheless neglects essential aspects of working-class life in the mid-twentieth-century such as spaces and institutions like working men's clubs (Todd, 2014) and unions (Paret, 2015) that this work supported, something that also recurred in the conversations that I had.

The **third** aim is to discover the means and mechanisms that keep my participants connected to and with the shared past. The emphasis here is on multiplicity and interconnectedness. Much of the work on 'smokestack nostalgia' tends to focus exclusively on patrimonial links. My work explores other avenues, including familial connections to the industrial past other than grandfathers and fathers, the importance of a built environment that is still scarred by the physical remains of deindustrialisation and which is interacted with throughout the life course, and the presence of heirlooms from the industrial era located in the home. Alongside this, it also problematises the neat bifurcation of life in working-class communities into an industrial past and a post-industrial present by recognising that deindustrialisation was less a discrete historical

event than it was a process that continued well into the lifetimes of the young men with whom I was working, who have their own personal memories of industrial life, even if it no longer resembled its mid-twentieth-century heyday. The emphasis is on how their memories are mediated in the realm of the sensual, with the sights, smells, and sounds of industry providing an anchor around which their recollections cohere.

The **fourth** aim is to establish how the deindustrialisation of the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) is understood by young working-class men in the present and how it is mobilised in line with their circumstances and needs. The closures and redundancies that accompanied industrial decline fundamentally reshaped communities such as Walker and continues to cast a long shadow in the lives of working-class men to this day. While work from Cowie and Heathcott (2004) has explored how it continues to resonate contemporarily, it remains under-studied in the context of 'smokestack nostalgia', and although Linkon, Rhodes, and Strangleman (Linkon, 2002; Linkon, 2013; Linkon, 2014; Linkon, 2018; Rhodes, 2013: Strangleman, 2001; Strangleman, 2013; Strangleman, 2016; Strangleman, 2017A; Strangleman, 2017B; Strangleman *et al*, 2013; Strangleman & Rhodes, 2014) acknowledge that deindustrialisation has a 'half-life', they have tended to overlook how it figures in the accounts of people who live in working-class communities and the ways in which they use it as a resource much like the industrial past. Taken together, these aims will help to answer the question as to how young, working-class men engage with, invoke, and (re)construct the interlinked and overlapping eras of industrialism and industrial decline at our post-recessionary, deficit-cutting conjuncture. Having considered them, the attention of this chapter will now shift to a brief overview of the context of this research, the historical conditions that form the backdrop of both my work and the lived experiences of my participants.

1.3 Situating the Thesis: Contextualising Walker

The research underpinning this thesis was conducted in Walker in the East End of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, a post-industrial city in the North East of England which lies at the centre of an inter-connected network of riverside towns and former pit villages. Like elsewhere in the region, the identity and prosperity of Walker [**Figure 1**] was built on and through heavy industry - in particular shipbuilding - which emerged on the banks of the Tyne in the early-1800s as companies specialising in the production of

iron and steam-powered ships were opened. The fortunes of the community rose and fell with those of the industrial economy, and throughout the first half of the twentieth-century companies such as the Swan Hunter Group benefitted from the booming demand for commercial and military vessels that came in the inter-war years and in the aftermath of the Second World War (Burton, 2013). Tens of thousands laboured in the shipyards and factories, and the money that this injected into the community meant that the relatively small ward could support bustling high streets and an oases of pubs and working men's clubs that offered both refreshment and a sense of community and sociability. Memoirs – while somewhat suspect as a historiographical resource if taken at face value - from locals like Herbert (2012) and Young (2019) suggest that the 'Golden Era (Hobsbawm, 1995: 257) of industrial capitalism was a time of relative prosperity and security for working-class communities in Newcastle.

This is not to say that the Walker of the mid-twentieth-century lacked for challenges. Despite enjoying high levels of employment, in-work poverty was significantly higher than in the rest of the city and the ward was home to problems such as low life expectancy and environmental degradation caused by the industrial work that its identity and prosperity was built on and through (Purdue, 2012: 200). Further, although the slum clearance programs of the post-war period had served to drastically improve the quality of the built environment, they had also permanently uprooted communities that had existed for generations, leading to significant social dislocation and displacement (Yelling, 2000). Not only this, but Walker – like many working-class communities that were organised along Fordist lines in which the economy and society alike were subordinated to the strict criteria of technical rationality (Burrows, Gilbert, & Pollert, 1992: 2) – was also highly conformist. As Gilbert (2008: 42) argues, while working-class communities in post-war Britain were characterised by a degree of collectivism and an enthusiasm for a traditional sort of left-wing Social-Democratic politics, they simultaneously demanded significant emotional repression from men, encouraged the exclusion and marginalisation of ethnic, racial, religious, and sexual minorities, and depended upon the exploitation of women at a time when other social and technological changes were making this condition seem anachronistic. Despite the challenges that
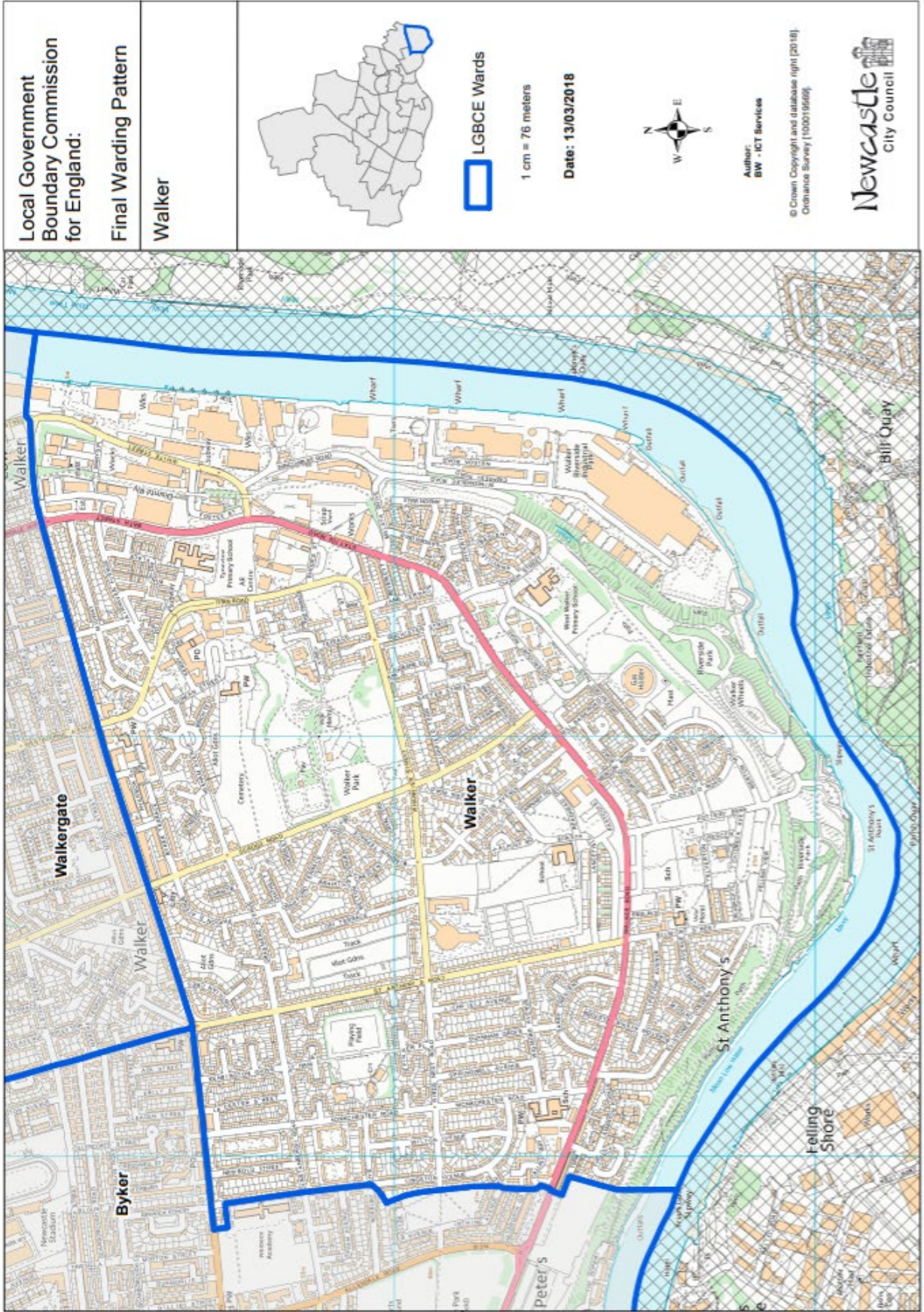
Figure 1 – Map of Walker (Source: newcastle.gov.uk)

Walker faced in the mid-twentieth-century, the boom that was taking place across the mature capitalist world meant that living standards and material wealth were slowly improving when compared with the pre-war years.

This picture of gradually improving socio-economic conditions started to change in the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) which began in the mid-1970s and extended in to the early-1990s. This period saw the industrial capacity and workforce of Britain enter an extended and seemingly irreversible decline as a structural economic crisis combined with a reconfiguration of the political landscape as it shifted away from the post-war consensus and towards a more market-mediated and profit-oriented way of governing and living. As Hudson (1986: 10) wrote at the time, it transformed places like Walker into 'industrial wastelands', an argument he built on twenty-years later in claiming that this 'once booming core has become a near-bust periphery that is blighted by widespread poverty and inequality and lies on the outer-edges of the country and the margins of the global economy' (Hudson, 2005: 582). As well as eroding the economic base of Walker, removing spending power from the community, and exacerbating the socio-economic problems from which it already suffered, the 'Crisis Decades' also left the community marked by the physical scars of deindustrialisation. The sites of industry that once loomed over the East End and signalled its dynamism and prosperity started to decay, housing was abandoned as those who could afford to fled to the higher-status suburbs, and the pubs, working men's clubs, and shops that had relied upon people getting their pay packet at the end of the week closed down one-by-one. The decline of shipbuilding went hand-in-hand with an inexorable rise in interlinked and overlapping issues like substance abuse, familial breakdown, and petty crime (Lever, 1991: 985).

Although the closure of the shipyards provoked some resistance in Walker - marches attended by people from across the city and celebrity-backed campaigns to save specific companies at the more organised end of the spectrum and acts of vandalism and violence at the other – Phillips (2008) and Strath (1987) argue that the greatest irony of deindustrialisation was that it rapidly engendered acquiescence in those communities that were at its sharp-end. Martin, Sunley, and Willis (1994: 459) reason that this was because of the drawn-out nature of the closures and redundancies. Although deindustrialisation reached a crescendo between 1979 and 1982 (Comfort, 2012), it was less a discrete historical event than it was a gradual process that

extended in to the 2000s. This was as true in Walker as it was elsewhere, and it was only a decade ago that Swan Hunters – the last shipyard on the Tyne – was closed. It staggered on into the twenty-first-century with a much reduced staff and thanks to government contracts for naval vessels, Mah (2012: 69) argues that its lingering presence helped to keep a sense of socio-economic and psychological rupture with the industrial period at bay. Some of the impacts of industrial decline in Walker were alleviated by the opening of branch plants and call centres in the 1980s and the relocation of back office work by large companies to the city in the 1990s, but these jobs were for the most part relatively low-skill, low-wage, and insecure (Phelps, 1993). Indeed, Jessop (2015: 21) argues that the viability of this way of alleviating the damage caused by deindustrialisation was unsustainable, being underpinned by tax cuts and workfare policies and leading to the inadvertent creation of a sort of 'shadow welfare state' in left-behind places. This work also stood in stark contrast with what it was replacing. The muscular labour and physical craftsmanship that predominated in the factories and shipyards that once lined the banks of the Tyne was replaced by a valorisation of 'soft skills', 'emotional intelligence', and 'social attributes such as deference, politeness, cleanliness, and bodily presentation' (McDowell, 2000: 389).

The redevelopment of the city centre and the adjacent riverside in the early-twenty-first-century helped Newcastle to shake off its image as a bleak and monochromatic outpost, but it also came to resemble the post-industrial city written about by Zukin (1991), embodying the contradictions of transition in its sharply divided landscapes of consumption and devastation. Its more peripheral areas were home to considerable areas of dereliction and ruination, and communities that were built on and through the illusory permanence of industry remained trapped in the spatio-temporal moment between industrialism and post-industrialism. Walker was one such place, and although there were attempts to revive its fortunes – most notably the 'Going for Growth' programme in the early New Labour years, which sought to rehabilitate the low-income, low-demand housing in the area for the benefit of a more affluent population (Cameron, 2003) – these were largely unsuccessful and it continued to suffer from high levels of unemployment and employment in insecure, poorly paid, and temporary work, low educational attainment among its younger residents, and severe problems with alcohol and drug abuse across its population. Although the Tyne has started to come back to life in the last decade or so as companies specialising in

maintaining and producing materials for offshore energy projects have emerged, few people who live in the East End communities that were built around the shipyards and factories that once lined its banks have the educational credentials to work in places like Shepherd Offshore. What this means in practice is that Walker has benefitted relatively little from this resurgence of industry that is going on right on its doorstep, on the sites of the shipyards that its identity and prosperity were built on and through.

Walker has also suffered more than most places from the austerity politics that have come to define the socio-economic landscape Britain since the Financial Crisis in 2008 and the election of first Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2010. Blyth (2015: 16) has shown that the 'dangerous idea' of austerity has its roots in liberal economic thinking and argues that, for this reason, it should come as little surprise that in our neoliberal age it emerged as the favoured way of dealing with the fallout of the Great Recession. By pedalling the common-sense idea of the economy-as-household, former Chancellor George Osborne was able to affect what Hall (2013: 15) considers one of the most radical, far-reaching, and irreversible programmes since the Second World War. Policies that had been pioneered under the Thatcher government and which had been somewhat mitigated by the expansionary fiscal policy of the Blair and Brown years re-emerged. Deep spending cuts, changes to benefits to make them less generous, more conditional, and increasingly punitive, and comparatively small alterations in taxation were the order of the day, and as Berry (2016) has shown there was a distinctive geography to this agenda that has seen the North, deprived areas, and Labour councils disproportionately impacted. Walker falls into all three of these categories, and the last decade has seen the deepening and exacerbation of the socio-economic problems that it has wrestled with since the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403). This is the context that forms the backdrop to the lived experiences of the young working-class men with which I was working, and before offering a brief summary of this thesis, the attention of this chapter will shift to reflect on the reasons that I chose this group to work with.

1.4 Young Working-Class Men as Research Subjects

I chose to work with young working-class men because I saw them as being most likely to identify as what Byrne (1995: 196) calls members of the 'dispossessed working-class'. According to Ford and Goodwin (2014: 18), this describes those who

were denied an inheritance of well-remunerated, secure, and semi-skilled employment that had been enjoyed by previous generations, with Gest (2018: 3) adding that such people have found it most difficult to adjust to the demands and requirements of the post-industrial service economy. There are three significant markers of identity that intersect with the 'working-classness' of my participants.

The **first** of these was the fact that my participants were men. The longing that they expressed for 'good' work are related in large part to concerns and queries about what it means to be a working-class man both historically and contemporarily. Roberts (2013: 5) working-class masculinity continues to be understood in large part in relation to industrial work, in the undertaking of gainful employment that enables those who commit themselves to it to conform to the male breadwinner ideal and provide for themselves and their families and which involves bodily and corporeal labour and technical prowess and skill. Although it was dirty and dangerous, work in coal mines, shipyards, and steel mills provided those with few academic credentials and limited cultural capital with independence, economic and symbolic power, and a degree of respectability and status. 'Smokestack nostalgia' must be understood in light of this.

The **second** of these was the fact that my participants were white. According to those such as Gest (2016; 2018) the reorientation of Western countries toward a more service-oriented, high-technology, globalised economy has been most difficult for white, working-class men. The reason for this is not that they have been most negatively impacted upon - Linkon and Russo (2003) suggest that African American suffered more than their white counterparts due to deindustrialisation, with Karla (2000) making similar arguments with regards to South Asian communities in the Midlands - but because whiteness embodies a settled expectation of perpetually privileged economic, political, and social circumstances (Baccini & Weymouth, 2021). Guisinger (2017: 10) suggests that white working-class men were the historically dominant group in the racial and gender hierarchies of Western nations, and this feeds into their yearning for the 'good old days'.

The third of these was the fact that all my participants were young. According to Sanderson (2020: 10), the move from an industrial to a post-industrial this had particular implications for young men from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who, lagging behind in educational attainment and having limited access to employment

other than that which is precarious and uncertain, have found it increasingly difficult to establish meaningful and secure careers, move out of parental homes, or start families of their own. Where once young working-class men such as those with whom I worked were 'learning to labour' (Willis, 1977), contemporarily it is more likely that they are 'yearning to labour' (Nixon, 2018) or 'learning to serve' (McDowell, 2000). The increasingly complex, protracted, and non-linear transitions that they now have to make to adulthood stand in stark contrast to the more straightforward one from the classroom to the workplace, and so like their masculinity and whiteness, their age and what it means for realising the transition to adulthood are also an important component of 'smokestack nostalgia'.

Young working-class men were also desirable candidates for researching nostalgia for the industrial past as they are part of what Hirsch (2012: 3) calls a 'hinge generation', those who have limited direct experience of a past event or way of life but who remain connected to and with it in multifarious and overlapping ways. A list of the young men that I worked with and some notable aspects of their personal biographies can be seen in **Appendix A**. In the context of present-day Walker, this meant that while they would have had limited exposure to the socio-economic world of twentieth-century industrial urbanism, they would have nonetheless grown up in the long shadow that it casts as they struggled to articulate what it meant to be a working-class man in a time and place where the institutions and practices that underpinned it had for the most part ceased to exist. While they would not have laboured in the factories and shipyards that once lined the banks of the River Tyne, they would have family members who had done so, and they themselves would have been raised hearing stories about and according to the values of industry, even as its central tenets were being eroded and undermined. There was, of course, no guarantee that the participants would have these kinds of connections with the industrial past, but the recent history of their community and their working-class upbringings meant that they were likely to have at least been exposed to it in some form. As Gest (2016: 31) suggests, such people make ideal participants when it comes to researching a longing for the industrial past in 'post-traumatic communities' in the 'crisis-laden present'.

In addition to identifying young working-class men as ideal participants because of their proximity to the industrial past and the challenges that this dispossession imposes on them in the present, my research was inspired and underpinned by a belief

that such people are some of the most fundamentally and profoundly excluded in contemporary British society. This is evident in the cultural, economic, political, and social life of the country (Beider, 2015). If the twentieth-century saw the rise of the working-class – from the transition of union leaders into 'cloth-cap MPs' in the 1920s to the 'angry young men' who conquered the arts and literature in the 1950s to the 'working-class heroes' who dominated popular culture from the 1970s – then the twenty-first century has been characterised by its increasing marginalisation. Evans and Tilley (2017) are among those who have shown that working-class men in particular find themselves increasingly locked out of both the levers of power and day-to-day life in modern-day Britain. This neglect also extends to academia, with Vanneman (2017: 1) arguing that where once questions of class predominated, there is now a paucity of both working-class academics and research about and with working-class people. Some of the most powerful inditements of this situation come in the form of blog posts from working-class academics such as Byrne (2015), who in the less formalised and regulated space of the online world discuss the challenges that they have faced in 'coming out' as working-class' and the ways in which this can manifest itself in a more generalised neglect when it comes to questions of class.

This is not to suggest that working-class issues have been entirely neglected by academics or relegated to the margins of their fields. The existence of the Working-Class Studies Association and the field of New Working-Class studies - to name but two high-profile examples - are a testament to the fact that there is still robust debate and discussion in these areas. Rather, it merely represents an acknowledgment that from the 1990s onwards, questions of gender, ethnicity, race, and sexuality that had undeniably been ignored and overlooked began to occupy centre stage somewhat more. While this represented a long overdue reckoning with other critical aspects of culture and identity that had been previously neglected, it also had the second-order effect of displacing the focus on class that had characterised research in much of the Western world in the wake of the Radical Turn in the 1960s. It is worth noting that this seems to be starting to change, although it is still too early to say whether this will be far-reaching or permanent. In the aftermath of recent political earthquakes such as the vote to leave the European Union and the election of Donald Trump, a body of work has started to emerge from Gest (2016; 2018) Goodhart (2017), Vance (2017), and Hochschild (2018) that explores these events that took academics, the

commentariat, and policy makers alike by surprise. It was with this in mind that I focussed on young working-class men, to join this attempt to amplify the voices of a group that is marginalised and excluded in a multitude of ways both within academia and more broadly within British society.

1.5 Summary of Chapters

Chapter Two contextualises this research and thesis within the existing literature. It begins by exploring the socio-political conditions that birthed a 'memory boom' within academia in the 1980s before moving on to how this has more recently manifest itself in studies of 'smokestack nostalgia'. Having done this, it will move on to considering how such work can be enriched by engaging with writings on working-class masculinities and the ways in which the myths, norms, stories, and values of the shared past are communicated and disseminated between generations, with a particular focus on familial links and the ways in which people in the present engage with and interact with material cultures in the home and the built environment of the post-industrial city. By way of a conclusion, it will address some of the shortcomings of this corpus and point to gaps in the literature which this research seeks to fill.

Chapter Three outlines the methodological approach of this research. It takes something of a chronological approach to explaining the ways in which data was collected, transcribed, codified, and analysed, beginning with questions of 'where' the study was undertaken and 'who' was involved before moving on to how the field was accessed, and the strategies that were deployed in order to recruit 'hard-to-reach' young men from an excluded and marginalised neighbourhood. Its attention will then shift to the data collection process itself, an exploration of the one-to-one, semi-structured interviews that I made use of and the ways in which the material produced in these counters was dealt with. Finally, it will take a look at broader questions of positionality and reflect upon ethical dilemmas and issues that were faced in the field.

 Chapter Four is the first of three empirical chapters and explores 'smokestack nostalgia' in the lives of my participants. It begins by confirming that which is put forward in much of the literature – that there is a yearning among young working-class men in 'left behind communities' for 'good' work, employment that is readily-available, secure, well-remunerated, and skilled and physical and that this must be understood in light of the fact that for such people the present has little to offer and the future is

non-negotiable – before seeking to add complexity and nuance to this narrative. It will be argued and demonstrated that deep and intimate attachments to the industrial past are not necessarily and by definition sanitising and simplifying and that, in fact, the participants had complex and multi-faceted senses of longing and yearning. This could be seen in discussions I had with them around, firstly, the dangerous and dirty nature of industrial work, secondly, their nostalgia for institutions and spaces such as trade unions and working men's clubs and, thirdly, their awareness that Fordist society was aggressively conformist and exclusionary.

Chapter Five is the second of three empirical chapters and seeks to understand some of the main means and mechanisms by which the participants remain connected to and with the shared industrial past. It will begin with familial connections and interactions with material cultures in the home and the built environment of the post-industrial city – although it will seek to add depth and complexity by introducing overlooked things like the importance of matrilineal connections and the varying ways in which people engage and interact with sites of industrial ruination over their life courses – before it disrupts the neat bifurcation of the recent past into an industrial past and a post-industrial present on which many studies misguidedly rely. It will argue that, as deindustrialisation is an incomplete and ongoing process that has been further complicated by the opening of branch plants in the 1980s and 1990s and reindustrialisation in the 2000s, there has never been a neat psychological and socio-economic break with it and that for this reason industry in fact interacts and intersects with the lives of people like my participants in multifarious ways, from childhood memories of the waning days of 'industry proper' to contemporary engagements with it in the form of personal or familial employment.

Chapter Six is the final empirical chapter and seeks to develop the concept of 'smokestack nostalgia' by showing that the participants make reference to the closures and redundancies of the 'Crisis Decades' in much the same way that they do the 'good' work of the 'Golden Era' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 257). It is argued that the deindustrialisation of the 1980s represents just as much of a Polanyian 'Great Transformation' as the industrialisation of the late-nineteenth-century and that for this reason it is unsurprising that it features heavily in their accounts. It goes on to suggest, however, that their ability to think of and through it in something more than negative and reactionary terms is surprising given the devastation that it visited upon their

community. This must be understood in light of their present circumstances, with this history of exclusion and marginalisation providing them with a stock of resilience and toughness that helps them to navigate a socio-economic landscape whose contours have been drastically reconfigured by the demands of austerity politics in our post-recessionary, deficit-cutting conjuncture. By way of conclusion, it emphasises that this 'deindustrial heritage' does not represent the basis for a new emancipatory politics as some have argued and hoped, but rather constitutes one survival mechanism that exists alongside more 'practical' ones such as 'making do and mending' or resorting to illicit activities to help make ends meet.

Chapter Two: 'Smokestack Nostalgia' and Markers of Identity: A Review of the Existing Literature

2.1 Introduction

The phrase 'smokestack nostalgia' refers to the lament that is felt in working-class communities that have seen the shuttering of their blast furnaces, coke ovens, shipyards, and steel mills (Rudacille, 2010: 5) and the yearning that residents feel for a vanished or vanishing industrial economy and society that has been in decline due to globalisation, shifts in the political terrain, the transition to a service-based economy, and technological changes (Smith & Campbell, 2017: 312). This chapter interrogates this phenomenon and the body of research that it has given rise to. The purpose is to explore how the kind of deep and intimate attachments that the young working-class men with whom I worked are understood in the existing literature, drawing-out how the shared past is evoked and understood in the post-industrial present. My research and the literature that it engages with emerge in large part from the broader field of 'memory studies', and an exploration of this arena of debate offers a useful starting point for this chapter.

In recent years, memory studies – a field which incorporates an array of work concerning things like commemoration, memorialisation, myth-making, nostalgia, and remembrance - has blossomed amidst a dialogue that has been interdisciplinary in its remit and international in its purview. Indeed, its growth has prompted Haniffa (2019: 337) to argue that it now constitutes a major field of scholarly inquiry. Following the 'boom' of the 1980s and 1990s, the last decade or so have been characterised by the institutionalisation and systematisation of a field once described by Olick and Robbins (1998: 105) as being 'non-paradigmatic and centreless'. The proliferation of dedicated journals and book series is a testament to this, the most prominent of the former being *Memory Studies* (launched in 2008) and the latter *Studies in Memory* (Routledge). Concomitant with this formalisation has been synthetisation, with the emergence of a number of anthologies – *Theories of Memory: A Reader* (Rossington & Whitehead, 2007) and *The Collective Memory Reader* (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Levy, 2011) – and collectively authored handbooks – *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* (Erll & Nunning, 2010) and *Memory: Histories, Theories, and Debates* (Radstone & Schwars, 2010) – attempting to carve out a distinctive identity for this field that increasingly possesses all the trappings of a mature scholarly enterprise. All of this means that reviewing the existing literature is more manageable today than even a decade ago.

With this in mind, this chapter will begin by exploring the political and social conditions that produced the 'memory boom' that has taken place both within academia and beyond its confines in the last thirty-years. Having done this, it will move on to consider those aspects of the field of memory studies that are of most relevance to the ongoing connections that young, working-class men living in a decaying shipbuilding community have with their shared past – work related to 'smokestack nostalgia' along with that which my research has shown enriches our understanding of this phenomenon. To this end, the remainder of this chapter will be organised around three broad and overlapping themes. The **first** of these themes is 'smokestack nostalgia' itself, the idea that the deindustrialisation that afflicted much of the mature capitalist world in the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) that began in the 1970s created the conditions a deep and profound sense of loss among members of the 'dispossessed working-class' (Byrne, 1995: 196) who continued to reside in communities that had been built on and through the illusory permanence of the coal mine, the shipyard, or the steel works. This **second** of these themes concerns identity - what it means to be a young, white, working-class man and how these markers of identity intersect and overlap. Crucially, this section will explore how this work dovetails with and can enrich our understanding of 'smokestack nostalgia', something that has been under-researched and underappreciated. The **third** of these themes is the mechanisms by and through which people remain connected to their shared past, whether that be familial links, exposure to the material cultures and built environment of a bygone era, or lived links that are part of their personal biographies. Throughout this chapter, references to the findings of my research will be made so as to embed the upcoming discussion in a consideration and interrogation of the existing literature. This will allow for the contributions to be drawn-out and discussed.

2.2 The 'Memory Boom'

Yates (1966: 10) argues that an intellectual appreciation of and curiosity about memory has waxed and waned throughout human history and, as is customary in Western thought, traces a philosophical interest in it back to Classical Antiquity, specifically to the era of the pre-Socratic fragments. Kuijpers *et al* (2013: 73), for their part, point to the somewhat more historically recent onset of modernity – a process that was both a driver and product of the 'discovery' of the self, the rise of the print media, the emergence of industrial capitalism, and the advent of the post-Westphalian

nation-state – as the period in which memory emerged as a distinct area of academic expertise and interest. It is true that the late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century in particular saw the emergence of a number of high-profile memoriologist philosophers and proto-psychological thinkers. This included Freud, who conceived of memory as something personal and subjective, and Halbwachs, who recast it as something with a socio-cultural component. For the purposes of this thesis, however, it makes more sense to turn to the work that emerged from the 'memory boom' of the 1980s as a starting point, as it was from this intellectual ferment that much of the work that my research seeks to engage with and contribute towards emerged. Erll (2011: 14) argues that it was the work of Yerushlami (1982) and Nora (1989) that pushed a concern with memory into the forefront of the psyche of many social scientists. The former was a slim volume that ruminated on why the Jewish people all but gave up on keeping track of history for the thousand years in which they were scattered into diaspora and why their relationship with it remains fraught to this day. The latter was a vast multi-volume work which enumerated on the places and objects in which the national memory of the people of France makes itself manifest.

The surging scholarly interest that followed in the wake of these landmark works cannot be understood exclusively in relation to the impact that they had within the academy, although this was certainly significant. As Simine (2013: 16) argues, it was in large part the product of and a response to a more generalised societal 'memory boom' that was taking place at the time. This arose from a bewildering array of changes that were occurring internationally and which were shaking many of the perceived certainties that had characterised life in the Western world in particular for much of the twentieth-century. These included the gradual but inevitable and inexorable disappearance of a generation that had witnessed the horrors of the Holocaust first-hand (Jacobs, 2010); the ideological bankruptcy and eventual collapse of the future-oriented regimes of historicity of the Cold War and an accompanying sense that a Fukuyaman 'End of History' was being witnessed (Hartog, 2015); the dislocating and disorienting effects of accelerating and intensifying processes of globalisation (Anheier & Isar, 2011); and drastic changes in both the role of the media and the technologies through which it was consumed and disseminated (Luhmann, 2000). As Said (2000: 176) surmises, the concern with memory among both academics and society at large that began to emerge in the 1980s was a specifically

freighted late-twentieth-century problem that arose at a time of bewildering change and unimaginably large and diffuse societies, seemingly corroborating the claim of Megill (1998: 37) that when life is complex and problematised, memory is valorised as a means of constituting and stabilising the present.

Blight (2009), Kammen (1995), and Winter (2007) are among those who have exhaustively investigated the 'memory boom' in a series of articles of the sort that Kansteiner (2002) argues confirms the intellectual, political, and social relevance of memory studies as a field. It is difficult to fully communicate the breadth and vibrancy of the writings that have emerged from this field in the last thirty-years. That said, it is possible to draw-out and categorise the main areas of study. Writing as memory studies was undergoing its systematisation and institutionalisation, Olick and Robbins (1998: 106) identified these as being research into diasporic communities in their host countries, the encounters of ethnic, political, or religious minorities with state-sponsored violence, the commemoration of the human tragedies of the twentieth-century, the lives of excluded, marginalised, and peripheralised out-groups, and the experiences of specific socio-cultural communities in societies undergoing rapid and dislocating change. It is this final area of study that research into working-class 'smokestack nostalgia' falls. Erll (2011: 18) argues that despite the multiplicity of work leading to an obfuscating heterogeneity in the terminology, there are a handful of generally agreed-upon characteristics about memory. The first of these is that it is in a large part a (re)construction; the second is that it is inextricably connected to the circumstances and demands of people in present; and the third is that it relies upon materialisation and sociability in order to be disseminated and propagated inter-generationally. According to this understanding, memories are not objective images of a past reality but are subjective, selective, and shaped by the needs and interests of the present. Having offered some contextualisation as to how memory studies came to be an established field, the attention of this chapter will now shift to explore how this trend has made itself manifest in ways that are of relevance to my research into how young working-class men engage with and utilise the shared past.

2.3 Smokestack Nostalgia: An Overview

One of the other transformations in the late-twentieth-century that led to the societal 'memory boom' that provoked a surging academic interest was the deindustrialisation of the advanced economies. As discussed in the introduction, in

the mid-1970s to the early-1990s a number of economic, political, and social trends combined and reinforced one another to lay waste to the industrial bases and workforces across the mature capitalist world. The scale and magnitude of this change – combined with the fact that, in many cases, nothing filled the void that was left behind in communities that had been built on and through the illusory permanence of industry– created the conditions on the ground for an upsurge of 'smokestack nostalgia' among not just the 'dispossessed working-class' (Byrne, 1995: 196) who had lost an entire way of life, but also among the public more broadly. It is the first of these constituencies that is of interest to this chapter.

The concept of 'smokestack nostalgia' – the origins of which can be traced back to the attempt of Cowie and Heathcott (2004: 1) to better understand the long-term ramifications of deindustrialisation, which had generally been considered a discrete historical event rather than an incomplete and ongoing process – goes by a number of other names. These include 'flat-cap nostalgia' (Loveday, 2014) and 'industrial longing' (Majumder, 2018). It is, however, the memorable original phrase that has captured the imagination of those seeking to explore the lament that is felt in working-class communities that have seen the shuttering of their blast furnaces, coke ovens, shipyards, and steel mills (Rudacille, 2010: 5) and the yearning that residents of such places feel for a vanished or vanishing industrial economy and society that has been in inexorable decline thanks to globalisation, shifts in the political terrain, the transition to a service-based economy, and technological changes (Smith & Campbell, 2017: 312). It is in some ways a paradoxical phenomenon. As Lever (1991: 985) noted towards the end of the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403), the industries that the identity and prosperity of communities – in some cases entire villages, towns, or cities – had been built around over the course of the nineteenth-century and twentieth-century caused massive environmental damage and had devastating effects on the health of those who laboured in them, with people working gruelling shifts in dangerous jobs and living in neighbourhoods hemmed in by companies that pumped effluent into rivers and polluted the air. Exploring the reasons why many people long for and look back to this period has been a key preoccupation of those who research 'smokestack nostalgia'.

2.3.1 Working-Class Smokestack Nostalgia

Working-class 'smokestack nostalgia' has been researched extensively by Cowie and Heathcott (2003), Linkon (2002; 2018), Mah (2009; 2010; 2012), Rhodes (2013), Strangleman (2007; 2013; 2017), Strangleman and Rhodes (2014), and Strangleman, Rhodes and Linkon (2013). These authors have sought to understand how people who still live in communities that were built on and through industrial work remember it and its loss, the strategies that they use to frame and comment upon this past, and how they draw-on and invoke this history to understand the present and imagine the future. These questions have been the subject of numerous edited collections – *Beyond the Ruins* (Cowie & Heathcott, 2003) – special journal issues – *International Labour and Working-Class History: Deindustrialisation, Class, and Memory* (2013) – and academic conferences – *Smokestack Nostalgia: Understanding Work Heritage in an Age of Austerity* (2014). Strangleman (2017: 468) argues that these contributions all emerge from a shared understanding that the deindustrialisation of the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) was not a discrete historical event captured by the moment at which a line stopped or the gates of a factory closed, as early theorists like Bluestone and Harrison (1982) thought. Rather, it was more geographically diverse, historically deep, politically perplexing, and socially complicated than it had at first appeared. This thesis seeks to contribute to the body of work discussed in the previous section that is seeking to do just that.

It is because of the processual nature of deindustrialisation – along with its magnitude and scale - that industry and its decline continue to be wrestled with. They have, as Linkon (2018: 2) memorably describes it, a 'half-life' and continue to resonate and impact on those who continue to live amidst the material remains of deindustrialisation and negotiate its socio-economic legacies. This kind of working-class 'smokestack nostalgia' manifests itself in a number of ways. Before turning to consider them, it is worth reiterating the fact that in order to understand these kinds of deep and intimate attachments to the past, the circumstances and situations of people in the present must be reckoned with. As Erll (2011: 10) has argued, 'memory work' is in large part a (re)construction and is inextricably connected with contemporary concerns, demands, and needs. What this means with regards to smokestack nostalgia – as has been argued by Loveday (2014) – is that it tells us as much about working-class communities at our post-recessionary, deficit-cutting conjuncture as it does historically.

The predominant way in which 'smokestack nostalgia' manifests itself in working-class communities is in the longing for 'good' work – defined as being, firstly, readily available and secure, secondly, involving significant enough material rewards to enable personal and familial financial stability, and thirdly, involving physicality and skill (Nelson & Smith, 1999). Each of these facets will be considered in turn. Beginning with the availability and security of work, Clarke (2015: 108) argues that there is a perception that the industrial era was a time when young men with few educational credentials could easily find employment in the Fordist industries that the identity and prosperity of communities across the mature capitalist world were built on and through. Strangleman (2007; 2013; 2017) has written extensively about the longing for readily available work, focussing in particular on those who worked the railways and in dockyards, places that he argues offered material rewards along with security and stability. This is an idea that recurs in the writings of Gorz (1999) on 'sustainability' and 'permanence', the work of Loveday (2014) on 'predictability', and the emphasis of Wright (2017) on 'certainty'. What unites this work is a recognition that, true or not, there is a sense in working-class communities that industrial work offered a security and stability that came with its availability that is unimaginable contemporarily. This is a crucial point. As Standing (2014; 2016) argues, this is a feeling that must be understood in relative terms, in light of the fact that work is increasingly hard to come by and that where it is available it is increasingly insecure and precarious, made up of part-time, temporary, and zero-hours contracts. This work stands in stark contrast to its Fordist predecessor, characterised as it is by instability, volatility, flexibility, ephemerality, insubstantiality, and unavailability (Fine *et al*, 1997).

The second strand of the longing for 'good work' that constitutes an important part of working-class 'smokestack nostalgia' revolves around employment that was well-remunerated and offered material rewards that enabled personal and familial autonomy and security. While it is important not to exaggerate the extent to which this was true and bear in mind that it was more applicable to the 'aristocracy of labour' than to those unskilled workers who toiled in the factories, mines, and shipyards (Foster, 2010: 245), Cowie and Heathcott (2003: 5) note that 'mobilised into the service of value-added, durable goods production, industrial capital provided the basis for a limited but nevertheless expanding prosperity for workers' as the rising tide of the anonymously buoyant mid-twentieth-century economy lifting all boats (Carnevali &

Strange, 2007). The idea that members of the 'dispossessed working-class' (Byrne, 1995: 196) look back on this 'Golden Era' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 257) as one defined by prosperity is a common one. Gaston and Hillhorst (2018), for example, point to it as a time of prosperity and high living-standards that continues to resonate in the present, something also argued by Brooke (2001: 773) who points to the 1950s as the beginning of a period of improving material conditions that is still looked back on with a combination of fondness and jealousy. Beider (2015), Collini (2019), Gest (2016; 2018), and Goodhart (2018) similarly subscribe to this line of thought. As with the perceived security and stability of industrial work, it is necessary to think about the contemporary socio-economic conditions that provoke a yearning for well-remunerated employment. The proliferation of insecure and precarious work is a product of a labour market that has been hollowed-out and polarised, characterised by the propagation of jobs that are high-skill and high-wage in the knowledge economy and low-skill and low-wage in the service economy, with the latter predominantly being staffed by the children and grandchildren of miners, shipbuilders, and steel workers (Breemersch *et al*, 2017). As Strangleman (2007: 102) argues, the desire for 'good' work in such a situation is not only understandable but is entirely sensible.

The final aspect of the longing for 'good work' that is such a central tenet of working-class 'smokestack nostalgia' is a yearning for the kind of skilled and semi-skilled employment that people often think predominated in the industries of the twentieth-century. In a memorable play on the title of the landmark *Learning to Labour* (Willis, 1978) – a classic study of a group of 'working-class lads' as they transition from school and into work – Nixon (2018) terms this as a 'yearning to labour', arguing that although secure and well-remunerated work are undoubtedly much sought after, people are also nostalgic for muscular labour and physical craftsmanship. As with the other aspects of 'good work' discussed, this must be taken with a pinch of salt. As Honeyman (2000: 7) notes, much work in the industrial economy was neither highly-skilled nor required particular expertise, but what is important is that employment in it has been constructed as such and that it was undoubtedly corporeal and embodied. As Murphy (2017: 2) argues in a recent work on unemployed young men in the French banlieues, there is a tendency in communities still marked by the physical and socio-economic scars of deindustrialisation to celebrate the heroicness of hard and heavy labour and the value of practical and technical work, something that also runs through the writings of

Alimahomed-Wilson (2011), Grint and Nixon (2015), Gorman (2000), Lindsay and McQuaid (2004), and Wall and McGuire (2012). Once again, it is important to reflect on the socio-economic conditions that this aspect of working-class 'smokestack nostalgia' emerged in relation to, that being that deindustrialisation and the transition to a post-industrial economy brought with it work that was not only less secure and worse paid, but which also demanded a radically different set of attributes (Alcock *et al*, 2003). In a number of articles and books, McDowell (2000; 2003; 2012; 2014) has pushed forward this argument, noting that muscular labour and physical craftsmanship have now been supplanted, replaced by a valorisation of 'soft skills', 'emotional intelligence', and 'social attributes' such as deference, politeness, cleanliness, and bodily representation.

Working-class 'smokestack nostalgia' is not a phenomenon that unfolds in a uniform way at the societal level. Rather, it occurs within specifically freighted social milieus and spatially bounded communities - neighbourhoods such as Walker that experienced industrial decline in the latter part of the twentieth-century and which continue to live in its physical and socio-economic shadow. Such places continue to wrestle its legacies to this day, and the terms 'post-traumatic community' and 'left behind places' are used throughout this thesis to help to communicate the spatiality of the lament that is felt in working-class communities that have seen the disappearance of the industries that their identity and prosperity were built on and through and the yearning that residents feel for a vanished or vanishing industrial economy. Having explored the idea of 'smokestack nostalgia' in this section, the following section one will explore how it unfolds in specific geographical contexts.

2.4 'Post-Traumatic Communities' and 'Left Behind Places'

Beginning with 'post-traumatic community', this idea has been most comprehensively explored by Gest (2016), who uses it to describe places such as Dagenham in East London and Youngstown in Ohio. He argues that the setting for white working-class exclusion and marginalisation is not uniform, but rather mirrors the uneven geography of capitalism and that such places should be seen as 'exurbs that lost significant industries in the mid- to late-twentieth-century and never really recovered' (2016: 5). Gest (2018: 2) later expanded on this list of cities, reciting a familiar roll-call of names that have become synonymous with industrial decline - Detroit, Gary, and Flint in the United States, Hartlepool, Bolton, and Wolverhampton in the UK - which did not

Newcastle or Walker but whose presence would not have been out of place. The idea of the 'post-traumatic community' is a straightforward one that Gest (2016; 2018) uses it descriptively. At the apogee of post-war Fordist socio-economic life, particular companies or industries employed enough people for a long enough duration that they could single-handedly support the economies of entire neighbourhoods, or in some cases towns or cities. In the aftermath of the deindustrialisation that began in the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995) of the 1970s and 1980s and which continues to this day in an ongoing process, such places endure as shells. They are physical manifestations of the decline and disempowerment of working-class communtiies that are physically marked by the degraded physical remnants of mid-twentieth-century industrial urbanism and which continue to struggle with interlinked and overlapping social problems inflicted by deindustrialisation such as high levels of unemployment, familial breakdown, criminality, and 'diseases of despair' such as addiction and suicide. There are obvious parallels between the idea of the 'post-traumatic community' and the Wacquantian idea of 'spaces of advanced marginality'. Wacquant (2007: 43) deploys his preferred term similarly to describe 'isolated and bounded territories that are perceived by both outsiders and insiders as social purgatories, leprous badlands at the heart of the post-industrial metropolis that are characterised by class decomposition, housing degradation, poverty, social problems, unemployment, and violence that are disconnected from the local and national economy.

In this thesis, the term 'post-traumatic community' is deployed in the same way that Gest (2016; 2018) uses it - to describe Walker as a spatially bounded community that was built on and through the illusory permanence of industry and which was once at the heart of the Fordist-Keynesian city but which has since been relegated to the margins of a global economy of which it was once a crucial node and become synonymous with all of the socio-economic problems associated with deindustrialisation. This term captures two interlinked and overlapping phenomena. First, it makes reference to a past trauma - the process of industrial decline that began in the latter part of the twentieth-century but which has continued with varying degrees of intensity ever since. Second, it identifies an existing condition that continues to shape working-class communities to this day. This dialogic relationship could be seen playing out in Walker in my research. Although my participants did not use the term 'post-traumatic community', they cast

deindustrialisation in these terms, seeing it as both a traumatic historical event which was put upon their community and as an ongoing process with a 'half-life' (Linkon, 2018) the legacies of which were unfolding to this day.

The term 'left behind' is also made use of throughout this thesis. If 'post-traumatic communities' is a backwards-looking term used to describe places that continue to struggle with the legacies of a bygone era, 'left behind' is in a sense more forward-looking, describing how they have simultaneously failed to adapt to the demands and requirements of a society and economy that has moved on from the Fordism and Keynesianism of the mid-twentieth-century. In the memorable phrase of Martin *et al* (2016), places such as Walker remain trapped in the spatio-temporal moment between the industrial era of the past and the post-industrial one in which we now find ourselves. A 'left behind place' is, in a sense, the inverse of a 'post-traumatic community'. Rhodes (2019) suggests that while the term initially emerged in the early years of the twenty-first-century, it was the EU referendum in Britain and the election of Donald Trump in the US in 2016 that confirmed its full ubiquity. According to this line of thinking, a marginalised and predominantly white working-class has been cast adrift by an assortment of deleterious developments that followed in the wake of deindustrialisation and which disproportionately affected people who were less equipped to deal with the demands of the post-industrial economy. Such people have been figuratively 'left behind', abandoned by political parties which traditionally represented their interests and excluded from the socio-economic lives of the countries in which they were once a central component.

Like with 'post-traumatic communities', within framings of the 'left behind' place is central. Rhodes (2019) goes on to argue that the narrative is invariably associated with post-industrial towns such as Oldham, Rotherham, Burnley, Wigan, and Sunderland. Although he makes reference to different places listed by Gest (2018), their choices share unmistakable similarities. The term 'left behind' is deployed to articulate the manifold ways in which specific and spatially bounded places are uniquely disadvantaged, either in comparison to the broader urban conurbations in which they are embedded or in relation to the nation more broadly. As McKay (2019) argues, the term 'left behind' can be used in relatively straightforward and hard-nosed way to describe places like Walker, as measured in indicators such as life expectancy, average income, house prices, unemployment, child poverty, and education, or it can be

mobilised somewhat less prosaically to describe those places that have struggled to adapt to the demands and requirements of post-industrialism. In this latter conceptualisation, the residents of 'left behind' places have made a halting and incomplete transition from an economy and way of life that was associated muscular labour, physical craftsmanship, and traditional notions of masculinity to one that valorises of 'soft skills', 'emotional intelligence', and 'social attributes' such as deference, politeness, cleanliness, and bodily representation (McDowell, 2000). Such people also frequently find themselves to be politically homeless, neglected by traditional parties of both the Left and the Right - although in the British context at least there are signs that this is changing with the crumbling of class allegiances to the Labour Party in traditional working-class strongholds across much of the country, most obviously the 'red wall' in the Midlands, Yorkshire, North East, and North West (Payne, 2021).

These dynamics can certainly be seen playing out in Walker. It has always been one of the more deprived parts of Newcastle, even in the mid-twentieth-century heyday of Fordist industrialism, but as Todd (2014), issues such as relative poverty and poor housing stock were at least partially offset by a comparatively generous welfare state, slum clearance programmes, and other such social democratic initiatives. Contemporarily it lags behind much of the rest of Newcastle and the country in most meaningful metrics, its only peers being similarly deprived and excluded places. It is worth pausing briefly to reflect on some of these statistics. In the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019), Walker was ranked 137 out of 32,482 Lower Super Output Areas in England, where 1 was the most deprived, making it the most deprived Ward in Newcastle. According to this report: there were 284 incidences of recorded crime per 1000 properties, compared to 224 per 1000 in the city; over 550 households in every 1000 received housing benefit, compared to less than 300 per 1000 in the city; the rate of Job Seeker's Allowance claims was 71% above the city average; 10.7% had never worked or were long-term unemployed compared to 5.7% in the city; 58% of residents were social grade DE (semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, unemployed, ad lowest grade occupations) compared to 26% nationally; the average house prices was a third lower than that of the city and rising more slowly; and rates of cancer, heart disease, and circulatory diseases were all above the city average. At the 2020 General Election, voter turnout was 48% compared to the national average of 67.3% (House of Commons, 2020). Even in terms of its demographic makeup, it

has in some sense been 'left behind'. While Newcastle is still remarkably white for a large British city - with 85.3% of the population being White British according to the most recent census (2011) - it has still seen the recent arrival of post-colonial and post-EU-enlargement migrants, something Walker has been even more insulated from, with 93% of its residents being White British according to the same census.

Walker, then, is clearly 'left behind' in the sense that it matches the descriptions of Rhodes (2019) McKay (2019) of a uniquely disadvantaged in comparison to the broader urban conurbations in which they are embedded or in relation to the nation more broadly. Although the transition of Newcastle from the industrial to the post-industrial has been painful and remains more fragmentary than other parts of the country, the city has for the most part shaken off its image as a bleak and monochromatic outpost. The city centre and riverside have been redeveloped into spaces of consumption and leisure, it is home to two large research universities and a cluster of large public sector offices including Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Transport, and has recently seen the emergence of a burgeoning IT and tech sector. In many ways, it closely resembles the post-traumatic community described by Zukin (1993: 23), embodying the contradictions of transition in its sharply divided landscapes of post-industrial consumption and deindustrialised devastation. Walker which have been 'left behind' as other parts of the city have adapted to the demands and requirements of our post-industrial, post-Fordist present and been gradually transformed by transnational flows of people from the post-colonial world and former Eastern bloc countries.

The terms 'post-traumatic' (Gest, 2016; 2018) and 'left behind' (Rhodes, 2019), then, are complementary. They make reference to places that were built on and through the illusory permanence of industry, which underwent a difficult and damaging period of industrial decline, and which have struggled to adapt to the demands and needs of post-industrialism. It is unsurprising that it is in such places - spatially and territorially delineated as they are - that 'smokestack nostalgia' makes itself manifest. In communities which continue to live in the literal and metaphorical shadow of the industries around which their identity and prosperity was built, in which nothing has filled the gap left by industrial decline, and which in many ways remain trapped in the spatio-temporal moment between the industrial and the post-industrial, a deep attachment to and longing for the past is understandable (Strangleman, 2013). Having

considered the concept of 'smokestack nostalgia' and explored the geographical contexts from which it tends to emerge, the attention of this chapter will shift to consider literature around how deep and intimate attachments to the industrial past relate to people such as my participants - young, white, working-class men living in the post-industrial, post-recessionary present.

2.5 Identity and Smokestack Nostalgia

It has been argued previously in this chapter that 'smokestack nostalgia' is a phenomenon that makes itself felt across large swathes of Western societies - it is experienced by the predominantly middle-class visitors to the industrial museums that followed in the wake of deindustrialisation (Simine, 2013) as well as in working-class communities which built their identities and prosperity around the factory or the shipyard. That said, one of the ideas that underpins this thesis is that a longing for the industrial past is felt most keenly by members of the 'dispossessed working-class' (Bryne, 1995) - people such as the participants that I worked with. This phrase is used throughout this thesis, and it is not value free when used in this thesis or by Bryne (1995). It refers to young, white, working-class men born in the decades after deindustrialisation whose certainty and security was relatively assured in a Fordist economy and society and whose lives are now defined by precarity and uncertainty. This is not to say that such people have been most negatively impacted upon by the move from an industrial to a post-industrial society, but rather that this frequently the way in which they understand this change due to the way in which it has undermined the privilege associated with white working-class masculinity. These are ideas that will be further unpacked in due course.

First, however, it is worth reflecting on the fact that when talked about in relation to 'smokestack nostalgia', class, gender, race, and age are not discrete categories. Rather, they overlap and intersect to significant degrees. This is not a unique observation, and scholars exploring 'intersectionality' have recognised that markers of difference and identity dovetail and interact since the pioneering work of Crenshaw (1995). While Garcia (2016: 102) notes that there is still disagreement whether intersectionality is a theoretical framework or a methodological approach - not to mention significant controversy around the use of the term in the world outside of academia (Collins & Bilge, 2020: 2) - Clarke and McCall (2013: 349) argue that social

science practitioners can benefit from recognising how markers that were once treated as discrete and separate interact in their work. While the subsequent sections tackle masculinity, whiteness, and youth and their relation to and with class in turn, it should be remembered that there is significant overlap between. Further, each of these will be related back to 'smokestack nostalgia' to draw out connections.

2.5.1 Masculinities and Smokestack Nostalgia

Writing a decade ago, Meith and McClymont (2009: 910) argued that research on men and masculinities had enjoyed a slow and steady rise over the previous twenty-years, One of the major areas of growth has been the study of working-class masculinities, a concern with which Roberts (2017: 3) suggests began to emerge in the early-1990s as academics began to reckon with an apparent crisis among men who were increasingly out of sorts with the demands and requirements of the post-Fordist and post-industrial economy and society that had emerged in the Thatcher years. In a similar vein, Nayak (2003:16) memorably refers to the 'real Geordies' that he was working with as being like 'flies in amber, having become petrified in the hardened solution of an older period', hitting on a recurrent theme that male members of the 'dispossessed working-class' were increasingly finding themselves trapped in the spatio-temporal moment between two incongruent eras. Writings on working-class masculinities have been broad and diverse, but some of the most significant areas that academics have explored have been education and schooling (Gilbert, 2018; Kosonen, 2017; Lehmann, 2007; McDowell, 2001; Ward, 2017), employment and work (McDowell, 2000; Shildrick *et al*, 2012; Nixon, 2019; Roberts, 2018; Walker & Roberts, 2017), and 'protest masculinities' (Connell, 1995) in a world with limited job opportunities (Ging, 2013; Griffin, 2005; Mahoney & Kearon, 2017; Nayak, 2006; Voyer, 2018). Such work has also been surprisingly international, refusing to confine itself to the heartlands of the mature capitalist world and looking as far afield as Bolivia (Gill, 1997), India (George, 2006), and Mozambique (Groes-Green, 2009).

It is from this nexus of research into masculinities and social class that work that better helps us to understand the 'smokestack nostalgia' discussed previously has emerged. It was noted above that the three desires that underpin the longing for 'good work' are themselves related to concerns and queries about what it means to be a working-class man both historically and contemporarily. Roberts (2013: 5) argues that in both

academic writings and popular culture, working-class masculinity continues to be understood in large part in relation to industrial work, in the undertaking of gainful employment that enables those who commit themselves to it to conform to the male breadwinner ideal and provide for themselves and their families and which involves bodily and corporeal labour and technical prowess and skill. As Nixon (2018: 55) surmises, work in coal mines, shipyards, and steel mills has been central to hegemonic constructions of what it means to be a working-class man because it has provided those with few academic credentials and limited cultural capital with independence, economic and symbolic power, and a degree of respectability and status.

Cornwall (2016: 1) – along with Brooke (2001), Joshi (2002), Murphy (2002), and Zuo and Tang (2000) - is one of those who argues that the ability of working-class men to play the role of breadwinner represents a central plank of dominant constructions of masculinity in many Western industrialised societies, something that Crompton *et al* (2007: 19) see as one of the most long-standing, pervasive, and resonant cultural and socio-economic norms of the industrial era. Historically, the entry into paid work in the coal mines, shipyards, and steel mills that once dominated the landscapes and skylines of villages, towns, and cities across the mature capitalist world was a rite of passage for young men, with the material rewards that came with toiling in them allowing them to fulfil and realise their historically constructed role as providers (Honeyman, 2000). As Snooks (1994: 4) argues, this form of family organisation in which the husband was expected to be the main – preferably sole – provider while his wife assumed responsibility for running the household was established first among the middle-classes but spread widely throughout the working-classes with increasing momentum from the mid-nineteenth-century. Creighton (1996: 310) argues that, prior to this, subsistence wages were paid to low-income families based upon the output of an individual worker, and for this reason all members were expected to contribute to household upkeep. According to Seccombe (1986: 72), however, this began to change as the increasing prevalence and prolificness of industrial work led to improved wages among workers, a transformation that meant a larger number of families could be supported by the income of the father. The male breadwinner model – which was never as absolute and total as is suggested by its contemporary lionisation and mythologization (Safa, 2018) – nonetheless remains a powerful ideal in conceptions about what it means to be a working-class man in the present.

The construction of working-class masculinity is not, however, reducible to the male breadwinner model. The kind of manual labour that provided men with the material rewards to support the entire family unit on one wage was also underpinned by equally important notions of courage, dignity, mastery, physicality, and skill, with Baron (2006), Paap (2006), and Vanke (2014) arguing that the key features of working-class masculinity are in fact analogous to the characteristics and skills demanded of and required by the typical industrial worker. Carrigan *et al* (1987: 148), for example, question what it means to be 'masculine', emphasising 'bravery, inner-direction, certain forms of aggression, autonomy, mastery of technological skill, adventure, and a considerable amount of toughness in mind and body' all of which they argue are needed to be a blue-collar worker. Nixon (2019) expands on this, suggesting that there are two key dimensions to industrial work when it comes to the construction of working-class masculinity.

The first of these is its association with skilled trades, craft occupations, and mechanical and technical expertise, the domination of which by the 'aristocracy of labour' (Foster, 2010: 245) allowed skilled workers to distinguish themselves from unskilled and semi-skilled labourers by virtue of their possession of prestigious and valuable skills that granted them both material and symbolic power and status. Yet within the industrial economy, many blue-collar workers were not employed in professions that demanded high levels of expertise or skill. The vast majority of work in construction, the extractive industries, and manufacturing, however, was still constructed as masculine and remained male-dominated. This brings us on to the second dimension of industrial work when it comes to the construction of working-class masculinity, and that is that it was dangerous, demanding, hard, and heavy, with physically challenging and risky jobs constructed as being masculine. For unskilled men, their bodies were the 'tools of their trade' that allowed them to demonstrate their embodied working-class masculinity. As Moorhouse (1987: 242) argues, 'danger and bravery, drawing on notions of masculinity, become important in the meanings surrounding work, with men gaining pride and respect and confirming their identity by pitting themselves against fear or furnace'. As Walker and Roberts (2017: 8) have argued, the use of the body as a tool within the labour process was a defining aspect of low-skilled working-class work and has served to reinforce the masculine nature of manual work and those who performed it. Like undertaking work that allows a person

to provide for themselves and their family, finding employment that is skilled and requires mechanical or technical expertise and is corporeal and physical remains an important part of what it means to be a working-class man in the present.

There are those who argue that there is more to the construction of working-class masculinity than the desire for work that is well-remunerated, skilled, and physical, in particular in a world where such employment has for the most part ceased to exist or is beyond the reach of the average man who continues to live in a community that was built on and through the illusory permanence of industry. Nayak (2003; 2006), for example, has researched how the performance and realisation of manliness has moved from the arena of production to that of consumption, exploring how 'real Geordies' sustain the coherence of their identities and links with the past through embodied activities such as drinking prowess, fighting, and sexual conquest. He is one of a host of academics such as Blackshaw (2003), Dolan (2011), Gill *et al* (2005), Howard (2004), and Ravn (2018) who have explored the importance of consumption and leisure activities among working-class young men coming of age in a world that is devoid of the kind of employment opportunities that were available to previous generations. Crucially, however, in studies such as these there remains an emphasis on the bodily and corporeal suggesting that this is less a different way of 'doing' masculinity than it is the utilisation of an alternative set of practices and resources in a reconfigured context.

Similarly, in their research on the role of petty crime in the formulation of the post-industrial self among unemployed men in Stoke-on-Trent Mahoney and Kearon (2017) seem to demonstrate the redundancy of the male breadwinner model. However, they go on to argue that this is once again more of a reformulation that is driven and determined by the dearth of alternative opportunities but which is still underpinned by the basic desire by working-class men to provide for themselves and their families. This is a tendency that has also been identified by Darcy (2018) and Sandberg (2011). There are still other academics who write against the consensus on working-class masculinities, arguing that masculinity is spatially and temporally specific, subject to challenge and periodic change, especially in times of crisis such as the transition from an industrial and Fordist society and economy to a post-industrial and post-Fordist one. Roberts (2013), for example, argues that in the case of such a sea-change it would not be unusual to find an associated

transformation in the dominant gender regime and in hegemonic notions of masculinity. He suggests that young working-class men have very different attitudes towards the service sector and the kind of emotional and 'feminised' labour that it demands than they are typically presented as having and that they consider it to be as difficult and dignified as any other form of employment.

On balance, however, Roberts (2013) is in something of a minority in arguing this. Although writing a decade earlier, McDowell (2003: 828) argues that while there are multiple ways of 'doing' masculinity the 'traditional' version remains dominant, with its emphasis on the male breadwinner model and mythologization of labour that while dirty and dangerous was also highly skilled and based on physical and technical mastery and prowess. What this means with regards to the 'smokestack nostalgia' discussed previously and the emphasis on 'good work' that runs through it is that it must be understood not just in relation to the present socio-economic circumstances of young working-class men – who find themselves increasingly out of sorts with the demands and requirements of the feminised and post-industrial economy – but that it is also indebted to their traditional conceptions of what it means to be a working-class man. Having considered the major aspects of the construction of working-class masculinity and how it relates to 'smokestack nostalgia', the attention of this chapter will now shift to how whiteness dovetails with this relation. It is evident both from the literature and my own research that it is young, white, working-class men who are most inclined towards idealising and longing for the economy associated with mid-twentieth-century Fordism and the society that flourished alongside and underpinned it.

2.5.2 Whiteness and Smokestack Nostalgia

Although most accounts of the genesis of whiteness studies trace its origins back to the work of W.E.B DuBois, its emergence as a distinct field of academic enquiry occurred in the US in the late-twentieth-century, emerging from related but distinct scholarly threads - white trash studies and critical race studies. Although both seemingly foregrounded whiteness, they offered different focuses, purposes, and effects (Kennedy *et al*, 2005: 360). The former analyses class issues associated with poor whites in the US and is associated with work such as that of Wray (1996) and Harkins (2003). The latter takes its name from its function, which is to critique race and whiteness as they play out through visibility and invisibility, and argues that all

representations of race - including whiteness - must be put on the table if genuine conversations about race are ever to occur. Driven forwards by authors such as Bell (1992) and Crenshaw (1995), critical race studies gained a wide audience in the 1990s in a post-Civil Rights era, but it remains controversial to this day, having recently become one of the fronts in the so-called 'culture wars' (Hartman, 2019).

Whiteness studies has from the start been an interdisciplinary field. To give some examples: in history, Roediger (2006) has explored how Italians, Irish, and Eastern European immigrants to America in the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries 'became' white; in sociology, Shor (2020) has interrogated how whiteness is constructed and deconstructed contemporarily and how this is weaponised; in law, Lopez (1996) has traced the reasoning employed by courts in their efforts to justify the whiteness of some and the non-whiteness of others, and revealed the criteria that were used, often arbitrarily, to determine whiteness, and thus citizenship; and in geography, Bonnett (1997) has discussed the relationship between place and the study of 'racial' identities. What underpins this scholarship - which represents only a small sample of a broad and diverse arena of debate - is an agreement that whiteness is a socially constructed category that is normalised within a system of privilege (Applebaum, 2016: 10).

Given the focus of this thesis, one of the most relevant strands to emerge from this intellectual ferment has been work which explores the relationship between whiteness and deindustrialisation. The industrial decline that began in the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995) of the 1970s and 1980s and the closures and redundancies that went along with this process were not just a white working-class phenomenon. Indeed, as Linkon and Russo (2003) argued in their portrayal of Youngstown in Ohio over this period, with less money saved, smaller pensions, and less valuable homes, African American families actually suffered more than their white counterparts when the mills closed, an argument that has also been pursued by Kubrin (2006) and Williams (2007). Karla (2000) has made similar arguments about the differential experience of White British and South Asian communities in the Midlands. All of these authors demonstrate how deindustrialisation intersected with pre-existing racial inequalities to produce distinctively racialised effects and expose the incompleteness of social democracy. The purpose of these reflections is not to enter into a perverse argument about which community was most negatively impacted by this transformation, but rather to highlight that race and industrial decline intersected and were experienced

differently. This extends to predominantly white communities such as Walker, places which High (2019) argues are often treated as the norm and in which racialised experiences of deindustrialisation remain invisible and uninterrogated.

Gest (2016: 1) argues that white working-class people are 'perplexing' as in the context of post-industrialism, they are subject to intensifying inequalities and are increasingly excluded and marginalised, and yet inherit the advantages of language and integration. This has been alternatively articulated as the 'invisibility of whiteness' (Sue, 2006). According to this line of thinking, the reorientation of Western countries toward a more service-oriented, high-technology, globalised economy undermined the political and social strength of the white working-class and their relative economic stability by diminishing their ranks, loosening associational life, and jettisoning state-sponsored welfare support systems which were in place in the post-war era. Although this experience was not unique to white working-class communities, their experience of this change was particularly traumatic. The reason for this, as Baccini and Weymouth (2021) suggest, is that whiteness embodies a settled expectation of perpetually privileged economic, political, and social circumstances. This was particularly true for the white working-class men who were the primary beneficiaries of the Fordist economy, and for such people deindustrialisation undermined not just the prosperity on which their communities were built, but their very expectations about the world and their place in it. In the place of a society in which their position of relative privilege was assured by industrial work and the way of life that it underpinned, their experiences are now characterised by the sort of economic precarity and uncertainty, political marginalisation, and social exclusion which was once the preserve of the 'Other'.

The idea that deindustrialisation and its fallout have been more traumatic for white working-class men because of the association of whiteness and masculinity with perpetual privilege (Baccini and Weymout, 2021) has been explored with increased scholarly vigour in the aftermath of the vote in the UK to leave the European Union and the election of Donald Trump in the United States, both of which have been understood in large part as a examples of white working-class revolts in 'left behind' places (Mondon and Winter, 2018). Kimmel (2017: 1), for example, has argued that throughout the twentieth-century, white working-class people - in particular men - were raised to expect unparalleled social and economic privilege and that in the post-industrial present, many of them now suffer from an 'aggrieved entitlement', a sense

that the benefits that they were due have been snatched away from them. Similarly, Mann and Fenton (2017: 72) suggest that due to their privileged position as the historically dominant group in the racial and gender hierarchies of Western nations, white working-class men interpret the economic distress caused by deindustrialisation as a threat to their status. As Guisinger (2017: 10) neatly summarises, for white men who perceive manufacturing jobs as historically important sources of employment and economic security mainly for their own group, layoffs, stagnant incomes, and social decay all contribute to a sense of diminished status.

Gest, Reny, and Mayer (2018) argue that this discrepancy between white individuals' - and in particular mens - understanding of their current economic, social, and political status and idealised perceptions about their past underpin a deep and profound nostalgia in communities that were built on and through the illusory permanence of industry. As was discussed previously, the link between 'smokestack nostalgia' - the lament and yearning of residents of working-class communities for a vanished or vanishing industrial economy and society (Rudacille, 2010: 5) - and masculinity is well-established. The way in which whiteness also dovetails with this, however, often goes under-appreciated. This is an oversight and it can be seen playing out in two significant ways. The first is in an openly atavistic and reactionary longing for a homogenous community populated by people who looked the same and shared beliefs, norms, and traditions. The second is in a more subtle and profound conservatism that runs through the longing for 'good' work that is such an important component of 'smokestack nostalgia'. Each of these will be tackled in turn.

Beginning with the first, while 'smokestack nostalgia' usually describes a longing for secure, skilled, and well-remunerated employment, it also exists alongside and overlaps with a desire to return to the old social and ethno-cultural certainties of the 'heartland', an ahistorical, retrospectively constructed, and idealised conception of the community that emphasises its unitary and singular nature (Taggart, 2006: 269). Duyvendak (2011: 18) argues that in those places where 'working-class natives' remain in the majority, the paradoxical longing for a homogenous community is a deeply nostalgic one that portrays the past as a 'closed and conflict-free whole populated by citizens who basically all looked the same and shared beliefs, norms, and traditions'. Virdee and McGeever (2018: 1802) suggest that this is underpinned by a 'politics of white resentment' that derives from structural decline and class

decomposition. According to this line of thinking, from the mid-1980s onwards, the prospect and reality of downward socio-economic mobility among the white working-class has produced experiences that are understood in a racialised frame that resonates with the cultural and political logic that a globalised and unrecognisable world is something that ought to be retreated from. This is a defensive exclusionary imaginary that is grounded in a bitter resentment toward the companies that abandoned their communities and a government that did little to stop them leaving but which is articulated in relation to the presence of minorities.

The second way in which whiteness plays an important role in 'smokestack nostalgia' is in the longing for 'good' work. This is less openly atavistic and reactionary than the yearning for the 'heartland' (Taggart, 2006) but nonetheless reveals that a certain conservatism runs through deep and intimate attachments to the past. As was discussed previously, one of the most significant aspects of 'smokestack nostalgia' is a sense that an inheritance of secure, skilled, and well-remunerated employment has been taken from members of the 'dispossessed working-class'. While this is understandable in the context of a present characterised by precarity and uncertainty, this conception of 'good' work is heavily gendered and racialised. As Jubany and Castellanos (2020: 20) argue, work in the insecure and informal economy has always existed, the difference is that it has historically been reserved for immigrant populations and women. To many white working-class men, this stratification of the labour market along racial-gender lines persists contemporarily, with the only difference being that they are now forced by shifting socioeconomic circumstances to engage in it themselves. As Branch and Henley (2017) argue, the proliferation of insecure work in the aftermath of deindustrialisation was most disruptive to the employment experiences of white men, and although it is women and ethnic minorities who make up the bulk of this new 'precariat' (Standing, 2011), it feeds into the same sense of diminished status that underpins the belief that they were the primary 'losers' of industrial decline. As will be explored in later chapters, both of these tendencies - the desire to return to the 'heartland' and an insipid reactionism running through the longing for 'good' work - could be seen in the responses of the young working-class men with whom I worked. Having considered the importance of whiteness to the concept of 'smokestack nostalgia', along with the way in which this intersects with working-class masculinity, the attention of this chapter will now turn to how youth transitions figure in this relation.

2.5.3 Youth Transitions and Smokestack Nostalgia

The study of youth culture has a long history in the social sciences, with Moore (2015) pointing to the socio-political upheavals of the late-1960s - when young people became powerful change agents across the Western world - as a watershed moment to which the genesis of this field can be traced. Since then, a significant body of literature addressing youth has developed, something that MacDonald (2011: 427) understands in light of the fact that the youth phase allows for a privileged vantage point from which to observe broader processes of social change, with new social trends emerging most obviously among the coming generation of young adults. This field has been diverse in its output and broad in its remit, but according to Murray and Gayle (2012), youth transitions are one of the central themes that run through it. Youth transitions are the focus of this section, which will begin by offering an overview of this phenomenon and the associated literature before turning to consider how it plays out among young working-class men.

Wyn and White (1997) are among those who have argued that youth is a social construction, with 'growing up' being a contingent process that changes depending on time and place and being shaped by historical and geographical context. While they, along with other scholars such as Heinz (2009), reject the idea that youth is a period of becoming - a time of simply being less than adult - they do tend to understand youth as a relational concept, sitting in contrast with and having meaning in relation to adulthood. Analysing the experiences and consequences of youth has for the most part been considered through the lens of what Roberts (2003) calls the 'conventional transitions paradigm', an approach that is concerned with the experiences of young people in three key interrelated transitions: from school to the workplace; from the family home to independent living; and from family of origin to beginning a family. Roberts (2009: 10) has further argued that examining these youth transitions is key to understanding the links between social origins, routes, and destinations, with an emphasis on how they are inflected by dimensions of difference - in particular class, but also ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.

This approach has been central to the study of youth since the 1970s, and within this time the context in which young people have transitioned to adulthood has changed significantly. It is widely argued that following a 'golden age' in the immediate post-war

period (Vickerstaff, 2003), from the 1970s onwards youth transitions in the Western world became increasingly complex, protracted, and non-linear (McDowell, 2002; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Thompson, 2011). Indeed, this line of reasoning has also been extended to places ranging from the post-Soviet space (Walker, 2013) to the Arab Mediterranean (Pacicello & Poppi, 2021) to Latin America (Cunningham, 2011). According to Roberts (2018), where once the transition of young people to adulthood was seen as being relatively smooth and uncomplicated - with young men making mass transitions from the classroom to the factory or shipyard (Willis, 1977) and young women following pathways to shops and offices (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997) - socio-economic changes that occurred in the last quarter of the twentieth-century have problematised that picture.

The reorientation of Western countries toward a more service-oriented, high-technology, globalised economy has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis. As has been argued, this had particular implications for young men from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who, lagging behind in educational attainment and having limited access to employment other than that which is precarious and uncertain, have found it increasingly difficult to establish meaningful and secure careers, move out of parental homes, or start families of their own (Sanderson, 2020). This is understood by the likes of McDowell (2000), Nixon (2009; 2017), and Roberts (2018) as being in large part down to the decline of the manufacturing sector and its replacement with an economy built around services that valorise 'soft skills', 'emotional intelligence', and 'social attributes such as deference, politeness, cleanliness, and bodily presentation' (McDowell, 2000: 389). These changes are especially important because work that was secure, skilled, and well-remunerated was crucial not just for facilitating youth transitions, but also - as discussed previously - for constructing working-class masculine identity, built as it was around economic participation and the breadwinner model. Where once young working-class men were 'learning to labour' (Willis, 1977) contemporarily it is more likely that they are 'yearning to labour' (Nixon, 2018) or 'learning to serve' (McDowell, 2000).

The difficult transition to adulthood that is now faced by young working-class men, however, is not simply about the move from school to work, although this is the focus of many studies. As Silva (2013: 5) argues, traditional markers of adulthood have not simply been 'increasingly delayed, disorderly, reversible, or even foregone' - adulthood

itself has been dramatically reimagined along lines of 'family, relationships, intimacy, gender, trust, and dignity'. According to this line of thinking, which has also been pursued by the likes of Amit and Dyck (2011), the economic insecurity that has emanated from the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial economy and society has not only led to the 'hollowing out' of the labour market, it has also made the realisation of traditional markers of adulthood increasingly difficult for young working-class men. This manifests itself in a multitude of ways: Coles (1995), Heath (2009), and Mudler (2009) have explored the difficulties they face in moving out of the family home and the impacts that this has on assuming adult responsibilities such as managing finances, consumption decisions, and domestic labour; Ciabattari (2016) and Newman and Graureholz (2002) highlight an increasing inability to take steps towards cohabiting, marriage, and childrearing; and Nayak (2006) and Rooke (2010) explore the ways in which they are locked out of the social life and spaces of consumption and leisure at the heart of the post-industrial city.

These 'extended transitions' - whether thought about in terms of establishing meaningful and secure careers, moving out of parental homes, or starting families of their own - are a uniquely generational experience. There has been much debate in the social sciences as to how a generation should be defined since the pioneering work of Mannheim (1927) appeared in English in the 1950s, but Woodman (2017: 4) suggests that the concept has reemerged as a central category in youth studies in the last decade or so as the field has grappled with how to conceptualise the impact of social change on the experience of youth. As Johansson and Herz (2019: 35) argue, the generational aspect of youth involves transitioning from a child to an adult within a certain timeframe and in a specific social and political context, both of which interact with social positioning such as class, ethnicity, or gender. By observing how these interact, it becomes possible to identify changes and transformations in how young people experience the transition to adulthood. In the case of young working-class men born in the last quarter of the twentieth-century, their personal biographies overlap with the socioeconomic changes that undermined the pathways to adulthood that had predominated in the post-war period, and their experiences of non-linear transitions as they attempted to establish meaningful and secure careers, move out of parental homes, or start families of their own were unique.

There are those who argue against this line of thinking. Goodwin and O'Connor (2005), for example, suggest that the complexity which characterised youth transitions in the 1960s and 1970s has been understated and the de-linearisation of contemporary transitions has been overstated. However, as Sanderson (2020: 1311) argues, there remains a broad consensus that transitions are now more fluid, complicated, risky, undertain, and prolonged than has been the case historically. This is particularly true for young working-class men, and because everyday life does not take place on the head of a proverbial pin but unfolds across space and place (Beatty & Fothergill, 2013: 111), their experiences should be treated as spatially mediated. Jones (2002: 1) argues that the term 'extended youth transitions' is frequently used in conjunction with 'social exclusion' as they intersect and overlap to a significant degree, with Cameron (2005: 396) noting that they have a specific local geography - mapping onto a sub-national territorial space where multiple problems and processes interact to create populations and places of concentrated disadvantage where realising the 'conventional transitions paradigm' (Roberts, 2003) is increasingly difficult for young working-class men.

MacDonald (2002; 2005; 2007; 2010; 2016) has explored this phenomenon in a number of articles and books. Drawing on research undertaken in Teesside, he argues that such places tend to be towns or neighbourhoods which were built around the illusory permanence of a small number of 'cornerstone industries' and which are now characterised by: insecure and risky job markets; degraded built environments; anti-social behaviour such as criminality and substance abuse by disaffected youths and 'unemployable' adults; and fraught transitions on the part of residents who find it difficult to establish meaningful and secure careers, move out of parental homes, or start families of their own (MacDonald, 1998). They are, in other words, 'post-traumatic communities' such as Walker, exurbs that lost significant industries in the mid- to late-twentieth-century and never really recovered (Gest, 2016: 5) and which continue to struggle with interlinked and overlapping social problems that this has inflicted (Gest, 2018: 2). As has been argued previously, it is in such places that 'smokestack nostalgia' among young working-class men predominates, and this can in part be understood in relation to their 'extended youth transitions' (Jones, 2002). Whereas historically, their 'conventional transitions paradigm' (Roberts, 2003) was relatively assured as they moved from the classroom to the factory or the shipyard (Willis, 1977), this is no longer the case, and as Strangleman (2007: 102) argues, this makes a longing for the certainties and security of the past not only understandable but sensible.

The previous sections have explored how, for young, white working-class men living at our post-industrial, post-recessionary conjuncture, their age, ethnicity, gender, and class interact and overlap. It has been suggested that these are not discrete or separate markers of identity, but rather that they are interrelated and overlap, in particular when thought about in relation to their deep and intimate connections to the industrial past. This has been necessary, as it is such people that I worked with when collecting the data that informs and underpins this thesis. Having considered this, as well as having offered an exploration of the concept of 'smokestack nostalgia', the attention of this thesis will now shift to interrogating and problematising this idea. It will do so in two primary ways. Firstly, it will suggest that it is a mistake to conceive of 'smokestack nostalgia' as relating solely to the desire for 'good' work and will draw out other important aspects of the historical working-class experience which this conceptualisation overlooks. Secondly, it will argue that it is also necessary to consider how deindustrialisation figures in this phenomenon, given the long shadow that this casts in working-class communities to this day. Each of these will be tackled in turn.

2.6 Problematizing Smokestack Nostalgia

The literature concerning working-class 'smokestack nostalgia' almost exclusively emphasises the extent to which young men living in communities built on and through the illusory permanence of industry yearn for 'good' work, employment that is readily available, well-remunerated, secure, and physical and skilled. This is likely indebted to the argument of Cowie and Heathcott (2003:5) in their foundational and pioneering edited collection *Beyond the Ruins* that academics must 'strip industrial work of its broad-shouldered, socialist-realist patina' and appreciate that it was above all else 'work that people did because it paid well and was located in their communities'. There is undoubtedly an element of truth in this – at our post-industrial, post-recessionary conjuncture, there is little question as to whether 'left behind' people yearn for work that is not insecure, poorly paid, precarious, and temporary – but it is a mistake to succumb to the idea that such deep and intimate attachments to the industrial past are so easily explained and dismissed. Bonnett and Alexander (2013), Robinson (2016), and Smith and Campbell (2017) are among those who have argued against the tendency in the 'memory boom' literature more generally to assume that commemoration and remembrance are impulses that are necessarily and by definition prone to simplification, suggesting that people frequently engage with their shared past

in complex and multi-faceted ways, but this understanding is yet to migrate into studies of 'smokestack nostalgia', which is still seen by many as a 'mythologising and simplifying impulse' (Orange, 2014: 5).

It is a mistake to view 'smokestack nostalgia' in this way. There are numerous aspects of mid-twentieth-century working-class culture that members of the 'dispossessed working-class' are likely to think worthy of commemoration than simply jobs and work, in particular those that related to the way of life that was unique to the 'Golden Era' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 257) of industrial capitalism. High up on this list are institutions and spaces that catered to and depended upon men working in Fordist companies and conditions. One such example might be working men's clubs, 'physical and cultural spaces in which blue-collar workers both experienced and shaped the material conditions and social relations that defined their day-to-day life' (Cherrington, 2009: 187) and which were 'thriving bastions of community and sociability which cultivated and relied on strong links with local industry and which provided an atmosphere of friendly semi-formality that engendered solidarity and empowerment' (Hall, 2017: 73) but which have been in 'precipitous and unstoppable decline' since industry itself was eviscerated in the Thatcher years (Cherrington, 2012: 14). Another example is trade unions, a movement which existed for the purpose of maintaining and improving the conditions of working lives but which have seen their membership, bargaining power, influence on government, and legitimacy gradually eroded over the last three decades (Paret, 2015). At a time when there is a dearth of spaces and institutions that cater to excluded and marginalised young men, it is not beyond the realms of possibility to think that institutions and spaces such as 'workies' and unions would be a part of their 'smokestack nostalgia' – even if less prominently than jobs and work. This will be discussed in Chapter Four.

2.7 Deindustrialisation and 'Smokestack Nostalgia

A second shortcoming in the existing literature on 'smokestack nostalgia' is its excessive focus on the industrial era and a subsequent neglect of the deep and profound impacts that the deindustrialisation of the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) has likely had upon the children and grandchildren of coal miners, shipbuilders, and steel workers and the ways – both positive and negative – in which they draw-on, engage with, and invoke this era. This is, in some ways, understandable. After all, the very name of this theory indicates that studies of it will be concerned

above all else with the industrial past and the ways in which working-class people look back on this time of full-employment and well-remunerated work. This is a mistake, however, and there is every reason to think that the heritage, memory, myths, and narratives of and about the period of industrial decline will be just as prominent in the lives of young men still living amidst the rusting metal carnage of deindustrialisation as the industrial era. Blyth (2002) and Strangleman (2012) have both argued that the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial economy and society represent a 'Great Transformation' comparable to that written about by Polanyi (1944), and for this reason it will undoubtedly have had a significant impact upon the lives of people who continue to live in communities whose identity and prosperity were built on and through the illusory permanence of industry. Deindustrialisation is a process that has left both physical and socio-economic scars in working-class villages, towns, and cities across the mature capitalist work and represents an era-defining sea change that, however damaging and traumatic, is unlikely to go ignored and uncommented upon. To ignore it represents a major conceptual blind-spot in the study of 'smokestack nostalgia', and with this in mind, the third analysis chapter sets out to address this lacunae, exploring the ways in which young working-class men engage with and invoke the closures and redundancies of the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995) and whether they are able to conceive of them in anything other than negative and reactionary terms. Having dawn out some of the limitations in current scholarship around 'smokestack nostalgia', the attention of this chapter will now shift to some of the mechanisms by which attachments to the industrial past are transmitted.

2.8 Links to the Past

2.8.1 Links to the Past: Patrilineality

The family has long been of interest to social scientists – indeed, Vargus (1999: 13) goes as far as claiming that it has effectively always been at the core of social thought and points to its centrality in everything from Aristotelian thought of Classical Antiquity to the foundational sociological texts of the early-twentieth-century to theory in the present – and contemporarily it is seen and treated as a major social institution as well as a locus for much social activity. As Smart (2010) argues, families occupy something of an amorphous space between the public and the private and their affairs are inextricably entangled with broader cultural, historical, political, and social trends. It is

for this reason that they are well established in the literature as a crucial site in the transmission of everything from life's 'big' questions such a person's political persuasion (Jennings *et al*, 2009), religious beliefs (Copen, 2008), and socio-cultural values (Raneri & Barni, 2012) through to the 'small' matters such as which football club they support (Mar-Molinero, 2010) and the kind of music they listen to (Norton & Matsumoto, 2018). While profound changes such as new work patterns, living arrangements, social expectations, and cultural values have drastically transformed the family over the last forty-years (Farrell *et al*, 2012) and while its role in transmitting norms and values inter-generationally is increasingly underestimated and undervalued in modern life (McLellan, 1999), this remains as true as it has ever been.

The family is equally as important in passing on heritage, memory, myths, and narratives about the recent past, serving an intermediary function as a kind of switchboard between autobiographical, individual, and personal memories and larger frames of collective remembrance (Doolittle, 2011). Older members act as a bridge to the past, bringing it into the households and lives of younger members either directly - by acting as 'mnemonic anchors' around which otherwise forgotten experiences and memories can coalesce – or indirectly – by offering a conduit through which the stories, norms, and values of a recently bygone era are channelled (Winderberg, 2011). In the case of working-class 'smokestack nostalgia' among young men and its emphasis on 'good' work, there is something of a consensus in the literature that it is patrilineal connections – the ways in which relationships between sons and their fathers and grandfathers allows people in the present to remain connected with their shared past – that are the most important and significant, something that has been argued by Alimahomed-Wilson (2011), Bellamy (2006), and McClelland (1987). As Nixon (2018: 55) notes, while the deindustrialisation of the late-twentieth-century 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995) meant that it became increasingly rare for sons to follow in the footsteps of their older male relatives into coal mines, shipyards, and steel mills to acquire the knowledge, experience, expertise, and skill that these industries demanded and required, this link with them meant that even in the present the customs and traditions of this bygone era are passed down from generation to generation. Similarly, Strangleman (2007: 85) has suggested that in the absence of the apprenticeship programs and schemes via which prototypical working-class and blue-collar norms and values were transmitted to a generation of young men, relationships with fathers and grandfathers became essential in communicating and disseminating the culture and way of life that predominated on the shop floor.

What academics such as those discussed above have in common is a shared sense that patrilineal relationships play a crucial role in sustaining coherent links with the industrial past for young working-class men in the present and ensuring that the heritage, memory, myths, and narratives of and about this bygone era continue to resonate even in a radically transformed cultural, economic, political, and social context. These familial connections are one of the essential things underpinning 'smokestack nostalgia' – with its emphasis on work that is well-remunerated, skilled, and physical – among members of the 'dispossessed working-class'. Having touched on the importance of connections with fathers and grandfathers when it comes to the ongoing resonance of the shared past, the attention of this chapter will now shift away from masculinities and consider some of the other ways in which young working-class men remain connected with the coal mining, shipbuilding, and steel making that the identity and prosperity of their communities were built on and through. The first of these connections that will be explored is material cultures, how the 'things' and 'stuff'' found in the family home can play an important role in bringing the past into the present.

2.8.2 Links to the Past: Material Cultures

If patrilineality represents one important way in which young working-class men remain connected with the industrial past, this is not the only way in which the family is complicit in sustaining the coherence of this link. Although less gendered, material cultures of the home are also significant in the kind of 'smokestack nostalgia' that manifests itself in the yearning for 'good' work discussed previously. The study of material cultures – of 'stuff' and 'things' – has been pursued by academics including Buchi (2002),Bolvin (2010), Harvey (2017), Hannon and Longair (2017), Hicks and Baudry (2018), and Tilley *et al* (2013) and according to Grassby (2005) proceeds from the basic understanding that objects are not inert and static but are, in fact, charged and invested with meanings through association and usage which change, develop, and evolve over time. Work attempting to 're-materialise' the social sciences following the excesses of the Cultural Turn in the 1980s and 1990s has shown little regard for sustaining the coherence of disciplinary and sub-disciplinary boundaries, and in recent years, much interesting work has emerged from the point at which studies of material cultures of the home dovetail with those exploring the legacies of industry and its loss.

Mather (2013) is among those who have mined this rich seam in an article that illuminates some of the work that is being done in this area. In an exploration of how working-class protest and revolt is materially commemorated, she draws attention to the fact that much remembering and remembrance is done in the home and through the utilisation of more everyday objects that are imbued with significance and which sustain a coherent link with the past for this reason. She describes items closely and tangibly connected to the recent past as being like 'relics' which are preserved as a testament to the shared experiences of those in previous generations and as a way of actively bringing them into the lives of people in the present, and focuses on the power of homewares such as china plates and pewter tankards referring historical events such as the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 to manifest those in the homes and lives of people contemporarily. Similarly, Doolittle (2011) has researched the importance of the father's chair and the grandfather clock in working-class households, arguing that the 'thingness' of these somewhat everyday and innocuous objects acts as a bridge between the past and the present, maintaining at least a tangential link with the norms and values of the industrial era. Other work that explores such matters has come from the likes of Mills (2016), Russo and Linkon (2005), Smith (2015), and Thody (2014).

What all these studies have in common besides a focus on the material cultures of working-class people is an understanding that the home is an essential site and space in the transmission of the myths, norms, stories, and values of previous generations. As Doolittle (2011: 246) argues, in the case of the home the past and present remain in dialogue as it is here more than anywhere else that objects retaining memory can be found and where people can engage with their shared past in an everyday manner. The home became the subject of scholarly inquiry at around the same time as the material and materiality, with Blunt and Dowling (2006: 1) explaining that this was down to a need to understand it as not just a fixed, bounded, and confining location but a space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, and desire and fear, a place invested with emotions experiences, meanings, and relationships that lie at the heart of human life. Crucially, as Varley (2015: 276) has argued, the home is located on the threshold between memory and nostalgia on the one hand and everyday life in the present on the other. The primary reason for this, as Sokolova (2013: 27) argues, is that it is in the home where the material culture that sustains the coherence of our links with the shared past and brings it into our everyday lives in the present.

2.8.3 Links to the Past: The Built Environment

The home is not the only place where the material plays an important role in substantiating and sustaining links with the past. In many communities that were built on and through the illusory permanence of coal mines, shipyards, and steel mills, there is still and abundance of physical evidence in the built environment – what Storm (2014) calls 'post-industrial scars' – of the bygone era associated with work that was well-remunerated, skilled, and physical. These sites of 'industrial ruination' (Mah, 2012) act as a bridge between the past and the present for those young working-class men who have grown up amidst the rusting metal carnage of deindustrialisation, and it is to these more public manifestations and repositories of the shared past that the attention of this chapter will now turn. It was suggested in the previous section that material cultures of the home represent an important means through which the past is brought into the lives of people in the present, sustaining the coherence of their link with the industrial era because of the associations that they invoke and their sheer immutability and materiality. Similar arguments about space and place, which offer a materialisation of the past that is less personal by virtue of their presence in the public domain rather than the privacy of the home but is perhaps broader and deeper in terms of its appeal and profundity for this reason. Geographers in particular have highlighted the importance of space in commemoration and remembrance, with work from the likes of Foote (2003), Forest *et al* (2004), Hoelscher and Alderman (2004), Legg (2003; 2005; 2007), and Rose-Redwood *et al* (2008) united by a shared belief that bringing the past into the present is a geographically and spatially mediated phenomenon. Besides this, these works are unified by a focus on what Edensor (2005A: 3) calls 'memory spaces' – special sites for collective remembering that banish ambiguity and multiplicity and require people to conduct themselves in a certain way. By this, he means war memorials and monuments (Whitmarsh, 2001; Niven, 2007), historic districts where formerly industrial buildings are converted into up-market accommodation and retail space (Balibera, 2001; Hebbert, 2005), and heritage and museum spaces (Black, 2011; Crane, 2000), but this category can undoubtedly be extended to other spaces.

While discussion around 'official' memory spaces constitutes an important arena of debate, there is a second one that has emerged concomitantly and which is more relevant to my research. It is what Crinson (2005: 2) calls 'urban memory'. According

to this line of thought, cities serve as powerful repositories and symbols of memory, with the urban landscape made up of a collection of places, spaces, and objects that enable recollections of the past and embody bygone eras through traces of the sequential (re)building of the built environment. The city has been variously described as a palimpsest which counterposes and juxtaposes different eras in its building and rebuilding and presence the past in doing so (Mijatovic, 2014: 100), as a totality whose 'catalysing monuments' and 'architectonic props' form a 'topography of remembering' that both embodies and enables recollections of the past (Rossi, 1982: 14), and as a landscape made up of asynchronous moments where space forms a container for different eras that exist alongside each other and overlap (Crang & Travlou, 2001: 161). As DeSilvey and Edensor (2013: 467) note, an inescapable fact of living in the 'polyvocal' (Nas, 1998: 245) and 'kaleidoscopic' (Richardson, 2008: 7) twenty-first-century Western city is the presence of industrial ruins – the structural fall-out produced by the rapid cycles of industrialisation and abandonment and development and depopulation which are part-and-parcel of the creative destruction of capitalism (Harvey, 1996). This is echoed by Mah (2012: 5), who says that industrial ruins are produced by foot-loose capital abandoning sites that are less productive or profitable and can be read as the 'footprints' of a mode of social and economic production and organisation that is receding into the twentieth-century.

Shackel and Palus (2006: 50) argue that abandoned factories, decaying mills, and derelict shipyards have become commonplace in left-behind places throughout the mature capitalist world, invoking the work of Zukin (1993: 23), who suggests that the post-industrial city is sharply divided between landscapes of consumption – central areas where formerly industrial buildings are converted in up-market retail space for the benefit and pleasure of middle-class consumers – and landscapes of devastation – peripheral and peripheralised places that still bear all the 'physical and socio-economic scars of deindustrialisation'. This language is echoed by Storm (2014: 3), who describes the abandoned shipyards, old warehouses, derelict housing, vacant lots, and boarded-up shops as 'post-industrial landscape scars' that act as a reminder of an economy that was once dominated by mid-twentieth-century industrial urbanism.

Edensor (2001, 2005A, 2005B, 2007) in particular has explored 'industrial ruins' and their significance. He suggests that, contrary to what many people think, such sites are not wasted places that have outlived their usefulness and become dangerous

eyesores but are salutary counter-points to the homogeneity and predictability of the built environment which, crucially, embody the memories of past struggles, accomplishments, defeats, and day-to-day life of the people who once moved through and worked within these spaces, bringing their experiences and stories into the lives of the working-class people who continue to live in their literal and figurative shadow. Other academics have explored this problematic. Savage (2003: 10) argues that the deindustrialised landscape is like a ruined battlefield that is slowly healing over and invites commemoration and remembrance, while Heatherington (2018) suggests that sites of industrial ruination are deeply connected with the past and contain memories and enable recollections about it as they are physical reminders of industrial production and of the lives that were connected to these spaces. It is for this reason that Strangleman (2013: 25) argues that the built environment – along with familial connections and material cultures - plays an essential role in the sort of working-class 'smokestack nostalgia' discussed previously.

2.8.4 Lived Experiences

The final shortcoming in the extant literature which this thesis seeks to address is a tendency to consign the inter-connected and overlapping eras of industrialism and industrial decline to the distant past, as if they have passed firmly out of living memory and personal biography and can be discussed exclusively in terms of how they are reconstructed and reformulated in light of the circumstances and requirements of working-class people in the present. This is something of an unusual conceptual blind-spot. After all, the study of the ways in which this shared past continues to persist and resonate contemporarily can trace its origins to the foundational writings of Cowie and Heathcott (2003) which began with the basic understanding that deindustrialisation was not a discrete historical event captured by the moment at which a line stopped or the gates of a factory closed for the final time, as early theorists such as Bluestone and Harrison (1982) believed, but was rather an incomplete and ongoing process that was more geographically diverse, historically deep, and socially complicated than had been thought in the intense political heat of the 1980s. Although this reality goes unremarked upon in much of the literature, this problematises the neat bifurcation of recent history into a industrial past and a post-industrial present on which many studies depend, meaning that the experiences of younger working-class people of engaging with both industry and its loss are glossed over and ignored. This is something that

the second analysis chapter will seek to rectify. It will attend to the possibility that young working-class men may remain connected to the shared past not only though familial links, material cultures, and the built environment, but also through their own lived experiences of engaging with it growing up, that their personal biographies are by no means devoid of interactions with coal mining, shipbuilding, and steel making and their loss. As much psychological literature emphasises, this will likely be mediated in the realm of the sensual, with smells, sounds, tastes, textures, and visual sensations all offering ways in which doors to the past can be opened.

Personal memories of industry are not the only way in which the neat bifurcation of recent history into the industrial past and post-industrial present is disrupted and problematised. While it is true that the mass Fordist employment – and its association with readily-available, well-remunerated, and physical and skilled work – began to disappear with the closures and redundancies of the 'Crisis Decades', the Thatcher years also saw the proliferation of branch plants – foot-loose foreign-owned firms that specialised in the production of components for global supply chains – in many parts of Britain while since the turn of the century many former industrial towns and cities have seen a degree of reindustrialisation – albeit bringing higher skill jobs in fewer numbers in emergent industries such as offshore oil and gas and renewables. While it is unlikely that industry will dominate the commanding heights of the economy in the way it did throughout the twentieth-century, it is likely that many working-class young men will have encountered it in some capacity in the present, whether by working in it themselves, knowing those who do, or aspiring to do so. My work also seeks to attend to this reality, which has prevented the kind of absolute and permanent psychological and socio-economic break with the industrial 'past' that many studies of 'smokestack nostalgia' are predicated

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter began with an exploration of the cultural, economic, political, and social trends that underpinned the 'memory boom' that has occurred in academia over the last three decades – as well as some of the largely agreed upon ideas and themes that have emerged from this intellectual ferment – before moving on to a more in-depth consideration of how this has made itself manifest in communities that were built on and through the illusory permanence of industry. Working through the diverse and wide-ranging writings on 'smokestack nostalgia' among young working-class men, it was

argued that there is an emphasis on the yearning for 'good' work, employment that was readily available, well-remunerated, and physical and skilled, and that this in itself must be understood in relation to present circumstances. It was also argued that 'smokestack nostalgia' of the kind expressed by young, white, working-class men must be understood in relation to their age, ethnicity, gender, and class and how these markers of identity intersect and overlap. Having offered this overview, this chapter then considered those areas where my research seeks to contribute to the debate around how young working-class men remember industrial work and its loss, the strategies that they use to frame and comment upon this shared past, and how they draw-on and invoke this history to understand the present and imagine the future. I identified three significant possibilities. The first of these was the emphasis in the literature on the simplifying nature of 'smokestack nostalgia' and its preoccupation with employment and work, ignoring the complex and deep ways in which people often engage with the industrial past; the second was the way in which it overlooks the ongoing effects and impacts of deindustrialisation, a significant conceptual blind-spot given the magnitude and scale of this transformation; the third was its tendency to relegate the inter-linked eras of the 'Golden Era' and the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995) to the distant past, overlooking the fact that they continue to interact and intersect with the lived experiences of young working-class men in the present. Finally, the attention of this chapter shifted to some of the mechanisms by which the children and grandchildren of coal miners, shipbuilders, and steel workers remain connected with their shared past, pointing to the emphasis of academic on familial connections, material cultures, and the built environment in this regard and identifying shortcomings in the existing literature when it comes to understanding how the myths, norms, stories, and values of the industrial era are transmitted inter-generationally Having offered this overview of the extant literature and pointed to some of the gaps that this thesis seeks to address and fill, the next chapter will explore questions of method and methodology.

Chapter Three: Difficult Conversations? Talking to Young Working-Class Men About the Industrial Past

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach that I took when researching how young working-class men talk and think about their shared industrial past and the ways that this is shaped by and impacts on their lives in a 'post-traumatic community' (Gest, 2016). The data collection – which consisted of one-to-one, semi-structured qualitative interviews - took place over the course of eight months between October 2017 and April 2018. Thirty semi-structured interviews were conducted with young men from Walker, a former shipbuilding community in the East End of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. In terms of structure, this chapter follows a 'chronological narrative' of the kind advocated for by Jones and Evans (2011) to explain the ways in which data was collected, transcribed, codified, and analysed. The advantage of this approach is that it better communicates the way in which the research process evolved, enabling me to capture the ways in which methods were adapted and tweaked depending on how the participants responded.

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the 'where' of the research. It will offer a consideration of why Walker is the focus of this thesis, before it moves on to how the field was accessed and how these supposedly 'hard to reach' people – a label which is itself challenged and interrogated - were recruited. Having done this, its attention will shift to the data collection process, an exploration of the one-to-one, semi-structured interviews that were deployed, and what was subsequently done with this material, the ways in which it was transcribed, codified, and analysed. Finally, it will take a broader look at questions of positionality and reflect upon ethical dilemmas and issues that were faced in the field. This chapter seeks to capture the ways in which my methodological approach was tailored to the specificities of my research. When discussing the data collection process the ways in which visual methods were deployed alongside questions about familial and material links to the past will be discussed. This was used as a way of facilitating conversations with young men who frequently lacked the kind of direct and personal connections with the interlinked eras of industrialism and deindustrialisation that their parents and grandparents had. Similarly, when exploring the ethical dilemmas that I faced in the field, the focus is on

the issues such as imbalances in power that I felt arose because of the differential class positions of myself and the participants and how I attempted to leverage my personal connections to the area as a way of overcoming this.

3.2 Newcastle and Walker as Research Sites

Watford (2001: 6) argues that deciding on where to carry-out research is one of the most important questions when planning a project. In the case of my work, Newcastle was chosen for reasons of suitability. Given the magnitude and scale of the deindustrialisation that reshaped the cities and towns that once constituted the 'industrial heartland' of the mature capitalist world, it is arguable that there are many places that I could have researched nostalgia among young working-class men. However, Newcastle offered a number of benefits, primarily that while it is in many ways typical of the protracted industrial decline that impacted upon places across the UK in the late-twentieth-century, it has yet to receive intense and prolonged academic scrutiny. Its transition to post-industrialism has also been fragmentary. Beyond the undeniably visually striking redevelopment and regeneration of the centre and riverside of Newcastle lie an abundance of depressed and decaying areas. Wacquant (2007) would term these 'spaces of advanced marginality' - isolated and bounded territories characterised by class decomposition, housing degradation, poverty, social problems, unemployment, and violence at the heart of the post-Fordist, post-Keynesian city that are disconnected from the local and national economy. Hudson (2005: 582) argues that this once booming core has become a near-bust periphery that is blighted by widespread poverty and inequality and lies on the outer-edges of the country and the margins of the global economy. It offers an interesting and unique place in which to explore how nostalgia for the shared past – something that is always deeply and fundamentally connected to the circumstances of the present - might unfold.

Walker [**figure 1**] is a prime example of the kind of excluded and marginalised places that can be found across Newcastle and the North East. While it offered some undeniable practical benefits – such as that it occupies a useful middle-ground between having been the subject of some research, such as the work of Mah (2009; 2010; 2012), without having been 'over-studied' (Clark, 2008) – it was selected because it aligned with the argument of Walford (2001: 7) that the most important thing when it comes to choosing a research site is thinking through the ways in which it

relates to the theoretical objectives of a study. Walker did so in three compelling ways. The first of these was the way in which its identity and prosperity were built on and through a handful of large employers which remained important until a decade ago and that it has experienced a degree of reindustrialisation in recent years. What this means is that it is not a place with a straightforward 'industrial' before and a post-industrial 'after' neatly bifurcated by the discrete even of deindustrialisation, but rather that its relation with these interlinked and overlapping eras is complex and messy. The second of these was that the population of Walker has remained reasonably static over the last few decades. Although those who could afford to fled to the higher-status suburbs in the 1980s and it has seen the arrival of some post-colonial and post-EU-enlargement immigrants, it has not experienced the same kind of churn as other parts of the city. While Walker is unlikely to have been inhabited by an idealised homogenous community historically or contemporarily, the links of its residents with the shared past are more coherent and robust than other parts of the city which are more linked in with the geographic fragmentation and spatial disruption of our times (Massey, 1991). This is not to suggest that Walker has been entirely insulated this 'time-space compression' which has eroded a sense of local place and its particularity, but rather is an argument that this process has been spatially uneven and less impactful in some places than others. Both of these make Walker a compelling place in which to study 'smokestack nostalgia' among young working-class men for straightforwardly academic reasons – the industrial era and the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) in which industrial decline intensified are an ongoing aspect of day-to-day life in a community which has retained its links to and with them. The third reason is of a somewhat more personal nature.

My interest in working in Walker was also underpinned by the fact that it is where the paternal side of my family come from. As Loughran and Mannay (2018: 1) argue, all researchers have stories to tell about why they chose to research particular place, and mine is that my grandfather owned a barber's shop in Walker for his entire working-life and that my father was raised here before he joined the Navy, a part of the exodus of people who fled the North East in the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) of the 1970s and 1980s as the industries that communities had built their identity and prosperity on for generations entered an inexorable and seemingly irreversible decline. There was something appealing to me about researching a place that I had felt a certain

connection to growing up but from which I also feel profoundly dislocated, having been raised in far-away Portsmouth and in significantly different socio-economic circumstances in the middle-class suburbs. I was raised hearing about the legendary friendliness of Geordies, the faded glories of Newcastle United Football Club, and the beauty of the Northumberland countryside, and my father – part of a large contingent of North Easterners who had relocated to the military town where I spent the first eighteen-years of my life – often talked with his displaced friends about their shared desire to one day to return to this hinterland, whatever the protestations of their invariably Southern wives. I also spent many of my school holidays visiting my grandparents and numerous aunts and uncles, many of whom had never left the East End of the city. In this way, I developed a sense of imagined or partial belonging to Newcastle and Walker that stretched across temporal and spatial distances. This played a significant part in my decision to conduct research in this part of the city. It also impacted upon my research practice and findings in ways that will be discussed later in this chapter.

3.3 Accessing the Field: Volunteering in a Post-Traumatic Community

Okmus *et al* (2007: 22) suggest that accessing the field can be difficult at the best of times and argue that it becomes especially trying when the target population might be considered 'hard-to-reach'. Shanghai *et al* (2011: 86) use this term to describe those who are in some way disenfranchised, excluded, and peripheralised and who are for this reason often guarded in their interactions with outsiders in general and researchers specifically. As was argued in the introduction, the kind of people with whom I wanted to work – young, working-class men from a decaying shipbuilding community – might be considered as such because they are socio-economically marginalised, politically disenfranchised, and live in a part of Newcastle that has been marked with a 'stigma of place' (Wacquant, 2007). It was for this reason that gaining access was high on my list of priorities when I began my PhD. Miller (2004: 217) emphasises the importance of gaining trust when working with such groups, claiming that researchers must be willing to invest significant energy and time to do so, with Liamputtong (2007: 6) arguing that one way to achieve this is through ensuring that there is a degree of reciprocity in the researcher-researched relationship. With suggestions such as this in mind, in the early weeks of my first-year, I began to seek-out organisations in Walker through which I might meet potential participants.

While my intention initially was to make contact with an organisation of some kind that worked specifically with young men from the area, it quickly became apparent that there is something of a dearth of such institutions in Walker and indeed more generally (Evans & Tilley, 2015). This underlines the exclusion and marginalisation that such people live with and the difficulties that I was going to face in making contact with them and building meaningful relationships that could form the basis of my research. It was because of this setback that I came across Kids Kabin a charity established in early-1990s with the aim of using creative arts and hands-on projects to give children in disadvantaged communities the opportunity to achieve. While it began life in a disused shop, it has since moved into a purpose-built centre in the heart of Walker and established itself in neighbouring East End wards, including Byker, Daisy Hill, and Pottery Bank [**figure 1**], where it now serves thousands of children every year. I began volunteering at Kids Kabin in October 2016 after I met with the manager and explained my reasons for wanting to do so, whether he felt that working there would be a productive use of my time, and what my involvement with Kids Kabin would be. The outcome was for me to become Project Development Worker, leading activity sessions on a weekly basis, helping to alleviate some of the pressure on their busiest days at a time when such organisations are struggling with increased numbers of users thanks to the closing down of local government run schemes as part-and-parcel of austerity politics (Kelly *et al*, 2018).

The manager of Kids Kabin felt that there were a number of ways in which volunteering would help me recruit participants: the first was that the organisation was predominantly staffed by local people, a number of whom met my criteria; the second was that others had family members who fitted the bill; the third was that the manager had been working in Walker for twenty-years and was well-known and liked in the community, meaning he could put me in contact with people who had attended growing up; and the fourth was that I would be able to make contacts with the fathers, uncles, brothers, and cousins of children who attended and leverage the good-will that came with being a volunteer at an organisation that commanded so much respect. This multitude of recruitment avenues was extremely appealing to me. As McFayden and Rankin (2016: 100) note, while 'gatekeepers' such as the manager often have a key role to play in ensuring that a researcher can gain access to potential participants, they can also be problematic, in particular if they have strong opinions about who ought to be involved in a project or the direction in which

it should go. Although the manager struck me as being someone who would be 'hands-off' when it came to my project – this was, as it turned out, an accurate assumption on my part, and we ended up developing an extremely close professional and personal relationship over the three-years I volunteered - it was reassuring to know that, even if he wanted to be more involved in my project, I would be able to remain autonomous when it came to participant selection.

The other major discussion point that the manager and I worked through before I began my role as a Project Development Worker was how long I would be with Kids Kabin before I began the recruitment and data-collection phases of my research. Having also talked to my supervisors about how I would be organising my time, we agreed that because I had begun laying the groundwork for my research early, it would be useful for me to work in the area for the entirety of the first year without worrying too much about recruitment. We felt that not only would this period allow me to better understand the community and history of Walker, the challenges and problems that it faces, and the strengths and resiliencies that it possesses, but also that it would give me the time I needed to embed myself and build-up the necessarily thick network of inter-personal contacts. The manager also explained to me that he had seen a number of academics and policy makers 'parachute' into the area over the years to conduct what Jupp (2006: 30) terms 'exploitative and Fordist' research that took advantage of those who lived in the area and gave little back in return. This was not something he was keen on repeating, in particular if he was going to make use of the contacts and prestige that he had spent decades accruing to help me recruit participants.

Having had these conversations with the manager about my reasons for wanting to volunteer and what my involvement with Kids Kabin would be, I began to work there in October 2016, going in once or twice a week to lead activity sessions with groups of children. I found the work to be challenging and enjoyable, but more importantly I started to quickly feel that it was going to be useful. Whatever other problems it has, I found Walker to be extremely friendly and to have a real sense of community, and it did not take very long for people to start stopping me in the street to talk to me about Kids Kabin and my research. Especially useful in this forging of these kind of inter-personal connections with people from all over the East End were the 'street sessions' that I took part in throughout the summer of 2017. In these, myself and other staff members and volunteers would take things such as a pedal-powered pottery wheel, a

portable stove, or a mobile bike repair workshop to public spaces in and around Walker and run activities that anyone could access, something that would usually attract all kinds of people from the area, who either wanted to bring their children, siblings, or nieces and nephews to get involved or were simply curious about what was going on. In this way I met many people who I identified as potential participants and exchanged contact information with them. Besides building up these connections that I was hoping would mean that I did not have to rely too heavily upon Will when it came to recruitment, I also started to become close with my colleagues, some of whom met my criteria, others with family members who did so.

3.4 Data Collection: The Industrial Past in the Crisis-Laden Present

Having spent the first-year of my PhD embedding myself in Walker and building up networks of interpersonal contacts, I began the data collection stage of my research at the start of my second-year, conducting one-to-one, semi-structured interviews with participants over a period of seven-months between October 2017 and April 2018. This window of time was determined in large part by the fact that in the Spring of 2018 I would be undertaking a three-month ESRC-sponsored internship and my supervisors and I both felt that it would be better to aim to finish before the beginning of this placement than it would be to have to rebuild lost momentum after its completion. In fact, having this impending and non-negotiable deadline proved to be highly motivating, preventing me from the kind of 'mission creep' (Morrison *et al*, 2012) that sometimes afflicts qualitative projects when researchers find it difficult to come up with an 'exit strategy' to allow them to draw a line under data collection.

The attention of this chapter will now shift to the methods that I deployed in seeking to find out about the lived experiences of young working-class men in a decaying shipbuilding community, the ways in which they think about and discuss their shared past, and how this is shaped by their circumstances and needs in the present. It will begin by briefly touching on the ways in which they were recruited before moving on to consider the semi-structured, one-to-one interviews that represented the leading edge of my data collection and discuss some of the specific strategies that were deployed in order to encourage the participants to open up and talk about the matters in which I was interested. This is of particular importance. The success of my fieldwork was based in no small part on the ways in which I got a group of participants who were

not used to discussing their lived experiences to open-up and talk about their connections to and with the industrial past and the ways in which this interacted and intersected with their lives in the present. To this end, visual methods and targeted conversations around familial history and material cultures of the home were made use of as a way of greasing the wheels of our conversations and facilitating the communication of ideas between us.

3.4.1 Recruiting Participants: The Myth of the Hard-to-Research

It was the one-year period of embedding and relationship-building that allowed me to recruit the thirty participants that Dworkin (2012) and Mason (2010) suggest is appropriate for a study of the kind I was conducting. Participants were recruited on something of an ad-hoc basis as I and the contacts that I had made leveraged our connections and networks. What this meant was that the data collection had a stop-start quality, with some weeks proving to be particularly busy, while others would be frustrating and unproductive. The most useful of the recruitment avenues were, firstly, the interpersonal relationships that I had built with members of the community in Walker, in particular when conducting 'street sessions' in the summer, and, secondly, the contacts that the manager of Kids Kabin had in the area that was able to draw-on. I recruited twenty-four of my participants in these ways and a further two through colleagues who either met the criteria themselves or had family members who did so. While this felt somewhat disappointing initially given the potential that they had seemed to offer, I grew to see as a positive as it meant there was not an over-reliance on people professionally associated with the voluntary sector. It was towards the end of my period of data collection that I began to feel as if I had exhausted these avenues and with my placement fast approaching, I turned to some of the other organisations that I was involved in that served the East End – my boxing club and my local Labour Party branch. It was through these that I was able to recruit the final four participants, meaning that I was able to successfully complete my data collection on time.

Before turning to the research encounters themselves, it is worth taking a moment to reflect on a paradox that I have termed the 'myth of the hard-to-research'. Gray *et al* (2015: 170) point-out that it is common for excluded and marginalised people to be treated as being difficult to work with. In the case of my research, however, this did not prove true. Although there were inevitable frustrations when it came to recruitment and

relationship building – it was not uncommon, for example, for participants to fail to show up to our interviews and there were a number of occasions when those who had seemed to offer scope for 'snowball sampling' ignored my e-mails and phone calls afterwards as I tried to encourage them to spread the word about my research - it proved surprisingly painless for me to recruit the thirty people that I had settled upon early on. Difficulties only began to arise in earnest in the final weeks of the recruitment process, as the avenues that I had developed began to feel somewhat exhausted and I myself started to feel a sense of fatigue and frustration.

The relative ease with which I recruited participants and the positive research encounters that I tended to have with them can be explained in large part by the fact that I did not 'parachute' into Walker and conduct research in which I asked people who were potentially and understandably sceptical of 'outsiders' to talk to someone who they did not know and had little to offer them. Rather, I invested a significant amount of time and effort in embedding myself in the community and on building up networks of inter-personal contacts based on a combination of personal relationships with residents and a sense of reciprocity that came with my having worked in an institution that was widely known and respected. Working as a Project Development Worker throughout my PhD gave me the kind of access to young working-class men that I would otherwise have struggled to find and proved to be invaluable. Furthermore, it enabled me to encourage those who might otherwise have been resistant to working with me to not only do so reluctantly, but to open up in surprising and unexpected ways. It was not uncommon for participants to leave the interviews talking about how much they had enjoyed themselves and how infrequently they had the opportunity to talk about their lives in such an uninhibited way. Without this, they likely would have remained 'hard-to-research' and their stories might have gone untold.

While people such as the young working-class men with which I worked may well be hard-to-reach in the sense that they are socio-economically excluded and marginalised, geographically peripheralised, and as a result potentially guarded in their interactions with outsiders (Shanghai *et al*, 2011: 86), the idea that they are by extension hard-to-research is difficult to reconcile with my experiences. I suggest that this 'myth' is more an outcome of the failure of researchers to properly engage with the communities in which they want to work, build dense webs of interpersonal contacts, and develop positive personal and professional relationships with residents

than it is anything else. These problems can be relatively easily rectified by investing time and effort in the early stages of a research project and ensuring that it is underpinned by a philosophy of mutuality and reciprocity of the kind advocated for by the likes of Liamputtong (2007: 7). In doing so, not only is access to the field facilitated, but a groundwork is laid for positive and productive research encounters throughout the data collection phase. Having considered this apparent paradox, the attention of this chapter will now shift briefly to exploring the biographies of the participants before moving on to the research encounters themselves.

3.4.2 Biographical Information: Describing the Participants

The individual and familial biographies of my participants are detailed in full in the **Appendix** A. This includes information including their ages, level of education, employment status, living situations, family lives, and upbringings, as well as more general reflections that I made that emerged from our conversations. While the diversity of experiences makes it difficult to offer a fully comprehensive overview of the biographies of the young men with whom I worked, it is possible to draw out some general trends that played out across my sample, along with somewhat anomalous or noteworthy features that I picked up on.

The participants were a variety of ages, with the youngest being 18 [Aaron], the oldest 33 [Chrissy], and the majority in their early- to late-twenties. All were White with 4 openly discussing their non-British - Italian [Finn], Irish [Cam; Ian], or Polish [Ben] - ancestry. All were born and raised in Walker, although a small number [Charlie; Liam] had recently moved to neighbouring wards, the former seeking better educational opportunities for his son, the latter because the local council had provided him with social housing there. They also had a variety of professions, ranging from long-term NEETs (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) [Ben; George; Harry; Liam] to a handful in high-skill, high-wage employment in either the post-Fordist economy [Nick] or in the offshore industries that began to appear along the banks of the Tyne in the last decade [Charlie]. Most of the young men with whom I worked, however, had found employment in the sort of low-skill, low-wage, and insecure jobs that proliferated in post-industrial towns and cities over the last forty-years, such as in the service sector or the branch plant economy.

The home lives of my participants were as diverse as their employment, but it is fair to say that the majority lived in social housing, with only a handful either owning their own homes [Bill; Charlie; Luke; Nick] or renting privately [Dennis; Ian; Joe; Ollie; Pete]. This tended to align with those who were in relatively more lucrative or secure employment. Most of the young men with whom I worked were on good terms with their families - indeed many lived with them, usually in social housing - but there was a small but nonetheless significant number who were not on speaking terms with their parents in particular [Dennis; Euan; Greg; Jack; Joe; Liam; Tim] and an even larger number who had grown up in single parent households. There were also a small number who had recently started young families of their own or were imminently expecting [Charlie, Ethan, Nick, Rob]. Two of my participants [Dave; Niall] were opnely gay, with the rest being presumed straight, although this was never explicity confirmed, even in cases where we did not discuss personal relationships.

3.4.3 Qualitative Interviews: Creating a Space for Participants

The interview, described by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 32) as a 'conversation with a purpose', has been the technology *par excellence* of social science for close to a century, the method of choice for researchers irrespective of their disciplinary background or the nature of the project on which they are working (Edwards & Holland, 2013). While its popularity and prevalence has prompted Atkinson (2015: 41) to admonish academics for their 'over-reliance' and 'over-dependence' upon interviews and the data that they produce, I argue that the methodological centrality that they assumed in my research was appropriate, justified on the grounds of suitability in relation to the study of the lived experiences of young, working-class men in a decaying shipbuilding community, the ways in which they think about and discuss their shared past, and how this is shaped by their circumstances and needs in the present. Summerfield (2004: 15) suggests that interviews offer the best method for researching such people and matters, drawing on debates around oral history to argue that they enable researchers to work with marginalised and neglected groups to co-produce records of the recent past that would otherwise be sparse or non-existent. Similarly, Janesick (2014: 58) argues that interviewing enables the researcher to place an emphasis on the significance of temporal context and memory that is refracted through subsequent experience and the influence of ideology, producing a palimpsest of data that blends personal recollections with the myths, narratives, stories, and values of the milieu in which a participant is embedded.

The interviews themselves were one-to-one – with one exception in which a participant brought a friend along and the encounter became something of an unexpected paired interview – and semi-structured, organised around a loose collection of themes aimed at getting the participants to think and talk about industrial production and its loss and whether this shared past had any significance in the present [**Appendix B**]. As Rapley (2007: 15) notes this approach, in which a handful of pre-determined questions are augmented by follow-ups anchored in response to the particular accounts of participants, ensures that topics which are deemed crucial to the aims of the researcher are covered while also allowing for the diversity and vibrancy of the interests of the interviewee to shine through. This dynamic can be seen playing out in two very different interviews that I conducted. I entered both of them with the same set of interests and questions, but in one of them – with Ethan [33, Handyman]– we spent much of it discussing his anxieties and discomfort about the increasing number of non-British and non-white people in Walker, while in the other – with Joe [25, Rapper/Outreach Worker] – we talked at length about 'Makina', a uniquely Geordie youth subculture built around sports casual fashion, the taking of amphetamines, and Trance-inspired music characterised by hard synths and rapid-fire MCing. These interviews were dramatically different, and yet both addressed topics that I had not been especially interested in beforehand, but which nonetheless revealed themselves to be of relevance to my research interests.

As these examples demonstrate, this semi-structured approach created a space in which, in their own words, the participants could expand on questions and take our discussions in interesting and unidentified directions, while I in turn was able to gain a more nuanced understanding by seeking clarifications and encouraging them to unpack and explain their ideas in greater depth. As Hay (2000) and Valentine (2005) argue, material produced in this way has the potential to be rich, detailed, and multi-layered, providing a 'deeper picture' than other methods of qualitative inquiry, and while this was part of the reason that they were selected as the leading-edge of data collection, this is something of a general advantage. They were also settled upon because of their specific suitability when it came to researching industrial production and its loss in Walker and whether this shared past continues to resonate in the present. Bonnett and Alexander (2013: 398), for example, suggest that such an intensive approach as being essential in encountering the subtlety and complexity of

deep and intimate attachments to the past, while Dowling *et al* (2015: 78) argue that this is the most effective way to understand how people relate to and (re)shape their history in light of their circumstances and requirements contemporarily. There is a methodological and theoretical synchronicity between my methodology and my research interests that beguiles the 'over-reliance' and 'over-dependency' criticisms. Semi-structured interviews also gave me the opportunity to deploy additional creative methods within their parameters which helped me to better address my research interests. It is to these that the attention of this chapter will now shift.

3.4.4 Talking About the Past with the Help of Images

Kara (2015: 8) argues that since the early-twenty-first-century, academics have been increasingly able to reach beyond the bounds of conventionality and deploy a multitude of methods beyond straight-forward, back-and-forth questions and answers. I was able to do this thanks to the space that semi-structured interviews gave me to engage with the participants in more engaging ways. As Glaw *et al* (2017: 4) note, many of the innovations in this field have been in the form of visual methodologies, a collection of techniques used to understand and interpret images of various kinds. Bagnoli (2009: 547) argues that the usefulness of visual methods can be understood in relation to the fact that while conventional interviews rely on language as the privileged medium for the creation and communication of knowledge, our lived experiences are made of a multiplicity of dimensions, with the visual being one of the most significant. It was with this in mind – along with the enthusiastic endorsement of Banks and Zeitlyn (2015), Emmel and Clark (2011), and Mannay (2015) – that I chose to include some visual methods alongside the more conventional style of interviewing, a mixing of techniques that Mason (2006: 10) believes encourages 'outside the box' thinking on the part of both researcher and participant. These took on two forms. The first was a diagram of series of concentric circles that were used to encourage the participants to consider and talk about their place in British society and how this has altered inter-generationally, while the second was a series of photos depicting historic events deemed significant to Walker, Newcastle, and the North East to facilitate conversation about the shared past. Each will be considered in turn.

Beginning with the first of these, this method [**figure 2**] – in which the participants were presented with a set of four concentric circles printed on a piece of paper and told that this was a representation of British society, with the people in the

innermost ring being the most central, the most important, and the most influential with this becoming progressively less the case as the rings were moved through – is an example of what Prosser and Loxley (2008) term graphic elicitation. As Crilly *et al* (2006: 341) elaborate, interaction with such diagrams provides a basis for enhanced communication between researcher and participants, and in the case of my work it provided a stimulus that helped to get the young men I was interviewing to consider and discuss their own place within British society and the ways in which this had changed for people like themselves inter-generationally. This method was particularly useful when combined with encouraging the participants to tell me about their familial histories and personal biographies.

I would typically deploy the concentric circles relatively early on in the interview and explain their purpose to the participants before engaging them with questions about, firstly, where they would place themselves and, secondly, where they would locate people of their grandparent's generation. It is well-established in the literature on commemoration, memory, nostalgia, and remembrance that the family is an essential site in the inter-generational transmission of the myths, narratives, stories, and values of bygone eras and Erll (2011: 39) is one of many who argues that it is the de facto prism through which people interpret and understand their shared past. Discussing familial and personal biographies with the participants offered a means to get them to think about the history of Walker and Newcastle more broadly – a technique Keightley and Pickering (2013: 28) suggest is significantly more effective than asking generic and unrelatable questions – and the use of concentric circles provided a mechanism help them do this visually and elaborate on their characterisation of their present cultural, economic, political, and social circumstances and their understandings and visions of the past. As Gest (2016:14) notes, when deployed in this way graphic elicitation offers a powerful way to illuminate 'individuals' sense of place, their longing and nostalgia, and their lost landscapes of the past', an endorsement that has significant resonance with the research interests of my project.
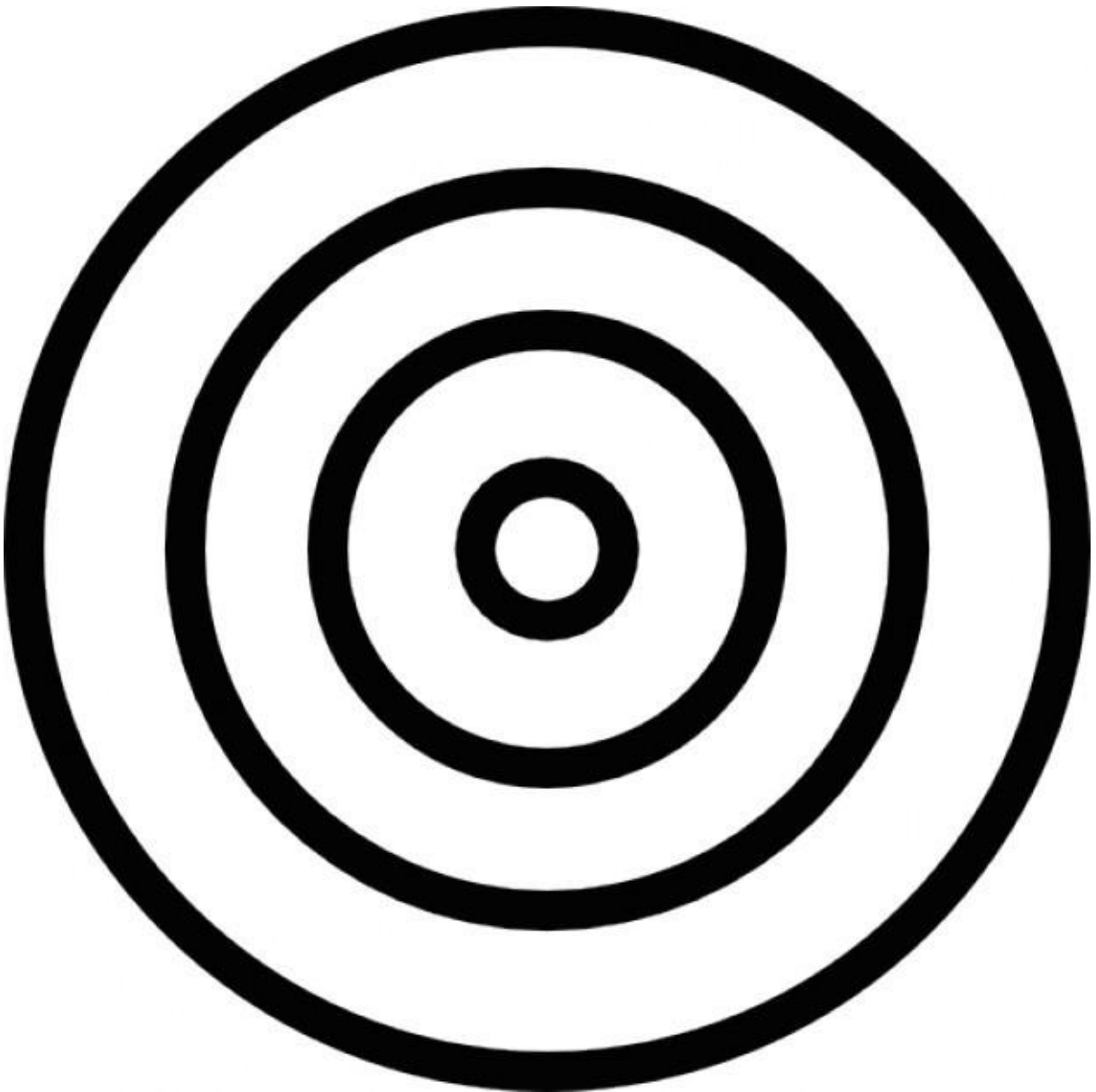
Figure 2 – Concentric Circles used for Graphic Elicitation

This graphic elicitation was highly effective, greasing the wheels of conversations with participants and provoking discussion that frequently went in directions that I had not anticipated or expected. Crucial in this regard was deferring to the participants when it came to interpreting what I meant when I told them that the concentric circles were a representation of British society. While this did occasionally cause some confusion and require a back-and-forth about what I meant by this, it also provided them with the space to engage with my questions about their present circumstances and how these have changed inter-generationally on their own terms. While the participants overwhelmingly felt that people such as themselves had historically been more central and had been gradually pushed out towards the outer rings of the circle, they understood this in different ways: for many, it was socio-economically, and they talked about the disappearance of secure, semi-skilled, and well remunerated work and its replacement with insecure and precarious employment; for others, it was geographically, and they discussed how the North East had been disempowered over the last few decades, or how Walker had found itself increasingly marginalised and peripheralised in this period in comparison to wealthier parts of the city; and for a handful this was racially, and they told me about their concerns about perceived changing demographics of the East End and how their were now more people from Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia than when their parents and grandparents had been growing up. In short, by combining questions about personal and familial biographies with the diagram of concentric circles, I was able to encourage diverse and wide-ranging conversations about the East End and its history in a way that would have been more difficult had I relied on straight-forward questioning.

The second visual method [**figure 3**] which I deployed was photo elicitation, which Shaw (2013: 785) explains is based on the simple idea that inserting photographs into an interview solicits insights, reactions, and responses from participants and provokes discussion more effectively than straight-forward back-and-forth dialogue, generating rich, thick information that might otherwise go undiscovered. Besides these general benefits, photo elicitation was also highly suitable for my project given my research interests, offering two significant advantages in this regard. The first of these was the argument espoused by Copes *et al* (2018: 478) that it offers a highly effective way of getting people who are unused to discussing their lived experiences and personal

biographies to open up, encouraging them to elaborate on their perceptions of themselves, their lives, and their present circumstances.

Figure 3 – Examples of Photographs used for Photo Elicitation (top to bottom, left to right): Jarrow Crusade, Shipbuilding on the Tyne, Walker Dwellings, Winter of Discontent, Miners' Strike, Meadow Well Riots)

The second was the suggestion of Harper (2002: 14) that it is well suited to studies such as mine which explore history, heritage, memory, and nostalgia as it gives participants a window into the past which, even if imperfect and inaccurate, encourages them to think and talk about bygone people, places, and times that they might otherwise forget or neglect. I saw both of these benefits playing out in the case of my own research encounters, in which I presented participants with a series of photographs depicting historical events or scenes pertinent to the history of Walker, Newcastle, or the North East and asked them if they had ever heard of them and, if so, what their thoughts were.

The photographs were typically shown to the participants around half way through the interview and depicted a range of things, from specific historical events – the 1978-79 Winter of Discontent, the 1984 Miners' Strike, the 1991 Meadow Well Riots – to more general scenes from the past – a newly constructed ship looming over the iconic terraced housing of the East End, a group of unnamed men leaving an unspecified factory at the end of a shift – and were chosen with the help of members of the a local history group, who were consulted as to what they thought some of the most significant things to happen in the East End in the twentieth-century were. Deploying the photographs was an effective way of encouraging the young men I was working with to involve themselves in the discussion generally, but the effects were especially noticeable when it came to those who had been somewhat disengaged or withdrawn initially, and it seemed to give them the prop they needed to throw themselves more fully into the interview. There were a number of instances throughout the research process where a participant contributed relatively little initially, only to come alive in the second half when I started to make use of photo elicitation, telling me about the events that they had heard of growing up and opining on ones that they were unfamiliar with. There were two kinds of photographs that seemed to be have particular efficacy: the first were of events that were historically recent, with the participants seeming to find them to be more relatable and knowable, having grown up hearing about them or in some cases actively remembering them; the second were the more general scenes depicting working-class life in Walker in the 1970s and 1980s, likely due to their lack of specificity allowing identification and engagement in a way that was not true of historical events, which had a more black-and-white, have-or-have-not-heard-of quality to them.

What both of these visual methods allowed for me to do was to get participants to think much harder about their personal memories and the stories, myths, and narratives about the industrial past that they had grown up around and with than would have otherwise been the case. This was something of an achievement. Whatever other steps the field of memory studies has taken towards being a mature scholarly enterprise, its practitioners continue to be blighted by a 'poverty of the methodological imagination' (Keightley & Pickering, 2013: 5), meaning that it proved to be something of a struggle when it came to thinking about ways in which I might get my participants talking about their pasts, both shared and personal. The utilisation of visual methods allowed us to co-create not only significantly more data, but that it was also of a significantly richer quality, shot-through with anecdotes and ideas that had gone undiscussed up until the concentric circles or photographs were deployed, meaning that they would likely have gone without these prompts, much to the detriment of my research. Not only this, but they were essential in getting the young men with whom I was working, a group that are frequently cast as being difficult to engage in substantive conversation (Gray *et al*, 2015: 170), to open-up and talk to me, working in concert with the feelings of good-will and relations of reciprocity that came with my volunteering.

This is not to suggest that this was always the case. There were several occasions on which the interview barely lasted half-an-hour and in which the conversation was unmistakably stilted and one-sided, and there was little that visual methods could do to alleviate this. Rather, I argue that the graphic and photo elicitation played an essential part in allowing me to collect data that was not only rich and multi-faceted, but which often took me in surprising and unexpected directions. One example of this was when, having been shown a picture of the Miners' Strike, one of the participants told me about the acts of vandalism that his father had organised in the local area after the shipyards began to close. The visual methods also inspired further adaptions to and developments of the question set that I took into interviews with me and the kind of conversations I sought to have. One thing that seemed to consistently come through as the participants and I talked about their shared past and how it intersected with their familial and personal biographies was the importance of heirlooms and material cultures of the home. This was not something that I had anticipated going into the interviews. As I reflected on my early encounters, however, I began to realise that those in which the participants and I had organically come onto the subject of the ways in which the

industrial past intersected with their day-to-day lives in the space of the home in profound and subtle ways had produced some of the most interesting material. It was for this reason that I started to proactively discuss these matters with my participants, and it is to this line of questioning that the attention of this chapter will now shift.

3.4.5 Material Cultures: Bringing the Past into the Present

The study of material cultures – of 'stuff' and 'things' – has been pursued by Buchi (2002),Bolvin (2010), Harvey (2017), Hannon and Longair (2017), Hicks and Baudry (2018), and Tilley *et al* (2013) and according to Grassby (2005) proceeds from the basic understanding that objects are not inert and static but are charged and invested with meanings through association and usage. As discussed in Chapter Two, attempts to 're-materialise' the social sciences has given rise to a distinct body of work that has emerged from the point at which studies of material cultures of the home dovetail with those exploring the legacies of industry and its loss. Mather (2013) is among those who have pursued this line of enquiry, exploring how working-class history is materialised in the form of everyday objects in communal spaces such as living rooms which embody familial biographies sustain the coherence of links between the industrial past and the post-industrial present. Such items are described as being akin to 'relics' which are preserved as a testament to the shared experiences of those in previous generations and as a way of actively bringing them into the lives of people in the present, with the 'thingness' of everyday and innocuous objects acting as a bridge that maintains a personal and tangible link with the myths, norms, stories, and values of the industrial era

I encountered this lively arena of debate following some early interviews in which participants organically brought-up the importance of family heirlooms and the ways in which these brought the industrial past into the home in various ways. One example of this came in the form of a conversation in which a participant discussed the fact that he was the first of the men in his family not to work on the railways in generations, before seamlessly bringing up that both his father and grandfather had taken sleepers when they had retired and hung them above their respective mantlepieces, mementoes which helped him feel connected to a time and a way of life that he would never personally know. Reflecting on this conversation as I walked home, I realised that I had stumbled upon something that seemed to resonate with the young men with whom I was working. As such, I set out to realise the potential that facilitating conversations around such

heirlooms had in helping me to better understand how my participants thought about the interlinked and overlapping eras of industrialism and deindustrialisation, the ways in which they remembered industrial work and its loss, the strategies that they used to frame and comment upon this shared past, and how they invoked this history to help them understand the present and future. Having experimented with where to position such conversations in the interview, I found that they tended to elicit the most successful response somewhat later in the interview, when I had already utilised visual and photo elicitation to get the participants to open-up and start thinking about their shared past and how it intersected with their personal and familial biographies.

Whereas I began the data collection phase with the intention of utilising graphic and photo elicitation, my decision to begin talking to the participants about material cultures was inspired by the tendency of some participants to bring this up themselves. Once I started facilitating discussions about family heirlooms, however, it quickly became apparent that this was a rich seam with the potential to produce interesting and relevant material. Many of the participants talked to me about artefacts and heirlooms in their homes – objects ranging from the more official ceramic homewares produced by canny manufacturers who seemed to recognise the desire among working-class people to commemorate industry through to more informal things such as plaques stolen on the last day of work as a memento – that seemed to consolidate and substantiate their links with an era that they missed out on entirely or experienced only in a fleeting way. While not all of the participants had such items to talk about, for those that did they seemed to offer something of an anchor around which our conversations coalesced, with discussions wandering off in tangential and unexpected directions before coming back to the object that initially prompted the conversation. Not only did these items bring the industrial past into the present in a very tangible way, but it seemed that their materiality and presence in the home allowed episodes from the familial and personal biographies of participants to coalesce around them, prompting discussions about this intersection that would not otherwise have happened. Taken alongside the visual methods that I deployed in the interviews, talking to the participants about family heirlooms proved to be an effective way of generating material that was relevant to my research interests in a way that would have been difficult with a less targeted form of questioning that did not properly consider my research interests. Having discussed these methods, this chapter will now consider the transcription, coding, and analysis that came next.

3.5 Transcription, Coding, and Analysis

3.5.1 Transcription

Having conducted thirty one-to-one, semi-structured interviews, in the Spring of 2018 I began what Davidson (2009: 36) calls the 'arduous, but necessary' process of transcribing them. With the permission of the participants, the interviews had been recorded using a dictaphone, a practice that is said to improve the quality of field observations (Patton, 2002: 262) and allow for details that might otherwise have gone unnoticed to be drawn-out (Rapley, 2007: 15). While such 'technological fixes' do carry with them a risk of potentially alienating researchers by making them less interested in and engaged with those they are talking to (Back, 2012: 18), I felt that my use of visual and photo elicitation made this less likely, as this demanded a greater level of engagement on my part and provided a focus that distracted from the presence of the dictaphone. The use of a dictaphone was in effect a practical strategy that allowed me to apprehend my dialogue with the participants and access it in great detail, in some cases several months after I originally met them, even if as Duranti (2006:12) argues this is necessarily and by definition partial, excluding inter-personal and visual cues such as body language and facial expressions. While there are convincing arguments in favour of transcribing interviews as soon as possible after they are conducted, in particular that doing so allows for the material to be engaged with and ideas produced that can help to modify future encounters (Oliver *et al*, 2005: 1275), I took inspiration from the likes of Bailey (2008: 130), who argue that transcription is less a straight-forward technical task than it is a prelusive analysis stage, involving judgments about the interpretation and representation of data and suggest that it should therefore be left until after the data collection stage of the research process. It was for this reason that I waited until Spring 2018 to begin transcribing my interviews, doing so verbatim so as to capture the richness of the encounters as fully as possible and fusing data and analysis in the process (Silverman, 1997). This led naturally into the coding of these transcripts.

3.5.2 Coding and Analysis

Following on from this process of transcription, I began the coding and analysis phase of my research, something that I started in earnest in September 2018 and which took me approximately two-months to finalise. Robson (2002: 51) suggests that before findings can be interpreted, researchers must tease out the messages embedded and

hidden within the data, while Morgan and Kruger (1997: 103) argue that the way in which this is done should not be left unexamined. From the outset, I took a grounded theory approach, a set of ideas developed by Glasser and Strauss (1967) that according to Adu (2019: 10) emphasise the need to let conclusions and findings emerge from the specific context in which they developed rather than through relying too heavily on pre-existing analytical categories, constructs, and variables. To this end, I utilised the Qualitative Data Analysis software package NVivo12 to transform my raw data into a form more suitable for analysis, and in line with the grounded theory approach that I was taking, I applied open coding – an emergent coding technique where codes are drawn from the text on something of an ad-hoc basis (Stemler, 2001) - to my transcripts in order to develop categories and label concepts that I had not come up with *a priori*. While, as Mills *et al* (2006: 21) point out, it is impossible for the researcher to entirely park their preconceived ideas of what the data could and should look like at the door, it allowed me to approach the material with a relatively fresh set of eyes and mitigated efforts on my part to project decontextualized ideas onto it that had not emerged from my interrogation of it.

What this looked like in practice was assigning nodes – broad and general themes such as 'family history', 'industrial work', 'lived connections', 'personal biography', and 'precarity and uncertainty' - to certain paragraphs, sentences, or phrases when they jumped out at me as I worked through the transcripts line-by-line, in keeping with the recommendations of Corbin and Strauss (1990). While 'going in blind' (Blair, 2015: 14) in this way meant that coding was initially a labour-intensive and time-consuming task, this became less the case as I made progress and began to notice recurrent ideas on the part of the participants that echoed across the research encounters. Having gone through each of the transcripts and coded them once, I undertook a follow-up round so that I could see whether nodes that had emerged somewhat later in the process were applicable to the transcripts that I had initially dealt with. Open coding of the kind that I undertook is not without its critics, not least that it is difficult to say 'openness' is in fact possible, as researchers are independently positioned subjects who are likely to start any activity from a certain viewpoint, whether that is individual perspective, practitioner insight, or theoretical leanings (Marton, 1993). Nonetheless, I felt that it offered the best way to deal with my data, and having undertaken this stage, I connected the different codes and drew associations into broader narratives while also

exposing the multiplicity of such themes by organising the data into categories and sub-categories. The final stage of analysis was the writing up of this thesis, and throughout I continually engaged with the recordings and transcripts of the interviews, allowing me to unify the coded data with academic and theoretical literature as I clarified and refined the ideas and observations that I had originally drawn-out.

This chapter has so far been organised as a 'chronological narrative' of the kind advocated for by Jones and Evans, (2011), an attempt to give an idea as to how the data collection phase of my research unfolded, the organic and sometimes unexpected way in which the process was informed by and fed off of experiences in the field and the analysis and reflection that inevitably accompanied this. However, having discussed accessing the field, recruiting participants, semi-structured interviews, and transcription, coding, and analysis, this technique will be abandoned for the final sections, which deal with matters that are difficult to compartmentalise as they impacted upon myself and my conduct throughout the research process. These relate to questions of, firstly, positionality and reflection and, secondly, ethics. Pechurina (2014: 111) argues that thinking about and working through these issues is fundamental to the successful conduct and execution of any qualitative research project and suggests that they must be considered critically and at length, a task that I see as being both desirable and necessary and which constitutes the focus of these final sections. I will begin by discussing questions around positionality, the baggage that I brought with me into the research encounters and the ways in which this affected my conduct and interactions with the participants, before moving on to consider some of the ethical questions that I wrestled with before, during, and after the data collection phase. Following this, some concluding thoughts will be offered.

3.6 Positionality and Reflection

3.6.1 Negotiating the Insider-Outsider Boundary

Exploring the subjectivities of the researcher is an essential task given the way in which they are embedded within the research process, with both themselves and the participants shaping the res earch and being shaped by it in turn (Lumsden, 2009) in a relationship that Bourke (2014: 1) describes as 'give-and-take' and Mason-Bish (2019: 264) terms 'symbiotic'. This section reflects on the ways in which my positionality impacted upon the collection of data and the production of research, a task that is necessary given that

researchers are not impartial and uninvolved parties but are a primary instrument in conducting and facilitating conversations during fieldwork and in making sense of the information that emerges from it (Chereni, 2014). There are two focuses here which interlinked and overlapped to a significant degree. The first is on the way in which I negotiated the blurry and shifting insider-outsider boundary and the ways in which my 'context' (Angrosino, 2005) impacted upon both my conduct as a researcher and the findings that I co-generated with my participants. The second is how in the process of talking to the participants about their shared history and personal and familial biographies, I began to think harder about my own past in what became a mutualised discussion.

It was noted previously in this chapter that the kind of person with which I wanted to work – young, working-class men from a socio-economically marginalised and geographically peripheralised community – were part of a group that are often considered to be hard-to-reach and by extension hard-to-research if steps are not taken to bring them into the fold and ensure buy-in. I did this by volunteering at an after-school club in Walker to ensure that there was a sense of reciprocity around my work. As well as enabling me to recruit participants with relative ease, this had profound implications for my positionality and impacted upon the data that was generated. It is well-established that 'insider researchers' who share the backgrounds, experiences, and identities of their participants have significant advantages over their 'outsider' peers when it comes to accessing such populations, something that has been argued by Chavez (2008), Hodgkinson (2005), and Giazitzoglu (2018) to give but a handful of examples. While I was well aware that this was a position that I would never be able to occupy given my middle-class upbringing, my Southern-ness, and the outwardly noticeable ways that these aspects of my identity made themselves manifest, I also knew that the insider-outsider binary is increasingly seen as unsustainable and unrealistic within the complex and messy reality of researcher negotiations of the self (Coffey, 1999). Dwyer and Buckle (2009), Kerstetter (2012), and Milligan (2016) are among those who argue that there is a space between insider and outsider that the researcher can access by dissolving some of the boundaries between themselves and the participants.

While all relations are - to a degree - intersubjective (Reich, 2010: 63), intersubjectivity is something that emerges through the active engagement of individuals who mutually construct actions, interactions, and meanings together (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2010). The 'inbetweener position' (Merriam *et al*, 2001) is an intersubjective one that is proactively nurtured by the researcher which in theory means that they can enjoy

the best of both worlds, allowing them to engage with participants and draw-on shared experiences to gather a richer set of data in a way that would be difficult for an outsider, without raising the kinds of questions about bias and confidentiality that are often faced by insiders (Kanuha, 2000). Alongside my concerns about accessing the field and recruiting participants, this played a part in my decision to volunteer in Walker, so as to blur the boundaries and differences that existed between myself and the excluded and marginalised young men with w I wanted to work. By spending the first-year of my PhD embedding myself in the community, I was able to become something of an 'external-insider' (Banks, 1998), someone who is able in some ways to appreciate and understand the attitudes, behaviours, beliefs, knowledges, and perspectives of a group without adopting them for themselves. This was invaluable when it came to conducting interviews with participants, most of whom were recruited through Kids Kabin, as it meant we immediately had something in common to talk about, helping to break the ice, create a sense of rapport, and disrupt the straight-forward researcher-researched relationship (Hoffman, 2007). Being able to bring up my own familial and personal connections to the area was also useful, with participants visibly opening up as they recognised similarities that had not been immediately evident, prefacing statements with phrases such as 'you'll understand this' [Ethan, 33, Handyman] or 'ask your old man about that' [Ollie, 29, Taxi Driver].

While this blurring of boundaries and differences was useful across the board – there were countless occasions during the data collection phase when the participants and I would find common ground because of my volunteering work, whether that was reminiscing about when they had attended Kids Kabin as children or talking about the benefits that it brings to the community contemporarily – occupying the 'space between' (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) was especially beneficial when it came to interviewing people who were particularly marginalised and excluded. While virtually all of the participants had experienced a degree of peripheralization by virtue of their class position and place of birth (Gest, 2018), there was a small cohort who were severely excluded. While it is difficult to surmise all the experiences and traits that defined this imprecise and loose group, for the most part they were not in education, employment, or training, came from families where few if any people had worked since the shipyards and factories that once lined the banks of the Tyne had closed, had somewhat dysfunctional home lives, and had suffered some kind of adverse childhood

experience. While there were some of these especially hard-to-reach young men who eschewed this tendency towards reticence – Tim [21, Unemployed] had seen his mother pass away unexpectedly while out shopping with her as a child, had spent some time living on the streets as a teenager, and was at the time unemployed due to long-term health problems, and yet our wide-ranging conversation lasted more than two hours – but it recurred with enough frequency to give me pause for thought.

My impression was that it was with such participants that I had the least in common. Whereas with many of the other people I interviewed, I could talk to them about shared experiences of university, work, or volunteering and ask them about their family and home lives without worrying about the sensitivity of the topic, this was not the case with the especially hard-to-reach young men, whose stories about life in a decaying shipbuilding community at our post-recessionary, deficit-cutting conjuncture were far removed from my own upbringing and life. In these encounters, it often felt as if there was a shared understanding that we had little in common and that this precluded any kind of common ground or mutuality. In such cases, my volunteering was invaluable. Such participants saw themselves as the primary beneficiaries of the outreach work that it did – I was told on a number of occasions that they felt they would have ended up in jail without it, or that it was the only thing standing between their younger family members and the temptation of criminal behaviour – and my involvement in it was crucial in building rapport and bridging the divide that existed between us. This was not, however, the only way in which I sought to occupy the space between the insider and outsider researcher. As Dwyer and Buckle (2009: 55) argue, there are countless ways in which we can move between these two positions, and something I found myself doing frequently was emphasising my own personal and familial connections with Walker. I would generally bring up these connections early on in the interview, as if to acknowledge that while my middle-class and Southern upbringing differentiated me from the participants, we had more in common than it appeared, a sameness that seemed to play an important part in endearing me to them.

This is not to suggest that being able to draw-on my volunteering experience of my familial and personal connections to and with Walker offered some kind of 'magic bullet' that led to these the differences and distance between myself and the more excluded and marginalised participants disappearing. Some of these young men continued to pose a challenge when it came to building the buy-in and rapport that

qualitative research is heavily reliant upon, sometimes proving difficult to engage with in any meaningful way. This is perhaps best reflected in the shortness of an interview with Liam [27, Unemployed], which lasted a little over half an hour and required significant work to produce any raw data that felt as if it would be useful. Rather, it is to argue that this blurring of the insider-outsider boundary – my occupation of the 'space between' (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) – offered me an initial way of breaking down the barriers between myself and the subset of my participants that were most challenging to work with, those who were likely least well-equipped to deal with the demands, expectations, and requirements of a qualitative interview. This was a significant advantage of the subject position that I adopted, and when combined with the photo and visual elicitation methods that I deployed led to the co-creation of some of the most insightful and interesting material.

3.6.2 Emotion in the Research Encounter: Interrogating 'Our' Pasts

Going into my research, I anticipated that my familial connections to Newcastle and Walker would be beneficial when it came to building rapport and a sense of sameness with young, working-class men. However, I had given no serious consideration to how in working with them, there would be a mutual talking about the past given my familial links to the area. This proved to be an oversight. Perry *et al* (2004: 8) argue that – although it frequently goes under-discussed - for researchers studying a historical, political, or social milieu or phenomenon to which they are connected in some way, there will inevitably be a degree of emotional involvement with their subject of study. This proved to be true in the case of my work, in which I frequently found that I was less a disembodied and dispassionate researcher than I was someone who was deeply and intimately involved in an encounter and experience that I was attempting to make sense of (Gould & Nelson, 2005). As a child, I frequently spent school holidays with my grandparents in Walker, helping my grandmother out in her allotment on the edge of the ward or sitting with my grandfather in his barbers' shop on the high street that runs through the heart of the community. As I talked to the participants about what it was like growing up in the East End, I began to think about my own somewhat more indirect connections to and with it. Given the similarities in our ages, the young men with whom I was working and I frequently discovered that we had shared similar childhood experiences, such as attending the sports weeks that ran throughout the summer out of a local community centre or going to see Newcastle East End Football

Club play their inaugural Boxing Day game over the Christmas holidays. These were parts of my life that I had not thought about in some time, and I was surprised to discover the emotional response that they elicited in me, in particular when I discussed them with my grandparents when I went to visit them.

Similarly, seeing the boarded-up front of my grandfathers' barber shop elicited something of negative reaction on my part. The high street that runs through Walker has been in a precipitous decline since the factories and shipyards that once lined the banks of the Tyne started to close in the 'Crisis Decades' of the 1970s and 1980s. However, projecting back as an adult, it still seemed to be at the heart of the economic and social life of the community when I had visited as a child, and it felt as if it was home to more decaying, dilapidated, and disused housing stock and retail space in the present. Whether this is true or not is difficult to substantiate – as will be discussed at length in the analysis chapters of this thesis, memory and recollection are infamously unreliable and often tell us little about the past as it actually was (Erll, 2011: 15) – but irrespective of the accuracy of this belief, it forced me to think hard about my familial biography, my upbringing, and how different my opportunities would have been had my father not left Walker at sixteen to join the Armed Forces. This interrogation of my past and my position was triggered by nothing more than walking past the shop which had once been owned by my grandfather on my way to my volunteering placement, and again it shows the under-appreciated importance of emotion in research encounters and experiences.

These examples are just two of the small ways in which I interrogated my self and my past while conducting research, something that I had not expected when I had set-out to investigate how young, working-class men think about and relate to their shared history. What ended up emerging from our research encounters was a more mutual and shared interrogation of *our* pasts, often within the parameters of the research encounter, but also frequently beyond its spatially and temporally bounded confines. Especially when I was engaged in a period of particularly intense data collection, I would find myself thinking about my own links to and with Walker and talking about this with friends and family. Tang (2007: 48) argues that experiencing this sort of emotional response when researching a subject or phenomenon with some kind of personal resonance is inevitable, and suggest that this can in fact result in a greater and more unique understanding of the topic, an enriched project, and enhanced

interpretation and understanding. It is difficult to say with certainty whether or not this is true, although there is plenty in the literature to suggest that it is (Given, 2008). Nonetheless, when conducting analysis of the data that my interviews generated, I certainly felt that the empirical material was of the sort of deep, multi-faceted, and rich nature required for the kind of research that I was conducting and suspected that this could be explained in part by the 'emotionally sensed knowledge' (Hubbard *et al*, 2001) that the participants and I had co-generated.

3.6.3 Men Researching Men

Cowburn (2013: 183) has suggested that, in contrast with the wealth of work exploring the theories and practices of feminist methodologies, most research conducted by men does not explicitly include a consideration of how their gender affects the material that is produced. As Yost and Chmielewski (2012: 224) argue, there is a rich history of feminist critique of research methods in the social sciences. Motivated by an under-appreciation of the concerns of women and girls in the social sciences, feminist researchers have expressed the need for methods that respect and empower their experiences as legitimate sources of knowledge (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). One of the outcomes of this critique has been a growing recognition of the benefits that can come when women interview other women. Leavy and Harris (2018: 3) suggest that there are two interlinked explanations for this. The first explanation is that there is a benefit to blurring the boundaries between researcher and researched, with gender being one of the most outwardly noticeable and socio-politically charged and significant differences. In the context of a research encounter, this sameness serves the broad feminist goal of breaking down hierarchies between people (Sprague & Korbynowikz, 2003). The second explanation – effectively the inverse of the first – is that there are significant disadvantages for female researchers that come with being the 'gendered outsider' (Soyer, 2014: 10). While some of these are to do with the threat that men can pose (Harries, 2016), for the most part, they concern the increased likelihood of male participants reacting to feelings of a 'surplus threat' when the researcher is female (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001). As Allain (2014: 62) notes, this can lead to compensatory performances on the part of the participants – from false claims to be an expert on the topic at hand (Pini, 2005) and purposefully going off-topic (Gailey & Prohaska, 2011) to more malevolent sexualisation strategies aimed at exerting control (Orrico, 2014) – that pose challenges to the fieldwork process.

With these debates from the literature on feminist methodologies in mind, going into the interviews I felt that my being a male researcher would be advantageous. In my mind, my gender would implicitly communicate to the participants a sense that they could discuss things with me that they might shy away from if talking to a woman and interact with my work as a volunteer and my familial connections with Walker to further blur the boundaries between myself and the participants and flatten out the differences of class and geography. There was good reason to think this. As Pini (2005: 69) argues, when researching across gender boundaries, the interview setting situates women as outsiders who are not privy to some of the innermost beliefs, feelings, and thoughts of their participants, whereas men are able to draw-on and reproduce traditional gendered roles to gain privileged access when they are working with participants who share this 'most significant of markers of identity' (Tarrant, 2014: 45). Although somewhat problematic, I was expecting to benefit from this when going into the data collection phase of my research. Indeed, I was in some ways counting on it given my self-consciousness about some of the more obvious markers of difference that existed between myself and the participants and the challenges that I feared this lack of common ground and mutuality had the potential to pose.

However, this was not the way that things always worked out in practice. Horn (1997) and Allen (2008) have argued that the position of a woman as a gendered outsider in a research encounter when working with men is in fact advantageous. According to this line of thinking, female researchers are viewed as different and unthreatening and are therefore afforded access to specific forms of male behaviour that would be less likely to be performed if the researcher is male. As Yost and Chmielewski (2012: 224) argue, this possibility is enhanced when conducting qualitative interviews given the high level of engagement between researcher and participant that is required. I could see this dynamic playing out in some of my interviews. This was particularly true of those in which sensitive topics – often to do with the familial history or contemporary homelives of the participants when these fell beyond the parameters of what is considered socially acceptable to discuss with one another – came into our discussions. This can be understood in light of the fact that while researchers and participants may initially find that they share obvious similarities in terms of their gender identities when they are both men, the unspoken social cues and rules that dictate their inter-personal conduct, the things that they 'can' and 'cannot' talk about

and say to one another, can close down interesting and profitable avenues of discussion in a way that can be counter-productive (Pante, 2014). In the case of my research, I could see both the benefits and draw-backs of the insider status that came with being a man interviewing other men, profiting from it on some occasions, in particular when it came to accessing the field and building rapport, and losing out on others, in particular when it came to talking about topics that some of the participants did not feel comfortable sharing with someone of the same gender identity.

3.7 Ethical Questions: *Homo Academicus* or *Turistas Vulgaris*?

Qualitative research is permeated with ethical issues (Valentine, 2005) and an awareness of this represented an essential component of my work. To navigate some of the more general pitfalls which are a component of any project, I sought to conduct what Orb *et al* (2001: 96) term 'inherently ethical research' by adhering to ESRC guidelines that relate to the proper treatment of participants. What this meant was that appropriate information was shared with them in advance [**Appendix C**], that they took part voluntarily and provided informed consent [**Appendix D**], that they were able to drop-out as and when they wanted to, and that their preferences regarding anonymity and confidentiality were respected. While these recommendations certainly offer a pragmatic and useful set of considerations – a starting point that all researchers ought to observe – they operate at a level of abstraction and generality which fails to anticipate and address many of the specific ethical challenges and questions that are faced in the field. In the case of my research, these were overwhelmingly understood in relation to debates about working with marginalised people in peripheral places. This will now be turned to.

Ranciere (2004:1) is among those who has wrestled with the problem of the 'philosopher and his poor', the tendency of the great Western thinkers – from Plato to Marx and Sartre to Bourdieau – to make 'the people, the plebeians, and the proles' the 'objects of their analysis and the illustrations of their arguments'. While this is a somewhat grandiose question, it is just as relevant to more everyday researchers such as myself whose work, suggests Shweiger (2019: 5), carries with it significant ethical questions around whether excluded, marginalised, and vulnerable people are being exploited. Although I had endeavoured to avoid taking advantage of the young men with whom I was working by ensuring that my research had a degree of reciprocity and that my practice was 'inherently ethical' (Orb *et al*, 2001: 96), in the early stages

of my data analysis phase I felt a sense of discomfort stemming from the similarities and parallels between myself and a 'dereliction tourist' (Crang, 2011) drawn in by the chaos and devastation of deindustrialisation or someone on a 'poverty safari' (McGarvey, 2017) attracted by the deep and profound impacts of austerity politics.

Although Mah (2014: 165) sees *homo academicus* and *turistas vulgaris* as being qualitatively different, a critical challenge for me was to avoid the tendency to impose negative assumptions on an area of decline and disadvantage in which I was working. The solution I deployed was straightforward – asking the participants to reflect not just upon the challenges and problems that Walker faced, but also what some of the best things about living in the area were. What became apparent across the interviews was that they felt, firstly, that it had an unparalleled sense of community and, secondly, that they were incredibly proud of how it had survived in the face of significant adversity, both findings that would come to the fore in my later analysis of the interview material and end up forming essential components of my arguments. In this way, I was able to build a more balanced and fuller picture of the lived experiences of the young men with whom I was working, allowing me to look beyond the status of their hinterland as a 'symbolic location' (Gilroy, 1987) with a negative reputation that derives from the accumulated cultural and political associations of its contemporary socio-economic deprivation and to see it for what it was – an undoubtedly troubled place that had much to offer and in which, crucially, ordinary people lived their day-to-day lives.

It was noted previously that my anxiety around whether there was something fetishizing about my interest in an area that is well known for its socio-economic problems was largely a feature of the early stages of my data collection phase. The reason for this was that I began to quickly realise that, rather than feeling as if they were being taken advantage of or exploited, the participants overwhelmingly enjoyed the experience of taking part in my research, telling me that they rarely got to talk about things such as their familial history or what life in Walker is like contemporarily. It is likely that this is related to the fact, discussed previously in this chapter, that the kind of excluded and marginalised young men with whom I was working frequently feel themselves to be unheard most of the time and unlistened to the rest of it (Gest, 2016). Rojas *et al* (2013: 156) argue that, when properly conducted and executed, qualitative research can play an important part in helping people such as my participants to find their voices and make them audible, and as I conducted more of my interviews, I

increasingly felt that this was what was happening in the case of my project. To circle back around and, I attribute this to the way in which I conducted my research, the combination of being 'inherently ethical', ensuring some reciprocity through embedding and volunteering, trying to paint a complex and dynamic picture of Walker and the lived experiences of my participants, and helping a group of young men who for the most part felt maligned and voiceless felt as if somebody was listening to them. These dynamics also had the happy consequence of interacting to give rise to a body of material that was dynamic and rich and which often went in directions that I had not anticipated in the planning stages of my research.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methodological approach that was taken when it came to researching what young, working-class men feel and think about their shared past and how it interacts and intersects with their lives in the present. A 'chronological narrative' (Jones & Evans, 2011) was adopted so as to explore the way in which the research process unfolded, with each stage outlined and justified and to capture the organic way in which the process evolved as it was informed by reflections on previous experiences. This chapter began by discussing the 'where' and the 'who' of my work, giving a broad overview of the research site and subjects – Walker and young, working-class men – and how these were settled on for reasons of suitability when in relation to my research interests. It then moved on to the more logistical questions of how the field was accessed and the participants were recruited, with an important aspect of this being a discussion of the way in which I embedded myself in Walker by volunteering at an after-school club. Having done this, the attention of this chapter shifted to the data collection phase - exploring the ways in which I conducted one-to-one, semi-structured interviews – with a particular focus on how photo elicitation and visual elicitation were deployed alongside questions about material cultures in order to generate material that was more diverse and rich and which was of greater relevance to my focus on nostalgia for the industrial past in the 'crisis-laden present' (Gest, 2016) than if I had relied upon straightforward questions-and-answers. It then moved on to consider the round of transcription, coding, and analysis that followed on from this. At this point, this chapter abandoned the chronological approach in favour of discussing issues which were more difficult to compartmentalise given impact that they had upon both myself and my conduct throughout the research process, namely

questions of positionality and ethical issues. In the case of positionality, it explored how the way in which I occupied the middle-ground between 'insider' and 'outsider' allowed me to generate richer and more detailed material as well as build rapport with the most marginalised and excluded of my participants, while in the case of ethics the emphasis was on my own concerns about the possibility of my research taking advantage of the peripheralization of the young working-class men with which I was working and the ways in which my practice not only ensured that this was not the case but in fact facilitated positive research encounters. Having offered this methodology, the focus of this thesis will now shift to three empirical chapters which detail the analysis produced through the research methods discussed.

Chapter Four: Beyond Smokestack Nostalgia: Complexity, Criticality, and Yearning

4.1 Introduction

Having offered an overview of the methodological approach that underpinned this thesis, the following three chapters will discuss, explore, and interrogate the data that was collected. This chapter is focussed on 'smokestack nostalgia', the yearning that residents of working-class neighbourhoods feel for a vanished or vanishing industrial economy and society that has been in inexorable decline thanks to globalisation, shifts in the political terrain, the transition to a service-based economy, and technological changes (Smith & Campbell, 2017: 312). This chapter draws on empirical examples to highlight the multifarious ways in which the participants understood and utilised their shared past in the face of a present that seemed to offer them little and a future that presented itself as non-negotiable. This confirms the arguments of the likes of Cowie and Heathcott (2004) that industrial work remains an important part of the lives of young, working-class men. However, this chapter seeks to contribute to the discussion by arguing that such people think and talk about the industrial past in a way that is more complex and multi-faceted than has typically been acknowledged. The participants frequently went beyond offering sanitised and simplified accounts and talked at length about the shortcomings of the dirty and dangerous work done by their fathers and grandfathers and the conformist and exclusionary culture that it perpetuated and relied upon. They also exhibited a longing not just for readily-available and well-remunerated employment, but for the spaces and intuitions that came with it, the unions and working men's clubs that were part-and-parcel of industrial working-class culture in the mid-twentieth-century. This chapter explores four inter-related and overlapping themes.

The **first** theme that this chapter explores is the ongoing connections that the participants had with the industrial past and the ways in which they related this to their present circumstances. This is in line with much of the existing literature, which emphasises that members of the 'dispossessed working-class' (Byrne 1995: 196), frequently mythologise and romanticise a time that, to their minds, was characterised by secure, well remunerated, and semi-skilled employment. It goes on to suggest that this tendency should be understood in light of the precarity and uncertainty which

defines the lived experiences of many of the participants. The **second** theme that this chapter explores is the multi-faceted and nuanced way in which many of the participants engage with the industrial past, and it is here that it breaks with consensus somewhat. The suggestion here is that 'smokestack nostalgia' is not as ahistorical and prone to glossing-over the painful complexities of the working-class experience as is suggested by, for example, Orange (2014) and the participants often demonstrated an awareness of not just the down-sides of industrial work but also a longing for the spaces and institutions that it supported. The **third** theme that this chapter explores is the tensions that existed in the narratives of the participants about the industrial past. It begins by considering the accounts of those participants who tend towards reactionary and atavistic understandings of their shared past, before turning to those who controvert this propensity by discussing the multi-ethnic and trans-national history of the city and region and the exclusionary nature of the kind of homogenous and conformist culture that is often cast back to. The **fourth** theme that this chapter explores is the ways in which the seemingly contradictory and discrete tendencies exhibited by the participants often intersected and overlapped in the same accounts, capturing the complexity of their interactions with the shared past and the messiness of their social realities and subject positions. In terms of structure, each of these themes will be addressed in turn, before concluding remarks are offered.

4.2 'Hard Work, Proper Labour': Yearning for Industrial Employment

As was discussed in the Introduction, deindustrialisation has precipitated a 'profound economic, political, and social collapse' in 'post-traumatic communities' (Gest, 2016) such as Walker, which was built on and through the illusory permanence of shipbuilding and has struggled to recover from its loss, which is manifest in a host of socio-economic challenges which the area now faces. There is, however, a danger in exaggerating the extent to which this process was accompanied by 'amnesia', as Dudley (1994: 4) demonstrates in over-stating the shift from the industrial to the post-industrial as a *fait accompli*. While Richardson (2013: 7) has shown that this belief is far from uncommon, it does not hold true in the case of my research, which is more in-line with work that explores 'smokestack nostalgia', the idea that many of the key markers of working-class life forged in the crucible of mid-twentieth-century industrial urbanism continue to persist and resonate at our post-recessionary, deficit-cutting conjuncture. In particular, there is an emphasis among 'left behind' young men on the

disappearance of work in the coal mines, steel mills, and shipyards that, to their minds, was readily-available, secure, well-remunerated, and skilled and physical. It is this theme that is explored throughout this section, which argues, firstly, that the industrial past continues to resonate and remains important in the lives of the participants and that, secondly, this is because it offers them a lifeline as they navigate a present that offers them little and face a future that presents itself as non-negotiable.

There were a handful of occasions in which the participants stated their desire for 'Fordist feelings of stability and belonging' (Muehlbach & Shoshan, 2012: 317) in explicit and unambiguous terms. Tim and George were the most obvious examples of this tendency. Both of them discussed in no uncertain terms their desire to return to a simpler and better time throughout their respective interviews, and it is likely no coincidence that neither of them was in work at the time of our conversations. These were conducted at Kids Kabin, a place chosen by them because it was somewhere that they felt at home and, as they both noted, where they did not have to spend any money to feel welcome:

> [Tim, 19, Unemployed] 'I want to wake up in the morning, have my coffee, put my overalls on, go to work and get my head down, get scruffy, have a laugh with the lads, come home, have my tea, have a bath, and just go to bed, like what it used to be in the olden days.'

> [George, 19, Unemployed] 'I wish I was back in the 1960s, man, those were the days – hard-working, bit of graft, proper labour, sweaty bollox when you get home, a good day's pay for a good day's work, not like what it is now.'

In both responses, there is an emphasis on 'proper' work which required few if any educational credentials and involved the kind of muscular labour and physical craftsmanship that is increasingly absent in a world which now valorise 'soft skills', 'emotional intelligence', and 'social attributes such as deference, politeness, cleanliness, and bodily presentation' (McDowell, 2000: 389). Although recent research by Roberts (2012) has suggested that there is an increasing aptitude and appetite among young, working-class men for the kind of 'menial' or 'white-collar' jobs that predominate in the service-based economy, this same bifurcation of the labour market into 'good' and 'bad' work (Nelson & Smith, 1999) according to whether or not it involves physicality and produces tangible outcomes was also prevalent among those few participants who still worked in industry. One example of this was Stephen, an

electrician at one of the offshore companies that have sprung-up along the river in place of the old shipyards in the last decade or so. I met him at his place of work on his lunch break, where as he showed me around he claimed that:

> [Charlie, 26, Electrical Engineer] 'Not many people can say that now, that they're proud of what they do, if I think about my mates from growing up, and it's just clocking in to get that pay-cheque... I enjoy it as well, I like that I'm getting my hands dirty and helping to make something real, that I'm not just sat on my arse behind a computer or on the phones every day.'

What was more common than the obviously and explicitly nostalgic comments expressed by Tim and George, however, was a more profound and subtle sense of lost chances and missed opportunities. Many of the participants seemed to conceive of themselves as members of a 'dispossessed working-class' (Byrne, 1995: 196), a socio-spatially excluded underclass unique to the post-Fordist moment residing in communities whose decaying smokestacks that once marked them out as spaces of dynamism and prosperity are now a sign of their decline and a symbol of the socio-economic challenges which they now face. Many of the young men with whom I was working talked about how they felt that they had been denied an inheritance enjoyed by previous generations and to which they felt entitled:

> [Ethan, 33, Handyman] 'Since the yards have closed, there's nae work for anyone around here. My old man says that you used to be able to walk out of your job on a Friday and walk into a new one on the Monday there were so many around.'

> [Dom, 26, Self-Employed] 'Where are the jobs for normal blokes? And I don't mean working in the bloody supermarket for pennies a couple of times a week, I mean the kind of stuff our dads and grandads had, which let you look after your family? I know you can't go backwards, but there's got to be more than this.'

> [Finn, 19, Kitchen Porter] 'It were easier to get a job back then, and even if there weren't much variety, it were easier to make money and get hours. My dad says when he was growing up you could just go door-to-door and somebody would take you on straight away, down in the yards or labouring. It were skilled work as well, you can't really get jobs like that now.'

A sense of loss permeated these accounts, a lamentation for the perceived certainties and intelligibility of the past, and they represent just a handful of examples in which the emphasis was less on the specificities of industrial work than it was on the broader benefits with which it was associated. This more general sense of loss recurred across many of the interviews, and there are three aspects of the participants responses that are worth drawing-out. The first is their emphasis on the ready availability of work in the industrial-era, and the idea that you could 'walk out of your job on a Friday and walk into a new one on the Monday' [George, 19, Unemployed] or 'just go door-to-door and somebody would take you on straight away' [Mac, 27, Chef] was a common one. The participants paint a picture of Walker as a place in which employment opportunities were so abundant that a job could be treated with a disregard that would be inconceivable today and where ties of community and patronage were strong enough that going through the process of applying for work was an unnecessary formality. Given the historical centrality of shipbuilding to the economic and cultural identity of the East End, it was this industry in particular that the participants mobilised in service of this narrative. Over a cup of coffee in a community-run café in Walker, Jack told me that:

> [Jack, 26, Self-Employed] 'There was places like Swan Hunter, the shipyards at Walker and Walkergate, and they were massive, they employed tens of thousands of people, it's hard to wrap you're head around it.'

The participants did not, however, limit themselves to discussing shipbuilding. As we had a pint in a run-down local pub, Ian talked about what he called the 'three pillars' of employment in the East End. Although his background as a trade unionist and a Labour Party activist likely played a part in his more sophisticated understanding of the history of the area, he was by no means the only person who was aware of this heritage, even if none of them captured it in quite such a pithy way:

> [Ian, 26, Trade Unionist] 'You had three pillars here, Swans, which was the biggest yard, Parsons, which made turbines and is now the Siemens factory, and Wills, which was a cigarette factory, and everybody from Heaton, Byker, Walker, Walkergate, everybody would go to work there.'

The second aspect of the responses of Ethan, Jack, and Finn that it is worth considering is their belief that industrial work brought material rewards that enabled a degree

personal and familial security. They are certainly not wrong on this count. As Cowie and Heathcott (2003: 5) note, 'mobilised into the service of value-added, durable goods production, industrial capital provided the basis of a limited but nevertheless expanding prosperity for workers', while Weis (2004: 13) argues that the 'male breadwinner model of employment, normalised by Fordism and institutionalised by agreements such as the family wage, began to decline with the onset of deindustrialisation in the mid-1980s'. The yearning of the participants for a time in which work was well-remunerated and allowed people to support their family was evident in statements such as 'it were easier to make money and get hours' [Ben, 25, Unemployed] and 'there used to be jobs for normal blokes which would let them take care of their family' [Dennis, 29, Outreach Worker], and like Ethan, Jack, and Finn, there was an emphasis on the well-remunerated nature of readily-available industrial work.

The third aspect of the responses of Ethan, Jack, and Finn that it is worth drawing-out is the understanding of Finn that industrial work involved the kind of training and required a degree of skill that is largely absent from the world of work with which people from Walker are generally familiar. This is evident in his claim that 'it were skilled work as well, you can't really get jobs like that now', a statement which speaks to contemporary debates about the 'vanishing middle', the idea that from the 1980s onwards, sweeping changes in the economy, including the advancement of technology, outsourcing of jobs overseas, and contractions that have occurred in manufacturing has seen a decline in the employment share of middle-skill employment (Tüzemen & Willis, 2013). Finn was not the only person to draw attention to the kind of skilled work that was once associated with shipbuilding. In an interview in which he veered between claiming that he was 'not interested' in the industrial past and talking about its benefits, Liam told me that:

> [Liam, 22, Unemployed] 'You didn't need money for those old jobs, you just needed practical skills, and people around here are practical. Give me a hammer and a drill and I'm happy as Larry. Most people don't wanna sit down and read all day and they didn't used to have to and everyone I know they never got their qualifications, they just got good work in the shipyards.'

Once again, the emphasis is on applied and practical skills rather than formal education in an employment market which is increasingly hollowed out and polarised, characterised

by the proliferation of jobs that are high-skill and high-wage and low-skill and low-wage. The responses considered above – and their emphasis on the availability of work, the material rewards that came with it, and the level of skill involved – speak to the fact that the nostalgia many of the participants expressed was for a specific epoch, that in which Fordism began to take root. This meant a world of work that required few if any educational credentials, involved muscular labour and physical craftsmanship, and was characterised by decent pay and security alongside a socio-cultural world that offered abundant opportunities for things like autonomous education, mutual aid, and self-help (Gilbert, 2008). As Erll (2011: 11) argues with regards to nostalgia more generally, it tells us more about the circumstances, demands, and needs of the present than it does about the past, and the longing of the participants for the certainties and intelligibility of this era must be understood in relation to the precarity and uncertainty that of the 'crisis-laden present' (Smith, 1999: 4). It is to this that the attention of this chapter will now turn.

4.2.1 'Nay Work, Nay Chance of Making Things Better': Smokestack Nostalgia in the 'Crisis-Laden Present'

Erll (2011: 14) argues that, despite the complexity of the terminology that is mobilised in discussions about the kind of 'remembering' that the participants engaged in, there are two generally agreed-upon characteristics. Firstly, that it is in a large part a (re)construction and, secondly, that it is inextricably connected to the present. According to this understanding memories are not objective images of a past reality but are subjective, selective, and shaped above all else by the interests and needs of the present. The turbulence of the post-industrial present has led to the proliferation of narratives about the past (Thorleiffson, 2016) as people draw-on the myths and stories of the industrial-era to provide hope, inspiration, and guidance in the face of hardship and an uncertain future (Smith, 1999). Strangleman (2007: 102) notes that the longing of people in 'post-traumatic communities' (Gest, 2016) for a past in which industrial workers were well-paid, enjoyed good pensions, and expected long-term job security is 'not only understandable, but completely rational' in a present characterised by precarity and uncertainty. Among my participants, there seemed to be a profound sense that the present had little to offer them and that the future was non-negotiable. In a conversation with Dennis, an Outreach Worker who was born-and-raised in Walker and had been working at the coalface for most of his adult life in trying to address and mitigate the challenges that the area faces, I was told that:

[Dennis, 29, Outreach Worker] 'There's no such thing as a permanent job. It makes it difficult to start a family, pay your mortgage, plan a holiday. How can you invest in the future when you can't see more than a couple of months ahead? There's nay jobs, nay work, nay chance of making things better.'

In this context, turning to a past against which the inadequacies of the present can be measured and evaluated makes sense. Since the 1980s, broad social and economic transformations including the decline of industry, the rise of service sector employment, and the marginalisation of working-class culture have turned places like Walker into 'spaces of advanced marginality', isolated and bounded territories characterised by class decomposition, housing degradation, poverty, social problems, and unemployment – or as Wacquant (2007: 8) terms them, 'leprous bad-lands at the heart of the post-Fordist, post-Keynesian city that are disconnected from the local and national economy'. Dennis went on to note that:

[Dennis, 29, Outreach Worker] 'We are the most deprived ward in the city, we have the highest long-term unemployment, we have some of the worst crime, we have the most children taken into care.'

Walker is now home to former industrial labourers made expendable by technological innovations and the spatial redistribution of productive activities, low-skill, low-wage workers in the deregulated service sectors, the perennial holders of fixed-term contracts, the unemployed and the long-term recipients of benefits, and hustlers living off the black-market economy, and it is such people that Standing (2011) terms the 'precariat' whose existence is defined by a lack of predictability or security and who relate their sense of deprivation and exclusion to a lost past. While it is debatable whether the kinds of people with which I was working can be considered a 'new class' (Reich, 2017), the participants did frequently demonstrate this tendency to look back to a time when jobs were readily-available and well-remunerated in a present where they are poorly-paid, insecure, temporary, and low-skill. Indeed, Cam noted as much. As we had a beer after a boxing session at the local gym we met at, he told me that:

[Cam, 28, Merchant Navy] 'I mean, think about it, look at what Walker is like now and the kinds of jobs that most people have, I'm lucky to have a career, but it's not exactly surprising that people think things used to be better, is it? They're probably right as well, to be honest with you.'

In this response, Cam draws a direct and unambiguous connection between the 'smokestack nostalgia' that he sees in many of his peers – a tendency that he was in fact fairly critical of, seeing it as something of a distraction that did nothing to 'help people pay the rent or put food on the table' – and the exclusion and marginalisation experienced by many residents of Walker contemporarily. He was not the only one to do so. In an interview conducted over his lunch-break, college student and self-described 'politics geek' Niall followed a similar if more sympathetic line of thinking, telling me that:

> [Niall, 19, College Student] 'It would almost be a bit weird if people didn't look back to the past as a good thing, d'you not reckon? Like, I'm planning on going to uni, but if you don't leave Walker, there's nowt to do here, and then you think about shipbuilding, y'know, it were a job for life, it were well-paid, so I don't blame them, and I do it myself as well.'

In their statements, Cam and Niall echo the belief of Strangleman (2007: 100) that a longing for the industrial past is understandable and logical in a precarious and uncertain present, and while few of the other participants drew this connection so explicitly, it was not difficult to see it playing out across the interviews. In the quotes discussed in the previous section and in countless other conversations not included in this thesis, lamentations about the loss of the industrial past were frequently accompanied by a denigration of life in the present, with the participants demonstrating time after time the tendency discussed by Erll (2011) when it comes to the kind of 'remembering' that they engaged in – that must be understood above all else in light of the circumstances and demands of the present. That is not to say that the participants engaged in uncritical and unthinking 'smokestack nostalgia', and as is explored in the coming sections, they frequently demonstrated a considerable understanding of the painful complexities of the historical working-class experience.

4.3 'You Wouldn't Catch Me Dead in a Yard': Beyond Sanitisation and Simplification

Huyssen (2003: 3) argues that one of the seemingly permanent laments of contemporary Western societies concerns the 'loss of a better past, the memory of living in a securely circumscribed place, with a sense of stable boundaries and a place bound culture, with its regular flow of time and a core of permanent relations'. This was certainly so in the case of my research, as the previous

section has explored with reference to the longing of the participants for the security and certainty that came with industrial work. Huyssen (2006: 11) has further developed this idea, suggesting that that those who feel a deep and intimate attachment to the past frequently 'romanticise and simplify' those places and times that they refer back to and invoke. This line of thinking is a common one. Radstone (2005: 134), for example, suggests that that the feelings associated with looking back to the past generally reflect an 'indiscriminate idealisation that has led to denunciations of them as sentimental, escapist, and inauthentic' – a critique of viewing the past through 'rose-tinted glasses' that Atia and Davis (2010: 181) take one step further in saying that 'it can be reactionary at best and deeply exclusionary and atavistic at worst'.

This idea that 'smokestack nostalgia' is by definition romanticising and simplifying is one that has also been pursued. Orange (2014) argues that those who still reside in 'post-traumatic communities' (Gest, 2014) that were built on and through the illusory permanence of industry mythologise their shared past and idealise or overlook the painful complexities of the historical working-class experience. It is certainly true in the case of my research that a sense of detachment related to the passage of time allowed the participants to disavow some of the less savoury aspects of industrialism, from its ruinous environmental costs (Stearns, 2013) and the negative impacts it had upon the health of those who laboured in its factories and toiled in its mines (Szreter, 2004) to its intimate connection with British imperialism and overseas empire building (Darwin, 2011). When asked whether they could think of any improvements between the present and the time when their grandparents were growing up in Walker there were a handful of participants who could think of no drawbacks that came with living around and working in the shipyards. In conversations facilitated by the graphic elicitation method of presenting the participants with a series of concentric circles and asking them to place themselves and their grandparents according to their place in British society, with the middle of the circle representing centrality and its outer reaches exclusion and marginalisation, I was told that:

> [Ethan, 33, Handyman] Better? Erm, I'm not too sure really. I don't think anything is better, to be honest with you. Nah, nothing's better, not to my mind, anyway.'

When I pushed him on this statement, suggesting that the shipyards had been bad for the local environment, polluting the river and the air, he responded:

> [Ethan, 33, Handyman] 'But I'm not really bothered about any of that, so I stand by what I said, nothing's better than what it was back then, it's all about the work what they had, decent work.'

Responses of this sort – which acknowledged some of the negatives of the industrial era and the work that came with it, but which ultimately discarded as being not significant when compared to the benefits – were equally as common as those which denied any knowledge of shortcomings altogether:

> [Niall, 19, College Student] 'Bring it all back, I say, I understand the environmental impacts, but get the mines open, get the yards open, there's still a gap in the workforce. Off the record, I don't give a fuck about the environment, I mean, I do, I'm half joking, but we need so much more investment and jobs, so if that's the alternative, then make it happen.'

In the responses of both Ethan and Niall, it is possible to see the idea surfacing once again that the industrial era brought with it an abundance of employment opportunities that were well remunerated, along with the suggestion that it came with few negative externalities. However, the participants also frequently went beyond mythologizing the shared past and idealising the painful complexities of the historical working-class experience. The idea that nostalgia is not something suspect but is complex and nuanced (Strangleman, 2013) held in the case of my research, and the participants frequently showed that their understanding of the shared industrial past often went beyond being reactionary, sentimental, escapist, and inauthentic (Radstone, 2008: 31) and revealed itself to be complex and multi-faceted. They did this, firstly, by discussing the downsides of the industrial era and, secondly, by engaging with it in a way that went beyond a longing for secure and well-remunerated employment. That is not to say that this tendency was not evidenced. As discussed previously, it represented an important part of their understanding of the industrial past and was 'logical and understandable' (Strangleman, 2012) given the precarity and uncertainty that was a part of their present circumstances. Their 'smokestack nostalgia', however, was not reducible to this, and it is to each of these problematisations that the attention of this chapter will now turn.

4.3.1 'Dirty and Dangerous': Industry and its Discontents

The idea that working-class people living in 'post-traumatic communities' (Gest, 2016) such as Walker tend to see the industrial past through rose-tinted glasses and distort and falsify it is a common one. Dudley (1994), for example, argues that blue-collar work is subject to the same kind of romanticising imagery as more distant but nonetheless passing ways of life, while O'Hara (2011) points to the perversion of historical fact in accounts about it. This was certainly evident in the responses of Ethan and Niall discussed in the previous section. Cowie and Heathcott (2003: 5) best surmise the arguments of those concerned about the distortions and discrepancies that are apparently a problematic of 'smokestack nostalgia' and which my participants demonstrated at times. They discuss the need to 'strip industrial work of its broad-shouldered, social-realist patina and see it for what it was: tough work that people did because it paid well and was located within their communities'. Yet this is precisely what the participants frequently did. Some of them expressed a nuanced and balanced understanding of the industrial past in general. In what was in fact a series of short interviews spread over the day as he ran outreach sessions, Dennis told me that:

> [Dennis, 29, Outreach Worker] 'It were hard like, I think even though we've got it tough now, it was even tougher back then, I think even if they had a lot more work and security, from what my family tell me, it wasn't a bed of roses back then either.'

Others discussed more specific negatives and shortcomings, such as the health problems that came with working in the shipyards and the environmental impacts that work of this sort had on the local environment:

> [Ollie, 29, Taxi Driver] 'It would have been proper hard labour like, I'm not sure I'd be up to it - look at the size of me! But aye, they used to work with asbestos and that, it were proper dangerous, like I said one of my grandads died down there and I know loads of lads who could say similar things.'

> [Jack, 26, Self-Employed] 'I remember when I was growing up, the Tyne was an absolute shit-tip, for want of a better phrase, not anymore, you see people fishing in it, you see people swimming in it, you wouldn't have seen that even when I was growing up, and it wasn't all that long ago.'

Although it is important to stress that the participants still tended to see industrial work in a favourable light, attitudes such as these were common and demonstrate that many of them understood that working in the shipyards was not the 'bed of roses' [Dennis, 29, Outreach Worker] that some of their peers believed and that they recognised that those who suffered most from the associated dirtiness and danger were people like themselves. They were not wrong on this front. As Stevenson (1993) shows, the Industrial Revolution was overlain by a complex process of comment, criticism, and assessment. Contemporary authors like Dickens and Disraeli wrote of mass factory towns marked by degradation and squalor, governed by the regime of the factory and the pace of the machine, with environments polluted and despoiled and inhabitants rendered anonymous and dehumanised. Although the birth of the welfare state and the emergence of trade unions from the early-twentieth-century improved them somewhat, life in industrial cities could still be 'nasty, brutish, and short' (Renwick, 2018). Contrary to the claims of Dudley (1994) and O'Hara (2011), my research suggests that young working-class men residing in communities that were built on and through the illusory permanence of industry understand well that the sort of work for which they are nostalgic came with significant negatives – they were, in fact, more than able to strip it of its 'broad-shouldered, socialist-realist patina' and see it as tough work that people did because it was well-paid and readily available. In the minds of many of the participants, it seemed, whatever the negatives of industrial work were, they were balanced out by the positives that it brought to both people like them and the community that they lived in, a tendency that reflects their present circumstances and which Strangleman (2007: 102) argues is not just understandable but is entirely logical.

4.3.2 'There's Nowhere for People Like Us': Spaces and Institutions for Young Working-Class Men

My research also suggests that the kind of 'smokestack nostalgia' exhibited by my participants was about more than just to a longing for secure and well-remunerated jobs. While this was an important aspect of their longing for the industrial past, they also frequently talked about more collectivised and unionised workplaces or discussed the social and cultural life that came with working in the shipyards and factories that once lined the banks of the River Tyne. For authors concerned with the 'traditional' working-class culture thought to have prevailed in the first half of the twentieth-century,

the link between industrial workplace and local community seemed axiomatic. Clarke (1979), for example, has argued that working-class communities developed in those places where there was a close, dove-tailed relationship between work and non-work. From the late-twentieth-century, however, observers such as Young and Wilmott (1973) saw this link less clearly and argued that the home had become the key locus of working-class culture as post-war affluence enabled a turn towards more consumerist and privatised lifestyles. The relatively low prominence of industrial workplaces in discussions of working-class community is starting to change once again as it is realised that those places where affluence and suburbanisation were most affecting the contours of working-class life were in the South and that in much of Britain the 'traditional proletarian way of life continued to persist and resonate' (Savage, 2010). Studies from Ramsden (2015) and Batty, Finn, and Green (2011) have shown that working-class people contemporarily connect a perceived decline in the quality of community life with the historical decline of specific sectors of industry and the particular dependence of some neighbourhoods on a small number of predominant firms that have disappeared. The idea that industrial workplaces continue to play an important part in the social and cultural lives of communities certainly resonated with a number of my participants. Niall, one of the young men I interviewed who more explicitly acknowledged his desire for a return to a way of life associated with twentieth-century industrial urbanism, told me that:

> [Niall, 19, College Student] 'I think there was more community that came with those jobs, there was all the social stuff like the workies and the sports teams and all of that. I think when everyone was working together, in Swans or whatever, and there was money in the community, that's why.'

In this statement, Niall identified two aspects that underpinned the working-class culture that existed in a symbiotic relationship with the factory, shipyard, and steel mill – the money that it injected into communities that built their identity and prosperity on and through industry and the social institutions and spaces that this work supported. As Ramsden (2015) argues, industrial work not only provided the material rewards that supported 'the workies and the sports teams' but also facilitated and even relied upon their creation and existence, which was underpinned by the bonds and solidarity forged amidst the chaos of the shop floor and in the heat of the foundry. This was a line of thinking picked up by Cam, who told me that:

[Cam, 28, Merchant Navy] 'There were the working men's clubs, I mean, you can't have those if nobody is working, the pubs that relied on people coming off shift, all those places for people like us, they're all gone, the only place like that left is the boxing club, and that's dying a death as well, it seems like there are places for everyone other than normal blokes.'

The responses of Niall and Cam show that the narratives of loss expounded by the participants were not reducible to a longing for readily-available and well-remunerated work but were in fact complex and nuanced, extending to the disappearance of spaces and institutions that were a crucial part of twentieth-century working-class life and whose survival relied on mass industrial employment. It is in some ways unsurprising that working men's clubs and their disappearance recurred across the interview. As Cherrington (2009: 187) argues, they represented physical and cultural spaces in which working-class men both experienced and shaped the material conditions and social relations that defined class. Cherrington (2012: 14) goes on to argue that despite the perception among middle-class observers that 'workies' were 'just places for beer and bingo', they in fact operated at the boundaries of public and private life, blurring the distinction and providing social, welfare, and educational activities for communities that even in the heyday of social democracy were under-resourced. According to Hall (2017), working men's clubs were thriving bastions of local community and sociability which cultivated and relied on strong ties with local industry and which provided an atmosphere of friendly semi-formality that engendered solidarity and empowerment. A number of the participants reminisced about going to the local workies with 'wor granda when I was a bairn' [George, 22, Administrative Assistant] or 'going for a couple of pints with the old man when I turned eighteen' [Tim, 19, Unemployed] in what has been a rite of passage for generations. At a time when young, working-class men such as the participants find themselves increasingly spatially excluded and marginalised in the public realm (Beider, 2011), both priced-out of regenerated city-centres and viewed with a certain suspicion by the middle-class consumers and tourists that they are increasingly geared towards (McDowell & Harris, 2018), it is easy to see why they would cast back to a time when places existed that catered to people such as themselves.

As well as cultivating and relying on strong ties with local industry, working men's clubs were also closely associated with trade unions. As Todd (2014) notes, many clubs had close links with local union branches and their memberships tended to overlap significantly, with both providing access to homosocial collectivity and meeting a

demand for autonomy and control. Perhaps it is no surprise, then, that the narratives of loss emanating from the accounts of some of the participants also extended to trade unions, defined by the pioneering social reformers Sidney and Beatrice Webb (1894) as 'continuous associations of wage-earners that exist for the purpose of maintaining and improving the conditions of their working lives' in what is even now consider to be the most far-reaching and influential studies (Reid, 2005) of these bastions of mid-twentieth-century working-class life. Dennis was one of those who discussed unions and their values in our interview:

> [Dennis, 29, Outreach Worker] 'Shipbuilders stuck with shipbuilders and that was because of the unions, people coming together and if one of yous went on strike, everybody did, whereas now people tend to look out for themselves. I think back then, there was more people who were willing to step up, if someone is out of the job now, then it's a free-for-all, which doesn't make sense, we need to look out for each other more now that there's less jobs and the pay is worse.'

In this statement, Dennis draws the same kind of unflattering comparison between the insecure and precarious work that predominates in Walker now and the readily-available, secure, and well-remunerated jobs that were available in the shipyards that were discussed previously in this chapter. However, he goes beyond a simple longing for this kind of work, revealing an understanding that it existed in conversation with institutions of working-class politics and sociability that – whatever their failings – sought to ensure the rights of their members. Nick, one of the more socially upwardly mobile of my participants, was another of the participants who discussed unions with me, and he did not let his white-collar profession stand in the way of his blue-collar politics:

> [Nick, 29, Insolvency Administrator] 'Back then we were fighting politically, I'm not just one of these people who sits back and bashes Maggy Thatcher, but I do think the unions helped get power for people up here, it helped them get represented in their communities and looked after them in the workplace.'

Trade unions achieved their greatest status half a century ago, in the context of large-scale industrial production and the rise of the Keynesian welfare state, but they have been on the defensive since the late-twentieth-century as they have lost membership, collective bargaining power, influence on government, and legitimacy as the economy has increasingly been organised around flexible, insecure, and informal employment

(Paret, 2015). In responses such as those of Dennis and Nick, there is a clear sense of longing for the collectivism, representation, and solidarity that the union movement was built-on. Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman (2018) argue that unions provided a collective 'voice' through which working-class people could counter unilateral management control and brought a measure of democracy to the employment relationship and constituted a form of 'countervailing power' to the socio-economic dominance of capital in what could be a dehumanising political economy. While they acknowledge that this is a somewhat romanticised image of the movement, it is just such narratives that persisted in the accounts of the participants.

As was previously noted, Erll (2011) argues that memories are not objective images of a past reality but are subjective, selective, and shaped by the needs and interests of the present. This is as true of the sort of nostalgia for collectivism, representation, and solidarity that some of the participants demonstrated as it is for anything else. In both of the above responses, the idea of what unions were and how they operated is sanitised, glossing over some of the movements less savoury aspects such as the opportunities it provided for corruption and nepotism (Fitch, 2006), the marginalisation and exclusion that women within its ranks experienced (Ledwith, 2009), and the racist encounters suffered by many of its non-white members (Liinpää *et al*, 2015). In the response of Dennis, meanwhile, the intimate connection that exists between what is remembered and the circumstances in which that remembering is done is evident in his observation that 'we need to look out for each other more now that there's less jobs and the pay is worse'. He was not the only one to make such an observation. Rob [22, Administrative Assistant] told me that 'if anything, we need unions more now', while Luke [28, Joiner] argued that 'not many in my line of work are in unions, but we still need them'. The way in which the participants understood trade unions was in relation to their current circumstances and they spoke to the idea that the movement has the potential to make the greatest difference in the parts of the private sector in which many marginal people living in peripheral places find themselves working and in which it is least influential. Other participants talked to me about collective organising and bargaining in the context of a world that for working-class people is increasingly characterised by precarity and uncertainty. In an impassioned tirade Ian, a trade unionist and Labour Party member told me that,:

[Ian, 26, Trade Unionist] 'I mean my branch secretary is alright, but he's probably in his late sixties, retired, former shipbuilder, and I just wonder what he knows about zero hours contracts or the rise of precarious work, y'know? What can he do for a young person from Walker, which is where he's from actually, who works a few hours a week at Sports Direct, who does evenings as a Deliveroo rider, who pulls pints on the weekend?'

This response is unique among those participants that discussed unions in that Ian, as a unionist himself, sees the limitations of conventional means and methods of organising, and he is more tempered in his praise of and longing for the kind of top-down, rigidly hierarchical unionism that predominated in mid-twentieth-century industrial communities and workplaces. Nonetheless, he too recognises that unionism was an important part of the historical working-class experience and does not reduce blue-collar work to 'a good day's pay for a good day's work'. This neatly surmises the argument of this section, which has pushed the idea that the participants were in fact able to strip industrial work of its 'broad-shouldered, social-realist patina' and appreciate that it was 'tough work that people did because it paid well and was located within their communities' (Cowie & Heathcott, 2003: 5). Many of young men with whom I was working demonstrated complex, multi-faceted, and nuanced understandings of the historical working-class experience, discussing the dirty and dangerous side of industrial work, longing for spaces and institutions such as working men's clubs in which they could be themselves, and lamenting the loss of workplace collectivism, representation, and solidarity that has accompanied the slow but seemingly irreversible decline of the trade union movement. In the next section, this chapter explores the corollary of this more enlightened and sophisticated understanding of the industrial past and interrogates the tendency that some of the participants revealed towards atavistic and exclusionary understandings of it.

4.4 'I Wouldn't Have Wanted to Grow-Up in the East End when my Parents Did': Reactive Narratives and their Discontents

This chapter has sought to demonstrate that when the present is unclear and uncertain and the future presents itself as non-negotiable, it can be tempting for people to retreat in the 'warm, safe waters of the past' (Lilla, 2016: 5) and comforting to 'escape into a sense of constructed familiarity free from the chaos and uncertainty of the real lived

experience' (Cartland, 2018: 1). It has also attempted to present such deep and intimate attachments to the past as not just understandable but as unproblematic. However, this is not always the case. If the previous section showed that the kind of 'smokestack nostalgia' demonstrated by the participants was not, in fact, 'reactionary at best and deeply exclusionary and atavistic at worst' (Atia & Davis, 2010: 181), then this one will consider those instances in my research when the participants demonstrated exactly this propensity. The focus here is on those who cast the industrial past as a time of whitewashed homogeneity, as well as those who argued back against this, pointing not just to the long history of migration to the North East and to Walker, but also to the fact that this era was marked by a host of issues that challenge the idea that it was a time of homogeneity and social solidarity.

4.4.1 'It's Not Walker Anymore': Racism and Reaction in Nostalgia

As Forkert (2017: 20) notes, a longing for the past often implies a mourning of a mythical social solidarity which was based on shared ethnic and cultural homogeneity, where people lived in close-knit communities, knew their neighbours, and left their front doors open. This narrative is widespread – it is evoked by post-liberal academics such as Goodhart (2013) and Murray (2018) as well as populist politicians like Nigel Farage (Ford & Goodwin, 2014) – and it was one that was voiced by a handful of the participants. It was Ethan who brought this uncomfortable topic up most frequently and discussed it most passionately:

> [Ethan, 33, Handyman] 'Things have changed a lot since my grandparents and your grandparents lived here. A hell of a lot. It's not Walker anymore, really. There's more coloured people around here now than there is white people.'

This is, in fact, incorrect – according to the most recent census in 2011, 7.3% of the population of Walker is 'non-white' – but the anxieties expressed in this response are nonetheless worth considering. The idea that Walker had somehow been lost or stolen is one that recurred across a number of interviews, and it seems to mirror an emerging sense of displacement and disempowerment found in such communities that Taggart (2004: 269) argues stems from a desire to return to the old social and ethno-cultural certainties of the 'heartland', an ahistorical, retrospectively constructed, and idealised conception of the community that emphasises its unitary and singular nature.

Duyvendak (2011: 18) builds on this idea, arguing that in those places where 'working-class natives' remain in the majority, the paradoxical longing for a homogenous community expressed by those who are 'uneasy with newly arrived neighbours who have unknown habits and speak in foreign tongues' is a deeply nostalgic one that portrays the past as a 'closed and conflict-free whole populated by citizens who basically all looked the same and shared beliefs, norms, and traditions'. Ethan further demonstrated this tendency in other instances and interactions throughout the interview, which at times became heated:

> [Ethan, 33, Handyman] 'It boils your piss when you walk down the street and they're standing there with their wine and their spliffs, mumbling and jumbling. They come here, and they get everything, and we can't get nowt. I live on £76 a week, they get £300 or £400.'

There are countless explanatory models that are mobilised to justify and legitimise antipathy and hostility towards immigrants, but Stephan *et al* (1999: 2222) argue that these can be broadly divided into two camps: on the one hand, 'cultural threat arguments' that focus on the perceived harm that they cause to morals, norms, and values of the host country; on the other, 'realist threat arguments' that emphasise the supposed threats that they pose to the socio-economic well-being of the 'native' populace. Ethan begins by drawing on culturalist narratives, talking about the social problems related to drinking and drugs that immigrants cause in Walker. Brown (2016: 315) argues that anxieties about crime, moral decay, and social disorder are consistent features of anti-immigrant sentiment, and although decades of empirical research indicates that this fear has no grounding in reality (Bianchi *et al*, 2012), Kauff *et al* (2015: 641) suggest that it is nonetheless used as a proxy issue by which immigrants are judged on the basis of their perceived assimilation and integration. If they are seen to be 'not playing by the rules' they are especially likely to be seen as a threat and to thus become targets of prejudice.

Having drawn on culturalist narratives, Ethan then moved on to realist ones, discussing the unfairness of benefit payments and invoking the well-established – and again falsifiable (Vargas-Silva, 2016) – idea that immigrants use of public services is disproportionately higher than the contributions they make to tax revenues. Rydgren (2008: 5) describes this as a kind of 'welfare chauvinism' that casts immigrants and

'natives' as being in a competition for scarce economic resources in which the former are illegitimate competitors against those who are entitled to keep the entire cake for themselves. In this imagining, immigration is a zero-sum game in which one side loses and another side gains. It is also not limited to welfare, extending to the labour market. Helbling and Kriesi (2014: 595) discuss the resentment that people often feel towards immigrants due to the economic threat that they are perceived to pose, which is based on the idea that they put downward pressure on wages and increase unemployment rates. This attitude was one that George and Harry verbalised in an unexpected 'paired interview' in which two participants showed up together. As we discussed the companies that have sprung-up along the river in place of the old shipyards in the last decade that service the offshore oil and gas and renewables industries, I was told that:

> [Harry, 24, Unemployed] 'It's all changed now, it's not really us lot that work down there anymore. A few people I know work there, but not doing the kind of stuff we used to. There's a lot of Polish people who work there, a lot of foreigners.'

When I pushed Harry on this statement, suggesting that, in my understanding at least, the type of industry that now predominates on the Tyne requires education and training above all else, standing in stark contrast to the kind of semi-skilled work that once predominated and which welcomed school leavers with relatively low levels of educational attainment, George cut in, telling me that:

> [George, 19, Unemployed] 'Not if you know how to work it, y'know what I mean? And they know how to work it, especially the Eastern European ones, so they get all the work, and we don't get nowt. Like he said, it's not like what it used to be.'

Like Ethan, George and Harry look back to a time of mythical social solidarity based on shared ethnic and cultural homogeneity, and their responses were marked by a longing for the certainties of the industrial past, as can be seen in statements like 'not doing the kind of stuff we used to' and 'it's not like what it used to be'. Like the participants whose experiences were considered previously in this chapter, they were understandably nostalgic for a period in which work was more available and secure – at the time of the interview, George was unemployed, having lost his job as a mechanic several months previously, while Harry had never has a job – but where they differ

from those previously discussed accounts is the racialised frame of reference through which they understand their displacement and disempowerment. While Gest (2016) relates this to the phenomenon of 'outnumbering', the idea that people in white working-class are reacting and responding to the steady deterioration of their numbers in their neighbourhoods and cities, this explanation does not hold water in the case of Walker, which is overwhelmingly white and 'native', or Newcastle, which is remarkably homogenous when compared to other large British cities.

Virdee and McGeever (2018: 1802) offer a more convincing explanation, that the kind of racialised nostalgia evident in the responses of Ethan, George, and Harry is underpinned by a 'politics of resentment' that derives from structural decline and class decomposition in those communities that were built on and through the illusory permanence of industry and which are now peripheralised and marginalised spaces marked by the physical and socio-economic scars of deindustrialisation. They argue that from the mid-1980s onwards, the prospect and reality of downward socio-economic mobility among the working-class has produced injuries and experiences that have increasingly been understood in a racialised frame that resonates with the cultural and political logic that a globalised and unrecognisable world is something that ought to be retreated from. According to this line of thinking, this is a defensive exclusionary imaginary that is grounded in a bitter resentment toward the companies that abandoned their communities and a government that did little to stop them leaving but can only be articulated in relation to the presence of a growing share of visible minorities who are altering the complexion of their communities.

It is also worth noting that, although many of the participants did not express the same kind of openly atavistic sentiments as Ethan, Harry, and George, the longing for the industrial past that they expressed in our conversations was nonetheless frequently shot through with reactionary values. Previous sections have described the young men with whom I worked as being members of the 'dispossessed working-class' (Byrne, 1995) who had been denied an inheritance enjoyed by previous generations which they felt that they deserved – that being 'good' work, the socio-cultural formations that it supported, and the certainties and intelligibility of the era more broadly. While this was an understandable reaction to the precarity and uncertainty of their present circumstances, this attitude betrayed an entitlement that many would argue can only be understood in light of the fact that my participants were all white males. Kimmel

(2017: 1), for example, argues that for the last century, people like the young men with whom I worked have been raised to expect unparalleled social and economic privilege and that many of them now suffer form an 'aggrieved entitlement', a sense that the benefits that they believe they were due have been snatched away from them.

While this 'aggrieved entitlement' does sometimes manifest itself in in explicitly reactionary ways – as misogyny, racism, or xenophobia – it can also operate at a more profound and subtle register (Hall, 2004). In the accounts of the young men with whom I worked, there were frequent complaints that there were 'no jobs for normal blokes' [Ben, 25, Unemployed] or that all that was available was 'working in the supermarket for pennies a couple of times a week' [Jack, 26, Self-Employed]. Such attitudes were common, and although Ben or Jack never went on to express the kind of exclusionary attitudes discussed previously in this section, they nonetheless understood 'good' work not just as being well-remunerated, secure, and semi-skilled, but also in a gendered and racialised way. Their issue was less with the existence of insecure and precarious work than it was with the fact that they were now expected to do it. As Jubany and Castellanos (2020: 20) argue, work in the insecure and informal economy has historically been the reserve of immigrant populations and women, and it seemed that for many of my participants, this stratification of the labour market along racial-gender lines persisted, with the only difference being that they were now forced by shifting socioeconomic circumstances to do so themselves. Although they did not express the same kind of nativism as Ethan, Harry, and George, the 'smokestack nostalgia' of many of the participants nonetheless betrayed a certain reactionist tendency.

4.4.2 'I Hate the Idea that we Don't Have Immigrants Up Here': Challenging Reactive Narratives

Having considered the experiences and responses of participants with a more 'reactionary, exclusionary, and atavistic' (Atia & Davis, 2010: 181) conception of the shared past, the attention of this chapter will now turn to those who eschewed this tendency which Loveday (2014: 721) suggests is too often seen as being an inescapable and inevitable part of the 'smokestack nostalgia'. They fell into two broad camps – the first being those who recognised that the Walker and Newcastle of 'the good old days' were not, in fact, the lost idylls of ethnic and cultural purity that they are sometimes portrayed as, the second being those who felt that it would have been

undesirable to live in the kind of conformist communities that are often cast back to and invoked and which existed in a symbiotic relationship with workplaces organised along Fordist lines. Each of these will be tackled in turn. The intention here is to demonstrate that, just as some of the participants have a view of the past that is ahistorical and atavistic, others have conceptions that are more inclusive or which show an awareness that a more homogenous society would have had a less desirable side that often goes unconsidered in the understandings of the sort of young men with whom I was working.

Virdee and McGeever (2018: 1806) have written about the urgency of unsettling both the academic and public consensus which equates the history and the making of the working-class with the white male worker. He argues that from the seventeenth-century onwards England – and then Britain – positioned itself at the centre of a plethora of social, economic, and political networks that ensured foodstuffs like tea, coffee, and sugar would come to form a staple part of our diets and that raw materials like cotton would help to power our Industrial Revolution. These networks also brought men and women from all corners of the world to the country. He goes on to suggest that this means an 'insular history' that treats the presence of immigrants as a kind of add-on that, while deserving of attention, does not alter the way in which key trends, episodes, and events are understood is inadequate. Work such as this bring in from the margins the idea that the working-class had a multi-ethnic character from the moment of its inception, demonstrating that former slaves of Africa-American and Caribbean descent, Irish Catholic labourers, Asian and Arabic lascars, and Jewish refugees fleeing antisemitic pogroms in the Tsarist Empire have been making their home in Britain for hundreds of years, long before the *Empire Windrush* docked at Tilbury in the summer of 1948. Meer (2015: 54) argues that work such as this is particularly timely and urgent at a time when 'both politicians and members of the public appear to be bleaching national narratives'. This is something that a number of the participants seemed to recognise. When discussing youth culture and music in the North East, Joe noted that while the regions small West Indian population meant that it had taken a different trajectory than in other English metropoles, this did not mean that it represented the sort of mythical 'heartland':

> [Joe, 25, Rapper / Outreach Worker] 'I hate the idea that we don't have any immigrants up here, so yeah, okay, the people that basically came over to be cheap labour were mostly Irish, but it's not just people like that, there's loads of Yemenis in Shields, there's loads of Jewish people in Gateshead.'

Taking each of these communities in turn, Yemenis started to settle in South Shields in the late-nineteenth-century, coming over as seamen to serve in the British merchant navy, which had a strong presence in the area, and staying on and integrating with the local population (Visram, 2002), while a Jewish presence began to emerge in the early-nineteenth-century as refugees fleeing pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe settled in both Gateshead and the Newcastle, although it is only the former that now has a sizeable, and indeed growing, population (Schama, 2017). Although Joe only discusses three high profile communities, neither of which are located in the East End, his response demonstrates an awareness that there is no 'year-zero for immigration' (Olusoga, 2017: 2) to the city, region, or country and that ethnic diversity is not the historically recent novelty that it is too often portrayed as but an important part of the national story. Nor was he the only one that evidenced such knowledge. Elaborating on a point that Joe skated over somewhat, a number of the participants talked about the important role that Irish immigration has played in the history of the North East generally and Walker specifically. Cam was one of a number of my participants of Irish descent, and he told me that:

> [Cam, 28, Merchant Navy] 'There's a lot of working-class Irish people up here, in the region and in Walker, if you meet someone Catholic around here, their family are probably Irish, they came here to work in the yards, that's why my great-grandad brought my grandad and his brothers over.'

Cam was not the only of the participants who talked to me about Irish migration to the North East. Displaying his characteristically sophisticated and wide-ranging understanding of the working-class history of the region, Ian informed me that:

> [Ian, 26, Trade Unionist] 'There's loads of Catholics, or at least there used to be, because during the Irish Famine a lot of people moved over here to work in the shipyards, they also went to places like County Durham to work on the coalfields.'

As Cooter (2005) has shown, for a little over one-hundred-years from the mid-nineteenth-century, Newcastle was the fourth most popular destination in Britain for Irish migrants to settle. The tide ebbed and flowed in response to economic, political, and social conditions, but Foster (1990: 5) argues that there were two major periods of exodus from Ireland: the first and most significant followed a series of disastrous potato crop failures in the 1840s, which led to one-million people emigrating to Britain; the second occurred between the 1930s and 1960s, as people escaped the poor

economic conditions that followed in the wake of the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. Britain, for its part, was the destination *par excellence* due to its booming industrial economy and the shortages of labour from which it suffered. Although the Irish diaspora is now seen as well integrated and enjoys the 'invisibility of whiteness' (Ghaill, 2000: 137), this has not always been the case. Hickman (1995: 20) is among those who argues that Irish Catholics in Britain constituted a clearly demarcated racialised minority and were cast as members of an inferior Celtic race that was incompatible with membership of a British nation underpinned by a dual allegiance to Protestantism and the idea of and Anglo-Saxon race.

While those Irish who chose to make Newcastle their home no doubt suffered from the same kind of exclusion and marginalisation that their countrymen did elsewhere in Britain – the so-called 'Garibaldi Riots' in 1866 were one high profile example of an outbreak of violence caused by a tension between the religion of the immigrants and the politics of the 'natives' (MacRalid, 2005) – an observer in the early-twentieth-century noted that 'of all the asylums to which the Irish fled after the great exodus of the 1840s, there was none in which, owing to many circumstances, they were able to ultimately find more favourable surroundings than Tyneside' (O'Greg, 1917). Cooter (2005: 5) suggests that the Irish experience in the North East was one in which Catholics suffered less for their religion, labourers inspired little antagonism, and nationalists provoked minimal hostility, and argues that the reason for this is that the region had a well-established English Catholic community, a long tradition of Liberalism, and an ambiguous relationship with Englishness, while the areas to which they moved to – places such as Walker - were heavily industrial and suffered from labour shortages which made their presence more welcomed than threatening.

Cam was not the only one of my participants whose family were not native to the North East. Mac [27, Chef], for example, was part of the regions 'huge Italian community', with his grandparents having come to Britain after fighting as Partisans in the Second World War, while Ben [25, Unemployed] told me that his paternal grandfather had arrived as a military émigré following the German and Soviet occupations of Poland and had never left. Both of these participants were well aware of the heterogeneous history of Newcastle. The sorts of responses discussed in this section show that, just as there were participants who ahistorically and atavistically cast back to a mythical era of shared ethnic and cultural homogeneity, there were also those whose conceptions were more accurate and

inclusive and who drew-on the multi-ethnic and trans-national heritage of the working-class communities of the city and the region. Having considered their responses, the attention of this section will now turn to those participants who also rejected exclusionary narratives about the past. The responses of Niall and Dave – the only openly gay participants that I interviewed - are particularly relevant here. Both felt that it would have been undesirable to grow up in the kind of conformist communities that are often romanticised by those with deep and intimate attachments to the industrial past, and the discussions that we had speaks to the argument of Forkert (2017: 20) that it is important to ask whose nostalgia is validated and whose lost community is being mourned. For the 'Other', whether conceived of in terms of ethnicity, religion, or sexuality, the post-war period was a time of overt and prevalent discrimination and prejudice:

> [Niall, 19, College Student] 'I wouldn't have wanted to grow up in the East End when my parents did. It can still be tough being gay around here, but working-class culture has changed a lot, I've had a very accepting experience with coming out, but I think even thirty-years ago it would have been different.'

As we discussed his sexuality and his experience of 'coming out', Niall – whose favourable view of the industrial past has been discussed previously – eschewed the tendency of many of the participants to juxtapose an inadequate present with an idealised past. Instead, he talked about how his 'Otherness' would have led to him being excluded and marginalised within his own community. The complexity of his connection to and understanding of the industrial past, which he looked back on nostalgically while simultaneously recognising that his life would have been more difficult and even dangerous, will be further discussed in the final section of this chapter. Dave also cast his personal experiences of being gay in Walker contemporarily in contrast with what his father had told him about his own upbringing:

> [Dave, 22, Administrative Assistant] 'From what my dad has told us, you didn't want to be different around here when he was my age or when my grandad was my age, I'm not saying that being gay in Walker is a laugh a minute, but I reckon it was a totally different kettle of fish back then.'

The epoch to which they are referring represents the moment when Fordism - as described by Gramsci (1934) in his essay *Americanism and Fordism* – triumphed and the new industrialism demanded the production of a 'new type of man' who was more

disciplined in his habits and less invested in the work process than his predecessors. The communities that grew alongside the factories and shipyards that were organised along Fordist lines were characterised by collectivism and a certain egalitarianism, but as Gilbert (2008: 42) argues, they were also marked by a level of conformism that means even today we remember the mid-twentieth-century as a time of monochromatic homogeneity. This culture created social conditions that excluded and marginalised gay people (Field, 1995) and found various types of difference extremely difficult to tolerate, in particular when it came to the new immigrants from the Commonwealth (Gillborn, 2010), and it is this aspect of industrial working-class culture that Niall and Dave disavowed and rejected. While both were aware of the multifarious benefits that shipbuilding brought to Walker, they also recognised that their lived experiences would have been marked by a great deal more homophobia.

In the above responses, Niall and Dave also discuss their relatively positive experiences with 'coming out' and being openly gay in a working-class community. This is borne out in the literature. McCormack (2014), for example, argues that the orthodox archetype of masculinity that has traditionally been associated with working-class youth – built around the 'three F's of football, fucking, and fighting' – is being subverted and replaced by attitudes and behaviours that are more accommodating and inclusive. Blanchard *et al* (2017: 121) connect these changing attitudes towards same-sex desire and gay identity with the decline of industry, which like Gilbert (2008: 42) they suggest has produced a markedly less conformist and more individualised culture that has created space where the expression of difference can be more readily practised. Although class still has a dampening effect on the development of 'inclusive masculinities', McCormack (2012: 10) argues that young men in post-industrial communities are now more likely to intellectualise pro-gay attitudes, condemn homophobia, behave in physically tactile and emotionally open ways, and include gay peers in a way that would have been unimaginable among their forebears and as can be seen in studies by the like of Willis (1979) and Mac an Ghaill (1994). This was in fact something I had seen play out in my role as a Community Outreach Worker, when I witnessed the casual homophobia of one of the children with which I was working being called out and condemned by his peers in a way that would have been unimaginable when I was growing-up. The discussions that I had with Niall and Dave about gayness and sexuality – as well as

the conversations that I had with Joe, Cam, and Ian on the multi-ethnic and trans-national history of the North East, Newcastle, and Walker - showed an awareness on the part of some participants, grounded in their own lived experiences, that the 'Golden Age' (Hobsbawm, 1995) in Walker had an exclusive side to it. Having considered these responses, the attention of this chapter will shift to consider the ways in which the responses of the participants veered between sanitising and simplifying and critical and nuanced, often within the space of a few minutes.

4.5 'At the End of the Day, there was Pros and Cons': Complexity and Multiplicity in 'Smokestack Nostalgia'

If the previous sections have presented the participants as falling firmly into one of two camps – those who were prone to sanitising and simplifying the past and who in a handful of cases tended to cast it in racist and reactive terms on the one hand and those who engaged with it in a critical and nuanced way on the other – then this one seeks to show that the boundaries between them were fuzzy and porous. It is certainly true that some of the young men with whom I was working could be seen to stubbornly demonstrate one tendency or the other. One example of this discussed previously was evident in my interview with Ethan. In an interview that was shot through with an uncritical nostalgia for industrial work and in which the Walker of the mid-twentieth-century was painted as one of racial homogeneity and social harmony, he told me that:

> [Ethan, 33, Handyman] I don't think anything is better, to be honest with you. Nah, nothing's better, not to my mind, anyway.'

He doubled-down on this when I pushed him on things like the dirty and dangerous nature of the work he longed for or the damage it caused to the environment:

> [Ethan, 33, Handyman] 'But I'm not really bothered about any of that, so I stand by what I said, nothing's better than what it was back then, it's all about the work what they had, decent work.'

What was more common than this sort of attitude, however, was a more balanced view of the industrial past in which the pros – the availability of secure and well-remunerated work, access to spaces and institutions that served the interests of young working-class men, a superior sense of community – were stacked against and counterposed to the cons – the health problems that came with working in the shipyards, the environmental

degradation that was part-and-parcel of the industrial economy, and the aggressively conformist society which developed in line with the rhythms of the factory. In this way, the participants frequently demonstrated that they had complex and multi-faceted connections to and understandings of their shared past that were tinged with an ambiguity and uncertainty befitting of an era that had brought both prosperity and security to Walker while also causing significant damage to it. Sometimes this seemed to be a conscious and deliberate decision. One of the best examples of this came in a conversation I had with Ian, one of the most knowledgeable of my participants when it came to the industrial and working-class history of Walker and Newcastle, at a local pub. He told me that:

> [Ian, 26, Trade Unionist] 'At the end of the day, working in the yards had its pros and cons, like everything else. The work was well-paid was a big part of it, I wouldn't want to do it personally, but I'm doing alright, I can see why others from around here would want the yards back, they're struggling to get by.'

He recognised that the legacy of this era was complex and difficult to categorise, and also acknowledged that part of the reason for this is that the circumstances of young working-class men in Walker contemporarily has little to recommend it. In doing so, he echoed the sentiments of academics such as Erll (2011: 15) who argue that nostalgia of this sort tells us more about the present than it does the past and that it is shaped by contemporary circumstances, demands, and needs. What was more common than the kind of active reflexivity demonstrated by Ian, however, was a more unconscious tendency for the participants to both look back longingly at the elements of the industrial past that shine most brightly from our current historical conjuncture while also acknowledging that this way of life and work had serious shortcoming that they would prefer to leave behind. These seemingly conflicting understandings were frequently expressed within the same breath, and the participants demonstrated a recurrent tendency to simultaneously laud and decrying this era in a way that defied categorising or siloising them as being either straightforwardly nostalgic or critical and nuanced. Niall offered a case study in this, the only openly gay of my participants who told me that he would not have wanted to grow up in the East End when his parents did due to the stigma he would have faced before, a few minutes later, suggesting that re-opening the old industries would be the best thing that could be done for Walker. In Flat Caps, an up-market coffee shop near his college in central Newcastle named after the headwear synonymous with working-class Northern men, he told me that:

[Niall, 19, College Student] 'I wouldn't have wanted to grow up in the East End when my parents did. It can still be tough being gay around here… but I think even thirty-years ago it would have been different.'

He was not wrong on this count. As was discussed previously, the culture that developed in the shadow of the shipyard and factory and on which these industries relied could be aggressively conformist and exclusionary, with Barrett (2000) arguing that there was a high degree of incompatibility between the norms of masculinity for working-class men and being gay in such communities. Shortly after recognising this, however, as we talked about the environmental degradation that industries such as shipbuilding caused in places like Walker, Niall went on to suggest that such workplaces should be re-opened:

[Niall, 19, College Student] 'Bring it all back, I say, I understand the environmental impacts, but get the mines open, get the yards open, there's still a gap in the workforce. Off the record, I don't give a fuck about the environment, I mean, I do, I'm half joking, but we need so much more investment and jobs, so if that's the alternative, then make it happen.'

In responses such as this, there seems to be an ability to hold two incompatible opinions about the industrial past and what it would mean for life in the present if elements of it were to be resuscitated, an unwitting refusal by Niall for his connections to and understanding of it to be easily categorised. He was not the only one to do this, talking about how his own circumstances in the present were more desirable than those of previous generations alongside what had been regrettably left behind and lost. Ollie [29, Taxi Driver] told me early on in our interview that 'everything was better back then, when my da was growing up, man', before spending the rest of our conversation pointing out his own unsuitability for the kind of physical and semi-skilled work that predominated 'back then' and how things had 'just got better and better' for himself and his family in the intervening decades. Sentiments of this sort recurred across the interviews as participants celebrated and disavowed the industrial past seemingly on a whim. In doing so, they demonstrated that their connections to and with it were anything but straightforward, and that the ambiguity of its legacy was reflected in their responses. The young men with whom I was working could – and frequently did – demonstrate that they could engage with their shared past in a way that was critical and nuanced one moment and sanitising and simplifying the next, moving between these two subject

positions in a way that I had not anticipated when I began my research. This adds further depth and complexity to the idea of smokestack nostalgia, one that this chapter has already sought to develop by showing that it extends beyond a longing for secure and well-remunerated work to include spaces and institutions for you working-class men who are also frequently aware of its less desirable aspects. Having done this, this chapter will offer some concluding thoughts, before moving on to consider the ways in which my participants remained connected to and with the era of industrial urbanism.

4.6 Conclusion

The first of the three empirical chapters of this thesis has begun with an exploration of memory in the post-industrial city, focussing on the ways in which young, working-class men engage with their industrial history and heritage. It has drawn on empirical examples to highlight the multifarious ways in which these individuals understand and utilise their shared past in the face of a present that seems to have little to offer them and a future that presents itself as non-negotiable; has argued that they do so in a more complex manner than has typically been acknowledged in academic discourse; and has demonstrated that while this has sometimes led to the proliferation of reactionary, atavistic, and exclusionary narratives about the past, there is also evidence of the participants invoking more inclusive multi-ethnic and trans-national histories and considering the exclusionary nature of the kind of conformist and homogenous community that is often harked back to when the industrial past is mythologised and romanticised. These findings are noteworthy when discussing the nature of 'working-class nostalgia' (Strangleman, 2007) among 'left behind' people in marginalised and peripheral places, and paint a picture of a far more complex, multi-faceted, and nuanced engagement with the industrial past than is often presented, and so by way of a conclusion, the four main themes that this chapter considered will be reiterated.

Firstly, it was demonstrated that the participants continued to draw-on and invoke their industrial heritage, in particular that from middle decades of the twentieth-century, when the industrial culture associated with Fordism began to take root. This meant a world of work that required few if any educational credentials, involved muscular labour and physical craftsmanship, and was characterised by decent pay and security, and a socio-cultural world that offered abundant opportunities for things like autonomous education, mutual aid, and self-help. It is easy to see why this epoch, short as it was – the earliest it could be said

to have started to germinate would have been with the New Unionism of the 1890s, only really became normative across the working-class in the mid-twentieth-century, and started to disappear with the decline of mass industrial employment in the 1980s – continued to elicit strong positive responses and resonate in the memories of the participants, whose lived experiences in the present are marked by a great degree of precarity and uncertainty.

Secondly, this chapter suggested that while the participants did sometimes betray a propensity to gloss-over and simplify the painful complexities of the historical working-class experience, they also often engaged with it in ways that are more complex and nuanced than such people are typically given credit for. Not only did they demonstrate an awareness of some of the negatives that came with industrial work, but they showed that their longing for it was not reducible to 'a good day's pay for a good day's work', but that they were in fact aware that it both supported and relied upon spaces and institutions that are now in decline, such as working men's clubs and unions.

Thirdly, this chapter this chapter showed that, while those with deep and intimate attachments to the industrial past sometimes did propagate reactionary, atavistic, and exclusionary narratives that cast back to a mythical era of shared ethnic and cultural homogeneity, there were also those whose conceptions were more accurate and inclusive. In these cases, the participants drew-on the multi-ethnic and trans-national heritage of the working-class communities of the city and the region and showed an awareness of how exclusionary the kind of conformist and homogenous cultures that are often invoked when the industrial past is mythologised and romanticised, showing that the kind of deep and intimate attachments to the past that almost all of the participants showed themselves to have are not by definition reactionary and exclusionary.

The following empirical chapters will build on the exploration of memory among young working-class men in the post-industrial city. This chapter has focussed on the ongoing deep and intimate attachments of the industrial past that many of the participants have demonstrated , but has yet to consider the ways in which deindustrialisation – a 'great transformation' (Blyth, 2002) that is arguably comparable to industrialisation given the extent to which it redefined and reworked the contours of cultural, economic, political, and social life in communities that were built on and through the illusory permanence of manufacturing, mining, and shipbuilding – is engaged with, invoked, and understood by those that have grown up its rusting metal carnage.

Chapter Five: Remembrance of the Industrial Past: Familial, Material, and Lived Links

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the ways in which the 'Golden Era' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 257) of industrial Britain continues to resonate in and shape the lives of the participants and how they negotiate and utilise it to help them navigate the uncertainties of the present. This chapter will explore some of the mechanisms that underpin this tendency that revealed itself to a greater or lesser extent across all of the interviews. What this means is that, having considered the stories that young working-class men living in a marginalised place tell about the experiences of previous generations and explored the ways in which these are shaped by the needs and circumstances of the present, the attention of this chapter will shift to some of the specific ways that these narratives have been transmitted to them and how they have in turn engaged with and modified them. This is something that has been touched on but has yet to be explored with sufficient breadth or depth and is the major focus of this chapter, which sets out to build-on and develop the themes around 'smokestack nostalgia' discussed previously.

Erll (2011: 21) argues that a sense of connection to the shared past and its continued resonance in the present is dependent upon its transmission through social interactions and its material codification, a line of thinking that can be traced back to some of the original and pre-eminent theorists of memory studies such as Halbwachs (1925) who explored questions of how historical experiences, memories, and values are passed on inter-generationally. In this tradition, there is an emergent field of research that explores the gradual movement from eye-witness and first-hand testimony to indirect and second-hand 'witnessing' of historical events and processes, how the maintenance and even perpetuation of a lived connection to the shared past among 'hinge generations' (Hirsch, 2012: 3) who had limited or no direct contact with and experience of the phenomena themselves can be explained and understood. As Olick (2011: 12) notes, this is a broad and diverse arena of debate, but as was explored in the literature review chapter, there are a handful of strands of it that are of particular relevance when it comes to explaining and understanding how 'left behind' people living in communities that were built on and through the illusory permanence of industry remain connected with their shared past.

In terms of structure, this chapter is organised around three broad thematic concerns which relate to the ways in which the participants remained connected to and with the industrial past. The **first** of these themes is the familial links that they had with it. The young men with whom I was working frequently talked to me about fathers and grandfathers who had worked in the factories and shipyards that once lined the banks of the Tyne and passed down to them the markers of working-class life forged in the crucible of mid-twentieth-century industrial urbanism. They also occasionally talked to me about less direct matrilineal links with these workplaces and the communities whose identity and prosperity were built around them. Something that emerged strongly from my research was a sense among the participants that, although they had never been employed in industries such as shipbuilding, they remained connected to work of this sort by family members who had and who passed down its myths, stories, and values. For their part, the young men with whom I was working did not passively absorb or accept this knowledge, but rather actively negotiated and reinterpreted it in a drastically different set of socio-economic circumstances.

The **second** of these themes is the lived links that many of the participants had with the industrial past, connections that intersected with their personal biographies and experiences. Across the interviews, the young men with whom I was working told me about the various ways in which they had engaged with mid-twentieth-century industrial urbanism. Looking back to their childhoods, they discussed their sensory recollections of the sights, sounds, and smells of the dying days of Fordist industrialism. Similarly, we had conversations about the sites of industrial ruination which had loomed over Walker throughout their lives, and how their interactions with these sites had changed over their life-courses as they were gradually transformed from playgrounds serving an under-resourced community into more illicit spaces of transgression familiar to any teenager growing up in a deindustrialising or deindustrialised city. Meanwhile, in conversations that were more grounded in the present, we talked about heirlooms such as commemorative plates or medals and their presentation in the home, and how these played an important part in making manifest what were otherwise more abstract connections with the industrial past.

The **third** of these themes is the ongoing links that some of the young men with whom I was working had with industry. These came in two forms. The first was working in the branch plants that began to open in the North East in the 1980s and which provided a

lower-skill, lower-wage sort of labour that was nonetheless corporeal and demanded less in the way of post-Fordist sensibilities and skills than the emergent service economy. The second was working in the offshore industries that began to appear along the banks of the Tyne in the last decade or so and which have brought secure and well-remunerated work to Walker, but in a way that has failed to significantly benefit the community at the time of writing. These ongoing connections problematise the neat bifurcation of our current historical moment into an industrial past and a post-industrial present on which many discussions of 'smokestack nostalgia' seem to depend and reveal a reality that is messier and more complex than is often acknowledged.

5.2 'When You Grow-Up Around Something, You Do Feel A Connection': Familial Links with the Industrial Past

The family has long been of interest to social scientists, and as Smart (2010) argues, it occupies something of an amorphous space between the public and the private and their affairs are inextricably entangled with broader cultural, historical, political, and social trends. It is for this reason that families are well-established as a crucial site in the transmission of everything from life's 'big' questions such a person's political persuasion (Jennings *et al*, 2009), religious beliefs (Copen, 2008), and socio-cultural values (Raneri & Barni, 2012) through to the 'small' matters such as which football club they support (Mar-Molinero, 2010) and the kind of music they listen to (Norton & Matsumoto, 2018). While profound changes such as new work patterns, living arrangements, social expectations, and cultural values have drastically transformed the family over the last forty-years (Farrell *et al*, 2012) and while its role in transmitting norms and values inter-generationally is increasingly underestimated and undervalued in modern life (McLellan, 1999), this remains the case.

The family is equally as important when it comes to producing, preserving, and passing on heritage, memory, myths, and narratives about the recent past, serving an intermediary function as a kind of switchboard between autobiographical, individual, and personal memories and larger frames of collective remembrance (Doolittle, 2011). Older members act as a bridge to the past, bringing it into the lives of younger members either directly - by acting as 'mnemonic anchors' around which otherwise forgotten experiences and memories can coalesce – or indirectly – by offering a conduit through which the stories, norms, and values of a recently bygone era are channelled

(Winderberg, 2011). Younger members are equally active participants in this 'memory work' (Onyx & Small, 2001), engaging with the shared past in a negotiation which is shaped by their needs and circumstances in the present. In the conversations that I had with my participants, I could see this dynamic playing out in their own lives. While few of them had any direct experience of working in the shipyards and armaments factories that once lined the banks of the Tyne and which had underpinned the identity and prosperity of Walker for generations, almost all of them reported some kind of familial link and personal attachment to them. This connection was patrilineal, usually in the form of great-grandfathers, grandfathers, and occasionally fathers who had laboured as employees in various skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled capacities across a range of industries, and typically these jobs were something that had been passed from father-to-son as a kind of inheritance which had only recently been lost.

Most common was for participants to report a familial connection to what Ian [26, Trade Unionist] called the 'three pillars of East End employment' – the Swan Hunters shipyard, the Siemens turbine factory and, somewhat less frequently, the Wills cigarette factory – with the former being most common. This was unsurprising given the proximity of the yards to Walker and the centrality that they occupied in its economic life and sense of identity. Rob was one of the many participants who shared this attachment. His family had worked in shipbuilding for generations, and the intertwined sense of pride and envy that he voiced was typical of many of the young men with whom I worked. He noted that while his work in administration was reasonably secure and well-remunerated, it required significantly less skill than the work his father had done, which was 'skilled, very skilled, he was making metal and things within a millimetre would be huge, so he's more skilled than me, anyone can do my job'. As we had a coffee over his lunchbreak, he expanded on this, telling me that:

> [Rob, 32, Administrative Assistant] 'My family come from a shipbuilding background, I reckon most people around here probably have that, and as that work disappeared people like my dad moved away from those jobs that would have been the bread-and-butter for pretty much everybody at one point.'

Rob recognised the centrality of shipbuilding in Walker, noting that 'most people' in Walker had links with it and that amongst older generations 'everybody' had worked in this 'bread-and-butter' industry, and his response gives an idea of the depth and

profundity of familial connections to the industrial past. There were a number of participants who either told me that they had family members who had worked in industries other than shipbuilding or who actively recognised that this was not the be-all and end-all of their industrial heritage. Ben, who I had a cup of tea with in the Kids Kabin kitchen after I had finished volunteering on a dreary winter afternoon, was keen to show me that there was more to Walker than Swan Hunter:

> [Ben, 25, Unemployed] 'I reckon a lot of people will have talked to you about shipbuilding, but my lot are a bit different, we used to have breweries around here and that were where my grandparents worked. My grandad used to tell us how they were allowed drinks on shift, so the blokes would get beers in and get fat and the women would get soft-drinks and all their teeth would fall out.'

What can be seen in the response of Ben is the way in which the fact that his grandparents used to work in breweries interacts with amusing and memorable anecdotes that they used to tell him about this work, which seem to act as something of an anchor around which his recollections coalesce. Nor was he the only participant with familial links to industries other than shipbuilding. I met Nick after work one evening, and as our interview in his local pub wore on, he became increasingly vocal about how proud he was of the inter-generational socio-economic mobility that his family had enjoyed. He told me that:

> [Nick, 29, Insolvency Administrator] 'My dad worked on the railways for forty-year, we're a railway family actually, all the way back to my great-great-grandad, I'm the first one to not go down that route, but my dad managed to work his way up very high even though he had zero qualifications when he started out.'

In his response, Nick once again demonstrates his familial connections with the industrial past and the extent to which this work is seen as an inheritance that was passed down patrilineally from father to son, with him being the first person to eschew this tradition which stretched back to his great-great-grandfather. What all of these participants had in common – and Rob, Ben, and Nick are extremely typical in this regard, representing just a handful of examples – is the shared experience of having never worked in industry themselves, and perhaps having never even directly seen their older relatives do so, but a sense nonetheless of a deep and profound connection to it. Their relatives acted not just as a bridge that connects them to a recently bygone

time, but also offer a conduit through which its myths, norms, stories, and values were channelled to them and which they still celebrate even if the socio-economic base upon which they were built has been irrevocably eroded. Some of the participants recognised as much. When I met Luke, who felt that he shared many similarities with his father who had worked at the Parsons factory until the late-1980s because of the physical and skilful nature of his job as a joiner, he told me that:

[Luke, 28, Joiner] 'When you grow up around something you do feel a connection to it. My da and all his mates worked at Parsons, so we grew up hearing about it and felt involved. Let me give you an example, and that is hard work. All the blokes who worked there worked their arses off, and if that's your old man and his mates, then you learn from them, from the stories they tell you, y'know? That's why I work so much now.'

In his response, Luke hits on an important point – that when the industries that communities were built on and through have gone, it is predominantly through interactions with family members that the norms and values of industrial working-class life are passed on to a generation who have never work in the armaments factories, shipyards, and steel mills that defined the horizons and opportunities of their predecessors. As Byrne (2002: 279) argues, the industrial past provides a significant cultural foundation for young people growing up in the immediate aftermath of its disappearance, and their relationship with it is complicated and conflicted, mediated predominantly through the experiences and stories of their grandparents and parents. A whole generation of working-class men have grown-up hearing about the good old industrial days but not ever doing such work themselves, but as Walkerdine and Jiminez (2012: 8) have shown, in the short-term this does not undermine industrial identities, norms, and values as they are transmitted across generations. Studying the ways that a generation of fathers who had worked in the steel industry projected strong expectations about what was and was not legitimate employment for their sons to engage in, they demonstrate how in the absence of workplace inter-generationality, the family provides an important space for the transmission of memories, the passing-on of norms, and the socialisation of values of the industrial working-class. This was something that Finn, the son of a colleague from Kids Kabin, was aware of:

[Finn, 19, Kitchen Porter] 'Everyone has been brought up a similar way, we've got things in common, we share interests …We've been talking about the shipyards, right? I think because all our grandads worked there, and we grew up hearing about it, that's why we want good work now, rather than being happy to sit around watching Jeremy Kyle all day.'

Like Luke, Finn – whose grandfather worked at Swan Hunters before becoming something of a nomad, choosing to travel the world in search of industrial work rather than accepting his redundancy and peacefully retiring – felt that even though he had never worked in the shipbuilding industry, and in fact had no desire to, he had nonetheless inherited some of the values that came with it. The emphasis in his response was once again on hard work, and this was by no means the first time that the viewership of Jeremy Kyle were invoked as a kind of counter-foil against which whose failings the participants own successes and virtues could be measured. While such responses were less than typical, appearing in only a handful of the interviews, they recurred frequently enough to show an awareness on the part of the participants of the importance of the family not just as a link to the past but as a space for the inter-generational transmission of many of the key markers of working-class life forged in the crucible of mid-twentieth-century industrial urbanism. These continue to persist and resonate in the present and represent an enduring legacy of a bygone era.

This section has so far emphasised the centrality of male relatives who worked in industry in sustaining a coherent link between the participants and this era, and while grandfathers and fathers were certainly crucial in this regard, female relatives also played an important role, something that Berg (1992) argues has been consistently under-appreciated. Their connection with the industrial past was somewhat less direct and obvious – it was previously noted that many of the participants came from families who had, until recently, defined themselves in a large part in relation to working in a specific industry, whether that be the building of ships, the brewing of beers, or the construction of turbines, and that this had been something of an inheritance passed down from father to son in a patrilineal fashion – but despite this tangentiality it was nonetheless significant. Grandmothers in particular figured heavily in the responses of the participants, and many of them talked about the connections that these matriarchal figures had with the industries around which the identity and prosperity of Walker was built in the twentieth-century. Some of these were straightforward, with it being

extremely common for them to have worked either in administrative and secretarial roles, finding employment 'working the phones down the yards' [Alan, 20, Unemployed] or as a 'back office worker in the factories' [Euan, 27, Security Officer]. Others were a little more round-about, with a number of the participants talking about service-sector roles that relied on there being a local workforce with a disposable income, doing things like 'pulling pints at some of the pubs and workies' [Kieran, 24, Part-Time Student']. Regardless, the participants demonstrated that they were well aware of the matrilineal connections that they had with the industrial past, even if they did not express quite the same kind of admiration, jealousy, and pride that they demonstrated when they talked about the employment of their grandfathers and fathers. Ethan, one of the most loquacious of the participants, had more to say than most on the matter of his grandmother:

> [Ethan, 33, Handyman] 'My nana used to bake scones when she lived in the dwellings, they were for the shipbuilders, she used to sell them to people at the end of their shifts, I'll never forget them days, you'd try and steal them and she'd slap your hand and say 'ee mother, he's a greedy bloody bugger', oh aye, best scone-maker in the dwellings, everyone used to say that.'

Much like Ben, whose response showed the ways in which anecdotes about family members working in a brewery intertwined and overlapped with the local history of Walker, one of the significant ways in which Ethan remembers his grandmother is in light of the industrial history of the East End, as the 'best scone-maker in the dwellings' who sold cakes to 'shipbuilders… at the end of their shifts', the friends and colleagues of his grandfather who worked as a panel-beater at Swan Hunter. The way in which individual lives and the industrial history of Walker intersect was even clearer when I talked to Tim, who in a startlingly self-reflective interview told me that:

> [Tim, 21, Unemployed] 'My grandad was a welder, him and my nana met through work, well, kind of, they met in one of the pubs we used to have along the river, she was a barmaid and he went in after work one day and that was that, so I guess you could say that without the shipyards, I wouldn't be here!'

In this response, Tim shows that he understands his familial history and personal biography in light of the shipbuilding heritage of the East End, noting that without this industry and the economic base that it supported, he 'wouldn't be here' as it was because of this that his

grandparents met one another. This once again demonstrates the depth and profundity of the connections that the participants have with their shared past, something which helps to explain the ongoing resonance of the myths, narratives, norms, and values of working-class life forged in the crucible of mid-twentieth-century industrial urbanism at a time when this socio-economic base has been eroded. However, there is more to this ongoing persistence and resonance than just familial connections to a bygone era that the participants had no personal connections with. Having explored inter-generational transmission, the attention of this chapter will now shift to the lived links that many of them had with the industrial past, something that can be understood in light of the arguments made in the previous chapter that deindustrialisation was not a discrete historical event that pre-dates the lives of the participants but rather was an ongoing and incomplete process that extended across their life-courses. What this means is that, although they never worked in the industries that once lined the banks of the Tyne, the participants had a multitude of connections to them, and it is to these that the attention of this chapter will now turn.

5.3 'You Can't Get Away from it in Walker': Lived Links with the Industrial Past

The ongoing resonance of the industrial past in the lives of the participants and the continuing persistence of its myths, narratives, norms, and values in the present is not explicable purely in terms of their having had parents and grandparents who worked in and adjacent to shipyards and factories. Rather, and as this vsection will explore, the participants had a multitude of personal links with the industrial era, something that can be understood in light of the fact that it did not disappear overnight but rather was slowly eroded by the ongoing and as yet unfinished process of deindustrialisation. I have termed these more personal connections as 'lived links' so as to capture the way in which they represent a repeated and everyday set of encounters, and there are three significant ones that came through in the interviews with the participants. The first are the personal memories and recollections that they had of industry proper, a recognition of the fact that although they never worked in the shipyards and factories that once lined the banks of the Tyne, their lived experiences and personal biographies are not void of interactions with them. The second are the material cultures of industry that they interact with, the heirlooms in family homes that make up a discrete but persistent aspect of their day-to-day lives and which make manifest links. The third is the palimpsest of the built environment, the fragments which persist in Walker in the form of abandoned factories and disused shipyards which they have interacted with in various capacities over their life-courses.

5.3.1 'You Used to Hear the Sirens Going Off in the Mornings': Sensory Recollections of the Industrial Past

The first of the lived links that will be interrogated are personal memories. It is true that very few of the participants have ever worked in industry – those that have will be discussed later in this chapter – but this did not mean that it had disappeared before they were growing up in Walker. Deindustrialisation was less a discrete historical event than an incomplete and ongoing process that extended into their own lifetimes, in particular their childhoods. This meant that many of them have memories and recollections related not to being employed in the factories and shipyards, but of what it was like to grow up in a community built on and through the illusory permanence of industries that, while in their final days, remained important to the identity and prosperity of the area, the community, and their own families. Although industry had not shaped their personal or professional lives of the participants in the same way that it would have done for previous generations, neither were they entirely cut-off and dislocated from it. What was particularly interesting was the way in which their personal memories relied on multi-modal retrieval, how their recollections were dependent upon and mediated in the realm of the sensory. In the last decade or so, there has been a 'sensual revolution' in the social sciences (Bull *et al*, 2006) as it has been recognised that senses overlap to a significant degree with the lived experiences and social worlds of individuals (Smith, 2007). Building on this and drawing-on insights from the psychological literature such as Crawley and Eacott (2006), Wheeler *et al* (2000), and Willander *et al* (2016), it is increasingly recognised that while retrieving memories is difficult and authenticating their genuineness is even harder, our senses can open doors to the past that would otherwise remain shut, a fact that has been argued by Crawley and Eacott (2006) and Low (2013). As Compen (2014: 100) surmises, smells, sounds, tastes, textures, and visual sensations all possess a powerful and unique ability to transport us back to the past and trigger intense and vivid memories, acting as 'mnemonic anchors' around which recollections cohere.

Beginning with visual sensations, a number of the participants discussed early experiences of witnessing the sights of industry and the impression that these left upon them. So-called visual memory describes the relationship between perceptual processing and the encoding, storage, and retrieval of the resulting neural representations. It was in this way that most recollections were framed, with a common

and recurrent theme being how imposing industry itself was – the scale and size of the cranes, the ships, the factories, and the tools which it relied upon and churned out. Nick, for example, talked about the cranes that used to line the river and the ships that loomed over the East End of the city even in his youth in the early-1990s:

[Nick, 29, Insolvency Administrator] 'It was stunning, it's mad to think that even fifteen-year ago all these cranes, they were blue and yellow, there was just a sea of cranes, I'll always remember. It were the same with this ships, there wasn't many being built by then, but they would just tower over the area, you had to crane your neck to look up at them.'

In this response, it is clear that the memories that Nick has of industry are heavily visual, mediated through colour and size, with the brightness of the 'blue and yellow' cranes and the size of the ships that used to 'tower over the area' being especially evocative aspects of his recollection, seemingly anchoring it and ensuring that he will 'always remember' the tail-end of the shipbuilding. The awe and wonder that he felt as a child, looking up at the sites and products of industry whose imposing character is self-evident even if all one has seen is a photo, was something that was likely experienced by generations of inhabitants of Walker and it seems to sustain the coherence of his link with his shared past and ensure that memories of it continue to persist and resonate in the present. This same emphasis on the size was also an important part in the visual memory of Tim, who told me that:

[Tim, 21, Unemployed] 'You should have seen the tools, man, spanners for nuts that were bigger than my head, a spanner that were about four-foot long, I remember my grandad took me to Swans and showed me once.'

Although this recollection was somewhat more personal than that shared by Nick, whose experience of craning his neck to look up at the cranes and ships that once loomed over Walker is no doubt something that was done by residents of the East End for generations, the emphasis of Tim was likewise on size, in his case of the tools that industries like shipbuilding relied upon, with 'nuts that were bigger than my head' and 'spanner that were about four-foot long' sticking out in his mind particularly explicitly. This visual memory serves the same function as that of Nick, helping him stay connected to the industrial past, and his response also intersects with familial links, showing how they should not be seen as discrete and separate from lived connections but should rather be treated as mutually constitutive, links that interact, overlap, and feed into one another.

While it was visual memories that recurred in the responses of the participants with the most frequency, it was not the only sense that they invoked when they discussed the tail-end of the industrial era which overlapped with their childhoods. Olfactory memories – recollections triggered by and related to a familiar, powerful, or specific scent – also played an important part in maintaining an ongoing connection with the shared past. This link between personal biography and specific odours has been written about by of Herz (2016) and Kita and Nekatani (2011), and it is well-established that a person's sense of smell is intimately connected to their experience of a place and their memory of it. This can be seen in the responses of a number of the participants, who noted that 'it used to bloody stink around here what with all the pollution' [Jack, 26, Self-Employed] and 'it used to absolutely hum, the air was filthy' [Mat, 28, Printer Operator], but it was Ben who had the most evocative and specific olfactory memory. He told me that:

> [Ben, 25, Unemployed] 'I remember the boneyard, it were an old glue factory, and you would walk down the Tyne and smell the bones being boiled from a mile off, it were absolutely disgusting, loads of people used to work there.'

Stiwa and Riach (2012: 23) argue that smell creates highly emotive reactions with space and place as well as bygone eras, and this can be seen in the response of Ben, who makes a strong connection between walking along the River Tyne, the industrial past, and the undoubtedly pungent smells emitted from a local glue factory. Kiechle (2016: 23) suggests that the industrial city had a unique smell-scape characterised by the burning of coal, industrial adhesives, polluted rivers, and poor sanitation. This certainly seems to come through in the responses of the participants and resonate in their minds as an important part of growing up in a community that was built on and through the illusory permanence of industry.

The final sensory recall discussed by the participants was echoic memory, the sensory memory register specific to auditory information and recollections related to and triggered by a familiar, powerful, or specific sound. Although these were talked about with the least frequency when compared with visual memory and olfactory memory, they were still mentioned by a number of the participants, and they served the same function as their visual and aural counterparts – grounding their recollections and acting as a bridge between the present and the shared industrial

past. One unique thing about the echoic memories discussed was that they seemed more explicitly autobiographical, being brought-up and talked about in relation to fairly specific childhood experiences as opposed to in the more general way in which the participants talked about the sights and smells of industry. Calum was one of the participants who seemed to know very little about his industrial heritage when we discussed in in the abstract but who had a number of powerful sensory recollections. In an interview with him and his friend Harry, who he brought with him to Kids Kabin as he did not want to come alone, he told me that:

> [Harry, 24, Unemployed] 'You used to hear the sirens going off in the mornings at the yards, going off for the start of shift, I swear they'd wake you up every day before school, before your mam came to get you, that was the yards opening.'

This experience of being woken-up early on schooldays by the sirens going off to signal the start of a shift at the shipyards was one that was shared by other participants. Tim, who had also talked about his visual memories of industry and whose memories were clearly heavily mediated by and reliant on his senses, noted:

> [Tim, 21, Unemployed] 'There wasn't much along the river by the time I was growing up, but I do remember that you used to get woken up by the sirens going off for shift in the morning if you lived near enough. Every bloody morning!'

Just as it had a smell-scape, the industrial city also had a sound-scape, a cacophony of alarm bells, metal being hammered and welded, people discussing their work as they walked around or had a drink, and sirens going off at the start and end of shifts that operated as a kind of background hum against which everyday life unfolded, intruding only occasionally as in the recollections of the participants. The sounds of the industrial city would have been an important if only occasionally noticed part of day-to-day life not just for them but for everybody in their community, and given the power that sound has to sustain a coherent link with the past and open up doors to it, it is unsurprising that echoic memory held an important place alongside olfactory memory and visual memory in the minds of the participants.

5.3.2 'My Mam Has Loads of Stuff Like That': Material Cultures of the Home and Remembrance of the Industrial Past

While important, multi-sensory personal memories were not the only way in which participants remained connected to the shared industrial past. Rather, many of them told me that they had artefacts and heirlooms in their homes – objects ranging from the more official ceramic homewares produced by canny manufacturers who seemed to recognise the desire among working-class people to commemorate industry through to more informal things such as railway plaques stolen on the last day of work as a memento – that seemed to consolidate and substantiate their links with an era that they missed out on entirely or experienced only in a fleeting way. To briefly reiterate what was discussed in the Literature Review, the last decade or so has seen a renewed encounter with the diverse problematics surrounding matter and materialism (Anderson & Tolia-Kelly, 2004). Academics from across the social sciences, including Buchi (2002),Bolvin (2010), Harvey (2017), Hannon and Longair (2017), Hicks and Baudry (2018), and Tilley *et al* (2013) have responded to demands that their fields be 're-materialised' so that they are more firmly grounded in the lived experiences and realities of people in the present (Gregson, 1995). One of the significant outcomes of this 'return to things' (Dant, 1999), has been a recognition of the ways in which memory and remembrance interact and intersect with material cultures in the home. Mather (2013: 140) points out that this is where much remembering and remembrance is done and it is here more than anywhere else that objects retaining memory can be found and where regular people can engage with their shared past in an everyday manner, interacting with items that are imbued with significance and which sustain a coherent link with the past for this reason. Items closely and tangibly connected to the recent past are described as being like 'relics' which are preserved as a testament to the shared experiences of those in previous generations and as a way of actively bringing them into the lives of people in the present. Perhaps the best exploration of this relation is found in the work of Tolia-Kelly (2004), which argues that everyday artefacts and heirlooms signify nodes of connection and connectivity that are essential in sustaining a coherent link with bygone times and forgotten places.

A number of the participants talked to me about the industrial artefacts and heirlooms that could be found either in their family homes or their own ones. This was not something that I had thought about before starting data collection, but having realised the profundity with which material cultures of the home resonated with the young men

with whom I was working, I adjusted my methodology to ensure that it was something that I discussed with them in the course of the interviews I was conducting. It was Pete [24, IT Support Worker] who introduced me to questions of materiality and remembrance in the home. A second-generation resident of Walker – his father moved to the area in the 1980s to take advantage of the burgeoning demand for bailiffs that deindustrialisation, with its late-payments, lay-offs, and redundancies brought with it – his family originally came from Ashington, a 'small mining village, about twenty-miles to the North, out on the coast' and came 'from a long history of miners, whey aye'. As we had a coffee and bonded over a shared love of local clubbing institution WHQ, he dropped a mention of material culture into our conversation:

> [Pete, 24, IT Support Worker] 'My old man has always had this lump of coal,
> it just sits there on a shelf, he said my grandad gave it to him, he picked it up
> on the day he got laid-off, I guess as a kind of souvenir or something.'

Although I did not think much of this statement at the time and our discussion quickly moved on, I pondered its significance as I walked home and decided that in the future I would ask participants whether they had any similar 'souvenirs' in their houses, either growing up as children and teenagers or contemporarily. A number of them responded positively. One response that particularly stood out because of the extent to which he thought about his answer was that of Nick, one of the most upwardly socially mobile of the participants and someone who was vocally proud of his working-class heritage and the ascent of his father up the ranks of the rail industry. He told me:

> [Nick, 29, Insolvency Administrator] 'Aye, we do, I've never thought that much
> about it, but my dad has an old metal sign, British Rail I think, that's in his
> room, he took it when he retired I think, I reckon I'll get it eventually, as a bit
> of a hand-me-down, I'm the first one in the family not to work the rails.'

In the responses of both Pete and Nick, the importance of material culture in the home in sustaining a coherent link with the industrial past is evident. Although the details of their accounts differ in certain respects – in the case of Pete, it was his grandfather who had given them a piece of coal to commemorate his time working in a coal pit in Ashington, whereas for Nick his father took an old plaque for himself to remember his career as a railwayman – both seem to recognise that these 'souvenirs' or 'hand-me-downs' functioned as a way of bringing the shared past into their homes and lives. These

objects are not sanctified and reified in the same way that the more 'official' materialisations discussed by Dwyer and Alderman (2008) are, but rather constitute a discrete and quiet presence in the home, operating in the background of everyday life and encountered only occasionally in the lived experiences of both participants, something that can be seen in the statements 'it just sits there on the shelf' and 'I've never thought that much about it'. This is in line with the arguments of Mather (2013: 140), who suggests that this quiet presence is in fact the power of such 'relics', which give off a kind of background hum, bringing the past into the present in profound and subtle ways. Nick also hits on another interesting point in his response, that being that he expects the plaque will eventually be passed down to him, something he phrases in such a way as to avoid having to say that this will likely be as an inheritance when his father passes away. Nor was he the only participant to make such an observation. Ian [26, Trade Unionist] told me about the commemorative ceramic homeware that adorned his grandparents mantlepiece, made by canny manufacturers who recognised that the working-class offered an enthusiastic market for such cheap decorative objects that could keep them connected to a way of life that was rapidly disappearing:

> [Ian, 26, Trade Unionist] 'My nan and grandad have commemorative plates and cups, they have pictures of the yards and things like that on them, my nan has said she wants me to have them when they're gone, I think a lot of people of that generation have them and want to pass them on, and they're always on the mantlepiece, they always have pride of place!'

Unlike Pete and Nick, Ian notes that antiques and heirlooms which commemorate and invoke the industrial era are not hidden away and unnoticed, emitting a 'background hum' (Mather, 2013: 140), but have 'pride of place' in the home of his grandparents, occupying centre-stage on the mantlepiece, likely alongside other treasured heirlooms such as family photos. As Mills (2016: 74) notes, the hearth is traditionally regarded as the heart of the home, so it follows that objects associated with the hearth are regarded as part of that centrality and are often equally consciously placed on the mantlepiece because they possess particular importance or significance. He goes on to argue that we need the clutter of things to materialise history and memory, then the mantlepiece acts as a nucleus around which they can cohere, reflecting meaning back into a room and allowing us to interact with them, use them, mediate between us, and have quasi-social relationships with them. The

objects discussed by Ian were also at the more 'official' end of the spectrum than those I talked about with Pete and Nick - whose grandfather and father had 'procured' 'souvenirs' or 'hand-me-downs' that they imbued with significance because of the associations that they had with industrial work rather than because they made some kind of explicit and unambiguous statement – and in a similar vein Dom had a similar mandated and sanctioned commemorative object. He told me about it as we had a cup of coffee at a café in Walker:

> [Dom, 26, Self-Employed] 'My mam has loads of stuff like that at her place, the one thing I've got is a medal my grandad left me, he got it from working in the yards, I don't know if it was from Swans or what, but they people used to get them for their hard work. I keep it in the drawer by my bed.'

Unlike the other participants, who talked about commemorative objects being on display to one degree or another, Dom kept his in his bedside drawer, hidden away rather than somewhere discrete 'sitting on a shelf' or 'taking pride of place' on the mantlepiece. This is not necessarily that important. The medal that he talks about serves the same purpose as the lump of coal mentioned by Pete, the railway sign talked about by Nick, and the ceramic homeware discussed by Ian – that is, to sustain and substantiate a link with the shared industrial past through its inescapable present-ness and materiality. While Dom keeps his commemorative object hidden away or close to his person, depending on how one chooses to interpret his statement, because he attaches more meaning to it as something that was entrusted to him by his grandfather in his will, it brings shipbuilding into his home and his life in the present. Such objects are essential to a 'hinge generation' (Hirsch, 2012) who lived in close spatial and temporal proximity to industry but never really got the chance to take part in it in the same way as previous generations did. As Degnen (2006: 51) argues, they commemorate a moment in time before the certainty of industry and all it represented and was connected to was turned on its head, with their presence inside the home becoming a touchstone for everyday and mundane ways of remembering and memorialising, bringing the past into lives in the present more effectively than an official memorial or monument could ever do.

5.3.3 'When We Were Lads, We'd Go Exploring Down the Yards': Spaces of Industrial Ruination

There is one final way in which the participants remained connected with the industrial past, and that is through the reminders of it which have persisted in the built environment of the East End throughout their lifetimes. It was suggested above that artefacts and heirlooms represent an important means through which the past is brought into the lives of the participants in the present, sustaining the coherence of their link with the industrial era because of the associations that they invoke and their sheer immutability and materiality. Similar arguments have been made about space and place. As was discussed in the literature review chapter, geographers in particular have highlighted the importance of space in commemoration and remembrance, with work from the likes of Foote (2003), Forest *et al* (2004), Hoelscher and Alderman (2004), Legg (2003; 2005; 2007), and Rose-Redwood *et al* (2008) united by a shared belief that bringing the past into the present is a geographically and spatially mediated phenomenon. Crinson (2005: 3) has argued that cities are the most powerful repositories and symbols of memory, with the urban landscape made up of a collection of places, spaces, and objects that enable recollections of the past and embody bygone eras through traces of the sequential (re)building of the built environment. Shackel and Palus (2006: 50) suggest that the abandoned factories, decaying mills, and derelict shipyards that have become commonplace in left-behind places act as 'mnemonic anchors' around which connections to and with the industrial past cohere. This is variously echoed by Storm (2014), who describes such places as 'post-industrial landscape scars' that act as a reminder of an economy that was once dominated by mid-twentieth-century industrial urbanism, Savage (2003: 10) who suggests that the deindustrialised landscape is like a ruined battlefield that is slowly healing over and invites commemoration and remembrance, and Heatherington (2018: 25) who argues that sites of industrial ruination are enable recollections about the past as they are physical reminders of industrial production and of the lives that were connected to these spaces.

Mah (2009, 2010, 2012) has picked up on these ideas and explored them in the specific case of Walker. She argues that the industrial past continues to persist and resonate in the lives of people in the East End because the area remains marked by sites of 'industrial ruination'. This is a term she coins to capture the ongoing and processual nature of the decay of such places, and while her work raises a number of

interesting points, it takes the materiality and presence of such places at face value as a reason for the nostalgia that she recognises if often expressed by working-class people in the present. I argue that places such as the abandoned Swan Hunter shipyards are not a mere backdrop against which people's experiences and lives take place. They are, rather, a liminal no-mans lands which forms part of the texture of everyday life, something that was apparent in the responses of many of my participants. They had played hide-and-seek in abandoned factories as children, drunk and taken drugs in warehouses as teenagers, and raided decaying shipyards for scrap metal to help make ends meet as young adults. Such ruins are not merely 'physical reminders of industrial production' (Hetherington, 2018: 26) but have played an important part in the lived experiences of the participants, and for the purpose of discussion, their engagements and interactions have been broadly grouped into three categories. The first of these is as sites of play, the second is as spaces of transgression, and the third is as places of economic survival. Each of these will be considered in turn, but it is worth remembering that these were not discrete engagements but rather interlinked and overlapping.

Beginning with industrial ruins as sites of play, a number of the participants talked to me in warm and nostalgic terms about childhoods spent exploring abandoned factories and jumping from rusting shipyard cranes into the River Tyne. In an area where 'there was nowt for us to do' [George, 19, Unemployed] and 'you had to make your own fun' [Harry, 24, Unemployed], the abandoned shipyards, old warehouses, derelict housing, vacant lots, and boarded-up shops that were part of the built environment of Walker offered an urban playground of sorts where they could climb, hide, run, scramble, and smash with a degree of autonomy and freedom. It has been argued by the likes of Pyyry and Tani (2016) and Wooley and Nicks (2001) that away from the more commodified and regulated parts of the city, there are areas that allow for actions that lack clear instrumental benefits, are separated from everyday experience, and encourage exploratory encounters with strangers to take place, the three traits that Donoff and Bridgman (2017: 294) argue underpin play in urban space. This can be seen in the conversations I had with many of the participants. Liam was the first of them to talk to me extensively about this. In one of the more unusual interviews I conducted during the research process, in which I taught his young daughter how to make cupcakes as he could not find any last-minute childcare, he told me that:

[Liam, 27, Unemployed] 'By the time I was growing up there wasn't much going on down there in the yards, we used to go and run up in them, used them like playgrounds, there was nowt like that around so we made our own one, we got up to all sorts, running around, smashing it up, it were class.'

In his response, Liam expresses ideas that recurred across the interviews – that as marginalised people living in a peripheral place that were offered little in the way of facilities that are enjoyed by more central and prosperous areas (Moore *et al*, 2008) and that, in the absence of things like playgrounds and youth groups, he and his friends repurposed the rusting metal carnage of deindustrialisation to create spaces of play. Ollie shared similar sentiments, telling me that:

[Ollie, 29, Taxi Driver] 'When we were young we'd go exploring down the yards, climb up the cranes, jump into the river, break into old factories, mess around in them, loads of stuff like that, there was nowt else going on.'

Anecdotes such as these were by no means unique and they recurred across the responses of numerous participants, showing just how deeply embedded these former industrial sites are in the lived experiences of residents of Walker, even if they no longer provide the same kind of employment opportunities and chances for prosperity that they did throughout the twentieth-century. In fact, when I was talking to Kieran, a part-time student and skateboarding enthusiast about the fate of the Parsons factory – once one of the biggest employers in the East End, now a Siemens-owned shell of its former self with a skeleton staff and in the middle of a derelict and over-grown lot that is predominantly used for fly-tipping – he recognised as much:

[Kieran, 24, Part-Time Student] 'It's cool actually, they've built a bit of a DIY skatepark there, they've repossessed the land, it's sound because it was just wasted, but now it's being used for something positive, even if it's not providing jobs for people around here like it used to.'

What the responses of Liam, Ollie, and Kieran all have in common is a shared sense that, even though they are no longer used for their originally intended purpose, former sites of industry have nonetheless been an important aspect of their lived experiences growing up in Walker. Places such as Swan Hunters and Parsons, emblematic of the industries on and through which the prosperity of the East End and indeed the city was built and where their families found belonging, identity, and employment for

generations, remain an important part of day-to-day life even if they are a shadow of what they once were. In each of the accounts, it is clear that the participants did not just live in the figurative and literal shadow of industrial ruins, but interacted and engaged with them in innovative and interesting ways, incorporating them into their lives and taking advantage of the seemingly meagre resources that they had to offer in order to improve their personal situations, in this case the absence of recreational activities and facilities that were available to them growing up.

This dynamic was not only evident when it came to transforming industrial ruins into spaces of play as children. Rather, sites of 'industrial ruination' (Mah, 2012) intersected with the personal biographies of the participants throughout their life courses. Their engagements and interactions with them were not static and changed as they got older. Whereas once the abandoned shipyards and decaying warehouses offered them 'urban playgrounds', as they entered their teenage years they became spaces of subversion and transgression where they could consume alcohol – or 'get on it with nae bother' [Tim, 22, Student] - take recreational drugs – or 'have a bit of a smoke' [Finn, 19, Kitchen Porter] – and simply engage in the timeless teenage activity of 'hanging out' away from the prying eyes of their parents and the police. Kieran recognised as much:

> [Kieran, 24, Part-Time Student] 'When I was younger we used to go to parties in the old factories, it was class, no bother from the police or council or anyone, no bouncers to stop you from getting in, good times they were.'

In this response, he hits on an important point – that all too often, young, working-class men from marginalised and peripheralised areas are socially and spatially excluded from the landscapes of consumption that Zukin (1993) argues lie at the heart of the post-industrial city, something that Nayak (2006) has discussed in the case of 'Charvers' in contemporary Newcastle. While this exclusion often manifests itself as an inability to take advantage of the up-market bars and clubs that are now found in the town centres and riverfronts of cities that were once defined by their reliance upon and relationship with industries such as shipbuilding and steelmaking, something that is reflected in the concern Kieran expresses about bouncers and access, there is also a concern among Mandanipour (2015), Sibley (2002), and Vanderbeck and Dunkley (2004) that people like my participants are unable to make use of nominally public spaces

such as high streets and malls as they are marked out by the ways in which they dress and speak. George and Harry, in the only one of my interviews that was not one-to-one, recognised as much, bouncing off one another and becoming increasingly irate as we discussed socio-spatial exclusion:

[George, 19, Unemployed] 'I'm pretty normal around here, but if you go somewhere posh you see the difference.'

[Harry, 24, Unemployed] 'Aye, people like us, we stand out somewhere like Jesmond, y'know? Even in town I've had problems with coppers and security guards and people like that.'

[George, 19, Unemployed] 'Yeah, you get nowt but dirty looks when you're from here, but they look at us like we're bad, they look down at us because of what we're like and where we're from, but it's nowt to do with us.'

Wacquant (2007: 8) describes this as 'territorial stigmatisation', the concentration of advanced marginality in isolated and bounded territories that are perceived as socio-economic purgatories or leprous bad-lands by outsiders who brand residents with a 'blemish of place', and an awareness of this is evident in the responses of George and Harry. Nor were they the only participants who felt that people from Walker suffered from this Wacquantian marginalisation. Dennis [29, Outreach Worker] told me that being from Walker led to people 'looking down on you because of where you're from' and noted that this means 'locals feel less happy and confident because of that stigma'. Growing up in post-industrial Newcastle, then, where the participants are not only socio-economically marginalised and peripheralised but also spatially excluded, industrial ruins provided them with a space whose liminality allowed them to enact the rituals associated with being a teenager – drinking, taking drugs, 'hanging out' – that they were unable to do in the more commodified parts of the city. Joe spoke to me extensively about this, using the example of the Makina scene – a uniquely Geordie youth sub-culture built around sports casual fashion, the taking of amphetamines, and Trance-inspired music characterised by hard synths and rapid-fire MCing about taking drugs, stealing cars, and getting chased by the police – to illustrate his point:

[Joe, 25, Rapper/Outreach Worker] 'I went to raves from maybe 14 to 16, it's a young working-class scene, it's all the old shipbuilding communities, it's people who weren't allowed into the clubs and the bars in town, so they made do and used the old factories and warehouses to host their own events.'

As with Kieran, Joe emphasises how socio-economically marginalised and spatially excluded people such as my participants make use of the abandoned shipyards, old warehouses, derelict housing, vacant lots, and boarded-up shops that mark the built environment of Walker and create subversive and transgressive spaces in which they enacted teenage coming-of-age rituals. Where once the industrial ruins provided them with 'urban playgrounds' that compensated for the lack of recreational facilities and opportunities in the area, as they got older they continued to make use of them, seeing in them an opportunity to act as they without the kind of hassling and stigmatisation that they experienced in what George and Harry deemed 'posh' parts of the city.

There was one final way in which the participants engaged and interacted with industrial ruins, and that was by utilising them to help them make ends-meet as young adults growing up in a place with limited opportunities. This was the least common of the responses, but it nevertheless occurred with enough frequency to be worth discussing, with a handful of the participants talking to me about 'scrapping', breaking into former industrial sites in search of things like copper piping and wiring that had been left behind as businesses rolled down their shutters and locked their gates to sell to the scrap-man. Tim talked about this most profusely, telling me:

> [Tim, 21, Unemployed] 'When my mother passed away I went through a bit of a mad patch and there was a lot of copper down the yards and I suppose I was just a thieving little bugger, so I'd go around the yards looking for scrap to sell. We packed it in when we realised it was going to get us arrested.'

Other participants had similar stories. Liam [27, Unemployed] told me that the abandoned industrial sites offered a 'way to make a bit of money with copper and scrap to sell' while George [19, Unemployed] said that 'going in there and taking scrap' was 'the closest thing I've ever had to a job'. What all of these participants had in common was that they were all long-term unemployed, either having never had a job or out of work for months or even years, and while they claimed that they no longer engaged in scrapping, it seemed that they came from more deprived backgrounds than some of the other participants and that this activity helped them to 'put food on the table' [Harry, 24, Unemployed] and 'help out around the house' Liam [27, Unemployed]. The emphasis in these responses was not on making a secure living or finding money for what might be deemed unnecessary consumption, but on helping to

make ends-meet. Where industrial ruins offered residents of Walker spaces of both play and subversion and transgression growing up, they also, in a perverse way, continued to support the community economically, even if this was in a much reduced and inherently unsustainable manner. Indeed, Tim seemed to recognised this, and he explicitly compared his 'illegal bits and bobs' to the work that his grandfather did as a sheet metal worker at Swan Hunters shipyard, invoking an industrial birth-right and inheritance to help explain and justify his behaviour to me:

> [Tim, 21, Unemployed] 'Nobody wanted it, it had just been left there, and in some ways I felt like I was entitled to it, being from Walker, like I would have been working with it in the yards if they were still open, it's called theft by finding but nobody was coming back for it, so why can't I have it and make my situation a bit better and make a couple of pennies?'

What is evident in the above responses is the dynamic that has run through this whole discussion – that industrial ruins, which remain deeply connected with the past and enable recollections about it (Heatherington, 2018) are not some passive presence in the lives of the participants and the community but are something that they actively engaged and interacted with in their day-to-day lives growing up, whether this was playing in them as children, partying in them as teenagers, or searching for scrap in them as young adults. Taken together with personal recollections and material cultures of the home, living in the literal and figurative shadow of industrial ruins helps to explain why industry continues to persist and resonate in the lives of the participants. Besides having the narratives, myths, stories, and values of the industrial era transmitted to them by family members who toiled in its factories and shipyards, they have personal memories of the sights, smells, and sounds of industry, have antiques and heirlooms from this time in their family homes, and have grown up around and interacted with sites of ruination. Having considered these 'lived connections', the attention of this chapter will shift one final time to 'ongoing connections'.

5.4 'It's Good to See a Bit of Life Along the River': Ongoing Connections in the 'Post-Industrial' Present

There is one final reason for the ongoing persistence and resonance of the industrial past in the lives of the participants in the present, and that is that there has never been a clean socio-economic and psychological break with it. The participants do not just

have family members who worked in the factories and shipyards telling them stories about these halcyon days, and they have not simply grown up around the sights, smells, and sounds of industry and lived amidst its material remains, whether these be in the home or as an aspect of the built environment. Rather, they continue to live with industry in the present, even if it is much reduced. For the purposes of discussion, these are called 'ongoing connections', and they represent the third link that my participants have with the industrial era. This problematises the neat, teleological chronology that sees the passage from an industrial economy and society as a smooth transition, casting it instead in a more complex light characterised by partial deindustrialisation throughout the 1980s and 1990s and a degree of reindustrialisation in the 1990s and 2000s. This section will consider the responses of those participants with 'ongoing links', exploring, firstly, those who still work in industry and manufacturing and, secondly, those who have friends and families who do so.

The idea that deindustrialisation was not a discrete historical event that meant Britain effectively stopped making things in the late-twentieth-century (Chakrabortty *et al*, 2014) but was rather an ongoing and unfinished process that continues to this day is significant. While the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) of the 1980s and 1990s undoubtedly precipitated a significant decline in industrial employment and production (Edgerton, 2019), this was never as absolute and total as it seemed. According to a recent report by EEF (2018), the UK remains the 11th largest manufacturing nation in the world and manufacturing makes up 11% of GVA and 54% of exports and directly employs 2.6 million people. Britain also saw a degree of reindustrialisation which began in the mid-1990s and which continues to this day, a process that was underpinned by both 'push' – such as the shrinking of cost advantages of South and East Asian economies - and 'pull' – the development and increasing usage of technologies such as AI and three-dimensional printing in the UK - factors. While it is unlikely that industry will ever dominate the commanding heights of the British economy in the way that it did throughout the twentieth-century, it has undoubtedly been slowly returning to peripheral and so-called post-industrial parts of the country over the last decade or so in a process that is likely to continue (Rowthorn & Coutts, 2013). The possibility of this happening has increased further as of late with the Coronavirus leading to demands for the diversification and reshoring of supply chains.

These inter-connected and overlapping trends – partial and processual deindustrialisation on the one hand and fragmentary and slow reindustrialisation on the other – can be seen playing out in the East End of Newcastle. Although it saw the disappearance of industries in the 1980s, some of its iconic businesses, most obviously the Parsons turbine manufacturing plant, survived and continue to thrive in the present day, albeit with much reduced workforces and often under new ownership. Furthermore, and as Tomaney (2006: 1253) has discussed, it also benefited from the opening of the low-skill, mass-production manufacturing facilities which have found a home in the North East more broadly throughout the 1990s, and while these places employ fewer people and offer less in the way of remuneration and security than the traditional heavy industries, they have nonetheless helped to mitigate against some of the worst effects of their closures. Finally, Walker has, in the last decade or so, seen the riverside that was for so long marked above all else by the rusting metal carnage of deindustrialisation come back to life, reinvigorated by businesses such as Shepherd which produces jackets for wind-turbines and Wellstream which designs and manufactures pipelines for oil platforms. It is this trifecta - the survival of traditional businesses, the opening of branch plants, and the emergence of new high-skill, high-wage manufacturing - that underpins the 'ongoing connections' of the participants with industry.

The lived connections of the participants can be broken down into two broad categories. The first and most obvious were the employment connections, the handful of them who worked in the offshore and branch plant businesses or had done so in the past, as well as those who work in adjacent roles such as catering and security. The second category is the intersection of industry with their personal lives, whether that is through living near Walker riverside and so being able to see and hear what is going on there or through having family members and friends who work there in some capacity. Before this discussion begins, it is worth noting that these ongoing connections were talked about less than the familial and lived ones that have been considered previously in this chapter and that were are arguably more marginal and less significant in the lives of the participants. It seems that while industrial work has not disappeared entirely from Walker and the lives of the participants, it does not occupy as central a place in their lived experiences as it does in their connections to and with the shared past. Nonetheless, the young men with whom I was working talked about 'ongoing links' with enough frequency to warrant a discussion about them.

A handful of the participants either worked in industry contemporarily or had done so in the recent past, meaning that while they had not experienced the kind of Fordist mass employment that people in their community were nostalgic for, they had a direct and personal connection with this era in a way that those who had only been able to find work in the service sector or had been excluded from the workforce altogether did not. It was more common for them to have worked in branch plants – which as Phelps (2009: 11) notes tend to provide jobs that are relatively insecure, low-skill, and poorly-paid – or in factories that mass-produced consumer goods and relied on unskilled labour. Without exception, the participants talked about these roles in the past tense, as jobs that they had once had, perhaps a reflection of their unfulfilling nature and the limited financial rewards that they offered. I met Luke at a local 'greasy spoon', and when I asked him about whether there was still much left in the area in the way of industrial work, he told me about the time he had spent working in a factory alongside friends of his father, before he took up a skilled trade:

> [Luke, 28, Joiner] 'I've had friends who have gone from decent jobs to working nights packing boxes in factories. A lot of people who used to work at Parsons work at the Greggs factory now on the night shift, people that my dad worked with, I did it for a bit before I got trained up, that's a local company, Greggs of Gosforth, and it's massive now. So aye, there's still a bit of work like that around, but it's not like it used to be.'

In his response, there is a tension of sorts. On the one hand, Luke is aware that factory work, whether packing boxes or churning out pastries, is at least nominally connected to the kind of industrial labour that once predominated Walker. This is reinforced by the fact that during his time at the Greggs factory he was working alongside friends of his father who had previously worked at Parsons, one of the 'three pillars' of East End employment and synonymous with 'good work'. On the other, he also casts it in somewhat negative terms, in opposition to 'decent jobs' that many of the participants longed for – a phrase used by many of them as short-hand for secure, semi-skilled, well-remunerated work that could be done by a school-leaver – and as something that he did himself before getting 'trained up' as a joiner. This tension makes sense. While no doubt repetitive and boring, Conte-Helm (2012: 22) notes that work in the 'branch plant economy' retains a degree of physicality in terms of what is required from the employee and is also oriented towards producing something physical and tangible and

for this reason is comparable to mid-twentieth-century industrial work. However, as Nayak (2003: 10) argues, such work undermines both the male bread-winner model and the kind of community and sociability that accompanied working in the shipyards, given the demand for cheap flexible labour, fixed-term contracts, and non-unionised activity, and it is for this reason also notably different from the kind of work that was done by previous generations of East End inhabitants. This tension can be seen coming through in the responses of some of the other participants. Dom, for example, had worked in a number of jobs over the years, hopping from one to another as his circumstances demanded. One of these was 'working on the line' in a Siemens branch plant, something he said that he only did for 'about six months' due to his having been on a rolling contract when I chased him up for more information a few weeks after I met him. In the interview itself, he told me that:

> [Dom, 26, Self-Employed] 'There's still work like that up here, in factories and what have you, I think the North East is still more industrial than the rest of the country, I worked at one of the out-of-town Siemens places for a bit, working on the line, it were better than a lot of the office jobs I've had, bit more like the kind of work we've been talking about, but the hours were crap.'

The same tension runs through the response of Dom as was evident in that of Luke – a recognition that there were similarities to be drawn between working in the low-skill manufacturing that people of their generation were familiar with and the semi-skilled heavy industry that was the bread-and-butter of their fathers and grandfathers, even as at the same time jobs in the 'branch plant economy' (Conte-Helm, 2012) also differed in terms of the quality of employment, whether that was measured in terms of fulfilment, hours, or pay. Dom also hits on another important point in the above statement, and that is that the North East is still 'more industrial than the rest of the country'. A recent report from the NELEP (2018) noted that when compared with the rest of Britain, the region had a greater proportion of its workforce employed in industry, which also contributed more to its GVA than anywhere else in the country. The responses of Luke and Dom – as well as Simon [26, Unemployed] who 'worked in a box factory for a bit' and Ben [25, Unemployed] who 'used to be on the line' - is that there are still 'lived connections' with the industry that mean it continues to resonate and persist in the lives and psyches of the residents of places such as the East End.

Nowhere was this clearer than in the responses of Charlie [26, Electrical Engineer]. He was the only one of my participants who worked in the new high-skill, high-wage offshore industries that began to sprout up along the banks of the Tyne around a decade ago – I recruited Charlie by phoning around the various businesses that now operate from Walker Riverside with Wellstream being the only company that responded to my calls, and while I was also put in contact with two of his colleagues, they continually cancelled our meetings and eventually stopped responding to my e-mails – and in his responses the lived connections with industry are even clearer than in those of the participants who had previously worked in branch plants and factories. He told me about the enjoyment and pride he gets from his job, something that 'not many people can say nowadays', and he explicitly drew a connection between his role as an electrical engineer and the fabricating and welding that had been done by men in his family for generations, saying that:

> [Charlie, 26, Electrical Engineer] 'I think something like five generations have all worked in fabricating and welding, which was a lot to do with the shipyards, and we change with it, so now that the shipyards are gone we do oil rigs and wind turbines... That doesn't happen so much anymore, not like it would have done, families passing this stuff down, you don't think about it a lot, but you definitely feel connected to what you dad and grandad have done even though the riverside has changed so much.'

In this response, Charlie explicitly links his job as an industrial engineer in the offshore industries with what the male members of his family did in the shipyards throughout the twentieth-century, the industry on and through which the identity and prosperity of Walker was built for generations. He recognises that while the nature of his work may have changed – from fabricating and welding on ships to oil doing so on oil platforms and wind turbines – it remains as skilled, secure, and well-remunerated as it was for his predecessors, to whom he feels a sense of connection that was missing from the responses and lives of most of the participants. He also seems to feel that there is something significant about the fact that he works in the same place as his father and grandfather, on Walker Riverside where the shipyards that they toiled in stood well into his teenage years, as if this to keeps him connected to this bygone era and helps to bring it into his life in the present. This response neatly brings up some of the more indirect ways in which many of the other participants sustain 'living connections' with

industry – through friends and family members who work in the offshore industries that have started to spring up along the Tyne as the East End drags itself from the rubble of deindustrialisation. It is to these that the attention of this section will now turn.

Even if a number of the participants felt that they were excluded from working in the offshore industries – with sentiments such as 'you need so much training and experience, so I don't know if those jobs are for people from Walker' [Tim, 22, Student] and 'them jobs aren't for people around here' [Liam, 27, unemployed] being expressed fairly frequently – many of them had friends and family members who worked at places such as Technip, Shepherds, and Wellstream, all of which have located on Walker Riverside in the last decade and stand on the sites of the shipyards which once provided employment, identity, and purpose for tens of thousands of people in the East End. Bill, who felt that 'a lot of the problems in the area' were caused by 'the yards closing and the unemployment', told me that:

> [Bill, 29, Outreach Worker] 'My father-in-law still works in shipbuilding, he's a welder for Shepherds who do a lot of the offshore stuff along the river, he still does that, so you can see that not all of the industry is gone, we still have those links with it, even if it's not as big as it was when he was my age.'

Many of the participants had family members who worked in these new high-skill, high-wage jobs, and responses of this sort were fairly common, with Bill recognising that while industry no longer supports the prosperity of the entire community in the way it did throughout the twentieth-century, links with it have not been broken entirely, and it continues to be an important aspect of life in Walker in the present, even if it is somewhat emasculated. Finn, the son of one of my colleagues from Kids Kabin, shared similar sentiments. As we had a cup of tea at a community-run café, he told me about how although his grandfather worked in the offshore industries, he had neither the academic background nor the inclination to follow in his footsteps:

> [Finn, 19, Kitchen Porter] 'My grandad works at Barrier doing offshore stuff, spraying gas canisters and cranes and ships down with fire-proofing, those jobs weren't really there even when I was a kid, so it's good to see them coming back, seeing a bit of life along the river, he says it's not like what it was, but it's better than nothing and that it's still part of being from Walker.'

Like Bill, Finn was aware that the halcyon days of industry are a thing of the past - a fact that has been transmitted to him by his grandfather, who has witnessed the 'Golden Era' of mid-twentieth-century industrial urbanism, the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 257) of closures and redundancies, and the revival of sorts that has occurred in the last decade or so – but also understands that it continues to shape peoples lived experiences contemporarily, commenting that 'it's still part of being from Walker'. In this statement, he recognises that just as shipbuilding was an important part of the history of the East End, so the offshore industries are in the present, drawing a parallel between the two interconnected eras and demonstrating that he is aware that there is a connection between them that means the industrial past continues to live on in the present. It was not only the family members of the participants who continued to work in industry. A number of them had friends who did so as well. Although George told me that most of 'our lot from school are on the dole', he went on to talk about how they had found work along the revitalised river:

> [George, 19, Unemployed] 'A lot of my mates work down there, but mostly doing security and that, not working on the energy stuff. It's all changed now, it's not really us lot that work like that anymore. So aye, quite a few of our lot work there, but not doing the kind of stuff we used to.'

This response is an interesting one. Where Bill and Finn talked to me about family members who worked directly in the emergent high-skill, high-wage offshore industries, George discussed friends who worked in the ancillary roles such as catering and security which while necessary are likely of the insecure, low-skill, and low-wage sort which now typifies the employment landscape in much of the East End. They are not the fabricators and welders who embody the industrial tradition and keep it alive in the present, but the people responsible for the more logistical side of things, occupying something of a liminal space where they are exposed to contemporary industry on a daily basis and are reliant upon it, but who are simultaneously excluded from taking part in it economically and from benefitting from the kind of semi-skilled and well-remunerated work that it has to offer and of which they are envious. Nonetheless, industry continues to loom large in their lives and represent a lived connection with the industrial era which the participants are so inclined to pine for.

5.5 Conclusion

The first analysis chapter of this thesis explored the ways in which marginalised people living in a peripheral place talk about the experiences of previous generations and considered the ways in which these narratives are shaped by the needs and circumstances of the present. This one has sought to build on this by more explicitly discussing the ways in which this shared past continues to persist and resonate in the present. It was argued that the reason that industry continues to matter to the participants is that, despite their having missed out on its 'Golden Era' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 257) in the post-war period, it has been an important part of their lived experiences, both when they were growing up and contemporarily. Their connections with it were clustered under three umbrella terms.

The **first** type of connection were familial links that my participants had with the industrial past. These were the most commonly discussed, with virtually all of the young men with whom I worked having had grandparents and occasionally parents who worked in the shipyards and factories that once lined the banks of the Tyne. It was suggested that, while the patrilineal connection with industry was the strongest and most significant, there was also a less frequently discussed matrilineal one, with grandmothers in particular being mentioned. It was argued that these family members acted like a 'switchboard', passing down narratives about and the values of the industrial era to my participants.

The **second** type of connection were 'lived links' that my participants had with the industrial past. This umbrella term was a broad one, and it incorporated personal memories of the dying days of industry mediated in the realm of the sensory, with sights, sounds, and smells being particularly powerful mnemonic anchors; engagements with the material cultures of industry in the form of commemorative items and heirlooms in the family home; and encounters with the former spaces of industry, the variety of ways in which they lived with and utilised old factories and shipyards and how these engagements evolved over their life courses.

The **third** type of connection were the 'ongoing links' that my participants had with the industrial present. These were the most marginal, with only a handful of them working in the low-skill, low-wage branch plants that began to emerge in the North East in the 1980s and only one working in the offshore industries that began to appear along the

river in the 2000s. While it was more common for them to report family and friends who did so, this still represents a fairly marginal group of them. Their responses were nonetheless worthy of consideration, and it was argued that these links also play an important part in keeping industry alive in the lived experiences of people in the present. The attention of this thesis will now shift to the importance of deindustrialisation in the lives of the young men with whom I worked, the ways in which this significantly less romantic period remained an important part of their lived experiences and the ways in which they navigated a precarious and uncertain present.

Chapter Six: Deindustrialisation, the Experience of Transition, and the Past as a Resource

6.1 Introduction

Historians both academic (Comfort, 2013; Hobsbawm, 1999; Judt, 2005; Owen, 2010; Reid, 2005) and popular (Beckett, 2010; Ferguson, 2003; Marr, 2007; Sandbrook, 2006) now recognise that the decline of industrial employment in Britain began in the mid-1960s with the loss of jobs in staple industries like coal mining. However, it was not until the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) of the late-1970s and early-1980s that this transition started to come into conceptual focus as industry began to struggle across the length and breadth of the country. Tomlinson (2016: 76) goes as far as to suggest that this led to such a profound range of economic, political, and social changes that it provides the best underpinning narrative for understanding late-twentieth-century Britain. Indeed, building on the arguments of Blyth (2002), he makes the Polanyian argument that the impact and magnitude of deindustrialisation was so significant that - given the profound and widespread effects that it had on everything from employment and income distribution to the gendered division of work and the shape of the social security system - it is not dissimilar to the 'great transformation' of the agricultural economy into an industrial one in the late-eighteenth-century. Where previous chapters focussed on a longing for the industrial era in the accounts of my participants, this one puts deindustrialisation itself front-and-centre, considering the ways in which they young men with whom I was working actively and knowingly engaged with, and invoked it.

The scale and magnitude of the cultural, economic, political, and social impacts that accompanied deindustrialisation has meant that it remains an important and popular topic of study. In the last two decades, it has come to be seen less as as a discrete historical event and more as an incomplete and ongoing process that was far more geographically diverse, historically deep, politically perplexing, and socially complicated than it appeared in the political heat of the 1980s. Alongside this, there has been a growing interest in the ways in which working-class communities that witnessed the decline and disappearance of industries and which continue to live with its ongoing legacies have been impacted on in the *longue durée*. This is the conversation that this chapter seeks to contribute towards by considering the ongoing resonance of industrial decline in the accounts and lives of the participants. In terms of structure, it is organised around three broad and overlapping themes.

The **first** of these themes considers the shadow that deindustrialisation casts in the lives of the participants. It seeks to bring empirical depth to existing discussions about the legacies of industrial decline and explores the ways in which the young men with whom I worked engaged with this process and how the closures and redundancies of the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) intersected with their own lives and biographies. This section will demonstrate that - like the industrial era - the period of industrial decline remained a potent part of their shared history that recurred across almost all of the conversations that I had. The participants were also quick to draw a line that connected deindustrialisation with the problems that Walker faces contemporarily, demonstrating an awareness of the fact that this was not a discrete historical event but is an ongoing process which continues to impact on their lived experiences and their community in the present.

The **second** of these themes discusses the narratives that the participants mobilised when talking about this period. It has been argued across this thesis that the ways in which people talk about the past tell us more about the present than it does about the past itself, and this was as true of deindustrialisation as it was about the industrial era. It is argued in this section that the oppositional way in which the young men with whom I was working discuss industrial decline – pointing to the organised and more anarchic forms of resistance that emerged in response to it, from marches and strikes to rioting and vandalism – must be understood in relation to the relative disempowerment and impotence of working-class communities contemporarily. This section also explores the intensely localised and personal ways in which the participants understood the abstract political and socio-economic processes that reshaped their community in the late-twentieth-century and the granular and parochial manner in which they made sense of it.

The **third** of these themes considers how the participants invoke and mobilise this shared history and the way in which this relates to their circumstances and situations in the present. The narratives that people mobilise about the past are shaped by their demands and needs contemporarily, and here particular attention will be paid to the parallels and parities that the young men with whom I was working drew between the experiences of their predecessors of surviving industrial decline and its fall-out and their own of living in the 'Age of Austerity'. It will be argued that by drawing-on this shared history, they were better able to navigate and survive in our post-recessionary, deficit-cutting conjuncture. What weaves these arguments together is an understanding that

the participants use deindustrialisation as a resource, proactively mobilising it in a self-aware and deliberate way to help them survive in a community that is still negotiating the complicated legacies of the decline of the industrial economy.

The **fourth** of these themes explores how the narratives of collectivism and resilience that my participants invoked and mobilised about the shared past fed into the sorts of 'everyday politics' that many of them practised in their day-to-day lives. By drawing on the myths, norms, and values that they associated with the historical experience of deindustrialisation, the young men with whom I worked practised 'small p politics' - acts that are project-oriented, seek to deal with common concerns concretely and personally rather than abstractly and ideologically, and are concerned with local areas and issues - in two ways. Firstly, those involving mundane but nonetheless significant acts of charity or kindness such as making a communal meal for struggling neighbours or offering to look after the children of those who needed to work but were unable to afford childcare. Secondly, volunteering with or working for organisations to address some of the specific problems that Walker and its residents faced contemporarily. Both of these sorts of 'everyday politics' were oriented towards helping people in their community survive at the post-recessionary, deficit-cutting conjuncture at which we now find ourselves.

The study of deindustrialisation emerged concomitantly with and in response to the steady decline of industry across advanced economies in the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) of the 1970s and 1980s, but High (2013: 140) reckons that it was not until the 1990s that it came to be seen less a discrete historical event than it was an incomplete and ongoing process. Where in a pioneering study Bluestone and Harrison (1982) pictured deindustrialisation as a moment in time at which the line stopped or the gates of the factory closed, more recently the field has shifted decisively toward exploring the cultural meanings and representations of industrial decline. With the publication of *Beyond the Ruins* (2003), Cowie and Heathcott sought to properly articulate this new academic endeavour, declaring that the time had come to widen the scope of discussion beyond the prototypical plant shutdowns and the immediate body count of job losses and to reckon with the processual nature of deindustrialisation and its complex and numerous legacies. High (2013) traces the origins of this 'second-wave' of scholarship to the work of Dudley, who in *The End of the Line* (1994) argues that the North American Rust Belt was 'not a static landscape of slag heaps and desolate smokestacks, but a cultural drama of communities in transition and ordinary people struggling to find a place in the present'.

There is an emergent body of work that is answering questions of what it means and how it feels to live in a deindustrialising society, exploring the the ways that people living in 'post-traumatic communities' (Gest, 2016) construct and interpret industrial decline. At the forefront of this are the writings of Linkon, Rhodes, and Strangleman (Linkon, 2002; Linkon, 2013; Linkon, 2014; Linkon, 2018; Rhodes, 2013: Strangleman, 2001; Strangleman, 2013; Strangleman, 2016; Strangleman, 2017A; Strangleman, 2017B; Strangleman *et al*, 2013; Strangleman & Rhodes, 2014), which argue that deindustrialisation is an active and significant part of the present. Linkon (2013: 3) suggests that where terms like 'post-industrial' imply that we have moved beyond earlier conditions, there is no clear break between the past and present. For this reason, she describes deindustrialisation as having a 'half-life', with its injuries shared - evident in social costs such as population decline, the deterioration of the built environment, long-term unemployment, and political resentment – and inter-generational – passed down through families. High (2018: 16) builds on this, arguing that those born any time after the early-1980s were not displaced by deindustrialisation but defined by it. They grew up in communities struggling to adapt to socioeconomic losses and for them, working-class life revolved less around stability and solidarity than it did precarity and uncertainty. These changes shook working-class culture, experience, and identity to the core, and for this reason Strangleman (2017: 166) suggests that there is a need to explore them. This chapter will now join this conversation by exploring the ways in which my participants remember the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) in which deindustrialisation occurred and how they use this history as a resource to get-by in the 'Age of Austerity' (Cameron, 2010).

6.2 'I Thought Thatcher was my Dad's Boss': Deindustrialisation in the Lives of the Participants

It was argued above that there is now a body of work that casts deindustrialisation not a discrete historical event but an ongoing and incomplete process that continues to this day. This section explores the ways in which my participants engaged with industrial decline, how the closures and redundancies of the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) have intersected with their own lives and personal biographies. The experience of deindustrialisation loomed large in the accounts of many of the participants. Although they were either extremely young during the 1970s and 1980s or born in the aftermath of the crescendo of industrial decline, this

transformation was comparable in magnitude and scale to the industrialisation that the country underwent in the late-eighteenth-century (Tomlinson, 2016) and continues to cast a long shadow communities such as Walker that were built on and through the illusory permanence of industry. In such places, deindustrialisation has a 'half-life' (Linkon, 2013), and the participants freely discussed their experiences of growing-up around the destruction and displacement that the loss of shipbuilding in particular visited on their community and their families. This continues to resonate with them in the present. A handful of the older participants in fact had personal memories of closures and redundancies, usually in the form of witnessing grandfathers, fathers, uncles, and family friends being laid-off towards the tail end of the industrial era. In one interview Rob [32, Administrative Assistant] – whose father worked at Swan Hunters, 'basically shaping metal, usually nuts and bolts and screws and that kind of thing' - told me a story that demonstrated the ways in which in narratives about the past difficulty and loss can, and often do, exist alongside more humorous and light-hearted reflections that come with the passage of time and the perspective this brings:

> [Rob, 32, Administrative Assistant] 'I thought Thatcher was my dad's boss because he blamed her for getting the sack, so that's my first memory of her, I don't think I realised she was the Prime Minister for years after that! This would have been some time in the late-1980s I reckon, I remember him coming home and saying that he'd got the sack, it's one of my earliest memories in fact, and I remember taking him literally and thinking that he'd actually been put in a big black bin liner, it was genuinely quite upsetting'

The fact that Rob considers his father being made redundant to be one of his earliest memories is significant – Saul *et al* (2017: 88) argue that the isolated and fragmented recollections which constitute our 'first memories' represent the basis of 'diachronic unity', the beginning our unchanging sense of self – and that he should say this reflects the profound and lasting impact that industrial decline seems to have had upon him and the extent to which it intertwines with his personal biography. Later in the interview as we discussed what it was like growing up in a deindustrialised and deindustrialising community, he recognised as much, telling me that:

[Rob, 32, Administrative Assistant] 'It's hard to not project back, but you could just sense that what was happening was a bad thing, I just had this general feeling that everything we owned was paid for with money that wasn't there anymore, and Walker was just coming apart at the seams, so it's hard not to take all of that onboard when it's all around you at that age.'

As High (2018: 11) notes, those coming of age in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s were less displaced by deindustrialisation than they were defined by it, with Strangleman (2017: 466) suggesting that while workers were directly and immediately harmed by shutdowns, the longer, slower, and subtler effects of this change were ultimately more significant as families and communities struggled to adapt to the economic and social losses and as young working-class people grew-up in places that offered them few opportunities. This certainly seems to be the case in the responses of Rob, which are marked by the deep impression left by deindustrialisation. Over twenty-years later, he is still able to remember the confusion and misunderstanding he experienced when he heard about his father 'getting the sack' and recall the concern and worry that came with seeing his family and community impacted upon by the decline of the shipyards. Ethan [33, Handyman] was another of the older participants who had personal memories of closures and redundancies. I interviewed him early on in the research process at Kids Kabin, where he worked ad-hoc as a handyman, over a cup of tea after he finished cleaning the windows:

[Ethan, 33, Handyman] 'My da worked at Swans as a panel beater, that were a common job that, and he must of got made redundant in 1998 or something like that, I remember it, I were a teenager at the time, him and a load of his mates got laid off at the same time, it were mental.'

When compared with Rob, Ethan saw his father being made redundant much later in life, in his teenage years rather than as a young child, and towards the tail-end of the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) rather than early on in them. It was nonetheless clear that the impact that deindustrialisation had upon him was equally deep and profound. Throughout the interview, he talked about what it was like growing up in a community that to this day continues to wrestle with the consequences and legacies of industrial decline and the opportunities that he felt were denied to him personally as he transitioned into adulthood in a time and place that offered little in the

way of options and stability. He was particularly concerned about the social problems that Walker faces contemporarily, which like Gest (2018) he saw as being an outcome of the decline of industry, the return of which would make him 'over the moon' as it would 'bring work to the area' and mean 'a lot of the shit that goes on around here would go away'. Among the younger participants, a sense of detachment related to the passage of time meant that few of them had such direct connections with closures and redundancies, but despite this they still had plenty to say on the matter of deindustrialisation. As we had a pint of aptly named Shipyard Ale in a factory-turned-brewery on the banks of the Tyne and discussed some of the major changes the East End had undergone in recent years, Euan told me that:

> [Euan, 27, Security Officer] 'It was obviously before my time, but I think all the industry going changed everything, the shutting down of shipbuilding, it really wasn't that long ago, and you can still see what it left behind, if you walk along the river there's the abandoned buildings and that, so it's not gone anywhere'

While it is evident that Euan did not have the same kind of personal experience of witnessing a family member being laid-off as Rob and Ethan, he nonetheless understood the profound and wide-spread impacts of deindustrialisation on his community, seeing it as something that has defined the recent history of Walker and which remains relevant in the present. Although Euan largely and understandably conceived of this transformation in terms of the loss of secure, well remunerated, and semi-skilled employment, a number of other participants commented on the kind of long-term socio-economic legacies of industrial decline in 'post-traumatic communities' (Gest, 2016) that authors who are concerned with 'half-life' (Linkon, 2018) are often interested in. Mac [27, Chef], a second-generation British Italian, was the first of my participants to raise this issue of addiction and its relation to deindustrialisation after he mentioned its impact upon his own family. I interviewed him at a makeshift skatepark he had helped to build on an abandoned strip of industrial land, where he told me that:

> [Mac, 27, Chef] 'Legal highs are the new problem around here, things like Black Mamba, I think there are similarities with what's happening with opioids in the States, all those towns and cities like in The Wire where the jobs have gone, it's a lot like the North East, man.'

His reference to the Opioid Crisis - the deadliest drug epidemic in American history (McGreal, 2018) – is an interesting one. Although substance abuse and addiction are complex social problems, there is an emergent consensus that they intertwine with economic disadvantage and that downers ranging from legal over-the-counter medications such as OxyContin to illegal narcotics such as Heroin have found their home in the left-behind towns and cities of the Rust Belt because they offer a respite from the ordeals of life and an escape from the drudgery of barely managing in these places (Quinones, 2016). That is to say, industrial decline is no small part of what is fuelling the opioid epidemic, and Mac suggests that the use of legal highs in Walker is no different, drawing a comparison between the deindustrialised steel towns and motor cities of the American Mid-West and depressed parts of the monochromatic North East of England that has been made by academics, the commentariat, and policy makers before him. Drug abuse and addiction were also a topic of discussion in my interview with Joe, who in his own words was 'not one to judge' as he had 'done his own fair share of experimenting':

> [Joe, 25, Rapper / Outreach Worker] 'Heroin became a thing around here with the loss of industry, and it's not really surprising, they talk about the Great Depression when unemployed was something like 25%, but up here after the closures it go up to 70% in some places, so heroin started in the 1970s but it was the 1980s when it really took off.'

Joe is accurate in his assessment of the chronology of heroin usage. In 1975, there were thought to be only 5000 people in the UK using the drug, a figure which sky-rocketed over the next twenty-years to 43,000 (Buchanan, 2006), and although he does not make the same comparison between Walker and the Rust Belt as Mac, he shared the sentiment – that industrial decline shook working-class culture, experience, and identity to its core (Strangleman, 2017: 2) and that living amidst its fallout has driven a small but significant number of people to seek an escape in narcotics that numb psychological, emotional, and even existential pain. The idea that drug use represents one of the major 'hidden wounds of deindustrialisation' (Linkon, 2018) and can be explained in relation to its economic and social dislocation is borne out in the literature. Pilkington (2007: 213) shows that numerous studies of heroin outbreaks draw a direct line between the surge in usage and the high of rates unemployment and social deprivation and exclusion that accompanied industrial decline. Where recreational drugs were once the preserve of the middle-classes, for the first time in

the 1980s they became associated with young working-class men living in disaffected and isolated communities who found themselves surplus to requirements and filled a void in identity, meaning, and purpose with heroin (Buchanan & Young, 2000). This is a problem that continues to this day and can still be understood in light of the fact that a deprived underclass of unqualified, unskilled, and unemployed young adults living in marginalised parts of peripheralised cities - such as Walker - still provide the recruits to the ranks of problematic drug misusers (MacDonald & Marsh, 2002).

The responses discussed above demonstrate that it is not just the industrial period that continues to resonate with the participants in the present, with deindustrialisation also a subject of frequent discussion. My research suggests that this transformation has had a deep, lasting, and profound impact upon those who witnessed it first-hand. Ethan and Rob in particular demonstrated this in talking about the impression that seeing their fathers and family friends being made redundant amid the 'Crisis Decades' of the 1970s and 1980s (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) had on them, with the admission of Rob that this was in fact one of his earliest memories being particularly revealing. This section has also sought to demonstrate that those growing-up in the shadow of deindustrialisation recognised that its social and economic legacies were as significant as the closures themselves. Joe and Mac, drawing on personal experiences, focussed on drug abuse and addiction as manifestations of the need to escape that comes with being a marginalised person in a left-behind place. Deindustrialisation continued to intersect and overlap with the lives and personal biographies of the participants and resonated with them in deep and profound ways, casting a long shadow as they negotiated its complex legacies. The attention of this chapter will now shift to exploring the narratives that the young men with whom I was working employed when they talk about industrial decline, the ways in which they used it as a resource, with their motivations and reasonings subsequently interrogated.

6.3 'Makes You Proper Proud Seeing How People Fought Like That': Deindustrialisation Narratives

Having established that deindustrialisation and its legacies loom large in the lives of the participants, this section now consider the stories that they tell and the narratives they mobilise when they talk about it, whether they experienced the closures and redundancies first-hand, remember overhearing anxious conversations about paying

the bills, learnt about the immediate fallout of industrial decline from neighbours and relatives, or simply drew a line connecting their present circumstances with this process. Two major things became apparent from the interviews that will be discussed. The first is that the participants had a tendency to frame industrial decline in oppositional terms, referring either to a doomed but nonetheless necessary struggle in the form of strikes and marches, or invoking more anarchic and reactionary, but perhaps no less political, responses such as rioting. The second is that the participants tended to conceive of deindustrialisation in local and personal terms rather than structural ones, favouring discussions about events and processes specific to Walker or Newcastle as opposed to the abstract economic and political shifts that underpinned economic restructuring. Each of these findings will be addressed in turn.

When discussing the ways in which deindustrialisation makes itself most immediately and obviously manifest – in the closure of factories and shipyards and the laying-off of employees – many of the participants were keen to stress the extent to which such events were opposed by both directly impacted workers and the community more broadly. Reflecting on seeing his father and family friends being made redundant as a teenager as well as his experiences of being involved in resistance as a child, Ethan told me that:

> [Ethan, 33, Handyman] 'We had meetings in our kitchen, my da and all his mates talked about what they wanted to do, they put a few windows in, but the thing is, Swans had been on its way out for years, I remember when I was really young there were proper marches and protests and that, everyone in Walker would be there, trying to save the yards.'

Ethan was not the only one of the older participants who talked to me about the sort of large-scale industrial action that was mobilised to protest industrial decline. While he did not have the same kind of first-hand recollection, Bill told me about how his grandfathers – who had both worked at Swan Hunter – had been involved in organising strike action in opposition to the closures and redundancies:

> [Bill, 29, Outreach Worker] 'Both of my grandads were involved in trying to stop the yards getting closed down, they organised walk-outs and stuff like that, they told me about it when I was growing-up, I think it really wore them out, they were at it for years even after it was obvious what was happening.'

High (2013: 145) suggests that while it is true that industrial decline provoked such opposition in its early stages, one of the greatest ironies is that rather than leading to revolution, it rapidly engendered quiescence and the internalisation of despair as working-class communities were enveloped in silence and began to contend with a stigmatisation that lasts until today. This analysis is borne out to a degree in the responses of Ethan and Bill, who seemed to recognise that by the time their family members were being made redundant there was little that could be done in practice. These accounts, however, place less emphasis on the despondence that supposedly afflicted such people than it does on their apparent inability to act in any meaningful way in the face of this transformation. Both acknowledge that while the early years of the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) saw the origins of community-wide resistance, this continued into the 1990s in one form or another. For Ethan, the emphasis was on petty vandalism, while for Bill it was on lingering organised resistance even when the fate of shipbuilding had been sealed. Both speak to the disempowerment and impotence likely felt by working-class people facing down industrial decline, but ineffective as such actions may have been, they are also long way from the despondence and inactivity discussed by Nickson (1995).

Although Ethan and Bill emphasised the opposition and resistance that industrial decline provoked – whether the large-scale, community-wide demonstrations or small-scale deviant – their responses were marked by an awareness of the limitations placed on the actions of former workers by the magnitude, pace, and scale of deindustrialisation. This was less the case with some of the younger participants, who lacked the same direct connection with the closures and redundancies and tended to view the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) in which they occurred in more unambiguously oppositional terms. One of the ways in which discussion was provoked in the interviews was through photo elicitation, the utilisation of images depicting events that were an important part of the collective past in order to facilitate the gathering of information (Harper, 2002). One photo that proved to be a consistent conversation starter showed an intense stand-off between police and striking miners in something resembling a pitched battle in the most damaging industrial dispute in modern British history. The 1984-85 Miners' Strike was one of the many things that Frank and I talked about as we had a pint in the pub named after a colliery that once stood in the East End that he worked at one afternoon after his shift finished:

[Frank, 23, Bar Staff] 'That's a great photo that, isn't it? Makes you proper proud, seeing how people fought like that for their work and their community, there's something very Northern about it, I think that's what we're like up here.'

He was not the only participant to express a sense of pride as we discussed the strike, nor was he the only person to suggest that it embodied a certain 'Northern-ness' that can be understood in relation to the camaraderie and fighting spirit demonstrated by the striking miners. Alan, who told me that that some of his more distant family who lived along the coast worked in the deep mines that once stretched out arterially under the North Sea were involved in the strike, shared similar sentiments to Frank:

[Alan, 20, Unemployed] 'The Miners' Strike is a really important part of our history I would say. It looks like a battle, doesn't it? Say what you want about us Geordies, but we fought for our industries. We might have lost, like, but we didn't just roll over and take it. Fantastic picture.'

In both of the above responses, there is an emphasis on the resistance that working-class people and communities demonstrated in the face of overwhelming odds, the way that large-scale socio-economic forces that led to industry relocating overseas were challenged and opposed by those at the sharp-end of deindustrialisation. While the photo of the Miners' Strike was chosen precisely to provoke such discussions about the ways in which industrial decline was resisted – as Alan [20, Unemployed] notes, 'it looks like a battle' – what is important here is the way in which the participants generalised off the back of the elicitation. This can be seen in statements such as 'there's something very Northern about it' and ''say what you want about us Geordies, but we fought for our industries', which betray a shared sense that the Miners' Strike represented an atypical, albeit famous, response to the closures and redundancies of the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) rather than the aberration that High (2013: 140) suggests such industrial actions in fact were. It seems that at a time when labour power is devalued and the working-class is disempowered and disorganised (Tyler, 2013), there was an urge on the part of participants to cast back to a time when 'people knew how to stick up for themselves' [Cam, 28, Merchant Navy] and 'were willing to step up' [Dennis, 29, Outreach Worker], a tendency to conceive of the era of closures and redundancies as some kind of valiant last stand – ultimately doomed but nonetheless necessary and virtuous – before their communities were marginalised once and for all.

This emphasis on resistance and opposition can also be seen in participant responses about the more anarchic and rebellious ways in which people responded to industrial decline. One of the other images used as part of the photo elicitation method in the interviews that provoked conversation depicted the aftermath of the 1991 Meadow Well Riots, a series of protests in and around an estate located a few miles to the East of Walker that were triggered by the deaths of two young men who were fleeing the police in a stolen car and which quickly descended into the burning of buildings and the looting of shops. As with the more organised forms of resistance, the participants tended to view this event as part-and-parcel of the fall-out of deindustrialisation, as something to be accepted and excepted if not celebrated in quite the same way. Ollie, who said that he was familiar with Meadow Well thanks to his work as a taxi driver, opined that:

> [Ollie, 29, Taxi Driver] 'Riots don't happen for no reason, it might take something like those deaths for things to kick-off, but think about it, all those people would have been working in the yards once and then all of a sudden they didn't have jobs, they couldn't pay their bills, it's not surprising really, and it could have been anywhere around here'

The sentiment that the riots were underpinned by structural forces and legitimate grievances and that they could have happened anywhere in the East End was a common one. Dennis, who felt that he could speak with some authority on the matter given his experiences as an Outreach Worker, told me that:

> [Dennis, 29, Outreach Worker] 'I'm not saying I support the rioters, they destroyed people's livelihoods, but I don't blame them either, when you have something like young lads dying and the police are involved in a community with no opportunities or hope, then something is going to happen, and you could imagine it being in Walker.'

Ollie and Bill were both in tune with much of the scholarship that explores what motivates young men to riot. Where rioters are often portrayed as bored and materialistic youths who engage in opportunistic crime and violence (Akram, 2014), 'rationalist' theorists understand explosive expressions of 'urban discontentment' (Clover, 2016) in light of the fact that they tend to happen in disadvantaged and peripheralised communities that are home to a large number of marginalised working-class young men who are angry at the way things are and feel that there is no way to improve their situation (Newburn, 2015).

While a spark of some sort is necessary – an incident involving police brutality that seems to symbolise the brutal, targeted, and unjust treatment to which many people feel they are subjected is common – the kindling is in place in the form of grievances related to social deprivation and limited employment opportunities (Rhodes, 2009).

Echoing such arguments, many of the participants cast the Meadow Well riots as a spontaneous protest triggered by an incident involving the police in a community that suffered from strained relations with law enforcement that saw alienated young men rally against the socio-economic hardships that they had suffered growing up amid the fallout of industrial decline. They were quick to draw comparisons with Walker. Both places declined simultaneously as the shipyards disappeared – indeed, Swan Hunter was the largest employer in both Walker and Meadow Well - and they were stigmatised as 'no-go' areas concomitantly. Although Ollie and Bill condemned the arson and looting because of the harmful impact that it had upon businesses and the community more broadly, there also seemed to be an air of reverence around the act of rioting itself. The way in which they spoke about it was akin to the way in which other participants had talked about the more organised forms of resistance, and it seemed that they cast it within the same frame of reference, as another aspect of the oppositional narrative that they employed when trying to make sense of the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403). A number of participants who were involved in the 'Makina' scene – a uniquely Geordie youth culture built around sports casual fashion, the taking of amphetamines, and Trance-inspired dance music characterised by hard synths and rapid-fire MC-ing about taking drugs, stealing cars, and getting chased by the police (Reynolds, 2013) - talked about the way in which the riots are celebrated and mythologised:

> [George, 19, unemployed] 'We used to go to Meadow Well for raves, there were some proper good MCs from up that way, MC Rockeye was one, he talks about the riots in some of his songs. I don't think people are proud, but they're not not proud either, y'know what I mean?'

> [Joe, 25, Rapper / Outreach Worker] 'There's this MC Rockeye lyric, he's from Meadow Well, it's something like *Meadow Well Estate, that is where we're from, remember the riots, in 1991, lights start flashing, we start dashing*… I can't remember the rest, but the point is it's a big lyric, you hear it all over the place now, I have kids I work with who were born a decade after the riots and they still spit it.'

Interviewing George and Joe, I got the same impression that while the Meadow Well Riots were not something to celebrate as such, there was nonetheless something gratifying and even heroic about marginalised people in a peripheral place reacting to the socio-economic situation that had been inflicted upon them forces beyond their control (Campbell, 1993). It seemed as if the most infamous explosion of 'urban discontentment' (Clover, 2014) in the modern history of the North East was just as much a part of the oppositional narrative expounded by the participants as the marches, protests, and strikes that were as much a product of and statement against deindustrialisation. High (2013: 140) may be correct in arguing that industrial decline provoked opposition only in its early stages, before rapidly engendering quiescence and the internalisation of despair as communities built on and through the illusory permanence of industry were enveloped in silence and began to contend with a stigmatisation that last until today. The participants, however, saw things differently, emphasising the ways in which people fought against and resisted its closures and redundancies. The popularity and seductiveness of this narrative is understandable. At a time when the working-class is as disempowered and disorganised as it is contemporarily – when the 'forward march of labour' has been well a truly halted (Jacques & Hobsbawm, 1982) – it must be tempting to look back to a time when people were able to mobilise against their marginalisation and peripheralization, even if this took the form of rioting rather than organised resistance.

Also evident in these accounts is the intensely local and personal manner in which the participants understood deindustrialisation. What became clear throughout the interviews was that although large-scale social and economic forces may have shaped the individual lived experiences of the participants in profound and subtle ways, most of them – understandably - did not see their daily lives through the lens of the global movement of capital or neoliberal politics that underpinned industrial decline. Rather than think about the ideologies or actions of those with power, who often seem either disembodied or simply distant, they saw the abandoned houses that dot the estates on which they live, the run-down neighbourhood pubs and working men's clubs that just about manage to survive, and the decaying factories tucked away in forgotten corners and the abandoned shipyards that line the river even now. This personal, local perspective that frames the accounts of the participants is an important part of the way in which they talk about and understand deindustrialisation, and although it manifested itself in various ways, it was the decline and eventual destruction of the Swan Hunter shipyard that arose most consistently and frequently in our discussions.

Although there were a number of other yards along the river – as well as other industries that served the East End of the city – 'Swans' was the most significant. At its peak, it employed over ten-thousand people, and it continued to hold a special place in the hearts of many in the community. Mentions of it recurred across the interviews, with my conversation with Tim [19, Unemployed] revealing the ways that individual and familial lives and that of the yard intertwined when he told me that without Swan Hunter he 'might not be here' as it was 'where wor nana and granda met'. What made Swan Hunter even more special to the people of Walker that it staggered on longer than any of the other yards, and for some time it held the status of being the last yard on the Tyne, a talismanic reminder of a bygone era that Mah (2012: 10) suggests held a sense of psychological and socio-economic rupture at bay for as long as it remained open. This stopped being the case a little over a decade ago, when operations ceased entirely, and the finality of this was hammered home when the cranes that had loomed over Walker for generations were spectacularly blown-up in 2010. Given the centrality of Swan Hunter in the history of Walker and its prominence in the familial and personal biographies of many of the participants, it is unsurprising that it loomed so large in their responses. Many of them had stories about the day it closed and the impact that seeing this last link the industrial past disappear had upon them:

> [Alan, 20, Unemployed] 'Swan Hunters used to be very prevalent, I remember when they blew the cranes up actually, one of my best mate's dads worked down there, so I remember when it closed, everybody walked out the same time that day, they were just slumped, and I remember thinking even then that something had gone really badly wrong.'

> [Ben, 25, Unemployed] 'I remember the day it closed, a lot of my family friends worked there so they were all made redundant, we all went down The Nelson afterwards, it was like someone had died, I wasn't very old at the time, but I remember seeing all these old shipbuilders, tough as nails they were, and they just looked beaten, it were absolutely gutting.'

> [Frank, 23, Bar Staff] 'I actually remember when some of the last cranes went it was so recent, it makes me sad, I remember one day I was walking along and the sky seemed really bare, and it just kind of clicked that they weren't there anymore, I think they blew them up.'

In each of these responses it is possible to see the intensely local and personal frame of reference deployed by the participants when they discussed the closures and redundancies that came with industrial decline. The way in which they understood the decline of the shipbuilding industry was not in structural terms – the downsizing and rationalisation of workforces under the Thatcher administrations, the offshoring of production to the 'Third World' thanks to the 'annihilation of space by time' and the ideational demands of the neoliberal revolution in the 1980s – but in light of the impact that it had upon them and their community. The observation of Ben [29, Unemployed] was that 'it was like somebody had died' captures this perfectly, as well as speaking back to the idea of deindustrialisation being a traumatic experience that continues to echo and resonate years down the line. In the minds of the participants, the closure of Swan Hunter was not the outcome of abstract and impersonal forces over which working-class people in Walker had no control, but was a tragedy that impacted upon individuals and families who had for generations depended on the work it provided for socio-economic security, identity, and purpose. Although this individualised understanding of industrial decline was evident throughout the interviews in a number of other ways it was Swan Hunter, its closure, and the destruction of its cranes that had loomed over Walker for generations that seemed to elicit this response most strongly and with the greatest consistency.

6.4 'We're the Most at Risk, but also the Most Resilient': Deindustrialisation as a Resource in an Age of Austerity

This chapter has so far sought to contribute to ongoing discussions around the half-life of deindustrialisation (Linkon, 2018) and the ways in which this transformation continues to loom large in the lives of the working-class people still living amidst its fallout. This final section attempts to bring something new and unique to the discussion – an exploration of the ways in which people are able to reconfigure a sense of loss and sadness beyond the negative and reactionary and reconceive of themselves as something more than victimised and passive cogs in the machinery of capital. Many of the participants were able to see deindustrialisation in a somewhat more positive light than might be expected given the deep and profound impact that it had in Walker. This is a tendency which does not emerge in a literature that casts industrial decline in overwhelmingly negative terms, although it is important to emphasise that the participants did not see it as an unequivocal good. Rather, they seemed to be trying

to put a positive spin on it or find a 'silver lining'. In drawing comparisons between their own experiences of being the test subjects of 'Mr Osborne's economic experiment' (Keegan, 2014) and those of their community in the last quarter of the twentieth-century, they were able to develop a resource that they could draw-on and invoke to help them to navigate a socio-economic landscape whose contours have been radically reconfigured by the imperatives of austerity. This helped them to survive at the post-recessionary, deficit-cutting conjuncture at which we now find ourselves.

Austerity policies and politics have played an important part of social and economic life in Britain over the last decade, and as Blyth (2015: 8) has argued, given the roots of this 'dangerous idea' in classical Liberal thinking, it is unsurprising that it emerged as the preferred way of dealing with the fall-out of the Great Recession in our 'neoliberal era' (Slobodian, 2018). The preferred method of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition elected in 2010, Hall (2013: 13) sees austerity not just as the most recent chapter of the long 'neoliberal revolution' but as its most far-reaching, irreversible, and radical episode to date. Life in what former Prime Minister David Cameron called the 'Age of Austerity' figured heavily in many of the interviews, although only a handful of participants were aware of the term itself. Perhaps because he owed his self-employment to one of the policies associated with austerity – Welfare-to-Work, which sought to encourage those on benefits to monetise hobbies and skills by setting up small businesses – Jack was familiar with it. In a fired-up and politicised conversation over a cup of coffee, he told me:

> [Jack, 26, Self-Employed] 'Aye, I know exactly what you mean, it's all about shrinking the state and pitting people against each other. It's a race to the bottom so that rich people can make money off the back of poor people. It's business-as-usual for the Tories, basically.'

There were a number of examples of people replying in such a way, but what was far more common were confused responses such as 'I don't think I've ever heard of it' [Nick, 29, Insolvency Administrator] or 'never hear of it' [Harry, 19, Unemployed]. One particularly interesting example of this was Dave [22, Administrative Assistant], who actually worked at the Department for Work and Pensions, at the front-line of delivering and implementing austerity policies and politics, who still answered 'I don't really know what that is to be honest with you' when asked what his thoughts on austerity were.

This knowledge gap can be explained in light of the fact that austerity has been normalised and has come to be seen as an inevitable and natural state of affairs, a background hum in the lived experiences of people in the present (Blackman & Rogers, 2017). This does not, however, mean that the participants are unfamiliar with its effects. When I explained what some of the policies associated with austerity were that they might be familiar with – whether the Bedroom Tax, cuts to Local Council Spending, or Universal Credit, which was being rolled-out around the time that many of the interviews took place – they were quick to acknowledge the impacts that it has had upon the community, their family and friends, and in some cases they themselves. Dave, who had told me that he did not 'really know what it was', was one such example. He explained to me that:

> [Dave, 22, Administrative Assistant] 'What I've seen is a council desperate for money, and I know that it has to make tough decisions, but it seems that it's the stuff that anyone can use, like libraries and parks and pools, that have been hit. I haven't been affected personally, but all around me I can see people who have been, family or friends or people from school.'

He recognised the impacts of austerity on those around him but had been personally insulated from the worst of its effects, something that was true of many of the participants who were in full-time or secure employment. This was less the case for those who were either on part-time or zero-hours contracts or who did not have jobs at all. Liam, who might be categorised as a 'NEET' – a young person not in education, employment, or training – was an example of someone who was not familiar with the term austerity but was personally acquainted with its effects in his personal life:

> [Liam, 22, Unemployed] 'Oh aye, I know what you mean, the Government is just out to make itself rich. I'm on that Universal Credit and a load of my mates have been done by the Bedroom Tax. All these things just mean that when payday comes around, nobody has nowt. It's pointless.'

The responses of Dom, Dave, and Liam give an idea of the extent to which austerity is a part of the lives of the participants. This is unsurprising. Its effects have not been felt equally across the population – some people and places have suffered disproportionately more than others. Blyth (2013: 21) understands the 'distributional violence' of austerity as something that impacts upon people differentially depending

on their class, ethnicity, gender, and race but overlooks that everyday life takes place not on the head of a proverbial pin but across space and in place. Beatty and Fothergill (2013: 111) point to an emergent literature that redresses this aspatiality by exploring the geography of the Financial Crisis, its fall-out, and the way in which the Government have responded to it. One example of is the work of Berry (2016) which in considering the socio-geographic logic of austerity draws attention to the fact that Labour-voting councils that suffer from high levels of socio-economic deprivation and disadvantage and are located in the North have been hit hardest by a politics that they overwhelmingly did not vote for. Many of the participants were aware that as young, working-class Northerners living in Labour-voting constituency built on and through the illusory permanence of industry, they were more exposed to the negative impacts of austerity. Building on his concerns that cuts were having the greatest negative impact on public goods such as libraries, parks, and pools, Dave also noted that:

> [Dave, 22, Administrative Assistant] 'There's been a really big change in the last few years and its definitely been more in places like Walker or Byker than it has in places like Jesmond or Gosforth where people are more cared about and where they get out and vote.'

Pete shared similar concerns, although his were somewhat regional in scope, focusing on the North East more broadly rather than the micro-geographies of Newcastle and the ways in which its various constituencies have been differentially impacted upon by the regime of cuts and sanctions. As we drank a coffee in Flat Caps, an upmarket café in central Newcastle presumably named after the quintessential piece of working-class headgear (Worth, 2018), he told me that:

> [Pete, 24, IT Support Worker] 'Nobody was really surprised when we heard that the North East was going to be hit hardest by cuts, we all know it's grim up North, so it's just more of the same really. I've really noticed the affects in the last few years, and I think we're at breaking point.'

The idea that austerity represents 'more of the same was not something I had the chance to push Pete on, as the interview quickly moved on, but this idea recurred across a number of the conversations I had in which the participants expanded upon it and articulated in more detail. A number of them drew a connecting line between the deindustrialisation of the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) that their

community and family members lived through and the confusion and dislocation of its fall-out that they themselves grew-up around and the 'Age of Austerity' in which we now find ourselves and which in a large part defines their experiences in the present. One example of this was Ian [26, Trade Unionist], who argued that structural dynamics link and underpin industrial decline and austerity. He saw his interpretation as being a product of the fact that he is a Labour Party activist and Trade Unionist educated in the Socialist tradition, and told me that:

> [Ian, 26, Trade Unionist] 'My community got screwed by the shipyards closing, we were at the bottom of the list for investment in the 1990s, and now we're getting done over by austerity, and these things are all connected, they're all coming from London, this isn't a coincidence.'

Although Ian articulated himself in a more sophisticated way than other participants, such opinions were not limited to the more politically active and engaged of them. Although he did not link deindustrialisation and austerity in quite such an explicit way, Euan, a Security Officer who had 'never voted before', echoed the same sentiments. Invoking concerns about the so-called 'North-South divide' that, he told me that:

> [Euan, 27, Security Officer] 'There's such a big divide between us and them, between us and the South, and I think it's because they get everything and we don't get nothing, and you can see it with the yards closing and with all the cuts, we're always his the hardest, you know?'

Joe also shared the belief that, firstly, the North and the South were treated in different ways and that, secondly, both deindustrialisation and austerity could be understood in light of this:

> [Joe, 25, Rapper / Outreach Worker] 'Look, I'm not here to get into a pissing match, but just comparing London and the North East it's very much the case that we have fuck all and that we've been shat on more often and from a far greater height than people down there, you could see it with the closing of the yards and the pits and you can see it again now with the cuts.'

The belief of the participants that there is a direct line connecting the deindustrialisation of the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) with the cuts and sanctions of the 'Age of Austerity' is borne out in the literature. At the more abstract level, Fuchs (2016: 89) argues that they are simultaneous expressions and outcomes of the neoliberal economics and

politics that have predominated in Britain since the election of Margaret Thatcher, a line of reasoning that is supported by Keegan (2019) and Goodhart (2017). At the more specific level, meanwhile, Beatty and Fothergill (2017) explore the ways in which this ideology manifests itself, arguing that the higher levels of worklessness and welfare reliance in 'post-traumatic communities' (Gest, 2016) – ranging from incapacity benefits and free school meals to tax credits and workfare - make them more vulnerable to the impacts of austerity. The idea that communities such as Walker are in effect facing punishment in the form of cuts and benefit sanctions as well as the erosion of local council funding for the destruction previously wrought to their economic base is evident across the scholarship, with prominent examples including work by Cooper and Whyte (2017), Gray and Bradford (2018), and Lansley and Mack (2015). There is, in short, much in the literature that supports the belief of the participants that there are comparisons to be made and parallels to be drawn between deindustrialisation and austerity.

The participants, however, did not stop there. Across numerous interviews, they actively drew-on and invoked the shared history of closures and redundancies to help them survive the trials and tribulations of life in the 'Age of Austerity' (Cameron, 2010). It has been argued across this thesis that the way in which people conceive of and discuss the past is in a large part a reconstruction that is inextricably connected to and shaped by their present circumstances and situation (Erll, 2011), and this is as true of deindustrialisation as it is of the industrial period. At our post-recessionary, deficit-cutting conjuncture, when young working-class men like the ones with whom I was working find themselves at the sharp-end of neoliberal economics and politics, they do not just draw comparisons between their own experiences and those of their predecessors. Rather, they actively invoke their experiences of living through industrial decline and its fall-out to help them navigate and survive a socioeconomic landscape whose contours have been drastically reconfigured and redrawn by the imperatives of austerity. The tendency of the participants to seek out and make use of a silver lining amid the loss of deindustrialisation is not something that emerges from the literature, yet it recurred across my interviews. They frequently talked about how the experiences of their community of living through the closures and redundancies of the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) and their own of growing up amidst its rusting metal carnage provided them with a stock of grit, resilience, and toughness that helped them to survive in the present, and in doing so they were able to conceive of themselves as something more that passive and victimised cogs in the machinery of capital.

While I had heard from a number of participants various versions of the idea that 'you need to be tough around here' [Finn, 19, Kitchen Porter] and 'growing up somewhere like this makes you hard' [Tim, 19, Unemployed], I first encountered the idea that one unappreciated and under-researched aspect of the half-life of deindustrialisation (Linkon, 2018) is a residual resilience that can be drawn on and made use of when I was interviewing Ben [25, Unemployed]. Equal parts angry, despondent, frustrated, and passionate, he told me that:

> [Ben, 25, Unemployed] 'You have to be tough if you're from around here, because nobody is looking out for us, ever since the yards got closed we've been getting fucked over, and actually that has made us hard, so it's almost a good thing now with all the cuts and that, because it helps us survive.'

The idea that adverse experiences in the past have prepared both himself and others in the community for a present defined by accelerating job insecurity, flat-lining incomes, the evisceration of the public sector, and the dismantling of the welfare state – as if it acted as some kind of inoculation - recurred throughout the interview. He returned to this idea later in the encounter as he explained:

> [Ben, 25, Unemployed] 'People from Walker are seen as being tough, and it's true, because we've had so much shit thrown at us and we're still having shit thrown at us now, so you need to be able to handle that.'

Inspired by this conversation with Ben, I started to discuss with other participants whether they agreed with him that there was something positive to be taken away from the community having lived through industrial decline in the form of both the immediate closures and redundancies and the subsequent confusion and dislocation that they caused. Niall, who described himself as 'proudly working-class' and had become involved with a local anti-austerity group after it was announced that his college was about to lose £400,000 of its funding to budget cuts, felt similarly:

> [Niall, 19, College Student] 'I think because of our history, working-class communities, especially in Newcastle, are better able to deal with austerity, we've had to put up with more than most with all the industries going, so I think we're the most at risk but we're also the most resilient, and it means that when there are challenges, which there definitely have been over the last seven-years, we can deal with them.'

In a similar vein, Dennis drew on his experiences as an Outreach Worker as he talked to me about the ways in which he had seen people struggle to get-by in the 'Age of Austerity' (Cameron, 2010). As he mourned the increasing number of people turning to escapist drugs, loan sharks and pay-day loan companies, food banks, and petty crime, he also found some solace in a toughness that his community had inherited from its turbulent past:

> [Dennis, 29, Outreach Worker] 'There's a real toughness here, it's because of everything we've been through. Look at it this way, if you've seen all the jobs in your area disappear and the community crumble and the government ignore it, you have to be able to do something with that or you'd go mental, so people use it to help them now when they're getting the shitty end of the stick again, this time with cuts and sanctions.'

The words 'hardness', 'resilience', and 'toughness' recurred across the interviews as something that the participants believed they had inherited following decades of exclusion and marginalisation, a resource on which they could draw to help them survive the precarity and uncertainty of life in the 'Age of Austerity' (Cameron, 2010). What is important to emphasise, however, is the word survival. The participants did not see deindustrialisation as an unequivocal good, but rather seemed to be attempting to salvage something vaguely positive from its long shadow. This invocation of deindustrialisation, then, should perhaps be set alongside the more straightforward methods, strategies, and practices that people adopt and deploy as they attempt to make ends meet in a time of falling incomes, rising prices, and disappearing services – things ranging from 'making do and mending' (Lansley & Mack, 2015), using pay-day loan companies (O'Hara, 2014), visiting food banks (Garthwhite, 2016), or resorting to criminality whether as a way to help pay the bills or in the form of escapism (Mendoza, 2015). It does not represent a basis for a utopian politics of the type imagined by Smith and Campbell (2017), a way of remembering that actively and self-consciously aims to use the past to set a politically progressive agenda for the future, but is rather a strategy born of desperation and a lack of alternative options.

It is worth taking a moment to consider the responses of those participants who disagreed with the likes of Ben, Niall, and Dennis. This is not to say that they rejected the idea that deindustrialisation offers people some kind of stock of resilience and toughness that people can draw-on to survive the harsh realities of the 'Age of Austerity' outright, but rather to acknowledge that they simply believed that these

resources were inadequate to deal with the scale and severity of the challenges faced by working-class people at our post-recessionary, deficit-cutting conjuncture. After talking to me about the ways in which deindustrialisation and austerity interconnected and overlapped, Ian [26, Trade Unionist] followed up by saying:

> [Ian, 26, Trade Unionist] 'You take all of that onboard, it becomes a part of you and your mates and your family, if you talk to people from Walker they'll say 'we've always had it tough around here, nobody looks out for us, but we look out for each other', and I think that's why we've always been able to pull through before. I do worry that it's not going to be enough this time though, when wages are so low and opportunities are so few. I dunno man.'

In this response, some of the same ideas are evident as in those of other participants – that the confusion and dislocation of deindustrialisation has been internalised in some way, that people in Walker have inherited and nurtured a survival instinct, that they draw-on and invoke the history of industrial decline to help them in an austere present – but he does not share their somewhat more positive outlook. The idea that there are limits to what can be done with the inherited resilience and toughness in the face of a present that has little to offer and a future that presents itself as non-negotiable was also expressed by Cam, who told me that:

> [Cam, 28, Merchant Navy] 'Yeah, we do have that history of tough times and being shafted and people can say 'aye, we'll be alright, we've survived worse', but at the end of the day, that doesn't help people on the breadline, most people I know are on benefits, and it doesn't help them pay rent, it doesn't help them put food on the table, it doesn't help them keep the heat on.'

Although the responses of Ian and Cam questioning the value of deindustrial heritage represent a small minority when compared with those which cast industrial decline in a somewhat more positive light, they demonstrate that the way in which the participants invoke and mobilise their shared past is not homogenous or predictable but is personal and unique. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that many of the participants were able to reconfigure a sense of loss and sadness beyond the merely negative and reactionary and reconceive of themselves as something more than victimised and passive cogs in the machinery of capital. They drew-on and invoked deindustrialisation as a way of surviving in our 'Age of Austerity', mobilising a narrative about the 'Crisis

Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995) that helped them to navigate a socio-economic landscape whose contours have been drastically reconfigured and redrawn by the imperatives of neoliberal policies and politics. Just as the industrial past is a resource that the participants drew-on in light of their present circumstances and needs, so to is deindustrialisation, a process which inflicted significant harms on their community, their families, and they themselves, but something which they were nonetheless able to reinterpret and utilise in a present that has little to offer them and facing a future which presents itself as non-negotiable.

6.5 'People Around Here Have It Tough, but They Look Out For Each Other': Everyday Politics in the Age of Austerity

It was suggested in the previous section that while the ability of the young men with whom I worked to reconfigure a sense of loss and sadness beyond the negative and reactionary and reconceive of themselves as something more than victimised and passive cogs in the machinery of capital was noteworthy. This is because it exists in tension with the understandable tendency in the literature to cast deindustrialisation in overwhelmingly negative terms. It was also argued that while industrial decline provided a resource on which people such as my participants could draw to them survive the precarity and uncertainty of life in the 'Age of Austerity' (Cameron, 2010), it was less a basis for a utopian politics - a way of remembering that actively and self-consciously aims to use the past to set a politically progressive agenda for the future – than it was a survival mechanism born of desperation and a lack of alternative options. However, that is not to say that the narratives of collectivism and resilience that my participants invoked and mobilised about the shared past did not feed into the sorts of 'everyday politics' that many of them practised. It is to this that the attention of this final section will now turn.

It is useful here to pause and reflect on what is meant by 'everyday politics', what Kennedy *et al* (2018) call 'small p politics' and cast in opposition to the sort of 'big P politics' that most people would intuitively recognise – distant, election-oriented, large-scale, and party-based. Sloam (2020: 1) argues that for those who feel disconnected from or unrepresented by mainstream electoral politics, formal political participation is giving way to issue-based engagement. This makes itself manifest in a range of practices ranging from small-scale citizen-to-citizen interactions and individual decisions through to larger-scale campaigns and social movements. Boyte (2004: 5) suggests that

what unites these disparate politics is that they are shaped by the everyday lived experiences of individuals. Bang (2005: 159) adds that these everyday markers are, firstly, project-oriented and seek to deal with common concerns concretely and personally rather than abstractly and ideologically and, secondly, concerned with local areas and issues - the communities in which citizens reside.

Silva (2019) has explored how these ideas play out in communities which were built on and through the illusory permanence of industry and which are now characterised by precarity and uncertainty. She argues that the social and economic changes that accompanied deindustrialisation - the growth of insecure work, the privatisation of risk, the decline of industrial working-class power, the loosening of traditional gender roles - undermined the routines and rhythms of traditional working-class life such as manual labour, unions, and social clubs. Drawing on ethnographic research in the American coal-mining region that stretches across the Appalachian Mountains and the Midwest, she suggests that traditional 'big P politics' have been superseded by individual and small-scale strategies for coping with pain and that these have become sources of political stimulus and reaction. Smith and Campbell (2011) have made similar observations in the context of a former mining community in Yorkshire. They argue that residents actively invoke their shared history as a means to empower community action groups which mobilise around issues specific to their community and which need to be understood in light of its unique experiences of dealing with the fallout of the 1984-1985 Miners' Strike. Borth Silva (2019) and Smith and Campbell (2011) draw on and contribute to discussions around 'everyday politics' - the idea that excluded and marginalised people 'turn inwards' to focus on local and personal issues - which can be seen playing out in the accounts of my participants.

The sort of 'everyday politics' that my participants engaged in came in two forms. The first were highly personalised and rarely seen as being 'political', involving mundane but nonetheless significant acts of charity or kindness such as making a communal meal for struggling neighbours or offering to look after the children of those who needed to work but were unable to afford childcare. The second were larger in terms of scale and scope, relatively speaking, and involved volunteering with or working for organisations to address some of the specific problems that Walker and its residents faced contemporarily. These strands of 'everyday politics' were united by a focus on

the immediate and the local and by drawing upon and invoking the kind of collectivism and resilience that made up such a crucial aspect of the way in which they thought about the era of deindustrialisation. In lieu of operating through large-scale organisations that work to address abstract problems and enact structural changes, the young men with whom I worked frequently chose to act independently or through community groups to address issues of immediate concern to themselves, their families and friends, and their community. It is to the first of these kinds of 'everyday politics' - the highly personalised - that this chapter will initially turn to.

It was noted previously that Silva (2019) has argued that in a context in which working-class communities and individuals are disempowered, excluded, and marginalised, the mass politics of the industrial urban working-class that defined the twentieth-century have been superseded by individual and small-scale strategies that address immediate concerns and issues but which are still, in their own way, deeply political. This can be seen playing out in the accounts of my participants. While they did not always recognise as much, the sense of obligation that they felt to members of their community and the actions that they took to assist them - often in the face of significant personal hardship - constitute a powerful sort of 'everyday politics'. Interestingly, these were typically practised by those who were most disillusioned with formal 'big P politics' (Kennedy *et al*, 2018) and who were most obviously locked out of the political and socio-economic life of contemporary Britain. Liam was a good example of this. Although he was deeply disillusioned with electoral party politics, telling me that he 'didn't care about none of that' and that 'they [politicians] are all out for themselves', he felt a strong sense of attachment to his community and believed that he had a responsibility to help those in need:

> Liam [29, Unemployed] 'Obviously there's not much I can do,
> I've not got much money and I've got my daughter to think about,
> but every week I'll make up a big pot of something cheap and
> easy like a spag bol, and I'll just let people know that if they're
> hungry or owt, they can come over, no problems'

While he does not consider his efforts to help to feed those in his community as significant, this is a highly political act which has emerged in a very specific context. It was noted previously that Berry (2016) has demonstrated that communities like

Walker - Labour-voting, deprived, and in the North - have been at the sharp-end of austerity politics. One of the main ways in which this makes itself manifest in the everyday lives of the unemployed and those working in low-wage and precarious jobs is in food poverty. Garthwaite (2016) has shown how since 2010 cuts in welfare spending and changes such as the Bedroom Tax, Personal Independence Payment, and Universal Credit have led to sharp increases in food insecurity. He may not have recognised as much, but Liam was playing a part in stepping in to fill the void left by a retreating state in a community that was particularly exposed and vulnerable to the impacts of austerity. He was not the only one of the young men with whom I worked that did so. As we had a pint in the pub in which he worked, Aaron told me about a service that he offered to parents in his community who needed to go to work but who could not afford childcare:

> [Aaron, 18, College Student] 'There's a lot of people who've got it tough on my road, they need to go to work but they've got kids to look after, so I've always said to them that when I'm able to, when I'm not working or at college, that I can watch them. It's one of the things about living around here, people look out for each other, I used to just go around one of the neighbours when my mam and dad were at work when I was younger'

Although Aaron seemed to understate the significance of his actions to help working parents in his community, they were no doubt extremely valuable and much appreciated. As Hanon (2013: 4) has argued, in Austerity Britain families and parents are 'hourly and daily' picking up the strains of reduced income, higher bills, fewer services, more pressured but less financially rewarding jobs, and benefits that are more conditional and less generous. The family has been of interest to this thesis in light of the fact that it acts as a 'switchboard' where older members disseminate to younger members the stories, myths, and values of the industrial past, but it is also within the family where all the pressures of austerity - whether cuts to youth services, caps on benefits, or rising energy and food costs - accumulate. By offering to care for the children of parents in his local area, Aaron is helping to alleviate some of the pressure on them, enabling them to go to work and put food on the table, pay rent, and avoid falling foul of changes to benefits that have made them more conditional

and less generous. Aaron was not the only one to draw out the idea that community and solidarity are a crucial part of life in Walker. George [19, Unemployed] talked about helping people to fix their bikes as he had 'always been good with his hands', while Jack [24, Self-Employed] utilised his experience of making Newcastle United accessories to repair damaged clothes, telling me that he had 'become pretty well known for it nowadays'. There were other participants who engaged in similar acts of 'everyday politics but who did so in somewhat more organised ways.

It was noted previously that 'everyday politics' are project-oriented and seek to deal with common concerns concretely and personally and are concerned with local areas and issues (Bang, 2005). As Kennedy *et al* (2018) argue, this makes itself manifest in a range of practices ranging from small-scale citizen-to-citizen interactions and individual decisions - such as those discussed thus far - through to larger-scale campaigns and social movements. Some of the young men with whom I worked engaged in the latter category, involving themselves in more organised activities that nonetheless still constitute 'small p politics'. This usually involved either volunteering or working in organisations that were geared towards addressing and alleviating some of the specific problems that Walker and its residents face contemporarily. In my conversation with Bill, he told me that:

> [Bill, 29, Outreach Worker] 'I went to uni locally and was originally hoping to make a bit of money, but coming back to Walker every night, I realised how lucky I was, and I wanted to help out people from the community. I love it. You're not addressing the causes of the problems here, but you're dealing with the effects, and there's not many places that people can turn to now that will do that.'

Bill was not the only of my participants who worked in the Third Sector who shared such sentiments. Dennis [29, Outreach Worker] told me that he liked 'giving back to where I grew up', while Joe [25, Rapper/Outreach Worker] shared that he enjoyed 'giving back to kids that I was like, the ones who people forget about otherwise'. In each of these responses, the young men with whom I worked emphasised the local and the personal aspects of their 'everyday politics', whether expressed in the form of giving back to the community or helping out people such as themselves. This was not

unique to participants who worked for organisations that sought to address some of the issues that Walker faces. It also applied to those who volunteered. Cam, who I met at a local boxing club that I frequented and who organised sessions for children from low-income families in the East End of Newcastle, told me that:

> [Cam, 29, Merchant Navy] 'I used to come to this club when I was younger, I started these sessions for the youngsters a few years ago, it kept me out of trouble when I was growing up, and things are definitely harder for families now than they used to be what with all the cuts and that. It's only small, but I like to think it helps.'

As Eliasoph (2013: 10) argues, working in the Third Sector - either as a job or as a volunteer - is 'part of a syndrome of good citizenship and political involvement', while Shacar *et al* (2019) suggest that involvement in a community organisation, charity, or social enterprise is frequently motivated by a desire to make observable changes to the lives of fellow citizens who share a social milieu or a geographic space. This is in keeping with the emphasis of 'everyday politics' on local and personal issues and can be seen in all of the responses discussed above.

Others however, connected this more explicitly with the shared history of the area. Niall, for example, raised this idea that the 'everyday politics' discussed by the young men with whom I worked could be understood in light of the industrial history of Walker and the more recent experience of deindustrialisation:

> [Niall, 18, College Student] 'In Walker, people look out for each other. When I was younger, when my mam and dad were at work, I'd go around one of the neighbours, she used to look out for all the kids on our street. That kind of stuff probably started out in the yards, but it became even more important when they shut down, and it's still really important today with how tough things are.'

The belief of Niall that the kind of communitarianism which he had benefited from growing up and which he saw as an essential part of life in a precarious and uncertain present could be linked back to industrialism and its decline is supported by the literature. Gilbert (2008) argues that communities that grew up alongside factories and

shipyards were characterised by a certain collectivism and egalitarianism - indeed, Fordist workplaces both relied upon and cultivated this tendency - and while this has been challenged by the erosion of the mid-twentieth-century socio-economic base, it lives on in one form or another. Morgan and Pulignano (2020) suggest that solidarity is not a unified phenomenon with unchanging qualities but is underpinned and reinforced by a shared context. Industrial decline has challenged old forms of mobilising and organising - 'big P politics' - but it has also necessitated the emergence of an 'everyday politics' that is more geared towards localised, personal, and small-scale challenges and problems. As Hall (2019) argues, this is particularly urgent in the context of 'Austerity Britain' (Cameron, 2010). In my conversation with Cam, he noted as much:

> [Cam, 29, Merchant Navy] 'People around here have it tough, but they look out for each other. In fact, I reckon they do that because they've got it tough. When, y'know, all the jobs have gone and then your benefits get cut, people step up, because they know what it feels like or that it could be them next.'

Like Niall, Cam recognised that the kind of 'everyday politics' practised by his peers was grounded in both the historical experience of deindustrialisation and the present reality of our post-recessionary, deficit-cutting conjuncture. At a time when people such as the young men with whom I worked found themselves increasingly excluded and marginalised not just from the socio-economic life of the country but also from traditional forms of politics and political mobilisation (Goodhart, 2017), these kinds of 'small p politics' are significant. While they may not be the basis for a large-scale or utopian politics, they exist alongside the mobilisation of deindustrialisation as a resource for survival mechanism used by young, working-class men.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the ongoing legacies of deindustrialisation, a transformation that when it first received sustained scholarly attention in the intense political heat of the 1980s was recognised as having deep and profound ramifications but was ultimately seen as being a discrete and stand-alone event. In the intervening decades, it has come to be appreciated that industrial decline in fact represents an incomplete and ongoing process that was far more geographically diverse, historically deep, politically perplexing, and socially complicated than could have ever been appreciated as it unfolded, and this chapter has sought to contribute to the discussion around its legacies that began to emerge in the late-twentieth-century and which remains a crucial arena of debate. It made three core contributions to this arena of debate.

First, it sought to add empirical depth to discussions around the 'half-life of deindustrialisation', demonstrating the ways in which the closures and redundancies of the 1980s continue to cast a shadow in Walker. The accounts of Rob and Ethan – both of whom had memories of seeing family members and friends being laid-off – reflected the ways in which this structural transformation intersected and overlapped with their lives and personal biographies, while the responses of some of the younger participants who had no such recollections showed that this by no means lessened the perceived impact of industrial decline on their lived experiences.

Second, it showed that the participants tended to cast this shared history in oppositional terms - drawing-on both organised and more anarchic forms of resistance to present a narrative of deindustrialisation provoking fierce and enduring if ultimately unsuccessful opposition – and highly localised and personal ways – less as an impersonal and structural process and more anecdotally. At a time when young men such as those with whom I worked are disempowered and peripheralised, this frame of reference is understandable. Like 'smokestack nostalgia', narratives about industrial decline must be understood in large part in relation to the present circumstances of those who draw-on and invoke them.

Third, it considered the ways in which the participants reconfigured a sense of loss and sadness beyond the merely negative and reactionary and attempted to give deindustrialisation a somewhat more positive reading. It was suggested that this is not something that is apparent in the existing literature, and an attempt was made to contribute to it by exploring how they used the experiences of their predecessors of dealing with the closures and redundancies and their own of growing up amidst its legacies as a resource to help them navigate our 'Age of Austerity'(Cameron, 2010). While drawing a connecting line between industrial decline and austerity provided the young men with whom I was working a resource which helped them to survive in a precarious and uncertain present, the emphasis was on the word survive. This stock of resilience and toughness was not the basis for a utopian or progressive politics, but rather offered one of a limited number of tools at their disposal to make ends meet at our post-recessionary, deficit-cutting conjuncture.

Fourth it explored how the narratives of collectivism and resilience that my participants invoked and mobilised about the shared past fed into the sorts of 'everyday politics' that many of them practised in their day-to-day lives. It was suggested that by drawing on the myths, norms, and values that they associated with the historical experience of

deindustrialisation, the young men with whom I worked practised 'small p politics' - acts that are project-oriented, seek to deal with common concerns concretely and personally rather than abstractly and ideologically, and are concerned with local areas and issues - in two ways. Firstly, those involving mundane but nonetheless significant acts of charity or kindness such as making a communal meal for struggling neighbours or offering to look after the children of those who needed to work but were unable to afford childcare. Secondly, volunteering with or working for organisations to address some of the specific problems that Walker and its residents faced contemporarily. It was suggested that both of these sorts of 'everyday politics' were oriented towards helping people in their community survive at the post-recessionary, deficit-cutting conjuncture at which we now find ourselves.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has provided an empirical analysis of the ways in which young working-class men in Walker think about the interlinked and overlapping eras of industrialism and deindustrialisation, the ways in which they remember industrial work and its loss, the strategies that they use to frame and comment upon this shared past, and how they draw-on and invoke this history to help them understand the present and imagine the future. The research that has underpinned these questions was conducted with thirty participants from Walker – a decaying former shipbuilding community – in the East End of Newcastle - an equally marginalised and peripheralised city that has found itself on the outer edges of the country and the margins of the global economy - and it has been argued that the 'smokestack nostalgia' that they frequently demonstrated a proclivity for must be understood in relation to this context and their circumstances within it. Their horizons have been defined in a large part by two broad, incomplete, and ongoing socio-economic trends. The first of these is the proliferation of insecure and precarious work in an economy that has struggled to meaningfully transition from the Fordist and industrial to the post-Fordist and post-industrial. The second is the further exclusion of members of the 'dispossessed working-class' (Byrne, 1995: 196) as a result of the demands and requirements of the austerity politics that have predominated in Britain for better part of the last decade and which have redrawn the contours of its socioeconomic landscape.

This chapter will offer an overview of the arguments that have been made in this thesis and the contributions that it has sought to make. These will be interrogated in full, but they can be broadly aligned with the aims that were outlined in the Introduction. The **first** contribution this thesis makes is in exploring the ways in which the kind of people with whom I was working go beyond the tendency to sanitise and simplify when it comes to discussions around their shared past and engage with it in critical and nuanced ways. This was evident in numerous ways, from an awareness of the downsides of industrial work to a sophisticated understanding of the sociocultural world that it existed in relation with as opposed to a simple longing for secure and well-remunerated employment. The **second** contribution this thesis makes is in its interrogation of the ways in which the industrial past is made manifest in the present, something that is frequently lacking from

studies of 'smokestack nostalgia'. To this end, it looked at the material – the built environment and heirlooms in the family home – and the immaterial – sensory recollections – as well as how they interact and overlap. It also sought to problematise the neat bifurcation of places such as Walker into an industrial past and a post-industrial present and how the transition from one era to the next is more fragmentary and partial than it at first seems. The **third** contribution this thesis makes is in its exploration of how the deindustrialisation of the 'Crisis Decades' is understood by young working-class men in the present and how it is mobilised in line with their circumstances and needs as they continue to live amidst its material remains and with its socioeconomic legacies. Each of these will be addressed in turn, but before doing this, it is worth recapping on the questions and aims that underpinned them.

7.2 Research Questions and Aims

The research underpinning this thesis was motivated by a broad research question and some of the more specific themes that it sought to investigate. Beginning with the first of these, this research has attempted to answer the question:

> To explore the ways in which young, working-class men engage with, invoke, and (re)construct the eras of industrialism and industrial decline in a precarious and uncertain present.

This was itself underpinned by four more specific aims, which were: how this relates to their present circumstances and situations; whether they are able to go beyond sanitisation and simplification; what the means and mechanisms that connect them to and with the shared past are; and if the deindustrialisation of the 'Crisis Decades' is significant.

7.3 Contributions

7.3.1 Beyond 'Smokestack Nostalgia'

The empirical chapters of this thesis began with an exploration of how 'smokestack nostalgia' made itself manifest in the lives of the young working-class men with which I was working. The emphasis initially was not to challenge the existing work, which ran through and underpinned this thesis, but to add empirical depth by exploring how it played out in the unique time and place in which the young men with whom I worked found themselves. It was demonstrated that the industrial past continued to resonate in the lives of my participants, and that one of the primary ways that it made itself manifest

was in the longing for 'good work'. Building on arguments made in the literature review, this needs to be understood in relation to the fact that my participants were young, white, working-class, and male. Their experiences of deindustrialisation were shaped by these markers of identity, and this underpinned and shaped the 'smokestack nostalgia' that they all expressed to a greater or lesser degree across our interviews. In the conversations that we had, the idea recurred that labouring in the factories and shipyards that once lined the banks of the Tyne had provided work for young men with few educational credentials that was nonetheless secure, well-remunerated, and semi-skilled. This was understood in large part in light of and contrast with the insecure and precarious work which exists in our a hollowed out post-industrial economy, in which low-wage and low-skill labour and high-wage and high-skill labour have proliferated at the expense of people such as my participants in the 'crisis-laden present' (Smith, 1999). Memory, as Erll (2011: 11) argues, is always a reconstruction that is inextricably connected to and with the circumstances and demands of the present, and in the case of the young men with whom I was working, this meant drawing on the myths, norms, stories, and values of the industrial-era to provide hope, inspiration, and guidance.

Having established that my participants demonstrated a proclivity towards 'smokestack nostalgia' and explored some of the ways in which it made itself manifest, I then set out to show that it was a more complex phenomenon than is often suggested in the literature. The idea that the sort of deep attachments to and longings for the past that they demonstrated are by definition romanticising and simplifying has been propagated by Orange (2014:5), who argues that those who still reside in communities built their identity and prosperity on and through industry idealise or overlook the painful complexities of the historical working-class experience. While my participants certainly disavowed some of the less savoury aspects of industrial work, this tendency frequently co-existed with or was subsumed by nuanced and sophisticated understandings that are overlooked even in more sympathetic writings which tend to focus on a longing for secure and well-remunerated employment. The participants eschewed sanitisation and simplification in a number of ways and decisively answered the challenge of "stripping industrial work of its broad-shouldered, social-realist patina and see it for what it was: tough work that people did because it paid well and was located within their communities' (Cowie and Heathcott, 2003: 5) in a way that few researchers have managed.

The **first** way in which the participants eschewed the tendency to mythologise the industrial past and gloss-over its painful complexities was the most straightforward – a simple and frequent awareness of the downsides that came with labouring in the factories and shipyard that the identity and prosperity of Walker was built on and through. Across the interviews, the young men with whom I was working cast industrial work in a negative light, talking about the dangers that it posed to the health and well-being of people such as themselves and the ruinous environmental costs that it visited upon working-class communities like Walker which were often removed from the more affluent parts of the mid-twentieth-century industrial city. It is important to emphasise that the participants still overwhelmingly cast industrial work in a positive light. They did not, however, do so uncritically and unthinkingly, and many of them weighed its negatives against the positives that it brought to people such as themselves. This once again underlined the importance of present circumstances when it comes to interrogating how people analyse and understand the past, as the judgments that the participants made was from the precarity and uncertainty which characterised their current circumstances.

The **second** way in which the participants eschewed the tendency to sanitise and simplify the industrial past was through demonstrating an understanding of it and a longing for it that went beyond a straightforward desire for secure and well-remunerated employment. Strangleman (2007: 102) is correct in his estimation that this tendency – one which my participants frequently demonstrated – is not only understandable but logical given the precarity and uncertainty of post-industrial present. However, I have argued that this was not the be-all-and-end-all of working-class 'smokestack nostalgia', and the young men with whom I was working frequently went beyond this. They did so by talking to me about their longing for the spaces and institutions that existed alongside and in a symbiotic relationship with Fordist workplaces. The main ways in which they did this was in reference to unions and working men's clubs, both of which cultivated and relied upon close links with local industry and provided access to homosocial collectivity and meeting a demand for autonomy and control for their overlapping memberships. Like the longing for secure and well-remunerated work, the desire for collectivism, representation, and solidarity that many of the participants demonstrated was understood in light of their present circumstances. In this case, that meant a lack of access to spaces which catered to them and an absence of institutions that sought to protect their interests.

The **third** way in which the participants demonstrated complex and multi-faceted understandings of the industrial past was in terms of the nuance that they demonstrated when discussing it. There is an argument that the kind of deep and intimate attachments to industrial urbanism that they demonstrated are reactionary at best and deeply exclusionary and atavistic at worst (Atia & Davis, 2010: 181). While some of the participants certainly demonstrated this tendency, harking back to a mythical time when Walker was characterised by racial homogeneity and social harmony, it was more common for them to argue against this idea. A number of the participants talked to me about the long history of migration to the North East, Newcastle, and Walker, drawing a line from the Tsarist pogroms of the nineteenth-century through the Irish migrations of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries and to the more recent arrival of post-colonial and post-EU-enlargement migrants. Equally enlightening and insightful were the responses of the only two gay participants with which I worked, both of whom disavowed an industrial working-class culture that created social conditions that excluded and marginalised gay people (Field, 1995) and found various types of difference extremely difficult to tolerate, in particular when it came to the new immigrants from the Commonwealth (Gillborn, 2010). Each of these problematising tendencies interlinked and overlapped, and by exploring them my research has contributed to discussions around 'smokestack nostalgia' by interrogating the idea that it is sanitising and simplifying.

7.3.2 Familial Connections, Material Cultures, and Lived Links

Having established that the industrial past continued to resonate in and shape the lives of the participants and explored the ways that they negotiated and utilised it to help them navigate the uncertainties of the present, the attention of this thesis shifted to the means and mechanisms that underpinned this tendency which recurred across all of the interviews to a greater or lesser extent. In much of the literature on 'smokestack nostalgia', questions of how historical experiences, memories, and values are transmitted inter-generationally are considered in isolation, whereas my research reveals that connections to and with the industrial past are multiple and overlapping. Likewise, there is a tendency among theoreticians to treat industrial work and the socio-cultural world that it existed alongside as being firmly in the past, whereas the young men with whom I worked frequently had their own memories – mediated primarily in the realm of the sensory – of tail-end of industrialism and continue to live

in a community whose transition from the industrial to the deindustrial or post-industrial has been fragmentary and partial. I identified three interlinked and overlapping themes which, when taken alongside the precarity and uncertainty of the participants present circumstances, help to explain the reason for the 'smokestack nostalgia' that was an aspect of so many of their lived experiences.

The **first** of these themes were the familial links that they had with the industrial past. The young men with whom I was working frequently talked to me about fathers and grandfathers who had worked in the factories and shipyards that once lined the banks of the Tyne and passed down to them the markers of working-class life forged in the crucible of mid-twentieth-century industrial urbanism. They also occasionally talked to me about less direct matrilineal links with these workplaces and the communities whose identity and prosperity were built around them. Something that emerged strongly from my research was a sense among the participants that, although they had never been employed in industries such as shipbuilding, they remained connected to work of this sort by family members who had and who passed down its myths, stories, and values. For their part, the young men with whom I worked did not passively absorb or accept this knowledge, but rather actively negotiated and reinterpreted it in a drastically different set of socio-economic circumstances.

The **second** of these themes were the lived links that many of the participants had with the industrial past, connections that intersected with their personal biographies and experiences. Across the interviews, the young men with whom I was working told me about the various ways in which they had engaged with mid-twentieth-century industrial urbanism. Looking back to their childhoods, they discussed their sensory recollections of the sights, sounds, and smells of the dying days of Fordist industrialism. Similarly, we had conversations about the sites of industrial ruination which had loomed over Walker throughout their lives, and how their interactions with these sites had changed over their life-courses as they were gradually transformed from playgrounds serving an under-resourced community into more illicit spaces of transgression familiar to any teenager growing up in a deindustrialising or deindustrialised city. Meanwhile, in conversations that were more grounded in the present, we talked about heirlooms such as commemorative plates or medals and their presentation in the home, and how these played an important part in making manifest more abstract connections with the industrial past.

The **third** of these themes were the ongoing links that some of the young men with whom I was working had with industry. These came in two forms. The first was working in the branch plants that began to open in the North East in the 1980s and which provided a lower-skill, lower-wage sort of labour that was nonetheless corporeal and demanded less in the way of post-Fordist sensibilities and skills than the emergent service economy. The second was working in the offshore industries that began to appear along the banks of the Tyne in the last decade or so and which have brought secure and well-remunerated work to Walker, but in a way that has failed to significantly benefit the community at the time of writing. These ongoing connections – frequently overlapping and interacting – problematise the neat bifurcation of our current historical moment into an industrial past and a post-industrial present on which many discussions of 'smokestack nostalgia' seem to depend and reveal a reality that is messier and more complex than is often acknowledged. This emphasis on complexity and multiplicity is something that is infrequently discussed and represents a contribution that adds depth to discussions around how the industrial past continues to make itself manifest in the lives of young working-class men in the present. It also neatly leads on to the third contribution that my research makes.

7.3.3 Deindustrialisation as a Resource

It has been argued that the range of economic, political, and social changes that accompanied the deindustrialisation of the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) were so profound and of such a magnitude that they provide the best underpinning narrative for understanding late-twentieth-century Britain (Tomlinson, 2016). Despite this – and the fact that industrial decline is now understood less as a discrete historical event and more as an incomplete and ongoing process that was far more geographically diverse, historically deep, politically perplexing, and socially complicated than it appeared in the political heat of the 1980s – discussions of 'smokestack nostalgia' rarely interrogate the ongoing resonance of industrial decline in the accounts and lives of working-class people contemporarily. This is a conceptual blind-spot. My research revealed that the closures and redundancies of the 1970s and 1980s were in fact as important to the participants as the secure and well-remunerated work and the socio-cultural world that it supported of the mid-twentieth-century. I drew-out three themes that help us to understand the fact that deindustrialisation can be understood as an aspect of 'smokestack nostalgia' that is frequently overlooked.

The **first** of these themes was a consideration of the shadow that deindustrialisation cast in the lives of the participants and was the one that bore most similarity to the existing literature, in particular the work of Linkon (2002; 2013; 2014; 2018) on the 'half-life' of industrial decline. What was important here was to bring empirical depth to discussions about the legacies of deindustrialisation by exploring the ways in which the young men with whom I worked engaged with this process and how the closures and redundancies of the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403) intersected with their own lives and biographies. Like the industrial era, the period of industrial decline remained a potent part of their shared history that recurred across almost all of the conversations that I had. The participants were also quick to draw a line that connected deindustrialisation with the problems that Walker faced contemporarily, demonstrating an awareness of the fact that this was not a discrete historical event but is rather an ongoing process which continues to impact on their lived experiences in the present.

The **second** of these themes was a consideration of the narratives that the participants mobilised when talking about this period. It was argued across this thesis that the ways in which people talk about the past tell us more about the present, and this was as true of deindustrialisation as it was about the industrial era. It was argued that the oppositional way in which the young men with whom I was working discuss industrial decline must be understood in relation to the relative disempowerment and impotence of working-class communities contemporarily. There were two ways in which my participants talked about the 'Crisis Decades' (Hobsbawm, 1995: 403).The first was as a period in which working-class men such as themselves made a heroic – if ultimately unsuccessful – final stand against structural forces that were beyond their control, making particular references to events such as the 1984-85 Miners' Strike and the spirit of cooperation and resistance that it represented. The second was as a time in which even less organised acts of resistance occurred and were worthy of commemoration, from minor acts of vandalism through to urban uprisings, in particular the 1991 Meadow Well Riots in 1991.

The **third** of these themes was a consideration of how the participants invoked and mobilised this shared history and the ways in which this related to their circumstances and situations in the present. The narratives that people mobilise about the past are shaped by their demands and needs contemporarily, and I argued that the young men with whom I worked were quick to draw parallels and parities between the experiences of their predecessors of surviving industrial decline and its fall-out and their own of living

in the 'Age of Austerity' (Cameron, 2010). Across the Interviews, the participants invoked this shared history as a means of navigating and surviving in our post-recessionary, deficit-cutting conjuncture, using it as a resource in a time and place where options and horizons are severely circumscribed. These arguments together were woven together by an understanding that the participants were able to, firstly, reconceive of deindustrialisation in such a way as to cast themselves and their community as something other than passive and victimised cogs in the machinery of capital and, secondly, mobilise it in a self-aware and deliberate way to help them survive as they negotiated the complicated legacies of the decline of the industrial economy.

The **fourth** of these themes explored how the narratives of collectivism and resilience that my participants invoked and mobilised about the shared past fed into the sorts of 'small p politics' that many of them practised in their day-to-day lives. It was suggested that by drawing on the myths, norms, and values that they associated with the historical experience of deindustrialisation, the young men with whom I worked practised 'everyday politics' - acts that are project-oriented, seek to deal with common concerns concretely and personally rather than abstractly and ideologically, and are concerned with local areas and issues - in two ways. Firstly, those involving mundane but nonetheless significant acts of charity or kindness such as making a communal meal for struggling neighbours or offering to look after the children of those who needed to work but were unable to afford childcare. Secondly, volunteering with or working for organisations to address some of the specific problems that Walker and its residents faced contemporarily. It was suggested that, rather than representing the basis for a large-scale or utopian politics, both of these sorts of 'everyday politics' were oriented towards helping people in their community survive at the post-recessionary, deficit-cutting conjuncture at which we now find ourselves and were deployed alongside the mobilisation of deindustrialisation as a resource.

7.4 Summary

This thesis has sought to which young working-class men in Walker think about the interlinked and overlapping eras of industrialism and deindustrialisation, the ways in which they remember industrial work and its loss, the strategies that they use to frame and comment upon this shared past, and how they draw-on and invoke this history to help them understand the present and imagine the future. I have argued that it makes

three significant contributions. The **first** contribution this thesis makes is in exploring the ways in which the kind of people with which I was working go beyond the tendency to sanitise and simplify when it comes to discussions around their shared past and engage with it in critical and nuanced ways. The **second** contribution this thesis makes is in its interrogation of the ways in which the industrial past is made manifest in the present, something that is frequently lacking from studies of 'smokestack nostalgia'. The **third** contribution this thesis makes is in its exploration of how the deindustrialisation of the 'Crisis Decades' is understood by young working-class men in the present and how it is mobilised in line with their circumstances and needs as they continue to live amidst its material remains and with its socioeconomic legacies. The findings discussed and the conclusions offered are as relevant outside of academia as it is inside it. Across the mature capitalist world – in places such as Walker – people seem to be retreating into the warm, safe waters of the past in the face of a present that has little to offer them and a future that seems non-negotiable. My research represents a small contribution to helping us understand this uniquely twenty-first-century phenomenon, something that appears to be one of the defining social and political trends of our time.

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Chapter Nine: Appendices

9.1 Appendix A: Participant Biographies

Name	Age	Profession	Familial Links	Biography
Aaron	18	College Student	Father – Branch Plant Worker Maternal Grandfather – Factory Worker	Aaron [White British] was 18 when I interviewed him. He was in his final-year of college at the time and was hoping to go to university. He would be the first in his family to do so. He worked part-time at a pub. His parents were separated, and he lived with his father in social housing.
Alan	20	Unemployed	Maternal Grandfather – Factory Worker Paternal Grandfather – Miner Paternal Great Uncles - Miners	Alan [White British] was 20 when I interviewed him. He had been unemployed since dropping out of college the previous year where he had been studying to become an electrician. This was something he regretted, but he could not afford to commute every day. He was working as a labourer and was planning on completing his education. He lived with his parents in social housing. The paternal side of his family had worked in the mines under the North Sea and had been involved in the Miners' Strike in 1984.
Ben	25	Unemployed	Maternal Grandfather – Brewer Maternal Grandmother – Factory Worker Paternal Grandfather – Factory Worker	Ben [White] was 25 when I interviewed him. He was a third-generation Pole whose paternal grandfather had been brought to the UK as a child when the Germans/Soviets annexed Poland. He had previously worked in branch plant economy but had been unemployed for over a year when we met. He lived with his parents in social housing.
Bill	29	Outreach Worker	Father-in-Law – Welder Maternal Grandfather – Shipyard Worker Paternal Grandfather – Shipyard Worker	Bill [White British] was 29 when I interviewed him. He was an outreach worker who came from a comparatively affluent background. He was university educated and his intention had been to make money in the private sector upon graduation but wanted to give back to the community which he had grown up in. He had recently bought his own home with his partner and they had one daughter.
Cam	29	Merchant Navy	Maternal Grandfather – Factory Worker Paternal Grandfather – Factory Worker Cousin – Offshore Industries Worker	Cam [White] was 29 when I interviewed him. He was third-generation Irish whose great-grandparents had moved to Newcastle following formation of Irish Free State in 1922 He had planned to follow in the footsteps of his cousins and work on oil rigs due to the financial rewards that this entailed, but the decline from mid-2000s meant he of North Sea Oil from the mid-2000s led to him joining the Merchant

				Navy. He volunteered at the boxing club that I attended and ran outreach sessions for at-risk children. He was considering quitting his job to go to university and study maritime law. .
Charlie	26	Electrical Engineer	Brother – Fabricator Father – Fabricator Paternal Great-Grandfather – Fabricator	Charlie [White British] was 26 when I interviewed him. He had worked as a fabricator for the renewable energy industry since he left college when he was 18. He and his brother were the latest members of a dynasty of fabricators stretching back five generations. His family were a part of the 'aristocracy of labour'. He had recently moved to the adjacent ward of Walkergate so that his children could benefit from superior education. He was upwardly socially mobile and did not want his son to work in the industrial economy.
Dave	22	Administrative Assistant	Father – Offshore Engineer Maternal Grandfather – Factory Worker Paternal Grandfather – Railway Worker	Dave [White British] was 22 when I interviewed him. He was an administrative assistant at DWP and felt conflicted about this because of his left-wing politics. He was one of only two openly gay participants. He lived with his partner on the outskirts of Walker.
Dennis	29	Outreach Worker	Paternal Grandfather – Shipyard Worker	Dennis [White British] was 29 when I interviewed him. He was an outreach worker at a local charity. He started volunteering here while he worked at a call centre and eventually received training and was offered a job. He was not in contact with his parents for reasons that he would not disclose and lived with friends in a privately rented house.
Ethan	33	Handyman	Father – Panel Beater Maternal Grandfather – Publican Paternal Grandfather – Panel Beater	Ethan [White British] was 33 when I met him. He had been working as a handyman since leaving school without GCSEs when he was 16. I met him after he was hired as a window cleaner at Kids Kabin. He had 3 children by 2 partners, neither of whom he lived with. He was vocally concerned about perceived changes to demographics of Walker due to immigration.
Euan	27	Security Guard	N/A	Euan [White British] was 27 when I interviewed him. He had been working as a security guard for two-years and had worked in various low-skill, low-wage jobs in the post-industrial economy prior to this. He had left school when he was 16 with few qualifications. He was politically inactive but had a high level of political literacy. He lived with his mother and was not in contact with his father.
Finn	19	Kitchen Porter	Paternal Grandfather – Blaster	Finn [White British] was 19 when I interviewed him. He had

				worked as a Kitchen Porter and was training to be a chef at a local college. He had chosen this line of work despite having offers from his grandfather to assist him in finding training and employment in the offshore industries. He was the son of colleague from Kids Kabin and his two older brothers were both in the military. His parents were divorced, and he lived with his mother.
Frank	23	Bar Staff	Paternal Grandfather – Welder Uncle – Offshore Engineer	Frank [White British] was 23 when I interviewed him. He worked at an up-market pub in central Newcastle and hoped to own his own establishment in the future. He was positive about the changes that the city had undergone in his lifetime and its emergence as a destination for shopping and nightlife. He was planning on moving to a more affluent and planned on moving to a younger, more diverse, and gentrifying part of the city.
George	19	Unemployed	N/A	George [White British] was 19 when I interviewed him. He left school at 16 with few qualifications and had been unemployed for the most part since then. He had worked part-time at the garage owned by father but had left for unspecified reasons. He was a recipient of Universal Credit and lived with his aunt and uncle. He was uncomfortable about perceived changes to demographics of Walker due to immigration
Greg	20	Retail Assistant	Maternal Grandfather – Shipyard Worker Paternal Grandfather – Shipyard Worker Paternal Grandmother – Factory Worker	Greg [White British] was 20 when I interviewed him. He had been working at a supermarket since finishing vocational training at a local college. He had recently moved into social housing with partner falling out with his parents. He had previously worked at a factory but left due to unpredictability of hours despite higher rates of pay.
Harry	24	Unemployed	N/A	Harry [White British] was 24 when I interviewed him. He had left school at 15 without any qualifications and had never had a job. He was a recipient of Universal Credit. He had eight siblings and his parents were divorced. He was uncomfortable about perceived changes to demographics of Walker due to immigration
Ian	27	Trade Unionist	Father – Branch Plant Worker Paternal Grandfather – Miner	Ian [White] was 27 when I interviewed him. He was fifth-generation Irish, with both sides of family having left Ireland around the time of the Great Famine 1847-1952. He was a practising Catholic and was interested in intersection with progressive politics in Europe in

				twentieth-century. He was college educated and had become a trade unionist while working at a supermarket as a teenager. He eventually transitioned into working for Unite as an organiser and was thinking about going to university to further his career. He lived with his mother and grandmother.
Jack	26	Self-Employed	Maternal Grandfather – Sheet Metal Worker	Jack [White British] was 26 when I interviewed him. He had held numerous low-skill, low-wage jobs in the post-industrial economy after dropping out of college. He set-up his own business (making Newcastle United accessories) as part of Welfare-to-Work programme. He lived with his partner
Joe	25	Rapper/Outreach Worker	Maternal Grandfather – Steel Worker Paternal Grandfather – Docker	Joe [White British] was 25 when I interviewed him. He had started studying music at university but dropped out after one-year. He was a member of locally famous rap group and had been involved in organising parties as part of the Makina scene. He had been working as an outreach worker for several years and used music as a way to help at-risk children.
Kieran	24	Student/Delivery Rider	Maternal Grandfather – Factory Worker	Kieran [White British] was 24 when I interviewed him. He was a part-time student at Northumbria University and worked as a rider for food delivery company alongside this. He was the first in family to go to university. He lived in a HMO in a neighbouring ward. His parents were divorced but he was on good terms with both of them.
Liam	27	Unemployed	N/A	Liam [White British] was 27 when I interviewed him. He was long-term unemployed and a recipient of Universal Credit His upbringing had been difficult, and he was not on speaking terms with his parents. He had recently moved into social housing in a neighbouring ward and was a single father.
Luke	28	Joiner	Paternal Grandfather – Engineer Father – Engineer	Luke [White British] was 28 when I interviewed him. He had previously worked at the Greggs pastry factory with friends of his father who had once worked in high-skill, high-wage jobs at the Parsons turbine factory. This experience had persuaded him to upskill and train as a joiner. He was relatively well-off and had recently bought a house in Walker, choosing to remain in the area rather than moving somewhere more affluent as he wanted to stay near his mother as his father had recently passed away. He was a

				member of the Freemasons and volunteered in
Mac	27	Chef	N/A	Mac [White] was 27 when I interviewed him. He was a third-generation British-Italian whose grandparents moved to the UK after WWII. He was a proud member of the small but cohesive Italian diaspora in the North East. He had grown up in Walker and his family struggled financially as they set-up a restaurant, eventually thriving and running numerous establishments. Most had left Walker but he stayed for the sense of belonging. His parents were divorced and he lived with his partner and her family.
Niall	18	College Student	Paternal Grandfather – Shipyard Worker	Niall [White British] was 18 when I interviewed him. He was studying for A-levels at the time and wanted to go to university to study politics, a passion of his. His interest sprang from when funding to his school was cut and he organised a walkout. He would be the first in his family to enter higher education. He lived with his father, a labourer, and his mother, a retail assistant. He was one of only two openly gay participants that I interviewed and was highly liberal in the contemporary social sense.
Nick	29	Insolvency Administrator	Father – Railway Worker Paternal Grandfather – Railway Worker	Nick [White British] was 29 when I interviewed him. He had trained as an insolvency administrator after he completed his A-levels when he was 16. This made him the first in his family in several generations not to work in the rail industry in some capacity. He was upwardly socioeconomically mobile and had recently bought a house in Walker with his partner in anticipation of the birth of his first child.
Ollie	28	Taxi Driver	Father – Factory Worker Maternal Grandfather – Shipyard Worker Paternal Grandfather – Shipyard Worker	Ollie [White British] was 28 when I interviewed him. He had trained as a taxi driver when he was 21, having left school with few GCSEs and worked in a fish mongers in central Newcastle. He had recently moved out of parent's house and in with friends, the first time he had lived independently.
Pete	24	IT Support Worker	Maternal Grandfather – Shipyard Worker Paternal Grandfather – Shipyard Worker	Pete [White British] was 24 when I interviewed him. He was an IT support worker who had taught himself the skill set while working at a call centre. He was now making good money working in the burgeoning tech sector in Newcastle but had elected to remain in Walker to remain near his friends and family. He had recently moved into his own flat having lived with his father, a bailiff, and

				mother, an administrative assistant.
Rob	32	Administrative Assistant	Father – Shipyard Worker Paternal Grandfather – Crane Operator	Rob [White British] was 43 when I interviewed him. He was an administrative assistant who had been in his role since leaving college when he was 18. He lived with his partner in a house on the same street as his parents and his sister and her children. He was seeking promotion when we met as his partner had recently given birth to their first child
Simon	26	Unemployed	N/A	Simon [White British] was 26 when I interviewed him. He had been unemployed for around two-years, with his last job being working in a factory that made carboard boxes for white goods. He was a recipient of Universal Credit and implied that he engaged in minor criminal acts in order to supplement this, although he was vague about what these were. He lived with his parents and wanted to leave, but he was not eligible for social housing.
Tim	21	Unemployed	Maternal Grandfather – Welder Paternal Grandmother – Phone Operator Paternal Grandfather – Docker	Tim [White British] was 21 when I interviewed him. He was long-term unemployed and a recipient of Universal Credit and Disability Allowance. He was qualified as a mechanic, something that he was extremely passionate about, but he was unable to work due to a degenerative health condition. His life had been difficult. He witnessed the death of his mother as a child, had a difficult relationship with his father, and lived on the streets as a teenager. Despite this, he was relentlessly positive. Between meeting him and my leaving Kids Kabin, he began to regularly volunteer there, and his hope was that he could eventually work there full time.

9.2 Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Start by telling you a bit about myself and the project.

Today I want to talk about, firstly, the history of Newcastle and the North East in general and the East End specifically and, secondly, whether you think it still matters to people today.

(1) I want to start with some personal questions:

- What's your name?
- How old are you?
- Did you attend kids kabin growing up?
- What do you do now?
- What have you done in the past?
- Where do you live? Have you always lived there? Do you like it?
- What do you do in your free time?

(2) Now I want to talk you a bit about your family:

- Is it big or small? How many members are there?
- Do they live around here?
- Do you see a lot of them?
- What do your parents do?
- What about your grandparents?
- Many people see themselves as being either working-class or middle-class. Do you think either of those labels are applicable to your upbringing? How about your current situation?

(3) Started with questions like this to get you thinking about yourself and your place in British society and whether things were different for older generations. This diagram (concentric circles) is a model of British society. The people in the innermost circle are the most central, influential, and important; the people in each outward ring are less central, less influential, and less important:

- Where would you put the working-class?
- How about other groups?

- Looking at the same diagram, how do you think it looked when our grandparents were our age?
- What has changed?
- What is worse?
- What is better?
- Do you think that these changes matter?
- What do they tell us about contemporary politics (i.e. Brexit)?
- What are some of the hardest things about living in Walker?
- What are some of the best things about living in Walker?
- What about Britain?

(4) I'm trying to figure out whether people respond to and are aware of specific events and people or a more generalised idea of the past. I've had photos from what could be seen as key historical events and actors printed out and I just want you to let me know if you're familiar with them and if so what you can tell me about them:

(5) One of the things I'm particularly interested in is austerity:

- Can you just tell me a bit about it – things like what you think it is and how you feel about it as a set of ideas or policies?
- Have you seen the impacts in Newcastle generally?
- How about where you live?
- How about in your personal life?
- What strategies do people have for dealing with its precarity and uncertainty?

(5) This is the last sets of questions that I have, they're mostly to do with the history of Walker and Newcastle specifically:

- What are your earliest memories of Walker?
- What can you tell me about the history of the area?
- How does your family come into it?
- What can you tell me about the history of Newcastle?
- Do you think that Walker and the people who live here have been an important part of that story?
- Do you think that is the case now?
- What has changed?

- Do you have any memories of or connection to, say, shipbuilding?
- Do you think it would be a good thing for you, your family, your friends, and your community if it were to come back?
- Can you think of any possible downsides?

Appendix C: Information Sheet

The Legacies of Industry in Walker

Are you a resident of Walker? Do you have some kind of connection – direct or indirect – to its historical industries?

Do you think this heritage is still important today?

In what ways does this legacy affect you and your community? Do you think this shared history is a positive or a negative in the modern world? Would you like to see shipbuilding return? Do you think that it is better to forget about the past and move on?

The Study

The aim of this study is to explore the ongoing significance of the past in a community built on and through industries such as shipbuilding. I am especially interested in working with young men from Walker and the surrounding areas.

Taking Part

The study will involve two interviews with you. The first will be a one-to-one conversation in a place of your choosing, the second will be conducted 'on-the-move' as we walk around the local area. The interviews will be no longer than an hour and a half and will be recorded and used as part of my PhD.

If you choose to take part you can do as much or as little as you like!

Contact

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9.3 Appendix D: Consent Form

The Legacies of Industry in Walker
Consent Form

I understand that:

- My identifying details will be anonymised
- If I choose to withdraw all data associated with me will be destroyed
- The recordings will be destroyed after the completion of the PhD
- Information collected from interviews will be kept securely, on password protect laptops and locked into a secure filling cabinet.
- Anonymised data will be kept for 10 years following any publication (unless otherwise specified) after which retention will be reviewed.

- This interview will be recorded and used for the purposes of a PhD undertaken between 2016-2020
- I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and for any reason
- I can choose to answer or not answer any questions
- I am free to stop the interview or recording at any point

I confirm I have freely agreed to be interviewed for this project and that the recorded interview or extracts from it may be used as described above.

Signed:

Print name:

Date:

Telephone number:

E-mail:

Researcher Signature: