

## DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

### **Being Voiceless: Perceptions of class identity, misrepresentation and disconnect from a working class perspective**

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**Being Voiceless: Perceptions of class  
identity, misrepresentation and  
disconnect from a working class  
perspective**



**PhD**

**L. K. de Main**

**August 2017**

***A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University's  
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy***

## **Abstract**

Class has united and divided Britain for centuries and is widely accepted as a British fact of life. It is a subject which frequently occurs in academic research, the media, within Government, and wider public discourse; whether it is addressed directly, or represented indirectly, through other mechanisms and stereotypes. Longstanding problems such as relative poverty and inequality appear to be getting worse despite living in more affluent times. The gap between the rich and the poor is growing. If eroded further these issues could threaten cohesion and democracy. This thesis focuses on the social class at the 'lower' end of societal structures; the working class. Current literature finds that identifying and defining class boundaries is complicated, the working class are frequently demonised and perceptions need to be changed. Existing narratives claim that the working class are voiceless, disconnected and misrepresented. Some propose that increasing social capital is the answer, but judgements by academics and policymakers regarding the notions and types of social capital are often made without fully understanding the complexities of working class life.

This research makes a contribution to existing discourse by presenting the voice of the working class - perspectives not frequently explored in prior literature - in order to answer questions such as: How do the working class view their identity? What effect do negative external perceptions have on the working class? Who speaks for the working class and who actively listens? Does current social policy in the UK and the notion of social capital enable or hinder the working class to influence wider political structures? This research concentrates on one geographical area; Camp Hill, Nuneaton, Warwickshire. Camp Hill is a traditional ex-mining community which is officially recognised as being deprived and rates poorly on many local and national social, economic and health indicators. Stakeholders and residents of Camp Hill provided a wealth of information

through interviews, focus groups, diaries and social media, the findings of which are examined through a critical realist, ethnographic lens.

The findings suggest that it is impossible to agree on a clear definition of working class, even from the perspectives of the working class themselves. Class is voiced through stories and lived experiences not economic, educational or occupational measures. This research highlights the problem of developing policy based upon flawed definitions and partial understandings. The findings confirm that the working class are perceived negatively and demonised, reinforcing current literature. It goes further to recognise how negative media portrayals have led to apathy and helplessness within the working class in terms of how perceptions might be changed. There is a level of voicelessness and disconnect apparent within the working class; a continuum exists which identifies that, at one extreme, their voice is blocked, ignored or unheard. The other extreme recognises that they do not communicate their voice effectively, somewhat driven by a historical lack of trust in formal agency and a lack of confidence on whether their voice holds power. Social policy is often developed without fully understanding the lives of the working class, in terms of social networks, social capital and aspirations. Working class communities could be empowered to drive change from a grassroots level, although questions remain about how this can be achieved. This thesis presents a conceptual framework which draws together the key themes and demonstrates, through the frameworks barriers and linkages, the broader implications of a misrepresented and disconnected working class. In summary, this research broadly corroborates with existing literature but where it is weak in terms of self-determined working class perspectives, this thesis contributes by presenting greater working class voices from the working class themselves.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my husband, Adam, for picking up the pieces when all I could think about was this thesis. Thank you for also picking *me* up when I felt that it was not possible for me to ever reach this point. Hopefully now things might go back to 'normal' and we can celebrate an anniversary where I am not glued to my laptop. I love you.

Thank you to my mum for being there always, I could not have done this without your emotional support, looking after the children, feeding me and cleaning my house. There is no way I can ever repay you for what you have done for me, but I will try somehow. I love you.

I would like to apologise to my children. Scarlett – sorry that I have not always been available for our weekend pamper sessions, and yes, I have nearly finished. Samuel, my little game changer – you have only ever known me 'doing that writing thing' but it is nearly over and I will make it up to you, I promise! I love you both more than all the tea in China.

Thank you to all my family, friends and colleagues to whom I give this advice. Do not attempt to do a PhD with young children whilst working full-time. And never consider getting married or moving house during the period of study. Special thanks go to my sister, Helen, brother-in-law, Ian, and my father-in-law, Steve. You have helped me in ways you may not have realised. I hope that now we can talk about something else (though I doubt it).

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This thesis is dedicated to my dad, who remains the driving force behind all of my endeavours. I hope I still make you proud. (Paul Stephen de Main 1953 – 2002)

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*“They had a vast amount of considerations for their betters, and for the children of their betters, but very little for their own children, for each other, or for themselves. That was why they sat there in their rags and ate their coarse food and cracked their coarser jokes, and drank the dreadful tea, and were content! So long as they had Plenty of Work and plenty of – Something to eat, and someone else’s cast-off clothes to wear, they were content! And they were proud of it. They gloried in it. They agreed and assured each other that the good things in life were not intended for the ‘Likes of them’, or their children.” (Tressell 1914)*

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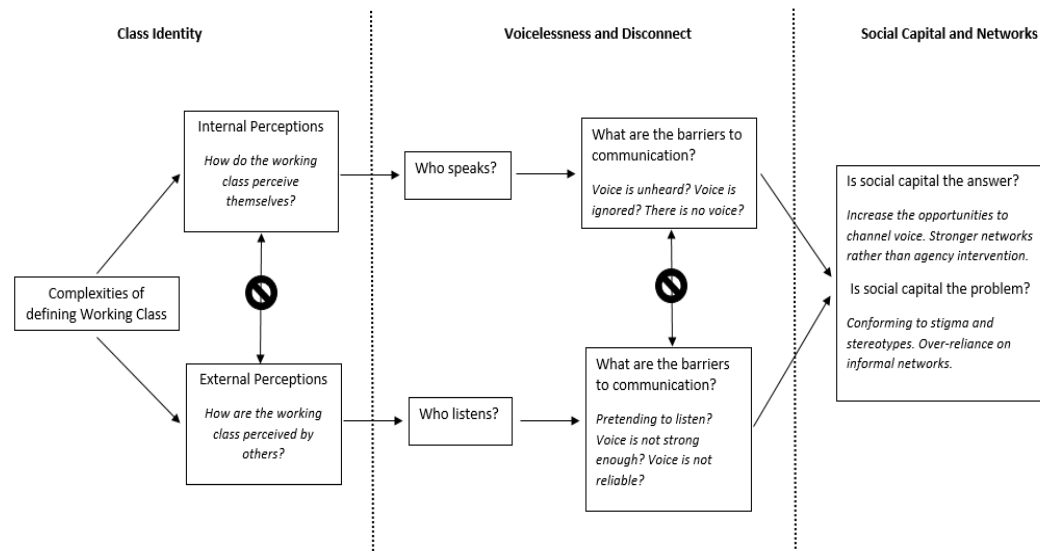
## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

In recent years, social class has become a hot topic once again, whether it is addressed directly or represented indirectly through other mechanisms and stereotypes. Some have argued that Britain is classless, yet the markers of class are clearly visible in contemporary society. Longstanding problems such as poverty and inequality appear to be getting worse despite living in more affluent times; the gap between the rich and the poor is growing. This thesis focuses on the social class at the 'lower' end of societal structures: the working class. In recent years, the working class have been illuminated in popular culture, discourse and social policy, yet the parameters that define the working class are far from distinct. The purpose of this research is to explore these complexities further in order to gain a greater understanding of how class is perceived, both by those who identify as working class and those beyond it, and this research explores and assesses the connections between them.

Historically, the working class are seen to be the least powerful class and the most disconnected to wider society. There appears to be a declining sense of voice and representation, particularly when compared to claims of increased social mobility since the 1980s. This research seeks to gain a greater understanding of working class voices, and in particular, the possibility that voices remain unheard, are ignored or are blocked. The concept of social capital has been suggested as the solution to unlocking working class voices and remedying societal problems frequently connected to the working class by policymakers and politicians. This will be explored further to greater understand whether in fact social capital is the 'answer', or whether it is part of the problem for the working class. Finally, the implications for wider social policy formation will be explored. Figure 1 draws these concepts together and presents the overall conceptual framework of this thesis. The

overarching research aim and research questions and objectives stem both from this framework and are further refined following a critical review of the current literature.



**Figure 1. Thesis Conceptual Framework**

This thesis is structured into key chapters which address the key research aim, research questions and objectives within the overall research framework, and demonstrates the progression of data collection, synthesis and analysis. *Chapter One* presents the background to the research and highlights the importance and need to explore the key issues in greater detail, both conceptually and in an empirical setting. The overarching research aim, objectives and research questions thus provide a guide to how the framework (Figure 1) will be further explored and developed within this thesis. In order to contextualise the underpinning drive and motivation to undertake this research, I have shared my background and personal reflections at the outset. It is important for me to be able to present my position within this research, partly to inform the reader of my previous experiences of the class position which is being explored, but also to allow the reader to draw their own conclusions on my stance within the later interpretations and conclusions. *Chapter Two* examines and critically analyses the existing body of knowledge and contemporary discourse on

the chosen topic areas. The subsections are structured in line with the thesis framework and contribute to the further refinement of the research questions and objectives. Theories and historical definitions of social class are evaluated and synthesised with less formal, contemporary markers of class. The notion that perceptions of the working class are changing is explored, emphasising the external perceptions and the effect this has upon the working class themselves, with a particular focus on the impact of media. Social exclusion, restricted social mobility and political disconnect are frequently seen to be problems specific to the 'lower' classes. These key issues are critically reviewed to establish whether they are symptomatic of working class identity or the result of a voiceless and disconnected section of society. The final sections of the literature review look to the development of social policy and the theory of social capital, often paraded as the solution to many societal issues, to identify the extent to which social capital is the answer or part of the problem. *Chapter Three* outlines the methodology of this research and justifies the overarching philosophical position and strategy to the gathering of both primary and secondary data. The research location, Camp Hill, is introduced along with the approach taken to access and integrate with research participants. The primary data collection methods are defined and the research population and accessibility is explored. A framework for the data analysis is presented and common research issues such as ethics, validity and bias are identified and addressed. *Chapters Four and Five* both present and analyse the data gathered during this research. The key themes of class identity, voicelessness and disconnect are synthesised with the existing body of knowledge in order to address the contested areas identified in earlier chapters and to further inform the overall research aim, research questions and objectives. Ultimately, this section gives voice to the participants, of which most define themselves as belonging to the working class. Finally, *Chapter Six* draws together the key areas of the overarching conceptual framework and demonstrates how a contribution to knowledge is made by addressing a number of weaknesses and limitations identified within the existing literature. The broader implications of these findings are discussed



and suggestions are made to further inform wider debates in this area. Opportunities for further research are identified and the thesis closes by revisiting and reflecting upon the impact this research has had on my personal learning and position.

Throughout this thesis, quotations are included from research participants to add context and to present the views and voices of the working class. Tables 7, 9 and 11 determine the characteristics of the participants; pseudonyms are used to protect their identity where possible.

## **1.2 Overarching Research Aim and Questions**

This thesis will explore and critically analyse the importance of perceived class identities, voicelessness and disconnect within the working class, asking what impact/influence this has on individuals, the local community and the broader implications for social policy, discourse and wider society. In order to address the research aim, the following research questions have been established:

**RQ 1:** What does it mean to be working class: Do conventional social class definitions offer a valid explanation to current societal structures?

**RQ 2:** How do external perceptions of class identity impact on the working class themselves?

**RQ 3:** Are the working class underrepresented and voiceless? Who speaks for the working class and who actively listens?

**RQ 4:** Does current social policy in the UK and the notion of social capital enable or hinder the working class to influence wider political structures?

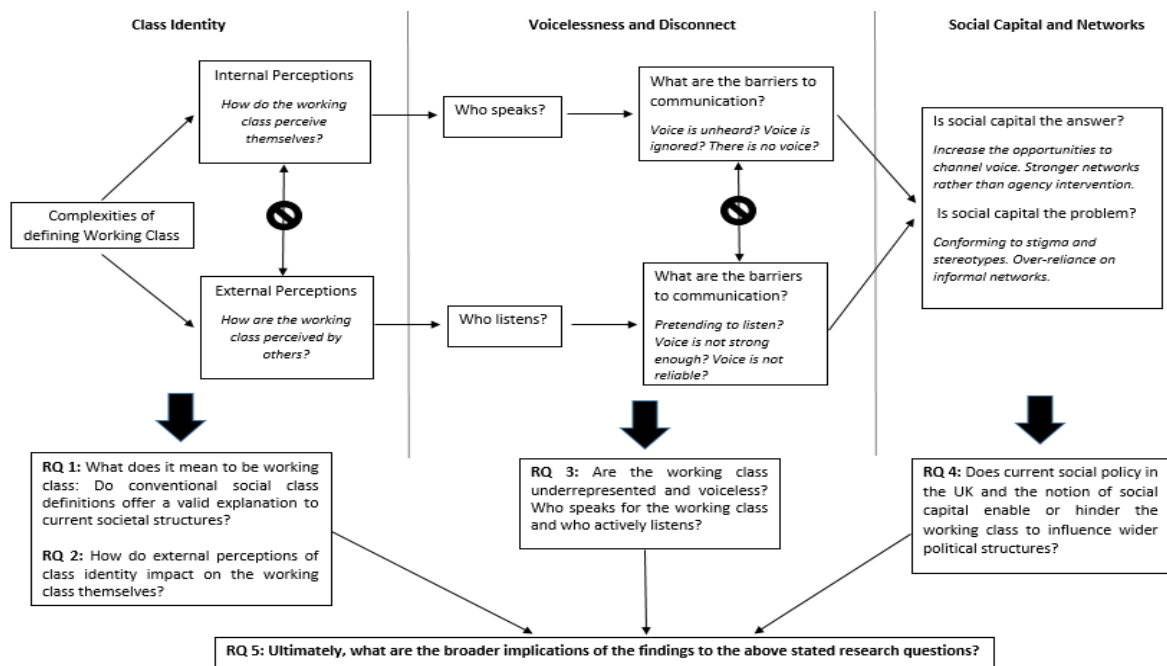
**RQ 5:** Ultimately, what are the broader implications of the findings to the stated research questions?

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

In order to address the overarching aim and research questions, the following research objectives have been identified:

- 1) Critically review and compare the literature on traditional and contemporary definitions of social class with a focus on the complexity of changing class identities
- 2) Develop a greater insight and understanding of how the working class are represented by policy makers, the media and local/central agencies through a critical review of academic and grey literature
- 3) Using a specific case study to collect primary data, explore and analyse how the voice of the working class is communicated and to what extent their voice is interpreted and heard
- 4) Through the operationalisation of the conceptual framework, synthesise the research findings from primary data collected with the existing literature on class identity, disconnect and social capital to address the overall research aim
- 5) Critically evaluate the social policy and research implications of the study's findings

The research questions are added to the overarching conceptual framework (Fig. 2) in order to demonstrate coherence and alignment throughout the structure of this thesis. The 'no entry' signs within this framework represent the perceived barriers between perspectives and viewpoints, these barriers are explored further throughout the thesis.



**Figure 2: Conceptual Framework including Link to Research Questions**

## 1.4 Research Scope

The wealth of opportunities this research provides is extensive in scope; as a result, there are many areas that have not been fully explored. Throughout this thesis, these opportunities will be acknowledged and suggestions for further reading identified.

A number of the key events occurred towards the end of this research one of which was the General Election of 2015 which saw a majority Conservative government retain power from the previous Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition. This created a noticeable shift in the political arena, particularly within the main party in opposition. The Labour Party saw the election of a new leader, Jeremy Corbyn. This resulted in a change to the political landscape at both grass roots level, through the media and within Westminster. Labour Party membership more than tripled in the following months; perhaps a reaction to a further four years of Conservative rule, or in response to the new leader who promised a “fairer kind of politics” (Corbyn 2015). In June 2016, a referendum on

Britain's membership of the European Union (EU) was held, the result of which found fifty-two percent of voters in favour of leaving the EU. Some viewed this result as a protest by those not benefitting from the status quo, in particular the working class (see Mason 2016, McKenzie 2016). In the period after the referendum, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, resigned and was replaced by Theresa May. In addition, political parties in the UK saw leader resignations, votes of no confidence and alleged coups. In June 2017, a 'snap' General Election was held, the result of which was a 'hung' parliament. The Conservative Party, with the largest number of seats, stayed in power with support from the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). The increased focus and ever-changing political landscape illuminated many of the issues outlined in this thesis.

The primary and secondary data collection for this research occurred before the General Elections, EU referendum and subsequent political changes, therefore the forthcoming chapters do not include much of the discourse which have resulted since, although there are clearly many connections between the data and such discourse. In the final chapter, I will briefly discuss some of the implications of the changing political landscape and how this continues to impact upon social policy and the wider debate.

## **1.5 Personal Reflection and Position**

*"A person's knowledge can only exist by virtue of a vast range of past experiences which have been lived through, often with the most intense feelings. These experiences, including textual experiences (books, lectures, lessons, conversation, etc.), we have been taught to disguise so that our utterances are made to seem as though they emerge from no particular place or time or person but from the fount of knowledge itself." (Rosen 1998: 30)*

This research originates from my own personal ambition and experience. It is not an area I have studied previously to any great extent; it is personal. We select the research we choose to

undertake on the basis of a personal drive to learn, enlighten and discover, and ambitiously aim to change or inform something that matters to us. I cannot be objective, unbiased or removed from this research because it is about my life, my culture and my background. Like many, I carry with me the baggage of all of my previous experiences, values and beliefs. This research is predominantly about the working class of which I originate and to where I believe I belong. I wanted to conduct this research because I felt uncomfortable with how the working class, people like me, were being portrayed and represented by various people such as politicians and the media. I also felt that we were not valued or being listened to. At the beginning of this research, I felt bewildered by the increasing portrayal of the dregs of society, chavs, scroungers, dossers etc. However, I also felt uncomfortable in that, on occasion, I saw some truth in the portrayal.

My dad always instilled a strong sense of pride in being working class to our family; we worked hard for a living. I remember asking my dad when I was a young teen “what social class are we?” his reply was “we work for a living so we’re working class”. A simple answer to a complex question, although I can only see that complexity now. At the time it was a definitive answer with no reason to argue otherwise; we sell our labour to survive in life. I still maintain that I am working class but structural definitions label me otherwise. In the BBC’s Great British Class Survey (Savage et al 2013), I was found to be ‘established middle class’ and the NRS (2014) classification would define me as grade B ‘intermediate managerial, administrative and professional’ placing me in the top twenty-six percent of the British population and firmly positioned within the middle class. This is due to my position in academia, qualifications, economic position and, in some cases, cultural tastes. I am the first generation in my family to go to University and gain a degree and the subsequent postgraduate qualifications.

I have often wondered what was different for me, why did I not follow the same path as many of my peers in senior school? This is a question I still cannot adequately answer however, I can

evidence much of my drive and ambition on my dad's encouragement; he wanted me to do everything he never had the opportunity to. I am sure that this is the wish of many parents; it certainly is for me now I have children of my own. My dad certainly had fewer opportunities than I did although he was a very private man, rarely discussing his early life. I remember him once giving me a copy of *Angela's Ashes* (McCourt 1996) and telling me that he could have written it himself, the striking similarities of a poverty ridden, strict Catholic upbringing, and the youngest of seven siblings in a two-bedroom house. My dad along with the rest of his family attended a local Catholic comprehensive school and he then went on to complete an engineering apprenticeship, the opportunities for higher education were not prevalent then, but he did return to study part-time in later years. My dad spent much of the early 1980s out of work having been made redundant after breaking his leg, he established his own engineering business in response which was quite successful until his untimely death at 48. I believed my dad had always been a Labour voter however recently my mum explained that he had voted Conservative until the Thatcher years, although the success of his own business suggested that he had actually followed Thatcher's guidance by "pulling himself up by the boot straps" (Thatcher 1980). I could be defined as one of Thatcher's children (Todd 2014), given I was raised in the 1980s. Recently I asked my mum whether it was difficult raising a family at the time, her response was that "we were never utterly desperate but we spent many years being very close to it". There was always good food on the table, often home grown, my mum was an exceptional homemaker and caregiver (she still is!). My sister and I were both incredibly sheltered from any difficulties but, like many of my peers, we knew never to expect (or even ask for) new toys or branded goods. Later in my adult years, my mum has been more frank and honest about some of the difficulties our family faced. My favourite childhood memories revolve around playing in the entries at the back of the houses, riding bikes and going to the 'rec'. None of these were costly hobbies and similar activities often feature when others reminisce about growing up in a working class community.

My parents had traditional roles. My mum did not work until my sister and I were in senior school, even then only during school hours. Her greatest skills lay in nurturing and caring for her family. She failed her 11+ and attended the local state secondary modern. A memory she often shares is of a time she worked as a punch card operator before she was married. She won a competition and was treated to a trip to London and tried vintage champagne (“disgusting”) and caviar (“over-rated”); she observed that being “posh” was not for her. My maternal grandparents worked in the same job in the same company (Rover and GEC) for the majority of their working lives, taking on extra work selling soap door to door to make ends meet.

I state that I am working class but my position appears far from static. I attended a large state comprehensive school and as a teenager, I was a bit of a pain, but I was quite enterprising. From thirteen years old I had various jobs including a paper round, selling burgers at football grounds, various Saturday jobs and bar work. I worked my way through University at a call centre and never moved away from home as financially it was not an option. My extended family did not understand what I did (they still don’t!), I did not marry young and have children early like many of my peers had. I have spent a lot of time reflecting on the causes that somehow made me do something different. I was born into a working class family, which at times could have been defined as underclass due to welfare dependency. I secured an undergraduate degree, a graduate role and my own home at twenty-one. Only to then be made redundant, sell my home and move back to my parents’ house. I then completed a postgraduate degree, became an academic and bought another house. My social habits and voting patterns could be defined as working class but I enjoy international travel and classical music which are more middle class – there is no surprise that I have difficulties identifying my position. I wonder that my admiration and respect for my parents make it hard for me to sever that link with my core identity. To become a member of the middle

class, you are going to surrender something very fundamental to who you are. As a middle class person, I do not feel a sense of belonging to anything, but as a working class person, I do.

There were several instances during this research which made me feel uncomfortable with my position. I never declared that I identify as working class when gathering the data but spoke as myself rather than as an academic. There were a few examples which stand out. In one focus group, a respondent commented “Lyndsey’s daughter has a passport” (Mick), the rest of the group were shocked. I felt like a fraud in this situation, my children have been abroad on holiday almost every year of their lives. How can I say I am one of them? In another case, the group remarked on a known resident who had just passed her college course to become a Teaching Assistant, they were not familiar with anyone who had been to college and talked of her having “ideas above her station” (Cheryl). There was I, a Senior Lecturer researching for my PhD, on an above average income, living in a higher than average valued house. I do consider myself to be a socialist, my political views are very left wing and I value social justice, equality and equity for all. I am an active member of my local Labour Party, perhaps now I am a ‘Champagne Socialist’?<sup>1</sup>

As an academic, I can sometimes feel overwhelmed by my colleagues as only a minority appear to come from a similar background. As Moyer states there is “something inherently wrong with our presence in the place we want to be—the universities, the middle class, ‘career’ jobs. We can change our accents, our style of dress, be more ‘assertive’. But our bodies know—we are betraying our people when we do these things. We love where we came from even as we need to get away. The unfairness of the circumstances handed to our people and the unfairness of how, somehow,

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<sup>1</sup> Champagne Socialists are often referred to in popular discourse and are deemed to be upper middle class people who self-identify as socialists, and thus their lifestyles are perceived to be in contrast with their political views.



we were the ones to stand a shot at getting away from it.” (2013: 3). The guilt and feelings of shame are explored by Munt (2000) who discusses working class academics as lacking a sense of belonging, who are just pretending and are fearful of exposure or as Hanley states, “the chip on one of my shoulders is balanced by a large lump of escapee guilt on the other” (2007:233). The escapism and the fact that we have ‘beaten the odds’ is unsettling as McKenzie (2015) writes, “It only compounds what I know about the brutal stigmatisation, and the devaluing process of working class people... Now ‘I have made it’ I am not supposed to react angrily to it. I am supposed to know my place and be grateful for getting out”. We do what we have to do; we have minds bigger than the opportunities of our birth. Having experienced university first as a student and then as an academic causes confusion over my class position, it seems almost insulting to other working class people to pretend that my life is comparable to theirs, but I also feel a lack of fit with other academic colleagues. Is it enough to state that I simply do not *feel* middle class? As Medhurst (cited in Munt 2000: 20) states “class is not just an objective entity, but also (and mostly?) a question of identifications, perceptions and feelings”. An alternative perspective is that of Gripsrud (1989) who argues that working class academics have ‘double access’, a form of class privilege which allows access to both high and low culture. He acknowledges “a sort of cultural limbo, not properly integrated in the lower class culture they left, nor in the upper class culture they have formally entered” (1989: 196), I feel that I should acknowledge this marginal position. There is a growing mass of literature on working class academics which has allowed me to reflect upon my own class identity crisis, though falling short of guiding me beyond the class cusp. One thing I am sure of is that my story does not call for sympathy!

## **2.0 Literature Review**

The resources gathered for this literature review were amassed from a variety of sources using different methods. Much of the information was available within the public realm, for example, books, websites and media articles. Additionally, many journal articles and documents were accessible using University subscribed databases and higher education access agreements. The approach to gathering literature began with an extensive period of reading and digesting the research and viewpoints of other writers and academics. From this, numerous references and citations were further explored and the seminal work within each topic area became apparent.

Research Objectives 1 and 2 involve a critical review of the literature in the areas of working class identity and perception of the working class. This chapter thus contributes to achieving the overall research aim by directly addressing Research Questions 1 and 2, thereby providing a foundation to address the subsequent Research Questions. The following table demonstrates how each section directly relates to and informs each research question in line with the overarching conceptual framework.

Overarching Research Question	Key Area of Literature Review
<p><b>RQ 1:</b> What does it mean to be working class: Do conventional social class definitions offer a valid explanation to current societal structures?</p>	<p><b>Class Identity</b></p> <p>The Dynamics of Class Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Definitions of Class</i></li> <li>• <i>Working Class: Times are Changing</i></li> <li>• <i>The Underclass</i></li> </ul> <p>Media Representations of the Working Class</p> <p>Aligned to research objective one.</p>
<p><b>RQ 2:</b> How do external perceptions of class identity impact on the working class themselves?</p>	
<p><b>RQ 3:</b> Are the working class underrepresented and voiceless? Who speaks for the working class and who actively listens?</p>	<p><b>Voicelessness and Disconnect</b></p> <p>A Disconnected and Voiceless Working Class</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Politics and Disconnect</i></li> <li>• <i>Social Exclusion and Disconnect</i></li> <li>• <i>Social Mobility and the Death of Class</i></li> <li>• <i>Whiteness</i></li> </ul> <p>Aligned to partially addressing research objective two.</p>
<p><b>RQ 4:</b> Does current social policy in the UK and the notion of social capital enable or hinder the working class to influence wider political structures?</p>	<p><b>Social Capital and Networks</b></p> <p>Social Capital as a Policy Solution?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Explanations of Social Capital</i></li> <li>• <i>Bonding Bridging and Linking</i></li> <li>• <i>The Strength of Ties and Networks</i></li> <li>• <i>Reciprocity and Trust</i></li> <li>• <i>Cultural Capital</i></li> </ul> <p>Social Policy for the Working Class</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Social Capital and Community</i></li> <li>• <i>Social Capital as Policy</i></li> </ul> <p>Aligned to partially address research objective five.</p>
<p><b>RQ 5:</b> Ultimately, what are the broader implications of the findings to the other stated research questions?</p>	

**Figure 3. Structure of Literature Review and Linkages to Research Questions and Objectives**

Defining social class is complicated, and often controversial, in that views of what constitutes one's class are laden with judgements, stereotypes, historical norms and values. Class has united and divided Britain for centuries and is widely accepted as a 'British' fact of life or, as Mount states, "Britain's dirty little secret" (2004). Savage (2015) notes that people in Britain are aware of, interested in, and upset about class, and that class has once again become a powerful force in popular imagination.

Historically, the concept of social class has been explored within a broad range of theoretical perspectives, often for different purposes and with some contradictions. For example, class has been theorised in terms of: power, conflict and opposition (see Skeggs 1997, Parkin 1972, Wright 1985); as a set of social relationships (see Kalmijn 1998, Prandy and Bottero 2000, Lipset and Bendix 1959); in terms of societal and economic structures (see Runciman 1990, Goldthorpe 1996); differences in occupation and aspiration (see Reid 1977, Monk 1970); and to demonstrate levels of inequality (see Reay 1998, Savage 2015, Westergaard 1996). Bottero (2004) identifies two distinct schools in class analysis: one group with a precise and rigid approach (see Goldthorpe 1996, Marshall 1997) and another group, which calls for a transformation and extension of class theory (see Crompton 1998, Devine 1998, Savage 2015). It is important to note here that more contemporary debates regarding social class have moved from a contained set of distinct structures to a more pluralistic understanding that class is a cluster of related variables.

Pakulski and Waters (1996) state the importance of distinguishing between 'class theory' (Marx) and 'class analysis' (Weber), describing the former in four propositions: the proposition of *economism*, where class refers to the differences in ownership of property; the proposition of *groupness*, where social structures have clear boundaries and associations tend to be exclusive; the proposition of *behavioural and cultural linkage*, therefore connecting consciousness, identity and actions that fall outside of economic production; and the proposition of *transformational capacity*,

which allows access to resources that can transform the view of their class and demonstrate the conscious struggle against other classes. Class analysis acknowledges the existence of societal structures but seeks to recognise the greater likelihood of the varying dimensions of class. One definition does not represent the members of a social structure, other factors such as gender, religion, ethnicity would have as great an impact. In fact, these other structures, as argued by Mortimore and Robinson (2003) are 'absolute', whereas class is not and this is the result of a postmodern society.

It is hard to perceive how class and class structures could be conceived in *objective* terms, class is an inherently *subjective* concept that means different things to different people, in different situations and at different times. As exemplified in my earlier introduction, people are likely to shift class position throughout their lives, but may choose to relate to only one social class. As Monk (1970) identified, social class is an understood concept but is hard to define; class is an "amalgam of factors that operate in different ways in different circumstances". Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst (2001: 877) argue that people understand class in different ways; it is often seen "less as an *attribute* and more as a marker by which people relate their life histories". Class has implications for societal structures, social relationships between different groups, inequality, political views, economics and power, all of which are discussed within this thesis. However, for the purpose of this research, the focus is predominantly on social class as an identity; and specifically that of working class identity.

This chapter will consider definitions of 'working class', and will explore the changing perspectives of class definitions from multiple viewpoints, primarily focusing on the post-war years in Britain. Traditional definitions of class will be explored along with an analysis of how class links with social exclusion, social mobility and political disconnect. The concept of 'whiteness' will be deconstructed in that the use of the term 'white working class' remains a contested, but prominent, topic for

academic and societal debate. These are not terms which can be used interchangeably as this has significant implications for the working class who do not identify as being white. In this thesis, the term 'white' in relation to working class will be used only when research specifically stipulates that 'whiteness' is a key variable; in all other cases, discussion will be focussed on the 'working class'.

It can be argued that there has been an increasing focus from the media on the working class and some suggest that they have been demonised as a result of contemporary television programmes such as *Shameless*, *Skint*, *Benefits Street*, *Benefits and Proud* to name but a few. There will be an exploration of the way in which the media portrays the working class and a consideration made of how this may have changed over the decades. The working class are perceived to be both demonised yet voiceless (Jones 2011, BBC 2008) and the increased attention upon far-right voting patterns will also be explored further as many argue that this is seen more as a 'protest vote' by the working class in an attempt to be heard, due to a failure to connect with other mainstream political parties (Goodwin 2014). It has been suggested that the working class are last in line for crucial resources with other sections in society receiving more (Beider 2011, Dorling 2009). It is clear that perceptions of class are constantly changing; over sixty percent of the British population, however, still identify themselves as working class. Yet, the importance of social class as an indicator of someone's attitudes has weakened, perhaps because categorisations of social class have become outdated (British Social Attitudes [BSA] 2013) or because definitions are frequently seen as inaccurate.

Researchers suggest that social classes arise from the concentration of three distinct kinds of capital (Savage 2015); economic capital (wealth and income), cultural capital (tastes, interests and activities) and social capital (networks, friendships and associations). These forms of capital will be explored with an increased focus on social capital. In 1997, Tony Blair stated that the government would deal with social exclusion and inequality, but he argued it was more about fatalism and about

“how to recreate the bonds of a civic society and community in a way compatible with the far more individualistic nature of modern, economic, social and cultural life” (Social Exclusion Unit [SEU] 2002). Blair acknowledged that “people were becoming detached from society and from citizenship in its widest sense”; this view was supported by Giddens (2000) who went on to identify that a culture of social capital might be the solution to social exclusion, cycles of poverty and deprivation. This thesis will explore those civic bonds between individuals, groups and communities by evaluating the concept and the value of social capital. In recent years, studies on the topic of social capital have surged yet it remains well contested, as many authors have attempted to understand the term in relation to a number of varying disciplines. The different forms of social capital will be outlined from multiple perspectives and consideration given to the value and impact of networks and social ties on individuals, communities and society as a whole. The concept of community will also be explored, a term much debated due to difficulties with definition and identity. Many argue that the most significant aspects of community are the informal networks that occur between people, groups and organisations. This is particularly useful for those in disadvantaged positions (Williams and Windebank 2000) and a speedier recovery is achieved with stronger networks (see Erikson 1979, Waddington, Wykes and Critcher 1991, Marris 1996). Finally, the implications of social capital informed social policy will be discussed; this is important given it is one of the few scholarly debates that has entered mainstream politics owing to its focus on issues which also engage policymakers. High levels of social capital appear to be correlated with several core policy objectives around improving health, reducing crime, increasing educational performance and economic regeneration (Gilchrist 2009). To some it seems a common-sense-approach for the government to support interventions which strengthen these networks and increase trust (Putnam 1993, Halpern 2008). The final section of this chapter will highlight the common themes which have occurred within existing literature and research with a particular emphasis on how these have informed the development of the overarching research objectives, questions and conceptual

framework. Prominence will be given to the conflicts and contested areas uncovered within traditional literature, they will be highlighted and will form the basis of the primary research design within this thesis.



## **2.1 Class Identity Dynamics**

*"I think there's a feeling of being 'we' being working class. I still strongly have that feeling... having to work for a living and will work for the vast majority of their lives because they have no choice other than go to work." (Roger, Stakeholder)*

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, British society was traditionally structured into estates, much like many societies across the globe. The associated features of such a system, such as hereditary determinants of occupation, political influence and social status, were challenged with the onset of industrialisation. The class system has been in a constant state of revision, and new variables other than birth (for example, education and occupation) are now a greater part of creating and understanding identity in Britain. Numerous and variable discourses regarding social structures and class highlight one clear point: class cannot be clearly defined. The nature of characterising class has demonstrated that such a debate only serves to add to ongoing contention. If distinctions regarding class are permeable and dynamic, how can political decisions be made and social policy be developed on the basis of 'who fits where'? It has been suggested that individuals often find it hard to establish which social class they belong to, sometimes associating with a class to which they do not belong, if traditional methods of defining class are believed to be accurate. If it is therefore difficult for an individual to comprehend and define their own class identity, how then can those external to such groups and individuals (such as policymakers) make decisions based upon flawed classifications? In the context of this, Savage identified the "paradox of class", the importance of a class structure to people's lives seems not to be acknowledged by the people themselves. "Culturally, class does not appear to be a self-conscious principle of social identity. Structurally, however, it appears to be highly pertinent" (2000, p.xii).

Prior to the 1997 General Election, John Prescott allegedly stated "We are all middle class now". In 1999, Tony Blair optimistically told the Labour Party conference "The class war is over" (BBC 1999),

this does not appear to have been communicated to the working class to whom the demarcations of class are very visible in their daily lives. Jones (2014a) argues that “pretending class was no longer an issue was convenient, helping to shut down scrutiny of how wealth and power are distributed in modern Britain”. However, in an early released transcript of a speech at the Trade Union Congress in September 2008, Harriet Harman reinvigorated the political class debate by stating that “the most important predictor of an individual’s life chances is where you live, your family background, your wealth and social class” (Kirkup and Pierce 2008). Despite being subsequently dropped from the final speech, Harman’s words ignited debate in a number of ways. As highlighted by Sveinsson (2009), firstly, it revealed how and when it is acceptable to talk about class. Secondly, a closer look at the media’s treatment of Harman revealed how commentators think about the working class itself. Thus, some suggest, the class war has made a dramatic comeback (Anthony 2014).

### **2.1.1 Definitions of Class**

*“The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and size. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. The devaluation of the world of men is in direct proportion to the increasing value of the world of things. Labour produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as a commodity - and this at the same rate at which it produces commodities in general.” (Marx 1848)*

This thesis will predominantly focus on modern, post-war, British definitions of class; however, one must acknowledge the earlier theories of class and the historical debate surrounding the structures in Society. Marxist theory identified the class structure of the capitalist mode of production, indicated in the excerpt above. This mode of production highlights the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (or working class) and as such, the nature and evidence for ‘class

warfare' or 'class struggles'. Class is often looked upon as a simple hierarchy of upper, middle and working (lower). The practice of officially classifying the British population according to occupation and industry began in 1851; in 1911 the government included separate questions on that year's census to draw further distinctions between occupation and industry outlining a summary of occupations for each social 'grade', now referred to as social class (Rose 1995). Whilst there has been some further clarification and movement of occupation between classes, this system is still the key method used to define economic class in Britain. In 1913, the Registrar General's Social Classes (RGSC) was published in an attempt to stratify groups according to occupation. The Registrar clustered occupations into upper, middle and working class and also according to health, hygiene and 'good standing' (Rose and Pevalin 2001). The last point demonstrates the subjectivity of class organisation: upper classes can look after their health and are deemed hygienic whilst those in working class occupations were not especially reliable or trustworthy (Beider 2015), perhaps demonstrating an early form of class 'demonisation' which we arguably still see today. Such clusters were (and still are) often defined by those with little experience of working class lives, further evidencing that people who are not working class are imposing classifications, values and perceptions on others.

The National Readership Survey (NRS) defines class in terms of the occupation of the chief income earner in the household; their definition is frequently used in market research and comprises five classifications, these are stated in Table 1 (NRS 2014).

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**Table 1: Social Grades (NRS 2014)**

The grades are often grouped as ABC1 for middle class and C2DE as working class. Only two percent of the population represent the upper class and consequently, it is not recorded in the NRS social grade classification. These social grades do not reflect levels of income which itself is interesting given the power of income in capitalist societies. The NRS acknowledges the questionable relevance of social grade given the increasing diversity of society, but maintains its value for its discriminatory power as a target group indicator for consumer behaviour. In 2001, Social Class based on Occupation was replaced by a new classification named the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) and was first used in the 2001 census. The categorisation itself is composed of seventeen groupings which can be further reduced to the three categories of higher, intermediate and 'lower' occupations (Rose and Pevalin 2005). NS-SEC distinguishes between those employed in routine or semi-routine occupations and those working in professional or managerial occupations. Such categorisations make judgements regarding the worth of those occupations, the researchers and theorists who make these decisions are not working in the 'lower' occupation

groups and this creates an obvious bias. At some point in history, judgements were made which decided that manual labour was less worthy than professional positions. Such decisions have, through history, been consolidated through social construction so that what was once just varying work roles is now an almost stated fact-based hierarchy.

In 2011, the BBC commissioned the Great British Class Survey (GBCS) which was conducted with 167,000 online respondents in addition to a further (arguably) nationally representative survey. This survey, influenced by the previous work of Bourdieu (1990), aimed to introduce further variables into the divisions of class to demonstrate how measures of economic, cultural and social capital can be combined to provide a powerful way of representing contemporary class divisions in the UK. Economic capital is concerned with income levels and general wealth; social capital relates to the extent that social networks are generated from contacts and connections that may further privilege or disadvantage groups; and cultural capital is linked to people's interests, such as preferences in music, media, cuisine and other 'emerging' or 'highbrow' cultural pursuits. These other forms of capital along with the work of Bourdieu will be explored later in this thesis. Savage et al (2013) stated that an occupationally-based class schema does not adequately capture the role of social and cultural processes in generating class divisions; even within the new GBCS classifications, it is recognised that there is no clear affiliation between occupation and class. The GBCS sought to demonstrate "the link between class and specific occupational, educational and geographical profiles which offer unparalleled insights into the organisation of class inequality in 2011–12" (Savage et al 2013: 220). The GBCS identified seven different types of social class as outlined in Table 2.

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**Table 2: GBCS Social Class Types (BBC 2014a)**

The findings from the GBCS identified a number of changes to the class system; essentially the traditional stereotypes regarding middle and working class were considered out of date. It found that only thirty-nine percent of participants fit into those categories and that the traditional working class is smaller than it was in the past with new-generation workers falling into the newly defined *affluent* or *emergent service workers* (BBC 2014a). Introducing new measures surrounding social and cultural capital highlighted the complexity of how people consume culture; the *technical middle class* are less culturally engaged while *emergent service workers* participate in various activities. The GBCS provoked debate by highlighting that class could now be defined beyond the boundaries of income and occupation to include social and cultural capital, thus shifting the discussion from the historical context of economic stratification to include cultural modelling. This

change has led to criticisms, often fuelled by the nature of how culture has been measured and the groupings identified by the survey, some suggesting that there were prejudiced assumptions in the survey design. Bradley (2014: 429) identifies three main weaknesses, “the approach to class is gradational, not relational; the markers of cultural capital used in the model are highly selective, therefore skewing the empirical findings, and lead to a negative view of working-class culture; and the model of latent classes resulting from the analysis is not coherent, with groupings that might be better distinguished as class fractions”. This oversimplification of working class culture has also been criticised by Mills (2014) who condemns the model for lacking in rigour due to the limited sample size, interpretation of results and the indicators used for defining cultural capital (discussed later). Despite criticism, both acknowledge that the GBCS is a significant contribution to a reinvigorated sociological research agenda on class, with a major public impact. Ultimately, the GBCS has highlighted the extremes of the class system; “The very rich and very poor are still with us in the 21st Century” (BBC 2014b).

Some authors reject the concept of class as a structure; Thompson argues “I do not see class as a ‘structure’, nor even as a ‘category’, but as something which in fact happens in human relationships... class happens when some men feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from theirs” (1964: 8). Boyce (2014) exemplifies the distinction between class as a ‘structure’ and class as a ‘story’, “We are the stories we tell. When you ask someone my age [56] what class they are, they tell you a story. They don’t describe their economic realities or cultural expectations. They tell you what their parents did. Or their grandparents. How they got here”. That class is a lived experience is supported by many researchers (see Kuhn 1995, Charlesworth 2000). There also appears to be a difference of opinion when discussing class identity with different generations. It is something the older generation worries about, yet the younger generation tends not to associate with, or be defined

by class in the traditional sense. Allen and Mendick (2013) argue that, as the younger population age, perhaps they will begin to see its prevalence more, having 'lived' the experience, this point will be revisited later.

People have an awareness of the concept and language associated with class that leads them to see it as a notion loaded with "cultural baggage; defining oneself in class terms, in this respect, is seen as a political statement most people are unwilling to make, for a variety of reasons" (Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst 2001: 878). Labelling an individual with a class identity reinforces expected norms and behaviours of the class as a whole. Sayer (2002) identifies class as an embarrassing subject, which is demonstrated when asking people "what class are you?" It can be unsettling because it may imply further questions such as "what are you worth?" or "do you think you are worth more/less than others?" If we state that class has nothing to do with income or economic value, then Sayer argues that it only makes the existence of class inequalities more troubling, "It is not surprising that people find class embarrassing, for embarrassment, and indeed shame, are appropriate responses to the immorality of class" (2002).

### **2.1.2 Working Class: Times are Changing?**

*"The working class worked, it says it on the tin ... it was the workers that made Britain great.*

*Hardworking, honest people with strong values."* (Paul O'Grady's Working Britain 2013)

Traditionally, the working class have been associated with industry, for example, factory work, mining and transport. The decline of such industries and the emergence of service roles have affected the debate surrounding the working class. Historically, working class communities have been close-knit, often housed together in tenements and terraces. The 1960s saw the increase in high-rise council flats, which replaced so-called 'slums' (and before that the 'Workhouse' for the less fortunate). More recently, these high-rise flats are being demolished through many regional



and national regeneration projects. Working class leisure pursuits have been constrained by working conditions and locality as well as disposable income. Traditional activities, often related to the working class, include watching football, visiting the pub and cinema, and trips to the coast all had to be fitted around working lives. One clear observation is that representation of the working class always involves some kind of moral or political judgement; in the words of Andrews, Toynebee and Woodward (2013: 6) – “it’s never innocent”.

The GBCS has promoted a general shift from viewing class in economic terms to include culture; this change has had the biggest impact on definitions of the working class. Although the survey has acknowledged this shift in its design, for years prior to this, the working class have been subjected to many cultural stereotypes demonstrating a similarity in negative perceptions using different labels and language, and this will be explored later. The GBCS defines the *traditional working class* (class five) as a “moderately poor class”; their annual income is below the national average at only £13,000 although most own their own homes worth around £127,000 and hold only modest savings. The number of social contacts is restricted and the scores on nearly every measure of capital are low, though not completely deprived. Occupations are predominantly blue-collar and it is strongly over-represented within old industrial areas (Savage et al. 2013: 240). The *emergent service workers* (class six) are relatively poor in terms of income but richer in cultural and social capital. This is because people who comprise this class – bar staff, nursing auxiliaries, call centre workers – generally tend to be younger than the traditional class group and have acquired ‘low brow’ tastes in music, the internet and sporting pursuits. The *precarariat* (class seven) are defined as the “poorest class”, with income of only £8,000, minimal savings and most likely to be in rented accommodation or social housing. The scores for both social and cultural capital are the lowest of any of the classes and this is clearly the most deprived, nevertheless this represents fifteen percent of the population and is therefore a relatively large social class. Occupations are predominantly

blue-collar or those unemployed; it is represented amongst old industrial areas but often away from large urban areas (Savage et al. 2013: 240-243). The choice of the term *precariat* is interesting in that it demonstrates the precarious nature of the lives of those within the category; an assertion of instability (Standing 2011: 14). The naming of the poorest is problematic and defining them at all could be seen as stigmatisation which adds to their inequality. In Savage's (2015) recent publication regarding the GBCS, he sets out a chapter specifically regarding the precariat; this chapter is written in a completely different tone to the rest of the book and informed by a different author. Does this imply that they are so fundamentally different that they cannot be spoken of in the same way and using the same language as those from other classes?

The GBCS includes a number of factors not previously considered by other class division definitions, but it fails to take into account the nature of relationships to other classes and how much power and autonomy one holds in life (Andrews, Toynebee and Woodward 2013). Despite the often negative perceptions, sixty-one percent of respondents to the British Social Attitudes survey (2013) subjectively view themselves as working class. This figure has hardly changed over the last thirty years and there still appears to be a notable sense of pride and nostalgia associated with belonging to the working class, although the survey suggests that the salience of reference to class in society has declined substantially. Other research suggests that people are ambivalent about which class to which they belong (Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst 2001), or that the more disadvantaged working-class 'dis-identify' with belonging to a particular social class (Skeggs 1997). Savage (2015) argues that people prefer to reflect upon the way they straddle different classes or transition between them during their lifetime. Class is important, not for self-identity purposes, but for the emotional reactions it prompts, usually negative in nature. It appears to matter to which class you *do not* belong rather than to which one you think you *do*.

Bottero asks “Who are the white working classes, and why the sudden interest in them?” (2009: 7). This question highlights the increased media spotlight on the working classes of modern society. Whilst the changing representations of the working class in the media will be explored in a later section, it is clear that momentum on communicating the perceptions of the working class has gathered speed in recent years. Historically, the working class were viewed as ‘respectable’, ‘honest’ and ‘hardworking’ although these terms are somewhat condescending; the lower classes were looked down upon by those above and clearly knew their place in the order of society. As Mount (2004: 101) states “they may be warm and spontaneous, or bad tempered and foul mouthed, or both. But they are not pretending... they are genuine... solidarity is the word for it”. According to a Britain Thinks Survey (2011), “the noble tradition of a respectable and diligent working class was over”. The survey reminisces about a ‘golden age’ where working class people did ‘real jobs’ which were tough and physical, and that people wanted to work. They acknowledge that life was hard but working class people “knew how to have a good time”, respected each other and lived in close communities. Although the survey methodology is not clearly stated, they emphasise that there is a clear sense that these characteristics of the working class are fast disappearing. The findings from the survey are almost arguably extreme in their views that working class people live hand-to-mouth and have limited aspirations beyond survival. One key finding was that being working class was a choice: “you wanted to work with your hands, do an honest day’s work, live in local community, be unpretentious, play football” (Britain Thinks 2011), the view now is that being working class is not a choice and tends to just mean “being poor”. As Mann (1992: 34) states “workers are told that they are free to come and go as they please, most know that this is a myth... without a job the worker is always in danger of falling into poverty”. A Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (SMCPC) report identifies the UK as having one of the highest rates of

low pay in the developed world. The National Minimum Wage<sup>2</sup> is now worth £1,000 per annum less in real terms than it was in 2008. Today, 4.8 million workers (almost twenty percent of the total number of workers in the UK), earn less than the Living Wage<sup>3</sup>; these are more likely to be women. The report states, “too often, the working poor are the forgotten people of Britain” (SMCPC 2013). The Trussell Trust (2014), Britain’s largest provider of food banks, suggested almost a million people received emergency food parcels from food banks in 2013 and the number is growing<sup>4</sup>. They suggest that almost half of recipients are in need due to welfare errors and sanctions. There are also over five million households classed as living in fuel poverty, this represents just under twenty percent of all households in Britain (Fuel Poverty Advisory Group 2013), and this is expected to increase to nine million by 2017. Prior research identified the effects of poverty, these include stress, low self-esteem, stigma, powerlessness, lack of hope and fatalism (see Cohen et al. 1992, Faith 1985). For such high levels of poverty to exist in Britain, one of the world’s richest countries, is a matter of great concern.

Previous studies are often criticised for romanticising working class culture, in fact, a relatively undisputed view is that the working class have historically been subject to social research due to the multiple fractions within its core. That said, it would be difficult to conduct research in the higher classes due to issues of accessibility. Many view their working class background nostalgically,

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<sup>2</sup> The national minimum wage is set by the business secretary each year on the advice of the Low Pay Commission. It is enforced by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

<sup>3</sup> The living wage is different to the national minimum wage, it is an informal benchmark, not a legally enforceable minimum level of pay (Living Wage Foundation 2016). However, the government website suggests that the national minimum wage and the living wage are the same (see HMRC 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Latest figures published by The Trussell Trust in 2016 demonstrate that foodbank use remains at record levels, rising two percent on the last year. In the financial year 2015/2016, 1,109,309 three-day emergency food supplies were provided to people in crisis (Trussell Trust 2016).

often reminiscing about days gone by as identified by the Britain Thinks Survey. Loveday (2014) argues that this remembrance is closely tied to feelings of loss and longing, and that individuals are aiming to add value to their memories in a society where they are often now deemed as valueless. Some argue that looking to the past enables the possibility of imagining a better future, one in which the value of working class lives is accorded recognition and worth (see Pickering and Keightley 2006, Loveday 2014, Gorz 1997). This nostalgia or longing is for a home that no longer exists or has never actually existed, a sentiment of loss and displacement, but “it is also romance with one’s own fantasy... mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values” (Boym 2001: 8). This loss and longing is frequently portrayed in media, with many references to how times have changed; regardless of many anecdotes about how tough life could be, there is often the view that “life was good back then” (Hall 2014: 15). For many, this romantic notion of the past stems from the simplicity of how life used to be. Some argue that the working class are bewildered by the pace of change in this modern, diverse, globalised world. “They belong in a past time” (Klein 2008: 36) and this will inevitably lead to greater social divisions.

Todd (2014) presents 1979 as being a turning point in the debate around perceptions of class; the election of Thatcher’s Conservative Government. It is at this point, she argues, that “for the first time in forty years, the gap between the richest and poorest began to widen rapidly, and Britain witnessed the fall of the working class as an economic and political force” (2014: 8). Todd’s research identifies a clear line where people speak of life before and after this key date. Thatcher saw the previous trends in full employment and welfare as barriers to economic growth, declaring, “we now have no alternative but to accept a reduction in the standard of living if investment and unemployment are to recover” (1980). Thatcher subsidised the free market by the large-scale privatisation of public services including extending the ‘right-to-buy’ scheme which provided the

opportunity for thousands of council tenants to purchase their homes at a much-reduced price. Although, Hanley (2007: 4) suggests this proves that a property-owning democracy is not necessarily an equal one. It could be argued that a focus on free markets helped Britain to regain its economic competitiveness and paved the way for greater prosperity in the 1990s, however, the deregulation of the financial industry has since proved to be an arguable failure. The reduced focus on full employment contributed to unemployment reaching ten percent in the mid-1980s, marking the beginning of what many believed was Thatcher's assault on the 'organised' working class (see Todd 2014, Jones 2011, Hall 2014). Thatcher believed that the existing trend of unions was bringing economic progress to a standstill by enforcing strikes which kept wages artificially high and forced unprofitable industries to stay open. When Thatcher came to power in 1979, twenty-nine million working days had been lost to strikes, when she left office this had reduced to two million days (Savage 2015). The reduction of Trade Union powers through the Employment Act of 1982 had a demonstrable effect on the rights of employees, and this was exemplified by the Miners strikes in the 1980s. The national strikes were initiated by Arthur Scargill in 1984 when the National Coal Board announced 20,000 redundancies, despite it being claimed that such redundancies did not make economic sense. The closure of the mines appeared to be politically motivated and there were widespread images of police enforcement, coupled with alleged attempts to undermine and discredit the unions through widespread media messages from right-of-centre media. Despite this, miners received public support, although the long strike had a significant impact on living standards and miners returned to work causing another blow to the power of the unions. These events again demonstrated the widening gap between the minority of the very rich and the majority who relied on work to get by, and whose security was increasingly precarious (Todd 2014). The reduced power of the unions, coupled with the decline in industry and manufacturing, led to a drop in the total union membership. This had, and continues to have, a significant impact on the collective power of the working class and acts as a barrier which restricts their voices from being communicated.

During the Conservatives' reign in the eighties, poverty and inequality increased which, amongst other factors, forced Thatcher to resign, ultimately driven by her introduction of the community charge or 'poll tax', viewed by many as a tax on the poor. The view of the working class dramatically shifted during this decade, from a respectable working class of the seventies, to the poor and in constant danger of poverty in the eighties – this most closely represents the view of the working class in wider society today.

### **2.1.3 The Underclass**

*"If you've never done a day's work in your life then you're a scrounger, you ain't working class if you ain't worked. Simple."* (Emma, Participant)

In his book *Chavs* (2011), Owen Jones explores historical and political factors which have led to the demonisation of the working class. The relatively new term 'chav' is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "a young lower-class person typified by brash and loutish behaviour and the wearing of (real or imitation) designer clothes" (2014). It was recognised as 'Word of the Year' in 2004 and it has been used in widespread media over the last decade. Some suggest its origins stem from the Romany word for a child, "chavy", or a boy, "chaval" (Partridge n.d). Anecdotally, chav is often used as an acronym for "Council Housed And Violent", "Council Housed And Vile", and "Council House Associated Vermin"; it is deemed to be a negatively-laden term often used as an insult or term of disgust (Tyler 2008). The term 'chav' normally only refers to people who are white, a point discussed in a later section. Hayward and Yar (2006: 16) suggest that the term "has always been connected with communities who have experienced social deprivation in one form or another", is aligned with "stereotypical notions of lower-class" and is "a term of intense class-based abhorrence". The Britain Thinks survey (2011) noted how the working class are anxious to differentiate themselves from chavs and they do identify a lower class to themselves. Perhaps the attempt to distinguish between the traditional working class, emergent service workers and the

precariat by the GBCS provides a structure to determine the sub levels within the boundaries of the working class demographic. The chav figure, it can be argued, is part of a larger process of identifying class which aims to distinguish the white middle and upper classes from the white poor. Howse (2008) argues that using the word 'chav' acts as a smokescreen for the hatred of the 'lower' class: not a new phenomenon, but a new label to replace previously laden terms such as 'hooligan' or 'cad'. Some argue that using such terms is tantamount to social racism (Burchill 2005). In the 1960s, people were referred to as being 'common', often alluding to those without middle class morals, though the term is not used as frequently now. Moreover, the increasing use of the word 'chav' has proved that, by eradicating a term, you do not abolish the thing that it seeks to describe.

The welfare state exists to increase quality between people by covering risks, equalising opportunities and levelling income distribution (Hagfors and Kajanoja 2007). However, there is a notable stigma attached to being poor or dependent upon welfare. This stigma highlights the circumstance as being culturally offensive or unacceptable and the longer the dependency lasts, the more likely it redefines one's social life in terms of the stigma (Goffman 1970). Stigmatisation is socially constructed and welfare dependents are self-confessed failures according to Titmuss (1974). He explains this through the way claimants are made to feel 'pauperised' and, because they feel this way, they therefore believe other dependents are abusers of the system. "The more the welfare system is believed to stigmatise, the more those who staff the system may think it is their function to stigmatise... The attitudes of both staff and claimants reinforce each other; they create what they fear – or what others want them to fear" (Titmuss 1974: 45). The stigma associated with welfare dependency can cause serious problems; some chose not to claim despite being in real need of additional support.

Heffer (2008) argues that the respectable working class has died out, whilst it used to be those who worked, now it is those reliant on welfare, in Heffer's terms a 'feral underclass'. He goes on to



argue that families no longer live generation-by-generation in humble circumstances, either they are clients of the welfare state and become the underclass or they become middle class. The term 'feral underclass' emerged again at the Conservative Party conference in 2011; Kenneth Clarke (2011) blamed that summer's riots<sup>5</sup> on "a feral underclass, cut off from the mainstream in everything but its materialism... the general recipe for a productive member of society is no secret... it's about having a job, a strong family, a decent education and beneath it all, an attitude that shares in the values of mainstream society. What is different now is that a minority of people in our nation lack all of those things and indeed, have substituted an inflated sense of expectations for a commitment to hard graft". Gove (2011) preferred to refer to the *educational underclass* in an attempt to understand the causes on the summer riots of 2011, going on to state that stronger discipline is required to prevent undermining "by the twisting of rights by a minority who need to be taught an unambiguous lesson in who's boss".

The concept of an underclass is not entirely new. Used in the US from the 1980s and earlier in the 1970s in Britain, the term was more often associated then in the context of race and ethnicity. Welshman (2006), though, identifies its earliest origins in 1918, citing Maclean's trial and his statement that "the whole history of society, has proved that society moves forward as a consequence of an underclass overcoming the resistance of a class on top of them" (cited in Macdiarmid 1966: xii). This view presents a different perspective from the use of the term in the modern day, and is perhaps more positive, as it is not clear here that the underclass feature at the bottom of the class hierarchy in society. Field (1989) identified four main "forces of expulsion":

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<sup>5</sup> Between 6th and 11th August 2011, thousands of people rioted in several London boroughs and in cities and towns across England. The resulting chaos generated looting, arson, and mass deployment of police and resulted in the death of five people. For additional insights into the riots, see Briggs (2012) and Smith (2013).

unemployment; widening class differences; exclusion of the poorest from rising living standards; and the hardening of public attitudes. These attributes, Field believes, have created an underclass separated from the rest of society in terms of income, limited life chances and political aspirations. Defining the underclass has proved to be a controversial debate due to differing perceptions not dissimilar to the wider debate of defining class itself. Marx termed this section of society as the “available reserve army of labour” (1848) which was accessed as and when industry required greater resources. Welshman (2006) notes that this reserve army increases competition among workers and acts as a downward force on wages, arguably causing a cycle or culture of poverty. For Smith (1992), the underclass lies outside the class hierarchy, because they belong to “family units having no stable relationships at all with the “mode of production”, thus according to Macnicol (1987: 299) becoming “casualties of capitalism”.

Should the underclass be defined in terms of society structures or can it be related to a more behavioural or cultural explanation? Morris (1994) argues that the underclass falls outside of societal structures and the focus is on moral failures, poor socialisation and the often-implicit suggestion of a different breed of person. He suggests that the underclass are dangerous because they are a threat to social organisation and they challenge models of social structures. Jencks (1989) suggests three different types of underclass: economic (those able but unsuccessful in obtaining steady work); moral (deviant behavioural norms); and educational (lacking in social/cultural skills). Many others have attempted to characterise the underclass in terms of dependency on the state (Buckingham 1996, Willetts 1992, Magnet 1993): unstable relationship to the labour market (Smith 1992, Townsend 1979, Levitas 1996): deviant behaviours (Ricketts and Sawhill 1988, Buckingham 1999): poor education and illiteracy (Dahrendorf 1987, Green 1990): incomplete families (Dahrendorf 1987, Murray 1990) and violent crime (Murray 1990, Freeman 1991). Drawing together many of these characteristics, Buckingham (1999) identifies three approaches to defining

underclass. Firstly, the behavioural approach which focuses on welfare dependency, unequal value systems, intergenerational cultural traits, low work motivation and low cognitive ability. The behavioural approach draws a clear distinction between the respectable ‘moral’ working class and the ‘immoral’ underclass. Secondly, the economical approach determines the underclass to be culturally distinctive, withdrawn from institutionalised politics, economical segregation and a lack of skills/qualifications. Finally, the critical approach suggests that those defined as underclass have similar values to other groups, are not segregated, there is little evidence of intergenerational behaviour and that the lack of skills and education stems from a disadvantaged labour market leading to semi and unskilled members of the working class.

One of the most widely recognised writers on the underclass is Charles Murray. Writing in the *Sunday Times Magazine* in 1989, he described himself as a “visitor from a plague area [US] come to see whether the disease is spreading” (1990: 3). Murray clearly stated that the underclass did not refer to degree of poverty but to a type of poverty, the ‘undeserving poor’, a point absolutely refuted by other commentaries (see Walker 1990, Deakin 1990). He argued that there was an underclass in Britain and that Britain “had a growing population of working aged, healthy people who live in a different world from other Britons, who are raising their children to live in it, and whose values are now contaminating the life of entire neighbourhoods” (1990: 25). Murray believed the underclass to be growing rapidly and identified three common characteristics: births out of wedlock, violent crime and unemployment. His view firmly plants him within the behaviourist approach in that his definition of underclass is not based upon condition but by one’s “deplorable” behaviour in response to that condition, therefore suggesting that being poor is not enough to deem someone underclass, more their behavioural reaction to the situation. A view shared more recently by David Cameron who, discussing the summer riots of 2011, stated, “these riots were not about poverty but rather about behaviour” (cited in Stratton 2011). Whilst favouring

the economic approach, Dahrendorf describes the underclass as “a cancer which eats away at the texture of societies” the development of which is “critical for the moral hygiene of British society” (1987: 15). The language of contamination and disease which is often associated with the underclass, and is highlighted above, conveys a pathological image of people in poverty. It seems clear that the label ‘underclass’ is just one of many branded upon a group of poor people perceived as undesirable and threatening.

Tyler (2013) again refers to the summer riots of 2011 in that, to some, they were “consequences of a cocktail of 'bad individual choices', an absence of moral judgement, poor parenting, hereditary or genetic deficiencies, and/or welfare dependency”. However, Tyler suggests that “by exposing the underclass as a powerful political myth, it is possible to transform public understandings of poverty and disadvantage and vitalise understandings of neoliberalism as class struggle” (Tyler 2013). The public and media reaction to the riots added many other derogatory labels to the already laden term ‘underclass’. The language used to describe those in poverty, on low incomes or at the lower end of the society scale varies in its defamatory nature. For example, some authors have identified terms such as; scum, thugs, feral rats, wolves, an army of ants (Connelly 2011): scum class and verminous waste (Easton 2011): social misfits, deviants and the dregs of society (Devine and Wright 1993): scroungers, spongers, dossers, feckless and lazy (JRF 2014). Whilst Jones (2011) discusses the demonisation of the working class, Loughnan et. al. (2014) suggests that the term *dehumanisation* is more accurate. Several of the labels applied to the ‘lower’ class encompass a range of animals, such as rats, wolves and ants as we can see above. Such animalistic labels are an example of further class-based prejudice, likening a person to an animal is one of the lowest forms of degradation. Marx identifies an underclass, those who he calls the lumpenproletariat who are “the dangerous class... the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society” (1961). Much of this language focuses on an element of disease or disgust, or

rather the role of middle class disgust for the working class. Tyler argues that more research is needed which addresses the issue of emotions as a result of the language used: “the relative absence of research on class disgust is also interesting because social class has become something of a disgusting subject” (2008:20).

#### **2.1.4 Class Identity Dynamics: A Summary**

It is clear to see that definitions of class are complex and nuanced. Categorisations of class vary from more traditional dimensions such as occupation and economic, even culture, to more indistinct measures such as emotions, beliefs and historical experiences. The construction of class is value laden yet not absolute (like genetics as an example). One’s class position can change during the course of one’s life, it is fluid; traditional definitions do not recognise this shift. Discourse surrounding the ‘lower’ class focuses on the *other* to the extent that some allude to another species; a form of dehumanisation. The research suggests that class demonisation is not a new phenomenon; the Victorian concept of deserving and undeserving poor has evolved into a new language. The line between working class and the notion of an underclass is blurred, and to some, the underclass falls outside of social structures altogether; almost not worthy of possessing a class identity.

Many of the viewpoints explored in this section originate from academics, researcher and authors who would generally not be subjected to the same life experiences of those about which they write; how can they make judgements about those in a class to which they do not belong? This is not to say that there has been no research conducted *within* the working class, but the occurrence and prevalence of this is rare within the literature. This thesis seeks to add to this area of literature by investigating the meaning of class, and the relation of conventional definitions to current societal

structures (RQ1<sup>6</sup>), from the perspective of the people who occupy the 'lower' classes in society. A similar weakness exists in the lack of research to investigate the impact of class terminology on those with which it seeks to describe. Such terminology, particularly in terms of the 'underclass', is popularised by those with little experience of living precariously. The impact of these terms (such as chav, scum, lazy, feckless) will be explored with those who are frequently on the receiving end of such derogatory labels, in order to identify the effect this has on their class identity and self-efficacy.

A conflict exists within the established research between two key observations. The first highlights the changing perceptions of the working class, in particular, the move away from a respectable group of hard-working people to the more ruthless rhetoric of a section of society which has failed in numerous ways. The second view refers more to the evolving nature of society, in that an underclass has always existed whether that be the lumpenproletariat, the undeserving poor of the Victorian workhouses or the hooligans of the 1980s. This research will explore this continuum at a grassroots level to identify if such a difference in opinion exists in order to further inform the existing research.

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<sup>6</sup> **RQ 1:** What does it mean to be working class: Do conventional social class definitions offer a valid explanation to current societal structures?

## **2.2 Media Representations of the Working Class**

*"Whoever controls the media controls the mind." (Morrison 1988)*

Since the last half of the twentieth century, representations of working class people in the media often focused on working class 'heroes' and 'villains', the parallel argument of demonisation and romanticising in the class debate. Some images may have been romanticised, many others fixed on narrow stereotypes. This stereotyping began to change from the late 1950s with the so-called 'kitchen sink' films, set in Northern towns which portrayed working class life from an insider perspective although even then, Hoggart (1957) stated that mass media had corrupted working class culture. Today we have a mixed picture; such portrayals of social realism might arguably still be present in television soaps such as *EastEnders* and *Coronation Street*. Many social dramas and even some situation comedies suggest a more rounded way of working class life. However, more images of stupidity and fecklessness persist, some of which will be explored later.

Loveday asks, "Why have working class people gone from being the salt of the earth to the scum of the earth?" (2014: 2). One argument would be regarding the normalisation of working class stereotypes in modern media. Almost eighty percent of respondents to a recent survey agreed or strongly agreed that images and stereotypes of the working class are inaccurate in popular culture and make working class people look stupid (Woodward and Toynbee 2013). Lucas and Walliams' comedy television series, *Little Britain*, introduced the character of Vicky Pollard. The BBC describes Pollard's character as "your common-or-garden teenage delinquent, the sort you can see hanging around any number of off licences in Britain, trying to persuade people going inside to buy them 10 fags and a bottle of White Lightening" (BBC 2014c). Awareness of the Vicky Pollard character is prolific enough that it is often used to replace the word 'chav' as a "synonym for this imagined social type... it independently populates negative newspaper and internet forum accounts of working-class girls and young women" (Tyler 2008: 28). Delingpole (2006: 25) suggests "the reason

Vicky Pollard caught the public imagination is that she embodies with such fearful accuracy several of the great scourges of contemporary Britain: aggressive all female gangs of embittered, hormonal, drunken teenagers; gym slip mums who choose to get pregnant as a career option; pasty-faced, lard-gutted slappers who'll drop their knickers in the blink of an eye... these people do exist and are every bit as ripe and just a target for social satire as were, say, the raddled working-class drunks sent up by Hogarth in *Gin Lane*". Delingpole argues that it is in fact the white, middle aged, middle class males who are discriminated against and terrorised by violent chavs and therefore must defend upper middle class entitlement (cited in Tyler 2008).

Raisborough and Adams (2008) explore the use of mockery as a form of disparagement humour, which "denigrates, belittles or maligns an individual or social group". Some argue that mockery is a social resource mainly available to privileged groups (see Cowan 2005, Lawler 2005), that focuses on shame and embarrassment as it reinforces normative behaviour and beliefs through the mocking of the 'other'. Mockery in the form of humour creates scenarios in which a suspension of social criticism is expected (Billg 2005), qualified by stating that it is 'just a joke' or it is based on fiction for entertainment purposes. The television show *Shameless* was a long running series (2004-2013) focusing on the fictitious Chatsworth council estate in Manchester, and the creator and co-writer, Paul Abbott, intended to base the series on his own life experiences growing up as a working class child; the intention was not to demonise the working class but to present an accurate portrayal of life on a council estate. To some extent this was attempted, (one child goes to university and another is in the gifted and talented stream at school) but generally the representation of the community was negative. Biressi and Nunn (2013) highlight *Shameless* as a depiction of the underclass, frequently cited in the press as "a reliable endorsement of an underclass living as scandalous, chaotic and uninhibited". Jones (2011: 129) argues that the main problem with the series is that it does not identify the situations which led to the characters'



current state or what impact the destruction of the local industry in Manchester has had on working class communities. Abbott's original script was rewritten as it was felt that it was too grim and 'gritty', the new script focussed on making viewers laugh. In doing so he created a show which encouraged its viewers to laugh at, rather than understand, the lives of its characters; the editorialisation was biased. Nelson's (2007) research, which interviewed working class viewers of the series found that they displayed discomfort in watching *Shameless* because they felt that they were being invited to laugh at their own class. The council estate frequently forms the backdrop to many media portrayals of the working class. To Hanley (2007: 7), estates mean "alcoholism, drug addiction, relentless petty stupidity, a kind of stir craziness induced by chronic poverty and the human mind caged by the rigid bars of class and learned incuriosity". Social class is built into the physical landscape of the country.

There are many recent 'reality' television programmes which have arguably focussed on normalising the hatred of the working class or arguably the underclass, such programmes have been labelled as 'poverty porn' by some (see Miles 2009, Mooney 2011, Scott-Paul 2013). Jensen (2014) argues that such programmes embed new forms of common sense about welfare and worklessness and draws upon Bourdieu's (1999) perspective of 'doxa' in making the social world appear self-evident and requiring no interpretation. Jensen states that consent for this common sense "is animated through poverty porn television and the apparent (in fact highly editorialised) media debate it generates", raising particular awareness of the 'skiver' or 'scrounger', a figure of social disgust, welfare dependency and deception. As Toynbee (cited in Jones 2011: 24) objects "They will point their camera at the worst possible workless dysfunctional family and say this is working class life". It has also been alleged that participants have been manipulated into demonstrating exaggerated behaviours. Two such recent programmes are *On Benefits and Proud* and *Skint*, and both of these programmes depict households who are in receipt of benefits and

appear to lack the associated shame that the programme writers assume should be the emotion felt when reliant upon welfare. There are several other programmes of a similar nature and each broadcast evokes intense debate. For example, Ryan (2013) criticised Channel Five for one show as it had “plumbed to the depths of human decency with its latest scapegoating programme”.

On the launch of the new series of *Skint* in Grimsby, local MP Austin Mitchell asked the broadcaster to “consider the ethics of the trend Channel 4 has embarked on, demonising the poor and making poverty entertainment” (cited in Deans and Plunkett 2014). By far one of the most controversial television series was *Benefits Street*; each episode provoked a strong reaction from the public via social media and general media alike. Channel 4 stated that “this documentary series reveals the reality of life on benefits, as the residents of one of Britain's most benefit-dependent streets invite cameras into their tight-knit community” (Channel 4 2014). *Benefits Street* focused on residents who regularly commit crimes and it portrayed a community who were dependent on the welfare state and appear to lack the motivation to seek employment. Despite receiving several hundred complaints, communications regulator, Ofcom concluded that its rules had not been broken (see Ofcom 2014), whilst a number of residents filmed for the show also complained that they had been misled by the documentary makers. One of the shows main characters, ‘White Dee’, stated in a later interview that she “laughed about it at the time, but it’s not really a laughing matter is it? Do you think we’re in this situation by choice?” (BBC 2016) The response to the series was mixed, some were outraged at the attitudes and values of the residents, and others felt that the community had been misrepresented. Nelson (2014) suggested that *Benefits Street* demonstrated a society forgotten by politicians, “these people are people who otherwise don’t have a voice. They don’t vote, so for many years they have just not mattered”. Others argued that residents were portrayed sympathetically and that the problem lies with a welfare system that abandons those in need. Some politicians called for welfare reform; Iain Duncan Smith used *Benefits Street* as justification to

support the Coalition's Welfare Reform Act. The public responded with varied views; the *Birmingham Mail* (Savvas 2014) collated the public response from the locality and some of the comments are quoted below.

*"I'm on benefits, I use them for the reasons they are given, I don't have flash trainers and a huge flat screen TV. I shop in charity shops or sales for clothes. My daughter is clean, fed, healthy, happy, intelligent, well-mannered and behaved. I know how to read, I know how to spell, I'm far from unintelligent. So yeah media does focus on the negative side of people on benefits."*

*"The snobbery about #benefitsstreet is disgusting. We are all one pay check away from needing help from the state so don't mock."*

*"Born and raised three mins from this street...mother still lives there. It's not bad editing! Some people expect everything handed to them, like the world owes them a living, however this is not just in lovely Winson Green...it's everywhere."*

*"I think the 'stars' of this show are a little shocked that they have finally seen their true selves, and they don't like it (I hope)."*

It is not just working class representations on television but in print media too. An example of this explored by Jones (2011) is the case of Shannon Matthews, who went missing in February 2008. Almost one month later it was discovered that Shannon had been the victim of a planned kidnapping with her mother, Karen, and her partner, Donovan, orchestrating the kidnap in order to claim reward monies. Once Shannon had been found, the press turned upon her mother and, as Jones stated, they stripped the working class of their humanity and labelled them as filthy, sub-human and devoid of basic emotions. The media coverage and discussion of the 'kidnap' of Shannon Matthews contrasted sharply with the earlier disappearance of Madeleine McCann who

went missing in Portugal in May 2007. The media coverage of the Shannon's disappearance was significantly lower than that of Madeleine as were public donations to the search efforts and reward funds. As Greenslade (2008) wrote "Overarching everything is social class. Shannon comes from a council house in a deprived working class area of Dewsbury Moor, West Yorkshire. Her mother, Karen, has what one might call an unsympathetic domestic profile with seven children from five different fathers. In "respectable" working class eyes, she would be regarded as a member of the underclass and, by implication, the author of her own misfortunes. Unlike the supposedly middle class McCann family, with their "respectable" careers in medicine, Karen lacks eloquence". Messent (2008) of the *Birmingham Mail* stated "Karen Matthews, 32 but looking 60, glib hair falling across a greasy face, is the product of a society which rewards fecklessness". This is not the only example where the media have referred to someone being the 'product of' state or society. In 2013, when Mick Philpot was found guilty of killing his six children in an alleged attempt to gain custody and obtain a larger council house, Dolan and Bentley of the *Daily Mail* referred to him as a "Vile Product of Welfare UK" (2013). This comment generated widespread debate, much of which focused on the *Daily Mail's* use of the accidental deaths of six children to channel its views on the state of the British welfare system. White (2013) wrote that "it requires a certain detachment from humanity to describe these innocents as having been "bred"; to place their picture under the headline "Vile Product of Welfare UK" so that they suddenly aren't so much victims of a tragic accident as victims of left-wing political thought". Tabloid newspapers in Britain have often been viewed as the chosen media of the working class, however, there are numerous examples of where articles and headlines appear to stigmatise and demonise those who do not fit the 'respectable' working class category.

Whilst the stigma associated with being on a low income is not an entirely recent phenomenon, the heightened connectivity of people is more so now than ever before and therefore relatively

uncensored articles, graphics and opinions are frequently shared. Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube allow news and personal opinion to travel fast and this furthers the development of greater channels for debate. For example, when searching the internet for the word 'chav', in 2003 there were very few results (Haywood and Yar 2006). A search using Google in 2014 yielded over 1.5 million results. Whilst it appears that there has been a decline in underclass discourse, other terms such as chav have increased in use representing a popular reconfiguration of the underclass idea. There are many groups on Facebook which fuel debate and other websites such as *Chav-Scum.co.uk* and *Chavtowns.co.uk* (renamed *ilivehere.co.uk*) further add to the demonisation of a perceived 'lower' class. The increase in the connectivity of people and the communication of such groups and websites can further embed stereotypes, in this case, specifically around perceived class values and behaviours.

A report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF 2014) seeks to dispel a number of myths often portrayed in the media and through public discourse, for example, the view that poverty only exists because people are too lazy to work and lack 'work ethic' (see Chase and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo 2015). Given that government figures demonstrate around half of households in poverty have at least someone in work, this statement makes the wrong assumptions. It also deems those out of work are lazy, but this is not the case for many groups such as the disabled, single parents and the temporary unemployed. Another myth, that people on benefits are living a life of luxury can also be refuted in that the average benefit claimant receives around £9 per day. Also, the often mistaken view that a family cannot be poor due to owning modern material goods, fails to acknowledge that these goods are purchased at the sacrifice of other necessities in an attempt to 'save face' and legitimise their worth in a consumer society. Orwell (1937) highlighted a similar issue with smoking cigarettes in the 1930s, "a tiny luxury in a miserable world". Many of those in poverty are often in debt as they need to buy essential items on credit or take out loans – frequently the only place they

can get these is from lenders who charge well in excess of 'normal' commercial interest rates. The Centre for Labour and Social Studies (CLASS) have published myth-busting facts regarding welfare, for example, the perceived generations of worklessness when statistics actually show only 0.3 percent of households have two or more generations that have not worked (CLASS 2013: 5).

### **2.2.1 Class in the Media: A Summary**

There has been a clear shift in media portrayals of the working class, most specifically those in the most precarious of situations. There appears to be far fewer media representations of a respectable working class in comparison to popular programmes in the 1950s and 1960s; it has been noted more recently that the number of actors and actresses from working class backgrounds is in decline. The increase in programs which appear to demonise the working class has led to the popularisation of the term 'poverty porn', which exists to exemplify its prevalence in mainstream media. Many media institutions (such as the BBC and well-known tabloid newspapers) who were once producing positive representations of working class life appear to have abandoned them in favour of more negative portrayals for entertainment purposes. The research suggests that the power of media perceptions of the working or underclass far outweigh the facts about them from other, more legitimate, research sources. Such media has also led to the normalising of the 'shocking' behaviour of a minority of people, to mislead the general public into believing such behaviour is typical of the working class. Mooney states that one of the major criticisms of poverty porn is that it "provides a view of poverty, and people experiencing poverty, out of context, with no consideration of the underlying social and economic factors that work to generate and reproduce poverty over time" (2011: 7). In broadcasting such material, it is apparent that the media frequently ignores or is ambivalent about the origins of the subjects' misfortunes in the first place. The root causes of poverty and/or welfare dependency are seldom uncovered or addressed, perhaps because it would no longer be entertaining. There is a growth in research and literature on the concept of poverty

porn, but despite more awareness regarding the negative effect of such programs, the number broadcast is not showing signs of decline. The effect of negative perceptions was previously raised as being under-researched. The same can also be said for the lack of research into the perception of such a negative media focus on those towards which the lens is pointing; this will be explored further within this research (RQ2<sup>7</sup>). Much of the literature on the working class in the media makes the recommendation that perceptions need to be changed, yet very few suggest *how* this change can be made. This is a complex, multifaceted issue which will be discussed with participants of this research with the aim that any findings will add to wider discourses.

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<sup>7</sup> **RQ 2:** How do external perceptions of class identity impact on the working class themselves?

## **2.3 A Disconnected and Voiceless Working Class**

### **2.3.1 Politics and Disconnect**

*“People preoccupied with the struggle to keep body and soul together cannot be expected to have much time or psychic energy left for political involvement, especially if no party seeks to mobilise them.” (Bennett 1990: 330)*

A British Social Attitudes survey (BSA 2013) reported that only ten percent of the British public trust politicians to tell the truth. This was further acknowledged by Mardell who stated “There is a deep distrust of politicians, a distaste for them that bewilders those in Westminster. It was as if the Age of Insecurity met the Death of Deference and they had a child, born swaddled in contempt - I christen it *The Disconnect*” (2014). In the last few decades, there have been some high profile political scandals, such as ‘cash for questions’ in the 1990s, the MPs’ expenses scandal in 2009 and more recently ‘plebgate’<sup>8</sup> in 2012; these attracted much debate in the media and have contributed to a lack of confidence towards politicians and the government in general. Jones (2014: 9) extends this view to a disconnect from the establishment, “a network of powerful people who socialise together, look out for and help each other... Britain is not ruled by the people as the theory of democracy suggests”. He argues that the establishment is chronically unrepresentative of British society from gender, class and education and that the elite have successfully redirected people’s anger to those at the bottom of society. This is not a recent phenomenon, several decades ago,

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<sup>8</sup> ‘Plebgate’ refers to an incident in September 2012 where Andrew Mitchell, then Chief Whip, was advised by a Police Officer to dismount his bike, Mitchell responded addressing the Officer as a ‘pleb’. The word is known to be a slang word used to describe someone of ‘lower class’. For more insight, see Walker (2014) and Smith (2015).



Titmuss (1974: 14) argued that “it is fashionable to believe that all power and authority and all politicians are evil”.

Recent research suggests that almost ninety percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that class and politics are closely linked; political struggle comes out of class interests (Woodward and Toynbee 2013). The BSA survey (2013) found that the once strong association between someone’s social class and their identification with a particular political party is now much weaker than before. They state that “this is due to political agencies who no longer seek to make an issue out of class, therefore leading to a declining relationship between class and attitudes”. Perhaps this can be evidenced in that trade union membership is no longer a key driver of attitudes as it had been in the 1980s, linked in part to its different social composition. The emergence of New Labour and the subsequent weakening of links with trade unions may well be responsible for this changing attitude. Previous research has suggested that the working class feel the government are not listening to their concerns, are not interested in engagement, and they do not feel they have been treated fairly by government (Beider 2011). A Newsnight survey (2008) for the BBC’s *White Season* indicated that fifty-eight percent of working class voters felt that they were underrepresented and that nobody speaks for them, their view of the future was pessimistic. Respondents talked of loss and abandonment. Comments on the survey results further support this view.

*“The white working class, which is basically most people, have resolved themselves to being ignored on pretty much all political decisions.”*

*“It comes down to a sense of betrayal shared by communities like this - a betrayal that has not eased with the arrival of New Labour.”*

*"I've got no time at all for politicians, I don't trust them. I was staunch Labour all my life but I cannot vote for them now - there is no difference between Conservative and Labour, they're all the same."*

Manning and Holmes (2013) sought to understand why people might feel actively disengaged from mainstream politics. Their findings suggest that one major reason is that politicians are perceived to be lacking understanding of the local issues and the context in which low income workers live. They state that "the gulf between represented and representative is widened if politicians fail to communicate in a down-to-earth way" (2013: 479), thus a result of disengagement and not apathy on the part of citizens. They also suggest that if politicians fail to recognise their privileged position, and politics fails to address economic disadvantage across minority groups, then disengagement from mainstream politics is likely to increase further. Recent debate has highlighted the privilege of MPs as unrepresentative of the overall population, only seven percent of people nationally attended a private school whereas this increases to over a third of MPs (Jones 2014, Nelson 2014a). At the time of writing, the current leaders of the main political parties all attended private school and hailed from upper middle class backgrounds. Bloodworth (2014) describes a current cabinet made up of over two-thirds millionaires and that the combined wealth of the cabinet was £70 million in 2012; he compares this with 1979 when around forty percent of Labour MPs had completed some form of manual or clerical work before entering parliament, by 2010 that figure had reduced to just nine percent. Such information is regularly published and often shared through social media sites, further demonstrating to voters the stark difference between the lives of MPs with the lives of the majority of the public. Boyce (2014) states "if the working class is now viewed as a kind of quaint ethnicity, then so are politicians... It's not Britain that's broken, it's Westminster, seen as serving no interest but its own".

Some authors indicate that politics has become too complex and as a result, voters become disengaged from the mainstream parties, instead focussing on other parties who frequently assert that they meet the needs of working class voters (see Hay 2007, Stoker 2006). Working class voters often display anger towards politicians who they see abusing their privileged position and illustrating how out of touch they are with the experience of economic disadvantage. Some voters might opt to display this anger by electing not to vote; a third of those eligible did not vote in the 2010 General Election, twenty-one percent stating that it is not really worth voting (BSA 2013). This dissent, many argue, also provides a space for the emergence of extremist, far-right movements such as the British National Party (BNP) and more recently the UK Independence Party (UKIP). Nations in Europe and beyond are experiencing similar problems with far-right parties having some success in racialising white working class disadvantage (Blee and Creasap 2010). As indicated in the earlier quotes, the movement of Labour to a more central and arguably more middle class position has created a class of voters who have been left-behind, i.e. those “older, working-class, white voters who lack the educational qualifications, incomes and skills that are needed to adapt and thrive amid a modern post-industrial economy” (Ford and Goodwin 2014: 278). The view that voting for far-right parties will splinter the votes for the Conservative Party has often been argued, however many now believe that such voting patterns are, in fact, stealing votes from the Labour Party. Nick Griffin, then BNP chairman, stated that “the party would become the focus of the neglected and oppressed working classes ... more Labour than Labour... who had abandoned the working classes” (cited in John et al. 2006).

The lack of voice, discontent and frustration became recurring themes in the media in the run up and aftermath of the 2014 European Parliament elections (Beider 2015) and this resulted in a surge of votes for UKIP, claimed to be “Britain’s most working class party” (Blackhurst 2014). Cohen argues “That Nigel Farage [then leader of UKIP] can speak to former Labour voters ought to be a

matter of shame to the British left and a call to arms” (2014). In the European Parliament elections in 2014, UKIP finished first place with more than 4.3 million votes and 26.6 percent of the national vote (BBC 2014d), this was the strongest result for the Party so far and the first time a new party has had electoral victory in over a century. Ford and Goodwin (2014: 277) state “while European Parliament elections are held under a form of proportional representation and hence offer a more favourable context for challenger parties, the fact that a small party with no more than twenty full-time employees was able to win the election outright remains striking”. Much of UKIP’s popularity stems from its views on EU membership, immigration and the associated dissatisfaction with the established parties in their dealings with immigration; perhaps this highlights their success at European Parliament elections. Britain’s future position in the EU and the immigration debate falls outside the scope of this thesis given the referendum occurred after the data collection period. However, the rise of a party seeking to provide a voice for the previously ‘voiceless’ white working class is an important factor for debate. In November 2014, Labour MP Emily Thornberry tweeted a photo of a house in Rochester which featured several England flags and a white van on the drive, mocking the recent by-election success for UKIP (Watt 2014); as a result, she was removed from her ministerial post. The event triggered a response well published in the media, the resident of the house stated “I think they [Labour] need to get out of their mansions and visit the working class. Her and Ed [Miliband] should come and say sorry to me”. Watt noted that politicians from liberal, professional backgrounds found it difficult to identify with working class people; he specifically focussed on a Labour Party culturally adrift from its own traditional working class base.

Wilks-Heeg proposed that the rise of the BNP in the last decade is best interpreted as “the canary in the coalmine – a stark warning signal about the health of British politics, and most urgently of all, about the perilous state of local democracy in England” (2008: 378). John et al. (2006) note that support for far-right parties originates from the lower-middle and working class; this is due to the

increased effect of social changes (such as immigration and unemployment) and those who have experienced the loss of collective forms of support (such as Trade Unions). Rhodes (2011: 103) argues that “the focus on a homogeneous, fixed construction of ‘the white working class’ portrays this group as either the principal, and often the only, constituency of the BNP”. Such discourses also suggest the turn to the BNP is an inevitable outcome of this undifferentiated group’s political disaffection, susceptibility to racism, and competition with minority ethnic populations for scarce resources.

UKIP’s rise in popularity, like the BNP before them, has often sparked discussions on whether it can be seen as a ‘protest vote’ from an aggrieved section of society. Arzheimer (2009) acknowledges the existence of a protest vote but states that “it is unclear as to what a protest vote should entail. Perhaps it is a protest unconnected to values and ideologies; a vote against things”. Or, as Arzheimer suggests, it is obvious that much of this protest is clearly value laden and directed against the policy or in some cases the absence of policy (see Mayer and Perrineau 1992, Swyngedouw 2001). Historically, a protest vote was seen as a blank or spoilt vote. A campaign by *None of the Above* (NOTA: 2014) aimed to provide an official box on the ballot paper to enable voters to register a vote of no confidence in all the parties and candidates put forward at the 2015 General Election. The campaign denied this is a protest vote stating instead “it is in fact far more than a protest vote it is the cornerstone on which a truly inclusive democracy can be built”, their website proclaims that they are “giving a voice to the voiceless”. Although NOTA was listed as a political party in order to stand candidates in the general election (2015), NOTA does not claim to have a party political stance and will disband once new legislation is passed to include ‘none of the above’ on ballot papers. A similar campaign *Blank Vote* (n.d) states, “The option to vote blank brings non-voters into the democratic process. In a healthy democracy, people who don’t want to support any of the candidates should be heard not silenced.” This campaign identifies other democratic nations which

permit the use of blank or 'none of the above' votes; they suggest that a no-vote might be perceived as apathetic whereas a blank vote displays a lack of confidence and trust in the parties listed. More recently the idea of a protest vote has focused on fringe candidates who are unlikely to win an election, but the vote is cast with the intention of taking votes away from the mainstream political parties, another way of expressing dissatisfaction.

### **2.3.2 Social Exclusion and Disconnect**

*"To be 'of society' is to produce; lacking such a role, one falls out of society proper all together, becoming part of its non-assimilable desiderata."* (Haywood and Yar 2006: 13)

In recent years, the rhetoric of politicians has sought to abandon the description working class, preferring instead to use terms such as 'hard working families' or the 'socially excluded' in order to contrast this with an underclass perceived as feckless, undeserving or a redundant population (see Hazlitt 1982, Gavron 2009, Byrne 2005). Using the more neutral term 'social exclusion' was preferred by New Labour while, some might argue, still drawing upon underclass theory. Blair believed that the socially excluded needed to be programed to join mainstream British society and that there needed to be a shift from promoting equality to promoting equality of opportunity (Lister 1998), thus the opposite of exclusion, more social integration. He stated "We came into office determined to tackle a deep social crisis. We had a poor record in this country in adapting to social and economic change. The result was sharp income inequality, a third of children growing up in poverty, a host of social problems such as homelessness and drug abuse, and divisions in society typified by deprived neighbourhoods that had become no go areas for some and no exit zones for others... we were never going to have a successful economy while we continued to waste the talents of so many" (SEU 2002:4). Mandelson established the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) and believed that improving social security benefit levels was not the remedy; he stated "the people we are concerned about, those in danger of dropping off the end of the ladder of opportunity and

becoming disengaged from society, will not have their long-term problems addressed by an extra pound a week on their benefits” (1997: 7). This view attracted criticism but the party stood by the view that increasing benefits would do nothing more than compensate people for their poverty rather than tackling the root causes. A number of welfare to work policies were planned to reduce welfare dependency; these ‘New Deals’ were designed to engage marginalised groups such as single parents, long term unemployed young adults and the disabled. Social policy refers to the principles that “govern the activities of individuals and groups so far as they affect the lives and interests of other people” (Macbeath 1957: 1). Policies are only meaningful if there is a belief that it can affect a change in some way. Most social policies attempt to steer the life of society along the channels it would not follow if left to itself (Lafitte 1962). Generating various social policies suggests a government intervening in societal issues it believes can bring about a change. Jones and Novak (2014) further the view that, rather than address the root cause of inequality, policy shifted towards punishment, containment and control.

Historically, there have been many articles and books published on poverty, deprivation and welfare (see Spicker 1988, Field 1989, Hutton 1995, Townsend 1979, Johnson 1990). It is necessary to make the distinction between using the term ‘poverty’ and the idea of ‘social exclusion’. The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ 2014) has identified five pathways to poverty - family breakdown, educational failure, worklessness and dependency, addiction, and serious personal debt. They suggest that all of these pathways are inter-connected and many of those trapped in poverty have experienced more than one of these problems. For example, “a child who experiences family breakdown is more likely to fail in school. Someone who fails at school is less likely to be in work and more likely to require benefits. Individuals on benefits and living on low incomes are more likely to experience serious personal debt. Debt often leads to family breakdown, and so the cycle continues... drug and alcohol abuse are often an additional influence, further entrenching social

breakdown destroying potential” (CSJ 2014). Earlier studies by Titmuss (1974) suggest that if the attachment to a work role deteriorates so do attachments to the family, notably for males, and the welfare payment then becomes a surrogate for the male breadwinner. This is an argument not dissimilar to that of Murray (1990) and his view identifying the absence of a father figure as a route to becoming underclass. Titmuss concludes that the lower classes should be regulated by work and that welfare causes more fragmentation in society.

Byrne (2005) suggests that combining the word ‘social’ with ‘exclusion’ bounds society as a whole, rather than individuals within society, and that by discussing ‘social exclusion’, we are considering the changes in the whole of society that have consequences for some of the people in that society. This view seeks to deny the use of terms such as ‘poverty’ or ‘underclass’ as self-inflicted and instead asserts that such consequences are a fault of society as a whole. Madanipour (1998:22) offers a definition, “Social exclusion is defined as a multi-dimensional process, in which various forms of exclusion are combined: participation in decision making and political processes, access to employment and material resources, and integration into common cultural processes. When combined, they create acute forms of exclusion that find a spatial manifestation in particular neighbourhoods”. Measures of social exclusion take into account indicators such as service access, health, education and infrastructure but many argue that intangible aspects such as vulnerability, loss of dignity, lack of choice and powerlessness must also be considered, therefore furthering Madanipour’s view of a multi-dimensional approach to a possible solution. Perhaps the reason that social exclusion is often a contested term lies with the ongoing dispute amongst social scientists as to which agency is responsible. Does the responsibility fall to the state, its institutions, society as a whole or the individual themselves? Understanding it involves interactions between influences and outcomes at different levels - individual, family, community, national and global (CASE 2002).



Hills, Le Grand and Piachaud (2002) argue that social exclusion involves several dimensions of deprivation: consumption; production; political activity; and social engagement. Often exclusion from one dimension correlates with exclusion from the others, although the correlation is not necessarily strong. Analysis of social exclusion trends allow researchers to link through time, across lives and between generations. Hills, Le Grand and Piachaud acknowledge that these links are not unbreakable and state, “there is no sign of a substantial British underclass, permanently cut-off from mainstream society” (2002: 56). Many acknowledge that social exclusion is, more often than not, a temporary state for most individuals and that social exclusion is something that can happen to anyone (Byrne 2005, SEU 2002, Townsend 1979). Although, certain groups are disproportionately at risk such as young people in care, low income households, family conflict, non-attendance at school, living in a deprived neighbourhood and some minority groups. Giddens (1998, 2000), through longitudinal research, shows how poverty and exclusion are not permanent, life-long conditions; his solution includes a rejection of government policies and greater community-focussed approaches, support networks and a culture of social capital (to be explored later).

The term ‘flawed consumers’ was founded by Bauman (2005) to define those disadvantaged consumers who, due to their lower income, cannot participate in the consumer culture of British society. The term highlights the view that low-income people are marginalised as consumer society expands. Bauman states “If being poor once derived its meaning from the condition of being unemployed, today it draws its meaning primarily from the plight of a flawed consumer. Mass production does not require more mass labour... this leaves them without a useful social function – actual or potential – with far-reaching consequences for the social standing of the poor and their chances of improvement” (2005: 2). There are more recent examples of how these flawed consumers are forcibly removed from cultural consumption, for example, when bars and

restaurants ban certain clothing, as it is associated with chav culture. Notices such as 'no hoodies', 'no sportswear' and 'no Burberry' can be seen outside some venues (see Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey 2008). Jones (2011) highlights the attempt of the travel company *Activities Abroad* who concluded they could legitimately promise a "chav free holiday" following an unsophisticated investigation of the middle class names which appeared on their client list (see Guardian 2009). There is further evidence of forced social exclusion in communities, for example, Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). The ASBO is a civil response which may be used against anyone aged over ten who behaves anti-socially and can be imposed against people who have not done anything criminal, yet a breach of an ASBO can lead to a five-year prison sentence (Hopkins-Burke and Morrill 2004). It is important to note that anti-social behaviour is a subjective term, as acceptable behaviour can mean different things to different people. The Home Office (2003: 5) define anti-social behaviour as "behaviour which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more people who are not in the same household". In other words, anti-social behaviour is whatever is perceived as such by members of the community (Somerville 2011). At the time ASBOs were introduced, the Labour government were attempting to address poverty and neglect amongst young people, a contradiction in aims given that ASBOs target the type of behaviour associated with young people. Cook (2006) argued that the anti-social behaviour agenda ignored the wider social and economic factors and, as a result, the underlying causes of this behaviour were not adequately addressed. ASBOs often seek to ban people from the areas in which they live and Hanley (2007: 222) argues that they "are merely a stick with which to beat those who have let nihilism dictate their actions". If people do not feel a sense of belonging or feel unable to participate in a functioning community, they may then choose to demonstrate anti-social behaviour, thus removing them to a position which reinforces further alienation, restricts access to "normal routes to socialisation" (Burney 2008) and more detachment from the patterns of normal life.

### **2.3.3 Social Mobility and the Death of Class**

*“A man who finds himself, beyond the age of 26, on a bus can consider himself a failure.”*

(Thatcher, cited in Wolfe 1991)

The quotation cited at the beginning of section 2.1.2 is from Paul O’Grady, a multi-millionaire celebrity who lives in a large house on a generous plot of land in the Kent countryside, and who still considers himself to be working class (Anthony 2013). The example of O’Grady is mirrored by many former working class individuals, perhaps endorsing the view that class is an individually held mindset rather than a definition by other means; he frequently defends the working class in the media. A study by Bukodi et al. (2014) found that around three-quarters of men and women alike ended up in a different class from the one into which they were born. It appears that social class is more about where you come from rather than where you are now. The creation of a cradle to grave welfare state in the 1940s sought to improve the conditions of those in need, predominantly the working class. However, in modern times, some might argue that the political rhetoric has focused more on *escaping* the working class and increasing the size of the middle class. Societal issues such as poverty, unemployment and low educational attainment are no longer seen as flaws of capitalism but, as we have seen in previous sections, many see it as a consequence of personal choice, behaviour and attitudes. This raises the question of how likely it is to move up the social class ladder. Given the blurred boundaries and definitions of these social structures, it seems somewhat simplistic to suggest that it is a possibility, yet all mainstream political parties in Britain make this their aim.

The general view is that social mobility in Britain is in decline (see Milburn 2015, Harrison 2013). Bukodi et al. (2014: 2) stated that “for the first time in a long time, we have got a generation coming through education and into the jobs market whose chances of social advancement are not better

than their parents – they are worse”. This view is furthered by Pearson’s (2016) review of birth cohort studies since 1946; social mobility has gotten worse, “the income of children born in 1970 was tied more tightly to the income of their parents than it was for those born in 1958” (2016: 229). The State of the Nation Report (SMCPC 2013) warned that “entrenched inequality and flatlining mobility have been decades in the making”; the report highlights the difficulty and slow progress of breaking the transmission of disadvantage from one generation to the next and, as a result, it is often difficult to judge whether social mobility is increasing or decreasing. However, the report states “If, as seems likely, the recovery sees the trend of the last decade continuing, where the top part of society prospers and the bottom part stagnates, inequalities will grow and the rungs of the social ladder will grow further apart” (2013: 4). The commission believes that social progress can be made by addressing several factors: parental support towards a child’s education; high quality, affordable childcare; high quality schools which focus on closing attainment gaps; accessible routes to work; high quality jobs; decent levels of pay and incentives to find work; and society becoming less unequal over time (SMCPC 2013: 2). Many of these key factors mirror those issues raised in the identification of an underclass and it appears that disadvantage and poverty still strongly shape life chances.

Like social exclusion, the debate often questions who is to blame; is it the fault of the communities or individuals themselves or the responsibility of wider society and political agendas? An editorial in *The Independent* clearly lays the blame with the ‘underclass’, “Generations are being brought up on sink estates mired in welfare dependency, drug abuse and a culture of joblessness. And the majority of children born in such wretched circumstances are simply not making it out later in life. This is not a class problem; it is an underclass problem. And it is the failure of these sections of society to get on that is responsible for the fact that social mobility is in decline” (Independent 2008 cited in Sveinsson 2009). Therefore, the answer is to simply ‘get on’ and take personal responsibility

for their failures but O'Neill (2012) does not agree. He states that the only way to address the inequities of social segregation is to either reduce the background inequalities or reduce the effects that such a background has on an individual's life. O'Neill identifies a trade-off between improving the opportunities of one group, and those of others and therefore "if our aim is to reduce the influence of social background as a driver of positional advantage, it is just as important to reduce the benefits enjoyed at the top as to lessen the disadvantages ensued by those at the bottom" (2012); ultimately a redistribution of wealth.

Bukodi et al. (2014) see social mobility as a matter of great political concern and that this is more so now than at any time previously. However, they also state that research so far which focuses on intergenerational class mobility does not evidence a decline, perhaps due to the less adequate data used to determine mobility trends than previously. Bukodi et al. use a newly constructed dataset that they argue moves the analysis into the twenty-first century; this does not evidence a decline in mobility but does highlight some 'mobility problems'. They find "the experience of absolute upward mobility is becoming less common and that of absolute downward mobility more common; and class-linked inequalities in relative chances of mobility and immobility appear wider than previously thought" (2014: 1-2).

Vernon (2011) highlights Kant's work on an enlightened culture which does not rely on inherited social structures. To be enlightened is to question those holding power over wealth, resources and politics and, as a result, social justice is possible. Most importantly to this debate is the notion that enlightenment allows the individual to take responsibility for their own lives and not be laden with cultural constraints. Depending on the theoretical argument, a failure to receive life's reward is down to either birth (elitist perspective) or you get what you deserve (social mobility) (Vernon 2011). When Blair assumed office in 1997 he declared Britain to be a meritocracy, although as Jones (2011) notes, meritocracy was never intended to describe a desirable society, more a warning of

what could become. Young, who coined the term in 1958, later describes his displeasure at Blair's overuse of the term (2001), he stated that "the poor and the disadvantaged would be done down and they have been ... It is hard indeed in a society that makes so much of merit to be judged as having none". In a true meritocracy, those who are most talented will rise and therefore society would be structured according to 'merit' so whilst society would remain unequal, it would be due to differences in ability over any other factor. As Jones (2011) argues, to have a genuine meritocracy it would require the removal of inherited wealth and private education, not something any mainstream party is likely to endorse. It could also be used to defend the view that those at the bottom do not have the required ability whereas those at the top deserve their place. Adonis and Pollard (1997) argue that "The entire basis of privilege has changed. Money and upbringing are no longer enough. Effort, education and exams – the three 'E's' of modern meritocracy – are the new order, and the prime job of private schools is to convert money into meritocratic success". The question arises regarding talent and ability, for example, does an investment banker or solicitor have more ability than a stay-at-home-mum or artist? Who can legitimately make such judgements? Who determines how merit is defined? Taylor states "The hideous thing about meritocracy is it tells you that if you've given life your all and haven't got to the top you're thick or stupid. Previously, at least, you could always just blame the class system (Taylor cited in Duffy 2004)".

The concept of social mobility, politically and in the media, asserts a pressure that being upwardly mobile is a positive thing and that one should have individual aspirations to achieve more than those before them. The general view is that the search for something better, for ourselves and our families, is a fundamental goal for most, the hope of moving up in one way or another is a common one (Chakrabarti 2014). The pressure to become socially mobile leaves some behind, perhaps this is due to lower ability, upbringing, wealth or any other such characteristics previously raised, but

the question arises – what is wrong with staying put? Previously in Britain, there appeared to be an element of pride, respectability and desirability with belonging to the working class, the roles that members of the working class play in society are valuable and much needed for the society as a whole. Marx's view that the working class had the power to change the world appears to have been diluted. HRH Prince Charles attracted criticism when he stated "In my view, it is just as great an achievement to be a plumber or a bricklayer as it is to be a lawyer or a doctor" (cited in Duffy 2004). Critics commented on the battle between aristocracy versus meritocracy, the privileged as opposed to talented, and an outdated defence of the British class system. Supporters cited HRH Prince Charles work for his Prince's Trust Charity which aims to widen the opportunities for underprivileged young people. Laurison and Friedman (2015) explore the concept of a class ceiling, not only do those from 'lower' class backgrounds get excluded from more elite occupational roles, even if they do manage to break through, they will earn on average £6500 per year less than those from more privileged backgrounds in the same role. They argue that this clearly demonstrates class-based discrimination.

There has been ongoing debate about the state of class for many decades. For example, John Major (1993) portrayed himself as a classless Prime Minister, with a mission to create a classless society where effort and reward enables anyone to rise from any background. His predecessor, Thatcher, stated that class was a communist concept and that it only groups people together and sets them against each other. She wanted to remove the idea that collective action could better people's lives, rather than by individual self-improvement and by "pulling yourself up by your bootstraps" (cited in Pilger 1992: 62). Devine (1997: 204), though, argues that in fact the Conservative Party created heightened class inequalities forming a greater gap between those working in secure roles and those in sub-employment or unemployment. Devine defines a classless society as one "in which people's life chances are achieved through merit, rather than ascribed on the basis of inherited

advantage”, and that people are provided with equal opportunities to compete over the distribution of rewards, alluding to the concept of meritocracy. It is suggested that Britain is less classless and a more class-bound society than it was nearly two decades ago (Devine 1997); many argue that classlessness peaked during industrialisation and has declined ever since (see Pakulski and Waters 1996, Mortimore and Robinson 2003). To state that Britain is now classless implies that one’s chance of success in society is no longer determined by their social class, a view that is clearly flawed given earlier arguments. Social class only exists due to class struggles therefore, with no struggle there would be no class system and no inequality (Pakulski and Waters 1996, Levitas 1996). Mount (2004) suggests measuring classlessness in terms of economic equality, lifestyle and opportunity. A classless society would be economically equal; given the widening gap between the rich and poor, we know this not to be true. Can class be measured in terms of lifestyle? Mount argues that many of the class markers have diminished, they still exist although less obvious. However, one of the most obvious demarcations is in the form of housing, specifically council estates, labelled by Hanley as “class ghettos” (2007; 163). Finally, classlessness would suggest that there is equal opportunity for all, a meritocracy, the mere suggestion of which would anger many people from working class backgrounds.

Mortimore and Robinson (2003) suggest that there has been a loss to the rigidly structured class basis in society and as a result perceived class divisions have weakened, although the importance and prevalence of class has not. Whilst Britain has not become classless, more likely realigned, due to the ‘flattening’ of class structures but representations of class have been ‘stretched’ between two extremes. These extremes can once again be exemplified in programming. In one night BBC2 broadcast *Posh People*, whilst Channel 4 aired a new series of *Skint*. As Anthony (2014) stated “On the one hand we saw a group of elegantly dressed people living a charmed life of champagne parties in exclusive clubs and stately homes and on the other an underclass of the workless and the



uneducated scraping an existence on benefits, crime and prostitution... They also suggest separate and static social blocks – the one impenetrable; the other inescapable”. He argues that these two alleged realities make a mockery of those who argue that Britain is now classless. In fact, these two shows do not present reality for many; they are the extreme, but heighten the growing sense of class friction and anxiety.

#### **2.3.4 Whiteness**

*“White people are neither literally nor symbolically white. We are not the colour of snow or bleached linen, nor are we uniquely virtuous and pure.” (Dyer 1997: 42)*

As with social class and many other social science areas, there is a lack of clarity around definitions of whiteness, this is due to the diversity of ways in which the term is applied. However, it is important to recognise that despite no clear definition, whiteness is about power and privilege (Garner 2010). Whiteness, as argued by Hartigan (2005: 1), “asserts the obvious and overlooked fact that whites are racially interested and motivated. Whiteness both names and critiques hegemonic beliefs and practices that designate white people as ‘normal’ and racially unmarked”, and as whiteness is claimed to be normalised and universal, above all human, then anything else is deviant (Dyer 1997). Garner (2012) recognises that the norms of whiteness are bound by a code: a set of behaviours that are viewed as constituting respectability. The codes or behaviours of whiteness are embodied by everyday acts such as eating, sleeping and dressing. Warren argues that each of these acts continually make and re-make whiteness, suggesting that they remain invisible to white people, “eluding scrutiny and detection through their apparent normalcy” (2001: 92). However, whiteness is also a paradigm, a way of understanding the social world, and supposes that “white is a position of relative privilege, albeit highly uneven, contingent and situational” (Garner 2012), and continues to construct itself as a privileged racial category (Warren 2001).

We have so far seen how the British white working class are discriminated against on many different fronts, but some argue, they are not discriminated against because of their colour. So the debate is not that whiteness is actually invisible, but that it seems irrelevant to most white people as they do not identify with having a racial or ethnic identity (Clarke and Garner 2010). Other authors argue that race does shape the lives of white people, as Frankenburg (1993: 1) states “In the same way that both men's and women's lives are shaped by their gender, and that both heterosexual and lesbian women's experiences in the world are marked by their sexuality, white people and people of color live racially structured lives. In other words, any system of differentiation shapes those on whom it bestows privilege as well as those it oppresses”. White people are "raced," just as men are "gendered". Whiteness can be viewed from a number of perspectives; it provides structural advantage and race privilege; it is the norm, a viewpoint to which others can be measured and society as a whole; cultural values and behaviours are usually unnamed and unmarked.

Jones (2011: 8) identified that the term ‘working class’ became a taboo concept in the aftermath of Thatcherism but ‘white working class’ became more prevalent in the early twenty-first century. Until this point, inequalities were often seen by politicians and the media in racial terms and Jones argues that the white working class had themselves become a marginalised ethnic minority often presented as being disorientated by multiculturalism and obsessed with defending their cultural identity from mass immigration. “It was ok to hate the white working class because they were themselves a bunch of racist bigots” (2011: 9). Recent attempts to deconstruct the terms ‘white’ and ‘whiteness’ have focused on its dominance and basis of privilege in society. There is a pervasive and ordinariness that orders and provides a common-sense hierarchy complementing class stratification (Beider 2015). This hierarchy may be observed through a cultural or class lens rather than through the perspective of ethnicity. As Sveinsson (2009) asserts that “framing the

disadvantage of the white working class as an ethnic disadvantage rather than class, is what places this group in competition with other minority ethnic groups”, with a history of racism and discrimination, it is a disadvantage to be black regardless of social status, but being white is not.

In some cases, working class whiteness may be construed as ‘extreme’ or ‘hyper-whiteness’ whereas middle class whiteness is ‘ordinary’; it is also used to signify a lack of progress, a belonging in a past time (see Dyer 1997, Beider 2015, Lawler, 2012). There is also the notion of ‘dirty whiteness’ or ‘filthy whites’ associated with the white working class, or the underclass (Nayak 2003). Whiteness is far from invisible but rather hyper visible in terms of media portrayal concerning chavs, the underclass and various forms of poverty porn. This contaminated whiteness often draws upon metaphors of disease, invasion and excessive breeding (Tyler 2008) that are often evoked in white racist responses to immigrants and ethnic minorities and “are mobilised in white middle class accounts of chavs as a means of differentiating their ‘respectable whiteness’ from that of the lower classes” (Nayak 2003: 84). The marginalisation of the working class in terms of overall white identity shows an overlap with the concept of ‘dirty whiteness’ and ‘clean whiteness’ to illustrate the complexity of whiteness and class (Beider 2015). Some argue that whiteness should be separated from the fixed view of race relations given that Britain now presents super-diversity over the more linear view of black and white (Vertovec 2007). Rhodes (2011) argues that using the terms ‘white’ and ‘working class’ together creates a cultural perception and expectation that the white working class are avid supporters of the far-right; this focus reduces the debate to matters of race rather than the many other dimensions previously discussed in this chapter (social equality, social exclusion, poverty, political disconnect, employment, skills etc.).

The BBC’s *White Season* broadcast a series of episodes examining why some white working class communities feel increasingly marginalised. Keating, Controller of BBC Two, said "It's BBC Two's role to reflect contemporary society and this is a timely moment for us to examine the roots of this

debate. The *White Season* is a complex look at how life has changed for the white working class in Britain. It will enable the audience to consider the views and circumstances of people who have a strong point of view and join in the debate” (Keating 2008). The series covered a number of dimensions in the white working class debate, including the notorious *Rivers of Blood* speech by Enoch Powell. Whilst the series intended to look sympathetically at the changes to white working class communities, Jones (2011: 117) argues that “it simply boosted the image of white working class people as race obsessed, BNP voting rump... problems were not portrayed as economic...they were simply portrayed as a minority culture under threat from mass immigration”. The trailer for the series presented a white man’s face coloured by black marker pen until he is camouflaged into the background and the question is raised “Is the white working class becoming invisible” (BBC 2008), perceived by some as once again reducing the wider issues to that of race. The *White Season* sparked widespread debate on the content, but it is also insightful to see how the media dealt with the issues uncovered. Lawler (2012) states that whiteness in England had become a class signifier, the *White Season* did not consider the whiteness of the middle or upper classes but focussed on the combination of class and race perceived only by working class people. That whiteness is often seen as problematic might provide the justification that these problems can be stripped from the white middle class so that they are associated only with the working class.

### **2.3.5 A Disconnected Working Class: A Summary**

The representation and prevalence of the working class voice appears muted; this can be observed from a number of perspectives. Historically, there have been multiple social policies developed which have been aimed at reducing social exclusion in an attempt to reconnect people back to regular society, some of which have had the opposite effect (e.g. ASBOs). Individuals, families and even communities who are socially excluded have a restricted ability to participate in decision-making or political processes. This results in a lack of power and control over their circumstances

and renders them voiceless. Researchers argue that, for many, social exclusion is a temporary state. Coupled with the fluctuations in social mobility, this further demonstrates the fluidity of class position. The literature suggests that social mobility is declining and that the gap between the rich and poor has grown in recent years; some believing that a redistribution of wealth is key to improving equality. Despite politicians stating that everyone has the same opportunities to succeed, this is clearly not the case and attainment can still be somewhat determined by the economic prosperity in to which one is born. There are examples of class-based discrimination in society, unlike other forms of discrimination this is generally accepted. Voicelessness is perpetuated because there is little legal recourse in which to defend oneself (as there would be if discrimination was grounded in gender or racial differences for example).

Previous research recognises a political disconnect, predominantly due to the lack of understanding of the lives of the working class. The majority of politicians, in recent times, are from a more privileged background to many of those they aim to represent and, as a result, a level of mistrust exists. The literature suggests that the working class have little political voice; a disengagement which is often confused with apathy. The differences between politicians and a sizable proportion of the electorate demonstrates that this disconnect is class-based. This review of existing research and literature partially answers RQ3<sup>9</sup> in that a level of voicelessness and disconnect appears to exist. However, the literature alone does not fully explore the absence of voice, leaving some questions requiring further investigation. For example, is there a voice but it is not listened to? Is it ignored? Is there a problem with the communication of a voice? Is the voice unreliable? This thesis seeks to further inform these questions through engagement with stakeholders and members of

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<sup>9</sup> **RQ 3:** Are the working class underrepresented and voiceless? Who speaks for the working class and who actively listens?

the working class. Views will also be obtained to add clarity and understanding to working class perspectives of social exclusion and mobility.

## **2.4 Social Capital as a Policy Solution?**

*“You are the sum total of the people you meet and interact with in the world. Whether it’s your family, peers, or co-workers, the opportunities you have and the things that you learn all come through doors that other people open for you.” (Colby 2012: 205)*

### **2.4.1 Explanations of Social Capital**

In 1997, Tony Blair stated that the government would deal with poverty, but he argued it was more about fatalism and about “how to recreate the bonds of a civic society and community in a way compatible with the far more individualistic nature of modern, economic, social and cultural life” (SEU 2002). He acknowledged that people were becoming detached from society and from citizenship in its widest sense; this view was supported by Giddens (2000) who identified that a culture of social capital might be the solution to social exclusion, cycles of poverty and deprivation. This section will focus on those civic bonds between individuals, groups and communities by exploring the concept and theory of social capital. The different forms of social capital will be outlined from multiple perspectives and consideration will be given to the value of networks, social ties and the impact of trust and reciprocity on individuals, communities and society as a whole.

Previous discussion has highlighted a number of factors that link social capital to societal structures, particularly social exclusion, disengagement from society and limited access to resources and support (see Madanipour 1998, Levitas 1996). The Great British Class Survey (GBCS) introduced cultural and social capital as new variables in the definition of class, the relevance of such variables to people’s lives is explored and the shifting debate demonstrates that it is no longer an economic or occupational model. We have explored the view that the voice of the working class appears to not be adequately represented politically or in mass media, this section seeks to identify theoretical viewpoints as to why this may be the case through a social capital and network lens. Some have

suggested that an underclass exists in Britain and highlight factors which might prevent individuals from escaping, for example lacking social skills (Jencks 1989), being cut off from mainstream society (Clarke 2011, Lister 1998), exclusion from rising living standards (Field 1989, SEU 2002) and inability to participate economically (Bauman 2005). Could an increase in an individual's social capital help to address some of these issues? Perhaps increased social capital and stronger networks will allow the voice of the working class to have a stronger influence and to be better heard.

There is little agreement between theorists to provide a clear definition of social capital, and this may stem from its origins within a variety of disciplines. The central idea is that social interactions are a valuable asset and, like other forms of capital, investment should yield a decent return. It recognises that relationships between neighbours, colleagues, friends, even casual acquaintances, have value for the individual and for society as a whole. Researchers and theorists have linked social capital to increased levels of health (Poland and Wakefield 2004, Kawachi et al. 1997, Flynn 1989, Cattell 2001), happiness and well-being (Argyle 1989, Ornish 1999), reduction in crime (Sampson and Laub 1993), greater educational achievement (Gesthuizen, van der Meer and Scheepers 2008), financial/economic benefits (Halpern 2008, Putnam 2000) and enhancing political participation (Putnam 1993a, Hall 1999). It is important to differentiate between social capital as both a concept and a theory; the former represents investment in resources of value in society and the latter as the process by which capital is utilised for some form of return.

The notion of social capital has been discussed over centuries, arguably dating as far back as Aristotle. Many credit the work of de Tocqueville (1831) for discussing the concept of social capital although not for the origination of the term (see Navarro 2002, Halpern 2005). He viewed that the coming together of individuals for a common purpose would help to overcome selfish desires therefore creating a vibrant, politically active society. As Kaplan (2005) acknowledges, de Tocqueville criticised individualism, the opposite of civic duty which "causes each citizen to isolate



himself from the mass of his fellows and to withdraw into the circle of family and friends ... with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look for itself", this is in stark contrast with Thatcher's earlier mentioned views on individual accountability. Many parallels can also be drawn between modern definitions of social capital and the work of Durkheim in the late nineteenth century. He observed that the behaviour of individuals could not be understood in isolation from the characteristics of the community and the relationships in which they were embedded. Durkheim stated "a nation can be maintained only if, between the state and the individual, there is interposed a whole series of secondary groups near enough to the individuals to attract them strongly in their sphere of action and drag them, in this way, into the general torrent of social life" (1893: 28). His research focused on suicide and, although thought of as an individualistic act, he found that suicide was far more common in societies where social bonds were loose and dislocated and far less common in societies with high levels of cohesion and solidarity.

The term 'social capital' was first identified by Hanifan (1916: 130), he placed the school as the centre of the community. He stated "the tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit". Hanifan took this further by adding "The individual is helpless socially if left to himself... The community as a whole will benefit by the cooperation of all its parts" (1916:130). Following Hanifan's identification of the term, social capital was rarely discussed again until the 1980s. However, many credit the work of Jacobs (1961), Young and Wilmott (1957) and Gans (1962) as important milestones in the development of the concept; studies which continue Hanifan's work on place-based relationships and community competence (Cottrell 1976).

The use of the term increased amongst academics and researchers when Putnam published his seminal text *Bowling Alone* (2000). He is generally credited with popularising the concept and highlighting its implications for government. Putnam (2000:20) stated simply that “our lives are made more productive by our social ties”. The greater our social ties and networks, the more enriched our lives become. A lengthier definition of social capital is given in an earlier article: “Features of social life – networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives ... Social capital, in short, refers to social connections and the attendant norms and trust” (1995: 664-665). Putnam's first large-scale study concerned the role of civic engagement in generating political stability and prosperity in Italy. He then turned his attention to the decline of social capital in the USA, arguing "kids today just aren't joiners" (2000:15). The post-war baby boom had created a far younger population and he identifies that civic responsibility rarely begins until middle age; he also noted the rise of television and electronic entertainment were the main culprits in its demise. *Bowling Alone* (2000) presents empirical evidence for the decline, though the data analysed was not originally collected for the purpose of measuring social capital. Limitations aside for the time being, the findings represent a definite shift in behaviours since the 1940s; this may be due to change in the way social capital is gathered rather than a decline. Putnam appeared to demonstrate strong correlations with economic prosperity, stable governance and social cohesion (1993, 1995, 2001) and suggested that social capital would enable co-operation and mutually supportive relations in communities and nations and would therefore be a valuable means of opposing many of the social disorders inherent in modern societies; mirroring the view of later policymakers.

Prior to Putnam's work, an older concept of social capital existed, developed by Bourdieu. He defines social capital as "the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of

mutual acquaintance and recognition" (1992:119). The emphasis is placed on two elements: the social relationship that gives individuals access to resources through contacts, and the value and quality of those resources. Bourdieu's concept stems from his own theoretical ideas on class and places emphasis on conflict and power, his research informed the earlier mentioned GBCS designed by Savage et al (2013). Bourdieu sought to separate out the narrow band of practices that were socially recognised as economics and divided capital into three areas: economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. Some argue that Bourdieu views social capital as an asset of the privileged, ignoring the idea that the less privileged might also find benefit in social ties other than to exclude them from opportunities to enhance themselves (see Field 2008, Gilchrist: 2009).

Coleman (1988) aimed to demonstrate that social capital was not limited to the powerful but could also convey real benefits to poor and marginalized communities, and that the norms embedded in these community networks could counteract possible disadvantages associated with socio-economic background. Coleman further developed the notion of social capital, linking back to Hanifan's original definition, in the context of education. He stresses the importance of intimate social capital; larger comprehensive schools lack the social capital that can be found in smaller schools. Coleman believed that social capital was not grounded in one area of study but covered a broad range and states that, like any other form of capital, it is "productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible" (1988: 598). He also talks of the decline in community neighbourhoods, blaming "the growth in transportation, which allows the separation of work and residence, and secondarily because of the movement of women in the labor force which removes much of the foundation of community based associations" (1990:350); this point will be revisited. Fukuyama refutes previous definitions of social capital in that they refer to manifestations of social capital rather than to social capital itself, and offers his own definition that "social capital is an instantiated informal norm that promotes co-operation between two or

more individuals” (2001: 7). His work focuses predominantly on trust and highlights the similarities between countries which are economically successful having high levels of trust (USA, Japan) with those less economically developed who present lower levels of trust between strangers (Russia, most of Africa) although recent economic pressures and changes to the global environment may challenge this view.

Coleman (1988: S102) identifies three factors in social capital: obligations, expectations and trustworthiness; information channels; and norms and effective sanctions. He explains the first form stating “If A does something for B and trusts B to reciprocate in the future, this establishes an expectation in A and an obligation on the part of B”, a certain level of trust is essential for this to become a mutually agreeable transaction. The second form recognises the importance of information and identifies that the acquisition of information can prove to be costly both economically and through time. A person may choose to keep up to date with current affairs through discussions with a friend or relation rather than investing time in reading the newspaper, thus utilising social relations as a form of social capital to provide valuable information, if somewhat unreliable and biased. Finally, Coleman outlines norms and effective sanctions stating “effective norms can constitute a powerful form of social capital” (1998: S105). A community with strong norms and sanctions may also serve as a constraint to some actions for example; criminals may be deterred by neighbourhood watch schemes or other informal community policing methods. However, this may also prevent individuals straying from the norms to pursue a different activity which can result in imposed sanctions on them, even if it might be for the individual’s greater good. Halpern (2008:10) defines the subsections differently: they consist of a network, a cluster of norms shared by group members and sanctions that help to maintain the norms and network. Using the example of a local community, he explores these three components. Our neighbours form our social network regardless of the depth of the relationship from a polite hello, to frequent visits to

exchange support. The boundaries may be geographically well-defined or far less distinct. The social norms are the (usually) unwritten rules and values that characterise the community members and, in the modern day, may include such things as parking vehicles in appropriate spaces or even looking out for each other's children. The final component, sanctions, determine the punishments or rewards on members of the community to maintain the network and norms; usually informal sanctions could exist in the form of gossip, reputation or for more positive reinforcement through direct praise. Halpern's distinctions fail to capture the nature of trust and information channels, however the notion of norms and sanctions are the same as those identified by Putnam's (1995: 664) "networks, norms and trust" and, as earlier discussed, by Coleman. The common distinctions of norms and sanctions could be a factor which restricts the influence the working class and their ability to have a voice; especially if 'speaking out' is not the normal activity with that community.

Theories and definitions of social capital have been adapted to fit a variety of different disciplines and frameworks and this dilution of the term can reduce its value as an analytical concept (Middleton et al 2005). Portes (1998: 2) states that "the original meaning of the term and its heuristic value are being put to severe tests by these increasingly diverse applications. As in the case of those earlier concepts, the point is approaching at which social capital comes to be applied to so many events and in so many different contexts as to lose any distinct meaning". Portes also argues that definitions of social capital render analysis impossible because it usually appears whenever a good outcome is observed, and, as a rhetorical device, one can see why this is effective. Fine (2001: 155) takes this view further, stating that social capital is a "totally chaotic, ambiguous, and general category that can be used as a notional umbrella for almost any purpose".

Hanifan's definition looked at the everyday habits of friendship, informal social norms and common civility whereas Bourdieu shifted the emphasis on to material benefits of social networks for individuals. Putnam included both norms and networks but in later work focused on social

networks and cooperation, a contrast to Bourdieu's "colder more privatised definition" (Halpern 2005:10). The concept itself existed prior to the identification of the term and more recent authors have sought to refocus its application in the modern world. The intangible nature of social capital may be seen to add to this diversity of application, whilst other forms of capital are more easily presented. Economic capital can be seen in the bank balance whereas to possess social capital, a person must be related to others, and it is those others who are the actual source of advantage (Portes 1998). Social capital, unlike other forms of capital, is not the property of individuals or organisations.

#### **2.4.2 Bonding, Bridging and Linking**

Putnam (2000:22) makes the distinction between bridging and bonding as forms of social capital. He determines bridging as inclusive and outward-looking, encompassing people across a diverse range, likening this to the civil rights movement. Bridging can occur between people who have less in common but may have overlapping interests such as neighbours, colleagues or community groups. He defines bonding as exclusive, and states that some forms of social capital tend to look inward and reinforce homogeneous groups giving the example of church-based women's reading groups. Gittell and Vidal (1998:15) define bonding simply as bringing together people who already know each other and bridging as bringing together people who do not. This simple definition has its flaws in that bonding can occur between people who have not previously met yet hold similarities not common across the general population; an example of this might be a mother and baby club, whereby the members have not met before but are allowed entry to the exclusive group. Bonding commonly occurs between people with strong mutual commitments, for example family, friends and close-knit groups. It is also found in marginalised groups as a form of solidarity, a point revisited later. De Souza Briggs (1998) explains that bonding social capital is good for "getting by" but bridging is crucial for "getting ahead". Much of the literature, Putnam included, emphasises the

positive nature of bridging and the drawbacks of bonding social capital, however, it would be unwise to suggest that either type is inferior, as there may well be a place for both. The distinction between the two can also appear unclear, and so the terms should not be considered as mutually exclusive. The above-mentioned mother and baby group might only be for mothers and their children but could represent many other cultural, class and age divisions within society.

Williams asks “What is so wrong with having deep relationships with other individuals rather than fleeting acquaintances? And why seek to develop only loose ties between people rather than deeper bonds?” (2005:261). The answer may be that bonding groups might find themselves isolated and unconnected from the rest of society without the presence of bridging social capital; this can be exemplified by the earlier discussion of social exclusion. Durkheim (1893) presented the concept of social solidarity to identify the relationships between individuals. He distinguished between two forms of solidarity: ‘mechanical’, in which people feel connected to other individuals who share similar characteristics and beliefs, all know their place and position in society. ‘Organic’ solidarity then refers to the interdependence between individuals, relying on others to perform economic functions that they themselves cannot perform, thus characterised by a complex division of labour (Sammut 2011). In making this distinction, Durkheim recognises not only those connections we intentionally make but also those in which we rely on, have limited knowledge of, or whose existence we make assumptions about..

Hall (1999) makes the link between social capital and class. He recognises the deep divisions in the connections that different classes have on the community and notes that middle class people tend to have more connections with voluntary and civic associations whereas the working class have higher levels of informal sociability, although the measurement of informal social capital is problematic. Goldthorpe (1980) agreed with this point, and his research found that fifty-two percent of the middle class were members of an organisation compared with nineteen percent of

the working class, of which trade union and social club membership dominated. Given the decline in union membership and number of social clubs since Goldthorpe's research, this figure is likely to have reduced considerably. He also established that those higher in the class structure had more frequent membership lasting a shorter time, but for the working class, the opposite was true. The connection between bonding social capital and the working class and bridging with the middle class was affirmed by Hall (1999: 438) who stated "the patterns of informal sociability of the working class are more likely to revolve around close contacts with kin and a small set of closely connected friends... by contrast, the social networks of the middle class tend to be more extensive and diverse". Hall acknowledges that there are significant variations inside each class and that research often contradicts assertions that the working class suffers from a lack of social connections; the patterns that the two classes display are quite different. Strong relationships or bonding social capital can stifle development, as Florida states "relationships can get so strong that the community becomes complacent and insulated from outside information and challenges" (2002: 1). This can further the social exclusion of certain sections of society and marginalise those unable to participate in wider activities as explored earlier with Bauman's (2005) concept of "flawed consumers".

In addition to Putnam's bonding and bridging distinctions, Woolcock (1998) identifies a third dimension of social capital, namely 'linking'. He refers to bonding and bridging as horizontal and refers to linking as the vertical relationships that exist up and down the social and economic scale. He argues that linking social capital is important in that it allows people to leverage resources and ideas and information from contacts outside of their own social milieu. Gilchrist (2009: 12) clarifies this further by focusing on the links between people or organisations beyond the normal peer boundaries, cutting across status and similarity and enabling people to gain influence and resources that would not ordinarily be made available to them. It is this linking social capital which arguably



increases one's prospects for social mobility by reaching up to those in higher positions to gain privileged access. If the general view is that social mobility is decreasing (see Milburn 2015, Harrison 2013), then the absence of linking social capital may contribute to its decline. The widening gap between the top section of society and the stagnant bottom could be the result of a deficit of linking social capital amongst the 'lower' classes. Those born with the ability to succeed are stifled by the lack of connections which link them to higher resources, a failure in the concept of meritocracy.

### **2.4.3 The Strength of Ties and Networks**

*"You take away my employment, you take away my ability to network, you take away my ability to build on my own social networks cos a lot of them derive from the other. So, if you have a high concentration of people with no work then you have less social capital because you have less networks."* (Roger, Stakeholder)

Granovetter (1973) makes the distinction between the strength of network ties, identifying weak ties as the general acquaintances and contacts we make throughout our daily lives. Strong ties are those we have with family and close friends who provide a more intense level of emotional support. Granovetter claims that there is an apparent lack within "sociological theory [in] that it does not relate micro-level interactions to macro-level patterns in any convincing way" (1973: 2). He argues that the smaller interactions between individuals are translated into larger scale patterns which then, in turn, influence other smaller groups. Whilst strong ties are essential for a person's well-being, it is the weak ties which allow them to move forward. Granovetter (1983) conducted research into how people acquired employment, his evidence suggesting that strong ties helped in organisations who employ family members but the weak ties were instrumental in acquiring roles in new fields. As someone moves into a new field of work, they take with them the previous contacts they hold, creating a link between the organisations thus increasing the web of networks

and arguably increasing social cohesion. It is understandable that Somerville (2011) has paired terms (see Table 3), strong ties with close relations represent the exclusive nature of bonding. The barriers to entry within the group are set high and members are protective of the group's interests; it is likely that members share similar characteristics, beliefs and views. Weak ties are those that encourage bridging between groups and networks, the inclusive nature creates lower barriers to entry and is likely to represent a greater diversity of participants. An individual would need examples of both to fulfil their needs, which may include economic, health and emotional requirements. If we take the previous example of a mother and baby group, though exclusive by definition, they may call upon other sources of support such as the services of a Health Visitor, Counsellor or Solicitor. Other similar groups may join them so together they can promote a fund raising initiative, and mothers within the group may utilise the weak ties they hold with external contacts to assist other mothers to resolve a variety of issues. Pahl and Spencer (1997: 102 cited in Field 2008: 77) relate the different types of social capital to an individual's life course. They suggest that close ties (bonding) are crucial in providing physical and mental support during the early years and in old age, while looser ties (bridging) can provide useful resources when negotiating the challenges of adult life. Therefore, having access to different types of social capital can prove useful throughout different points in one's life to improve the quality of life.

The term 'network' has numerous meanings and definitions dependent upon the discipline in which it is being used. Gilchrist (2009:48) distinguishes networks from other organisations stating "essential characteristics of networks are a web of lateral connections and avoidance of formal bureaucratic structures". The general premise that social capital is network-based is recognised by many authors who contribute to the debate (see Bourdieu 1990, Burt 1992, Putnam 2000, Lin 1999). Gilchrist further clarifies networks as being casual without formal roles and involves voluntary membership of which cooperation of members relies on trust rather than legitimate

contracts. The boundaries and barriers of any network are fluid and constantly shifting and members may find themselves in networks either intentionally or by chance. An organised group has common aims, interdependent roles and a distinctive sub-culture whereas, in a network, only some of the individuals have any form of social relationship with each other. In her research, Bott found that there was a considerable variation in the 'connectedness' of the networks, "the extent to which the people known by a family know and meet one another independently of the family" (1971: 59). Although networks have always existed in some form, closer attention has been placed academically in the last century and more recently with the rapid increase in online networks. Early attempts at comprehending networks refer to the Gestalt approach to human psychology, seeking understanding through the more holistic view of studying the social landscape to explain individual behaviour. This can be linked back to Hanifan's earlier claim that "the individual is helpless socially if left to himself ..." (1916:130), thus implying that networks are an essential requirement to one's well-being and that a greater understanding of an individual's network should provide an insight into individual behaviours. Morgan suggests that networks should not be seen as 'things' but as 'potentialities', "to be used and mobilized when the occasion arises" (1996: 32).

Mulgan (2004) revives the word *connexity* to emphasise the importance of connections and relationships within local communities and the wider society, "the growing connectedness of the world is the most important social and economic fact of our times". He explores our mutual interdependence and interactions that shape the modern world and how our local actions can affect others unbeknown to us. Despite the differing definitions and disciplines, there is a widespread agreement on the significance of networks and the general understanding that norms and information flows are seen as essential features of functioning networks (Baron et al 2000). Paxton and Moody argue that, although there is a large growth in literature on social capital and social networks, there is a distinct lack of synthesis between the two terms. They state "that the

lack of connection between the literatures is regrettable because their combined theories and methods create a prism through which we can better see social life” (2009: 1611). However, it is clear to see the commonalities of the terms in that ‘norms and information flows/channels’ are discussed within both concepts and there is a high degree of overlap in the literature. The link appears even closer when considering what Scott labels as relational data, “the contacts, ties and connections, the group attachments which relate one agent to another and so cannot be reduced to the properties of the individual agents themselves” (2000: 3). However, Lin advises that “social capital can and needs to be differentiated from social networks ... While social capital is contingent on social networks, they are not equivalent or interchangeable terms” (2005: 4).

Initially, this research aimed to identify the characteristics which make up both informal and formal networks, however the literature defines networks as wholly informal and the more formal connections are termed differently such as groups, organisations or teams (Bott 1971, Gilchrist 2009). Pichler and Wallace (2007: 2) place social networks along with social and family support under the term ‘informal social capital’ and go on to distinguish ‘formal social capital’ as associational behaviour and social trust. This once again emphasises the importance of viewing the terms concurrently.

Function	Type of Social Tie	Effect	Metaphor	Political Community
Bonding (Putnam 2000)	Strong, horizontal (Granovetter 1973)	'Getting by' (Survival) (de Souza Briggs 1998)	Social glue (Putnam 2000)	Communitarianism (Somerville 2011)
Bridging (Putnam 2000)	Weak, horizontal (Granovetter 1973)	'Getting on' (cohesion) (de Souza Briggs 1998)	Social oil (Putnam 2000)	Cosmopolitanism (Somerville 2011)
Linking (Woolcock 1998)	On-off, vertical (Somerville 2011)	'Getting up' (empowerment) (Gilchrist 2009)	Social grease (Woolcock 1998)	Participationism (Somerville 2011)

**Table 3: Functions of Social Capital (adapted from Somerville 2011: 57)**

Table 3 demonstrates the dimensions of social capital and identifies the levels of strong and weak ties which links with the political communities determined by Somerville. Communities in urban areas with lower incomes are often neglected by social networks that provide information about job opportunities or groups that enable career mobility (Loury 1977). Researchers note that this disadvantage can transmit across generations (see Kiernan 1996, Aldridge 2001), as an individual's access to social capital depends to some extent on the total resources of the family in which they grew up. For example, a wealthy family can provide access to networks which would not be accessible to those without the means, such as private school. Halpern (2008: 252) states that "the parents' endowment of social capital, in terms of their networks and expectations, also forms an important inheritance for the child and young adult". This class-based inheritance of social capital and network ties demonstrates the transmission of advantage or disadvantage across generations. Hanley defines "the wall in the head" (2007: 149) as the knowledge of what is out there beyond 'the wall' is based upon what you can establish from the lives of the people you know, which normally means your immediate friends and family. If your family and friends all live in the same circumstances on the same estate, there is little you can do to break down 'the wall'. Those with

more links outside will experience additional opportunities for work, education and generally greater levels of social capital. It is more important for those in the 'lower' classes as chances for social mobility depend upon it, as do chances of avoiding social exclusion. As discussed in an earlier section, social exclusion incorporates several factors such as educational failure, family breakdown, lack of regular employment, personal debt and poor health. These factors all contribute to weakened ties and lower levels of bridging social capital. The more years an individual has had in education, the greater their social networks (Hall 1999), employment provides access to additional networks not found in the home (Putnam 2000) and good health and greater disposable income provide the ability to engage in wider social opportunities.

#### **2.4.4 Reciprocity and Trust**

*"Someone will always help you out, you know that you can rely your neighbours. It's just what people like us do". (Mick, Participant)*

Some researchers believe that social capital can be measured by the amount of trust and reciprocity in a community or between individuals. "A society that relies on generalised reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society, for the same reason that money is more efficient than barter... Trustworthiness lubricates social life" (Putnam 2000: 21). Specific reciprocity refers to the immediate exchange of a favour - for example, mowing a neighbour's lawn in return for them washing your car. Generalised reciprocity holds looser conditions, the exchange is not immediate, "Each individual act in a system of reciprocity is usually characterised by a combination of what one might call short term altruism and long term self-interest: I help you out now in the (possibly vague, uncertain and uncalculating) expectation that you will help me out in the future" (Taylor 1982: 28-29). An example of which could be the payment of National Insurance for the provision of future health care.

It is challenging to find a universally accepted definition of trust; however, Rousseau et al defines trust, following a cross-discipline review of many papers, as “... a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another” (1998: 395). The subject of trust is a well-researched area and a topic in its own right, for that reason this review will focus on trust in its relation to social capital rather than the wider arena. The majority of theorists’ state trust is a key component of social capital (Putnam 2000, Coleman 1988, Lin 2005) but Fukuyama goes further to state that trust is essential to the formation of social capital and “the ability of people to work together for common purpose in groups and organisations... communities depend on mutual trust and will not arise spontaneously without it” (1995: 26). Newton ratifies this, stating “social life without trust would be intolerable and, most likely, quite impossible” (2001: 202). It has been argued that social capital can be difficult to form because it is based upon ethics, norms and trust. As levels of trust increase so does social capital; consequently, once formed it becomes very difficult to destroy. For communities, trust is a complicated process, requiring respect and a collective accountability on the part of leaders, partners and participants (Purdue 2001).

Participation in community life takes many forms and is shaped by differing motivations; when discussing social trust, many refer to voluntary involvement in associations as this does not form part of our normal working lives. As Newton (2001) identifies, we are born into our families, most have to work and we cannot avoid the powers in our country. One can choose to be involved in a voluntary association such as a sports club or music group, in these groups we demonstrate our trust and retain a balance of reciprocity over time (Gilchrist 2009). Often these groups involve a diverse representation of the population linking back to the earlier mentioned forms of bonding, bridging and linking. The term ‘generalised trust’ refers to the notion that individuals generally trust each other regardless of differences in age, class, gender, race and ethnicity however most studies

show that diversity in race and ethnicity drives down trust and it seems that generalised trust is created neither in voluntary associations nor in more informal settings such as neighbourhoods (Vårheim et al: 2008). Fukuyama credits Harrison (1985) in identifying the term 'radius of trust'; something that all groups embodying social capital will possess, that is "the circle of people among whom co-operative norms are operative" (Fukuyama 2001: 8). In some cases, the radius of trust could be larger than the group itself if the effect of their social capital extends beyond the group's boundaries, though it could also be smaller if sub-groups are evident. Fukuyama noted that "In-group solidarity reduces the ability of a group's members to co-operate with outsiders, and often imposes negative externalities on the latter" (2001: 9). Those with a narrow radius of trust are not likely to possess many of the weak ties that Granovetter (1973) highlights as essential for moving on.

The possibility that social capital can lead to undesirable behaviour is not as frequently cited as the many who emphasise the positive outcomes of social capital. Field (2008) suggests the negative consequences can be explored in two respects. Firstly, the possibility that social capital can reinforce inequality. Secondly, that social capital can support anti-social behaviour. Durlauf (1999: 2) states that behaviours which enforce "differential treatments of insiders and outsiders to a community are intimately linked to the nature of social capital". Strong group ties require members to think in terms of groups and as a result, such a mind-set can spread to other aspects of the group's behaviour, for example favouring certain characteristics during hiring, or selecting a residential neighbourhood. This can be linked to Putnam's concept of bonding, in that its value lies in creating strong in-group loyalty but, consequently, it can create antagonism towards those outside of the group and in wider society. Putnam (2000) acknowledges that bonding is beneficial to the self-interest of the individual or small group, but identifies bridging as necessary to build a collective identity as a nation. The 'dark side' of social capital is explored by Fukuyama (2001) who



recognised the negative effect of social capital on some communities and the wider nation. The issue raised concerning bonding, in that groups might achieve internal cohesion but at the expense of outsiders, can be treated with “suspicion, hostility or outright hatred” (2001: 8). Fukuyama makes reference to the Ku Klux Klan and the Mafia, both of whom achieve co-operative ends on the basis of shared norms, and therefore have social capital, but they also cause many negative effects for the larger society in which they are embedded. Other examples of negative groups bonded by social capital include criminal gangs, terrorist cells and paedophile rings. Group solidarity in human communities is often achieved at the price of hostility towards outsiders. There appears to be a natural human inclination for dividing the world into friends and enemies; this can be seen in the lines drawn between different social classes.

#### **2.4.5 Cultural Capital**

The Great British Class Survey introduced culture as a new variable in the measurement and characterisation of social class (Savage 2015). In addition to social capital, researchers and academics have explored the concept of cultural capital for several decades prior to this. The term originates from the research of Bourdieu (1986) who recognised that some types of cultural tastes enjoy more status than others but that this should not be confused with economic power. Cultural capital can, to some extent, operate independently of wealth, and can even compensate for lack of money as part of a group’s strategy to pursue power and status (see Jenkins 1992, Robbins 2000). However, it is argued that Bourdieu was influenced by Marxist sociology and that economic capital is at the root of all other types of capital (Field 2008), yet it could be combined with other forms of capital to create and reproduce inequality. Bourdieu (1986) adopted the concept of cultural capital originally in order to explain the unequal academic achievement of children from different social classes. He recognised that some groups were able to ensure children optimised their education by pursuing ‘cultural investment strategies’.

Bourdieu (1986) recognised three types of cultural capital, the first being 'embodied' capital. This refers to the knowledge that is acquired and inherited through culture and tradition. Embodied cultural capital is acquired over time as it is based upon the person's habitus (explored in a later section), which then permits greater receptiveness to similar cultural influences. The second is referred to as 'objectified' cultural capital, this can be someone's property, such as art or music, which has the potential to be sold for economic profit. In order to consume the art, one has to possess the conceptual and historic foundations of prior cultural capital, therefore the value of the art is irrelevant yet the significance is important. The third form is referred to as 'institutional' cultural capital, and relates to the formal recognition of a person's cultural capital, for example, academic qualifications or professional certifications. The general claim made by Bourdieu was that certain kinds of culture have the prospect of generating social advantage. He used the term 'legitimate culture' to identify activities which are respectable and socially approved, such as classical music and visual arts. Such legitimate culture encourages those who engage in it to appreciate the abstract nature, and as Savage (2015) suggests, this goes hand in hand with a sense of entitlement and authority. Bourdieu's study in France highlighted the major cultural divisions between 'intellectuals' and the 'popular classes' (1984), the working classes avoided overly artistic activities whereas the well-educated were drawn to such activities therefore demonstrating their status and power. He also explored the concept of taste, comparing 'industrialists' who spend lavishly on holidays and cars with 'intellectuals' who acquired more tasteful antiques. Such distinctions feature in the GBCS design, specifically when drawing upon 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow' culture. Savage (2015) argues that highbrow culture is more accessible now than during Bourdieu's research in the 1960's, there are more attempts to force greater engagement in highbrow cultural activities, and cultural engagement is generational: therefore, cultural capital has changed its form. The GBCS attempted to map cultural capital by identifying cultural oppositions such as disliking jazz and going to arts clubs, not going to restaurants and going to art galleries. The cultural oppositions

highlighted that those with lowbrow tastes were less likely to be engaging in social activities in the public realm, the more legitimate highbrow activities are an indication the social pressures and stereotypes in society. Ultimately, the GBCS found that cultural capital correlated with income level and educational attainment, and concluded that cultural divisions do map on to fundamental social divisions (Savage 2015: 106).

The three main forms of capital: economic, social and cultural, are relational and therefore inseparable argues Bourdieu. He was interested in the ways in which the three types of capital together distinguish “the major classes of existence... which give rise to secondary differences on the basis of different distributions of their total capital among the different types of capital (1986: 114). Field expands on this view by suggesting that those who are relatively high on financial and social capital also tend to be high on cultural capital, meaning that they are generally more engaged with other people who are themselves well connected and possess a similar level of legitimate culture (2008: 83). Like social capital, it has proven very difficult to measure and assess by many researchers and academics. The theory has also been criticised due to a lack of conceptual clarity leading to research applying the concept in different ways, and reaching different conclusions (Sullivan 2002). The transmission of cultural capital, particularly what Bourdieu (1986) terms ‘embodied’ culture, raises questions on the differences in social class. For example, more disadvantaged classes with little access to highbrow culture may still have educational values and therefore some relevant cultural resources exist. Education providers may counter family influences in the creation and transmission of cultural capital (Goldthorpe 2007). However, Bourdieu argues that working class failure in schools, if measured by exam success, is the fault of the education system not working class culture, and that the perceived superiority of those in higher classes is incorrect (1986). Cultural capital theory does not see working class culture as

inferior, it just sees it as different to middle class culture. The success of those in the middle and upper classes is as a result of them being able to define their own culture as superior.

#### **2.4.6 Social Capital: A Summary**

In summary, the importance of social capital and its relation to class position is growing both in social policy and in literature. Whilst there is no clear, agreed definition, there is a general understanding regarding the value of social capital, particularly as a concept which helps to improve understanding of, and suggest solutions to societal problems. The different forms of social capital and networks can demonstrate the constraints in helping to move society forward. The potential problem of strong ties and predominantly bonding social capital will place restrictions on an individual's ability to be socially mobile and avoid social exclusion. Having wider networks beyond the boundaries of one's peer group will provide greater support, and ultimately, more opportunities for voices to be heard. Obtaining the optimum balance of types of social capital is important, as the negative aspects can cause restrictions in terms of personal growth and can also reinforce negative behaviour. Trust and reciprocity is important to the survival and well-being of a society. The level of trust matters between those who are close, wider society and ultimately policymakers and politicians. It is evident that there is a lack of trust between the working class and key decision makers in Britain.

Theorists and researchers of social capital make a number of judgements regarding the appropriateness of the various levels and types of social connections. Priority and credibility is often given to bringing/linking social capital and the strength of weak ties, often dismissing the value of bonding social capital and strong ties; the type more frequently experienced by the working class. Many of the key theorists writing about social capital focus on the effect rather than cause, and this results in a deficit of research which focuses on the value of social capital to those in the 'lower' classes in society. Whilst this research makes no attempt to measure social capital or cultural capital

(discussed later), it does seek to investigate the meaning of such connections amongst the working class. Ultimately, the aim is to gain a greater understanding of how such notions of social capital may enable or hinder the ability of the working class to influence wider social policy (RQ4<sup>10</sup>), rather than relying on the perceptions of those who may not fully comprehend the day-to-day lives of those experiencing the effects of such social policy.

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<sup>10</sup> **RQ 4:** Does current social policy in the UK and the notion of social capital enable or hinder the working class to influence wider political structures?

## **2.5 Social Policy for the Working Class**

### **2.5.1 Social Capital and Community**

*“A community is alive when it is poor and its members feel they have to work together and remain united, if only to ensure that they can all eat tomorrow.” (Vanier 1979)*

Many references have been made to ‘community’ in the previous discussion; the concept of community is a well-covered area with much debate over how community is defined and how a community might be identified. Most theories of community generally focus on a common characteristic or bond and often hold expectations of loyalty, support, social cohesion and affirmation (Gilchrist 2009). Day (2006: 24) identifies three core elements of the meaning of community, “a particular way of organising social relationships, a general quality of sociability and mutual regard, and a summons to undertake joint mutual action”. Historically, geographical dimensions were used to define community, such as a residential area, town or estate and locality was seen as an important dimension to people’s identity (Frankenburg 1966). Many studies have however, demonstrated that social networks extend beyond geographical boundaries which may be based upon faith, hobbies, workplace and dispersed family connections (see Webber 1963, Wellman 1979, Cohen 1985). Often communities are regarded as actively constructed by members and not just arising from local circumstances. Glass (1944 cited in Byrne 1999) distinguished between neighbourhoods, which were simply people living in an area and experiencing the same things, from communities which were mindful of the commonality which derived from common spatial experience and were willing to act communally. This view is furthered by Meegan and Mitchell (2001) who recognise that much of the research on poverty and deprivation focusses on

statistical analysis of wards and the ACORN<sup>11</sup> postcode classification of socioeconomic groups. However, there is obviously more to a neighbourhood than such statistical measures would suggest, which highlights the reoccurring issue of forming policy on potentially flawed definitions.

McCloud (2013) observed that knowing your neighbours makes you happier, because you feel more connected. It is essential to humans not to be isolated and that meaningful relationships improve mental health. Many anthropological researchers show that community-type organisation is a feature of human society and that we share an inherent sociability and willingness to connect and cooperate. Blundel (2004:2) stated that humans are social beings, explaining that “in a complex technological world, our quality of life, even basic survival, depends on countless successful interactions with other people, mediated through markets, networks and various kinds of organisations. Without these intricate and largely unseen webs of communication, our economic prosperity, social welfare and cultural life would be undermined”. Although the concept of community as social capital is sometimes disputed (Taylor 2003), community does appear to represent a significant collective resource. The Commission for Social Justice stated that “we badly need to mend a social fabric that is so obviously torn apart. Social capital is a good in itself; it makes life possible. But social capital is also essential for economic renewal; the two go together ... economic prosperity depends not only on economic but also on social resources” (1994: 308). The argument thus states that to repair the social fabric of marginalised communities, social capital must be rebuilt not just for social cohesion but for economic competitiveness.

The most important aspects of community are the informal networks that exist between people, groups and organisations. Many people get involved in community activities to build new

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<sup>11</sup> For more information, see <http://acorn.caci.co.uk>

relationships and gain a sense of belonging, often utilised during times of struggle to improve the quality of life for them and their families (Williams and Windebank 1995). Several studies have identified the value of community networks in enhancing people's ability to cope with difficulties and in times of crisis, sharing scarce resources is common among communities living in poverty and crucial to the survival of some. Van Vugt, Chang and Hart (2005: 586) note that once people start to identify with their group, their welfare becomes intertwined with the welfare of the group, and people may engage in activities to help the group, even if it would involve making a personal sacrifice. Studies of communities hit by hard times (like long periods of strike action) have shown that stronger social networks recover quicker than those without (see Erikson 1979, Waddington, Wykes and Critcher 1991, Marris 1996). Social capital becomes a resource in the social struggles that are carried out in different social arenas (Siisiäinen 2000:2). Informal conversations within trusting relationships provide information and advice on various matters and as such, community networks act as cheap and user-friendly referral systems (Hornby 1993), supplying help at times of crisis and are often resorted to before professional, often stigmatised, help is requested from appropriate agencies, particularly about embarrassing or risky problems (Gilchrist 2009, Gabarino 1983).

Hanifan's (1916) earlier research highlighted the need for community-led initiatives rather than formal agency interventions, "tell the people what they ought to do, and they will say in effect, 'mind your own business', but help them to discover for themselves what ought to be done and they will not be satisfied until it is done. First the people must get together. Social capital must be accumulated, then community improvements may begin. The more the people do for themselves the larger will community social capital become, and the greater will be the dividends upon the social investment" (1916: 138). In the past, the prefix 'community' has been used to soften the edge of state interventions and agency-led initiatives, implying a partnership approach to services



and welfare delivery to sections of the population in need. Using the term 'community' often refers to people who are disadvantaged by poverty or other such social issues. Some believe that the word is inextricably linked to the British working class, as Levitas (1998) states "we rarely hear about middle class communities ... this is true for many social inclusion strategies".

Gilchrist (2009) identifies 'badges of belonging', the conventions and customs about the way people live their lives that reinforce community boundaries and helps to identify friends and allies, such as, hairstyles, dress codes, language and patterns of behaviour. Taylor (2003) argues that community has a downside, and informal networks can be notoriously private and opaque. Not all relationships are positive, either to the individual or to society, and can seem oppressive at times. Such 'badges of belonging' can become dominant norms which may become damaging to the confidence and identity of anyone who deviates from these defined standards of acceptable behaviour, resulting in a pretence to conform or are ostracised, as explored earlier. Peer pressure can hold people back; the influence of friends, neighbours and colleagues' beliefs and behaviours can sometimes go against their own better judgement. Gilchrist (2009) makes the comparison to criminal or paedophile rings who justify their actions only by comparison to other network members rather than against wider societal norms. Communities that are closed to outside influence and scrutiny may become stagnant and isolated from the rest of society and such communities often include individuals with unofficial power which becomes difficult to challenge.

Bourdieu (1990) makes the distinction between habitus and field; the former refers to the balances between informality and formality which form the basis of a community in its active sense, the latter being organised roles and institutions. This relationship between habitus and field is primarily driven by social class and secondarily in terms of culture, therefore Bourdieu sees a community as class-based. Habitus refers to the relationships which exist between individuals and how they respond to social structures in society (Hillier and Rooksby 2002); it is socially constructed, attitudes

are learned and socialised, and thus are reproduced over time. It is the interaction with authority, power and government that makes habitus a potent force within society (Beider 2011).

### **2.5.2 Social Capital as Policy**

Social capital is one of the few scholarly debates that has entered mainstream politics in that it focuses on issues that also engage policymakers (Field 2008). Social policies are concerned with “the right ordering of the network of relationships between men and women who live together in societies” (Macbeath 1957); high levels of social capital appear to correlate with several core policy goals around improving health, reducing crime, increasing educational performance and economic regeneration. Given the evidence linking social capital and networks to these policy outcomes, it could be seen as an obvious approach for the government to support interventions, which strengthen these networks and increase trust (Putnam 1993, Halpern 2008). Increasingly, social networks are recognised as crucial to the capacity of communities to participate in, and even deliver government initiatives (Taylor 2003). Blair’s aim of recreating the bonds of civic society to reduce poverty (SEU 2002) and Giddens’ proposed solution to social exclusion, cycles of poverty and deprivation with a culture of social capital (2000) both suggest the relevance of linking social capital and networks to public policy. The New Labour government in 1997 shifted the community to the heart of public policy (Somerville 2011). It aimed to strengthen community voice and the government’s responsiveness to voice in order to build trust. It also aimed to strategically apply the concept of social capital through providing an infrastructure that would facilitate the growth and development of social capital in civic society – thus creating an environment in which social capital can thrive (Halpern 2008). However, some suggest these policies failed to materialise due to a lack of long-term strategy and funding (see Taylor 2006, MacMillan et al. 2007, Thomson and Caulier-Grice 2007), and also a lack of understanding between the lived experiences of working class

communities and the government's understanding of that experience (Somerville 2011), a recurring theme within this thesis.

Field (2008) is critical of government interest in that so far it has concentrated more on measuring and monitoring levels of social capital than doing anything about it. Halpern (2008) agrees that much of the focus has been on audits, the result of which often introduce policies that destroy social capital rather than enhance current levels. Given the stigma and lack of trust associated with agency intervention, the introduction of social capital-informed policy could make matters worse rather than better, not least because the essence of social capital is that it consists of activities and relationships freely engaged in by individuals which could only suffer if the government stepped in (Coleman 1990). Considering the levels of distrust and disconnect which exist between the working class and government, Fukuyama's (2001: 18) point that "excessive state intervention can have a serious negative impact on social capital" is particularly pertinent. Such intervention may be seen as an intrusion on an individual's freedom and should be left to the initiative of individuals. Many argue that there should be no intervention to build social capital, and that the concept has been deliberately used to distract attention from the underlying structural causes of inequality and the political propaganda which frequently masquerades as social policy (see McClenaghan 2000, Muntaner et al. 2000, Titmuss 1974). However, it may be possible to introduce some interventions, which further the benefit of social capital for all, such as removing selective education or the exploitation of personal networks, which favour the careers of a privileged group (Field 2008).

Some have suggested social capital as an alternative to social welfare policy, Leadbeater suggests investing in social capital creates "a stronger community, more able to look after itself, with stronger bonds of trust and corporation" (1997: 34). In 2010, David Cameron introduced the 'Big Society' as one of the main agendas of his party's election manifesto.

*“Big society – that’s not just two words. It is a guiding philosophy – a society where the leading force for progress is social responsibility, not state control. It includes a whole set of unifying approaches – breaking state monopolies, allowing charities, social enterprises and companies to provide public services, devolving power down to neighbourhoods, making government more accountable. And it’s the thread that runs consistently through our whole policy programme — our plans to reform public services, mend our broken society, and rebuild trust in politics. They are all part of our big society agenda.” (Cameron 2010)*

The Big Society was seen as a way of reshaping the public sector with more community volunteers and a greater mix of private providers. It relies upon the social responsibility and public duty of those with greater financial means to support those who are disadvantaged. The concept of a Big Society aims to reduce state responsibility in favour of public good through a tradition of volunteerism and puts considerable emphasis on the role of civic society, the third sector and social enterprise to succeed where the state has arguably failed. Smith (2010) argues “this is a difficult concept to reconcile with the Thatcherite, new right concept of individuals as rational actors concerned only with utility maximisation. Cameron’s emphasis on there being such a thing as society contrasts both with Labour’s emphasis on the public sector and the Thatcherite emphasis on the market. Cameron sees the collective action problem being resolved by a sense of duty”. When Cameron introduced the Big Society, the Department for Communities and Local Government had its budget cut by two-thirds (Scott 2011) which demonstrates the funding cuts resulting from the agenda. Social capital has strong, public good characteristics, as such, it is vulnerable to free-riding and underinvestment by individuals. There needs to be investment for it to work. Financing the Big Society was by means of an unreliable funding stream of utilising money from dormant bank accounts, which is unlikely to provide enough resources to enable the third sector to become a serious alternative to the state.

More advantaged communities with strong networks, high levels of social capital and trust are likely to be in a position to act philanthropically and, in such communities, the Big Society should be easier to forge, therefore increasing social capital further. Hastings and Matthews express concern that “the version of localism developed by the Coalition government will further empower the already powerful in relation to public services” (2015: 546). This appears not to be the case for those in more disadvantaged communities. Members of minority and vulnerable groups could become further marginalised if they are not in a position to defend and promote their interests and if no one else acts on their behalf to do so (Kisby 2010). A particular concern is that neighbourhood organising in disadvantaged communities is underfunded and that there is a lack of initiatives designed to ‘level the playing field’ between communities (see Chanan and Miller, 2011 and Sullivan, 2012). A final audit of the Big Society (Civil Exchange 2015) concludes that “despite some positive initiatives, it has failed to deliver against its original goals. Attempts to create more social action, to empower communities and to open up public services, with some positive exceptions, have not worked”. The Big Society has not reached those who need it most and as a nation we are more divided than ever before. A genuine Big Society would be owned by wider society, actively involving those with least power and influence now, and would be “taken forward collaboratively by a state that sees its role as enabling, not as being in the driving seat” (Civil Exchange 2015).

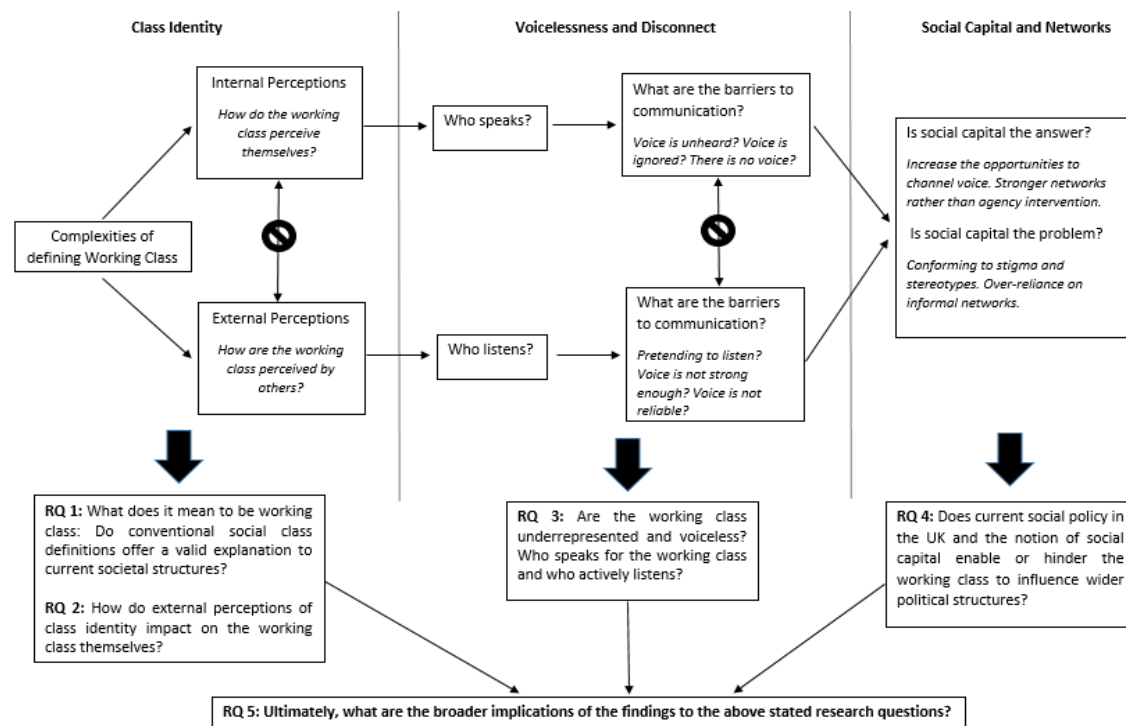
### **2.5.3 Social Policy for the Working Class: A Summary**

In summary, it is apparent that there is a difficulty amongst theorists and researchers to agree on a common definition of community; it is multifaceted and nuanced. Having varying definitions adds further complexity when policies are designed to target specific communities. Many recognise the opportunities that increasing social capital can have on ‘mending’ communities which are marginalised or are at risk of social exclusion, particularly in terms of improving well-being and prosperity. There is a general acceptance that communities rely on informal networks and bonding

social capital at times of struggle or crisis, but that this presents obvious implications regarding the increased disconnection and exclusion with wider forms of support. Currently, social policy is informed by statistics and metrics established on issues such as: unemployment rates; poor health; low educational attainment; levels of crime and welfare dependency.

The suggestion that social policy and initiatives should be community-led is stated by some researchers, yet there appears to be little evidence within traditional literature to suggest how this may be achieved. Additionally, if it is possible to generate policy from the grassroots, how could one be assured that the suggestions would be heard given the apparent level of disconnect and trust between communities and senior decision makers? The lack of understanding of the lived experience of the working class is frequently cited. This thesis aims to provide greater understanding of this experience, particularly in response to the broader implications on social policy and discourse (RQ 5).

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**Figure 4: Conceptual Thesis Framework Revisited**

The first research objective was to critically review and compare traditional and contemporary definitions of social class with a focus on the complexity of changing class identities. The literature review has identified and assessed the existing body of knowledge in the areas of working class identity, public perceptions and discourse, voicelessness and social capital. It has identified a number of areas that are under-researched or are substantially contested, and which therefore require further exploration. The aim of this literature review is to establish traditional and contemporary theories and reflections on key areas to inform the overarching research questions and provide further clarity around the above conceptual framework. In doing so, it is apparent that more insight is required to contribute greater evidence to these key areas. A recurring theme in this thesis, so far, is the lack of focus on the views of the working class themselves. In terms of the overarching framework, questions such as 'How do the working class perceive themselves?' and 'How is the working class voice communicated?' remain somewhat unanswered. This suggests a

lack of understanding and raises the issue of key decisions made on the basis of narrow and incomplete definitions and assumptions; this further exemplifies the notion of disconnection and voicelessness, this research aims to explore these questions and add more insight to wider discourse.

The first aspect which requires further investigation relates to the definition and characteristics of class (RQ1<sup>12</sup>). Much of the conventional theory refers to measures such as economic and employment status, this does not accurately reflect the way class is viewed today. There is a distinct lack of working class perspectives regarding social class, particularly in terms of how they view themselves. Additionally, there is a conflict within literature and public discourse regarding the change in views towards class over time. The data collected for this research aims to explore these conflicts and limitations in current theory, particularly focussing on the views presented by the working class themselves. There is some evidence that the working class are becoming more demonised and no longer represent the respectable and hardworking characteristics which were previously held. It could be suggested that the lines drawn between the underclass and working class are becoming increasingly blurred leading to negative perceptions and discourse. In contrast, historical evidence exists which suggests there have been frequent negative representations and language used to describe the 'lower' classes for decades; perhaps such views manifest differently in recent years. This relates to the second area requiring further exploration and the second research objective; to develop a greater insight and understanding of how the working class are represented by policy makers, the media and local/central agencies. There are numerous derogatory terms and labels used to describe those who occupy the 'lower' classes; these are

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<sup>12</sup> **RQ 1:** What does it mean to be working class: Do conventional social class definitions offer a valid explanation to current societal structures?



regularly documented within the media. Existing research tends to explore the impact of this in terms of common themes such as, social exclusion, poverty and welfare dependency. However, there appears to be limited discussion of the effect such labels and media representations have on the working class themselves (RQ2<sup>13</sup>). This weakness will be explored within the data collected for this research, with the aim of providing insights from those who are often recipients of such negative representations. Thirdly, existing research suggests that negative perceptions need to be changed but there are limited suggests regarding *how* this can be achieved; a point which is raised with participants in the later research stages. Fourthly, there is sufficient evidence within the existing literature to assume that a level of voicelessness and disconnect occurs within and towards the working class, this partially answers RQ3<sup>14</sup>. To fully address RQ3, it is critical to ask working class people for their own explanations and understandings of why this disconnect exists. It would be unjust to arrive at this conclusion without hearing the views from those to which the discussion is directed, and as such this forms a key part of the data collected within this research. Finally, the concept of social capital, as a major social policy concept and instrument aimed at the working class, is widely discussed within existing literature and research; there are varying definitions and ways of interpreting the theory and practice. It forms the basis of many social policies, interventions and initiatives in the UK. Judgements are frequently made by theorists and policymakers regarding the effects of social capital without fully understanding its intrinsic value to working class communities. This will be further explored to establish how it may be better understood in order

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<sup>13</sup> **RQ 2:** How do external perceptions of class identity impact on the working class themselves?

<sup>14</sup> **RQ 3:** Are the working class underrepresented and voiceless? Who speaks for the working class and who actively listens?

to influence wider policy and political structures (RQ4<sup>15</sup>). Within the field of community development, it is often suggested that social policy should be developed from a grassroots level. This recommendation needs to be explored further, particularly in terms of how it could be developed; what are the suggested actions to be adopted? Somewhat more problematic is the issue of voice. If social policy can be developed from a grassroots level, how can we be sure that decision makers and governments will listen and act?

Contested Areas Identified in the Existing Literature	Overarching Research Question
Conventional social class theory focusses on measures such as economic and employment status, this does not accurately reflect the way class is viewed today. There is a distinct lack of working class perspectives regarding social class, particularly in terms of how they view themselves. Additionally, there is a conflict within literature, research and public discourse regarding the change in views towards class over time. There are suggestions that the working class are becoming more demonised and no longer represent the respectable and hardworking characteristics which were previously held. This contrasts with the view that historical perceptions of the working class have been negative but that perhaps the terms are evolving.	<b>RQ 1:</b> What does it mean to be working class: Do conventional social class definitions offer a valid explanation to current societal structures?  Aligned with research objective one.
Contested Areas Identified in the Existing Literature	Overarching Research Question

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<sup>15</sup> **RQ 4:** Does current social policy in the UK and the notion of social capital enable or hinder the working class to influence wider political structures?

<p>There are numerous derogatory terms and labels used to describe those who occupy the 'lower' classes; these are regularly documented within the media. Existing research tends to explore the impact of this in terms of common themes such as, social exclusion, poverty and welfare dependency. However, there appears to be a limit to the discussion of the effect such labels and media representations have on the working classes themselves. Existing research suggests that negative perceptions need to be changed but there are limited suggests regarding <i>how</i> this can be achieved.</p>	<p><b>RQ 2:</b> How do external perceptions of class identity impact on the working class themselves?</p> <p>Aligned with research objective two.</p>
<p>Prior research explores the concept of voicelessness from several angles; voice is unheard, unreliable, ignored, blocked etc. There is sufficient evidence within the existing literature to assume that a level of voicelessness and disconnect occurs within and towards the working class but it would be unjust to arrive at this conclusion without hearing the views from those to which the discussion is directed. To fully address this research question, it is critical to ask working class people for their own explanations and understandings of why this disconnect exists.</p>	<p><b>RQ 3:</b> Are the working class underrepresented and voiceless? Who speaks for the working class and who actively listens?</p> <p>Aligned with research objective two.</p>
<p><b>Contested Areas Identified in the Existing Literature</b></p>	<p><b>Overarching Research Question</b></p>

The concept of social capital, as a major social policy concept and instrument aimed at the working class, is widely discussed within existing literature and research; there are varying definitions and ways of interpreting the theory and practice. It forms the basis of many social policies, interventions and initiatives in the UK. Judgements are frequently made by academics and policymakers regarding the effects of social capital without fully understanding its intrinsic value to working class communities. This needs to be further researched to establish how it may be better understood in order to influence wider political structures. Within the field of community development, it is often suggested that social policy should be developed from a grassroots level. This recommendation needs to be explored further, particularly in terms of how it could be developed; what are the suggested actions to be adopted?	<b>RQ 4:</b> Does current social policy in the UK and the notion of social capital enable or hinder the working class to influence wider political structures?  Aligned with research objective five.
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**Table 4: Research Objectives, Questions and Existing Literature Limitations**

The key areas outlined above and summarised in Table 4 indicate the broader themes which are taken forward for further investigation in this thesis. These themes provide an initial structure to the design of the subsequent phases of this research. The forthcoming methodology chapter will clarify the approach taken to gathering the necessary data to fully address the overarching research aim and research questions, specifically the third research objective, by using a specific case study to explore how the voice of the working class is communicated and to what extent their voice is interpreted and heard. Given the repeated lack of focus on the views of the working class identified in this chapter, it is imperative that priority is given to their voice in this research. This is essential to gaining a greater understanding of the broader implications of the research questions and identified contested areas within the existing literature and research (RQ 5). It is also important to

gain a greater understanding in order to address the fifth research objective to critically evaluate the social policy implications of a voiceless, disconnected working class.

### **3.0 Methodology and Methods of Enquiry**

#### **3.1 Aims, Objectives and Justification**

This chapter will outline the methodological philosophy, research strategy and approach adopted in this research with the ultimate intention of informing the conceptual framework (Figure 4) and addressing the research objectives and questions stated below. Both primary and secondary data collection techniques will be justified and explored and the data analysis strategy will be defined.

The overarching aim of this thesis is to identify and analyse the importance of perceived class identities and voicelessness within the working class, asking what impact/influence this has on individuals, the local community and the wider implications for social policy, wider discourse and to inform the knowledge base.

The overarching research questions are:

**RQ 1:** What does it mean to be working class: Do conventional social class definitions offer a valid explanation to current societal structures?

**RQ 2:** How do external perceptions of class identity impact on the working class themselves?

**RQ 3:** Are the working class underrepresented and voiceless? Who speaks for the working class and who actively listens?

**RQ 4:** Does current social policy in the UK and the notion of social capital enable or hinder the working class to influence wider political structures?

**RQ 5:** Ultimately, what are the broader implications of the findings to the other stated research questions?

The research objectives are:

- 1) Critically review and compare the literature on traditional and contemporary definitions of social class with a focus on the complexity of changing class identities
- 2) Develop a greater insight and understanding of how the working class are represented by policy makers, the media and local/central agencies through a critical review of academic and grey literature
- 3) Using a specific case study to collect primary data, explore and analyse how the voice of the working class is communicated and to what extent their voice is interpreted and heard
- 4) Through the operationalisation of the conceptual framework, synthesise the research findings from primary data collected with the existing literature on class identity, disconnect and social capital to address the overall research aim
- 5) Critically evaluate the social policy and research implications of the study's findings

### **3.2 Research Philosophy**

In any research, the philosophy adopted contains important assumptions about the way in which one views the world. Awareness of the philosophical commitments made has a significant impact on not only what is done, but that there is a level of understanding of what is actually being investigated (Johnson and Clarke 2006). Understanding of the underpinning research philosophy is essential to any research, and therefore, priority must be given to the researcher's ontological position: in this case, that of a critical realist. The capturing of complexity over time requires a philosophical position that is designed not to "untangle [the] weave, but in keeping the tangle and looking at the patterns it produces" (Goerner 1999: 138), this is one benefit of critical realism. Other research philosophies have a tendency to simplify the key issues into 'general laws' in order to define and/or explain the subject in question, in doing so they can lose sight of the origins of the phenomena in question.

First identified by Bhaskar (1978), critical realism has become increasingly recognised in recent years in the social sciences field. If we consider a continuum of research perspectives ranging from positivism on the left to interpretivism on the right, critical realism can be located in the centre. It takes elements from the positivistic school of thought and elements from the interpretivist school to offer a more balanced research perspective. As a critical realist, ontology takes priority over epistemology in that one must understand what exists before concerns about how knowledge can be accessed. Bhaskar's (1998) central arguments about ontology are to critique positivist approaches to knowledge, in that it reduces ontological questions to epistemological ones, confusing our descriptions of the world with the world itself. In fact, the epistemological position presents a problem to the critical realist in that accessing the entities which exist independent to one's knowledge can prove to be complicated. Central to the beliefs of a critical realist is the understanding that entities exist independent to one's identification of it and "there is no



(defensible) theory-neutral observation, description, interpretation, theorization, explanation or whatever” (Fleetwood 2005: 199), in fact, our knowledge of the world is theory-laden (Sayer 1998). We can only be informed by what we know whether that be a personal belief, social perspective or norm. This can be strongly linked to the theoretical views of social capital, in understanding the levels and types of social capital in a community, it can be argued that people can only gain access to those which they are aware of, but this does not mean that other networks and connections do not exist. As a critical realist, it is important to acknowledge one’s own theory-laden view of the world. In this thesis, my background was shared from the outset (see section 1.5), this approach allows the reader to understand and draw conclusions based upon the prior information shared. It enables a greater understanding of the position of the researcher prior to conducting the research, and supports Fleetwood’s view that one cannot be entirely theory neutral.

According to Byers (2013), the social world is comprised of four levels of reality: material, ideal, artefactual and social. This is a key and unique feature of critical realism; that multiple realities exist for all phenomena under investigation. The levels of reality correspond to the depth of reality being considered, ranging from the superficial material reality to the deeply embedded social reality. The critical realist perspective suggests that an accurate understanding of a phenomenon can only be obtained through considering all levels of reality. Bhaskar (1978) identifies three ontological domains: empirical (actual human experiences), actual (all events whether experienced or not) and the domain of the real (causal mechanism that generate events), something is ‘real’ if it has an effect or makes a difference. Particularly pertinent to this thesis is the view that critical realism sees social structures as ontologically real entities (Bhaskar 1978). Causal powers are located in the real domain and their activation may create patterns of events in the actual domain, which in turn, when identified, become experiences in the empirical domain (Tsoukas 1994). Fleetwood (2005: 201) identifies a number of modes of reality, one of which is wholly relevant to this research. The

term 'socially real' refers to causal mechanisms, rules, resources, relations, powers, positions and practices – social entities are intangible and dependent on human activity for their existence (like social classes). However, social entities existed before our acknowledgment; for example, forms of social capital have existed long before the phrase was coined. Unlike some other philosophies, critical realism attempts to provide a framework which considers the role of structure in understanding the reality of social interactions.

Critical realism has attracted debate in recent years, some arguing that it has limited influence in the field of social science (Oliver 2011). This may be due to the inaccessibility of the language used and, as a result, it appears somewhat disconnected from daily practice (Pratt 1995). Yeung (1997: 51) argues that critical realism is a “philosophy in search of a method”. In order to ensure that this research connects with the reality lived by participants, and to ensure that a method exists, this research adopts ethnography as an approach. The use of critical realism and ethnography is explored further in section 3.4. Some researchers have paired critical realism with other approaches such as grounded theory. Oliver (2011) asserts that traditional methodologists have tended to focus on positivist, constructivist and critical philosophical paradigms leaving little space for a philosophy such as critical realism to span these traditional divides. Oliver argues that using critical realism and grounded theory together offers “an accessible and congruent research approach” which is particularly relevant to research in the social field (2011: 372). However, a grounded theory approach is problematic in this research. Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue that the researcher should have no preconceived ideas when collecting and analysing data. Glaser (2002 cited in Allan 2003: 8) later indicates that by ‘preconceived ideas’ they were referring to “personal bias, dogma and mental baggage”. In this case, I have indicated my position at the outset and this demonstrates some potential bias and “mental baggage” which may have an impact on the research design and analysis (addressed in section 3.4.1). It can also be argued that a grounded

theory approach fails to identify potential causal mechanisms which may impact upon human behaviour and wider society. In addition to considering grounded theory, Houston (2010) pairs the philosophy of critical realism with an action research approach. This approach stems from Lewin's (1946) theory of interconnected cycles of analysis, goal-setting, planning, evaluation and change. An action research approach has its merits however, in this particular research, there are several reasons why it is not appropriate. Firstly, my position within the field of research prevents action; an essential part of the approach. I do not hold a position or authority in the community which would permit to make changes which can be observed. Secondly, the research will not be implementing actions to monitor and evaluate, the emphasis is more on understanding the actions of others. Thirdly, the cyclical nature of goal-setting, planning, evaluation and change requires a level of authority and time-commitment, which is not permissible within this research. Houston (2010: 89) argues that "action research offers opportunities to canvass the views of the stakeholders ... linked to the critical realist paradigm, it has a central role as part of an eclectic assembly of methods and approaches that capture the rich ontology of social life". Therefore, whilst the combination of critical realism and action research is not appropriate for this research, there is potential to consider it in future research opportunities.

Marsh's (1999) six major assumptions of critical realism are useful to demonstrate the applicability of this framework to understanding social capital and class. The six assumptions are:

1. There is a reality external to individuals
2. Reality consists of superficial and deep structures
3. Objects and structures have causal power
4. Actors' discursive knowledge regarding 'reality' has a construction effect on the outcomes of social interrelations

5. Structures such as cultures, ideologies, and values enable and constrain activities rather than determine outcomes
6. Social science involves the study of reflexive agents who may construct, deconstruct and reconstruct structures

Considering these assumptions, research into the working class and social capital is incomplete without some understanding of the social structural context that impacts upon people in society. For example, the critical realist ontology accepts that there is a reality external to individuals (assumption one) that contains both superficial and deep structures that are not easily observable or obvious (assumption two). An individual's knowledge of reality, including social structures is limited, as we have established, by factors such as an individual's background, education and network reach. The third assumption suggests that if there is necessity in the world, objects and structures therefore have causal power indicating a need to make causal statements (Byers 2013). However, the discursive knowledge regarding reality has a constructive effect on the outcomes of social interrelations (assumption four). This perhaps suggests that objects and structures, more accurately, can have causal power. Furthermore, structures such as cultures, ideologies, values and beliefs enable and constrain everyday social activities rather than determine outcomes (assumption five). As we have seen previously, they may enable a dominant class and constrain a 'lower' class or vice versa. Therefore, as social science involves the study of reflexive agents who may construct, deconstruct and reconstruct structures (assumption six) to understand perceptions of social capital and class, only partial reliance on primary research findings can be assumed.

Historical emphasis is an important consideration to critical realism and as a result 'facts' have the potential to be socially constructed. But unlike some constructivist approaches which accept all human accounts as equally valid, "critical realism is open to the possibility of distorted perception" (Houston 2001: 851). This is because the researcher and participants are unable to gain a fully

accurate picture of the social world. Phillips (1987) argues that we can only ever have a transitive view of the world, one that is tainted by “innate constraints or the disabling effects of ideology within society... even though this view may come closer to the true reality of things (intransitive) over time”. Researchers must adopt a sceptical view on the basis that humans are inevitably theory laden and shaped by experience, language, culture and norms (Houston 2001). For this reason, it is essential that data from other sources is sought. The critical realist perspective views structures and agents as factors that in combination determine the outcomes of social phenomena. That is, a phenomenon such as social class cannot be understood by examining structures alone; the issues regarding such structures have already been discussed. Nor can an understanding be obtained through reliance solely on agents (Byers 2013). Critical realism accepts that research is as equally value laden; the researcher is biased by world views, cultural experiences and upbringing (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009). This will have an impact on the research and will be explored in a later section.

The critical realist aims to understand social phenomena in terms of the mechanisms operating below the surface and influenced by specific historical, local or political contexts. This point is resonant of Marx’s (1852) view that “men make their own history, but they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past”. A similar argument is raised by Bhaskar who states that people “do not create society... it always pre-exists them and is a necessary condition for their activity ... Society does not exist independently of human activity. But... neither is it the product of it” (1989: 36). The dynamic relationship between the potential apparent in social structures and its contingent realisation through human agency thus stands at the ontological core of critical realism (Fleetwood 2005).

### **3.3 Research Strategy**

Most methodology literature focuses on the two main research strategies: *induction* and *deduction*. For a critical realist, this poses a problem, in that they both focus on a linear approach. Inductive strategies begin with data collection and use observable primary data to generate theory and form generalisations. The opposite is true for a deductive strategy; following a more 'top-down' approach, existing theory is identified and hypotheses generated. The theory is then tested through additional research and initial hypotheses accepted or rejected. Deductive strategies fail to uncover unexpected research findings as the scope is driven by specific theories (Morse and Mitcham 2002).

An alternative research strategy is that of *abduction*. This research strategy is different to the previous strategies discussed: it starts in the social world of those being investigated. The aim is "to discover their constructions of reality, their ways of conceptualizing and giving meaning to their social world, their tacit knowledge" (Blaikie 2007: 10). Their reality is embedded in their everyday lives and the researcher must enter this world in order to discover, redefine and understand social activities. The benefit of this strategy is that it allows the researcher to consider both the 'what' and 'why' questions. From a critical realist perspective, our knowledge is theory-laden by the social environment in which we inhabit. Since underlying structures and mechanisms are not directly accessible to visualised experience, "they have to be theoretically constructed and modelled, through a process of conceptual abstraction, which critical realists term *retroduction*" (Rees and Gatenby 2014). Retroduction refers to the use of reason and imagination to create a picture or model of the mechanisms that are responsible for the observed phenomenon (Bhaskar 1978), with the objective being to explain rather than predict, describe or deconstruct social behaviour. It is not linear as it involves moving back from observations to create a possible explanation. It is a more complex process that can be thought of as a "rising spiral involving numerous iterations" (Blaikie

2007: 3). Table 5 presents the four main research strategies and demonstrates the varying aim and start/finish points of each one.

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**Table 5: The Logics of the Four Research Strategies (Blaikie 2007)**

Danermark et al. (1997) argue that using both abductive and retroductive modes of inference in conjunction can lead to the formation of a new conceptual framework or theory, a practice commonly used by critical realists. Whilst abduction allows the framing and reframing of a phenomenon to identify a new conceptual framework, retroduction implies that researchers look for the conditions or qualities that make the phenomenon beyond what they can immediately observe (Ryan et al. 2012). The originator of the two terms, Pierce (cited in Meyer and Lunnay 2013), used them interchangeably, however he stated that progress in the form of new ideas or concepts solely leads from retroduction. Retroductive inference is constructed on the view that

social reality consists of structures and internally related objects but that we can only attain knowledge of this social reality if we go beyond what is empirically visible by asking questions about, and developing, concepts that are fundamental to the phenomena under study, such as 'what must be true in order to make this event possible?' (Meyer and Lunnay 2013). Danermark (2002) argues that "in the social sciences, retroduction is a mode of inference that is essential". Retroduction is a means of knowing the conditions fundamental to the existence of phenomena, an important belief of critical realists.



### **3.4 Ethnography**

Due to a relatively complex history, ethnography does not have a standard, well-defined meaning, it has been recontextualised and reinterpreted in many ways, in order to deal with differing circumstances (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). However, in the context of this research, ethnography can be seen as the study of people in their natural environment by methods of data collection which capture their social meaning and ordinary activities. This involves the researcher participating directly in the setting, in order to gather data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally (Brewer 2000: 7). The central aim of ethnography is to provide rich, holistic insights into people's views and actions, as well as the nature of the location they inhabit. As Hammersley states, "the task [of ethnographers] is to document the culture, the perspectives and practices, of the people in these settings. The aim is to 'get inside' the way each group of people sees the world" (1992: 15). The purpose is to describe and explain the social world being researched in the same way in which those who inhabit that world would describe and explain it. Previous discussion in this thesis has highlighted the notion that class is a lived experience; ethnography begins at ground level, with the lived experience of those in a particular social setting. A recurring theme in this research has highlighted the lack of working class perspectives or voice when defining the key issues and forming social policy. It is therefore essential that the strategy used in this research permits these perceptions to be heard rather than predicted or assumed; often the result of other less consultative strategies. The researcher is immersed in the social world being researched and as a result the process needs to be flexible and responsive to change. Observations may often lead to new patterns of enquiry which throw light on the emerging issues as experienced in this research and explored later within this chapter.

Owing to the complex nature of social life, ethnographers need to record a variety of elements in their field notes. Table 6 demonstrates the observational dimensions as identified by Spradley

(1980). This research aims to incorporate each of these dimensions and will be applied in a later section.

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**Table 6: Nine Observational Dimensions and their Descriptions (Spradley 1980)**

Ethnographic research generally draws upon a range of data, the research design is relatively open-ended, but there are some common features (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). People’s actions and accounts are studied in everyday context rather than in artificial conditions created by the researcher, data is gathered from a variety of sources which may be documentary and at times, informal by nature. The focus, as in this research, is generally fairly small scale, often in one setting to facilitate in-depth study and to interpret meaning from the observational dimensions identified above.

Ethnography has been critiqued by many in that it is unscientific (see Hammersley 1990, Thomas 1991) although its presence within the social sciences field has become more widely accepted. Current criticisms include the issue of representation: “to what degree can ethnographic accounts legitimately claim to represent an independent social reality?” (Hammersley 1992: 29). Ethnographers claim its value lies in the ability to capture the nature of social phenomena but the validity of such an approach is questioned. The data used could be seen as a product of their

participation rather than a reflection of the phenomena studied which is then further constructed throughout data analysis and discussion. Participants may also respond differently depending on the personal characteristics of the researcher. Women (or men) in the field, for example, may find accessing participants easier than others (Van Maanen 2011). The relationship between research and practice is also called in to question, ethnography has been criticised for not contributing to practice and some critics call for greater integration between the two if any attempt to form policy is made (Carr and Kemmis 1986). Hammersley (1990) identifies three significant problems:

1. There is a need to explicate the representational claims of a study and to make apparent the assumptions and values that underlie it
2. There is a need to focus empirical research on the theoretical issues that it is designed to illuminate
3. There is a need to examine the explanatory status of a methodology which rejects determinism

Porter (1993) further identifies the lack of development between structure and action in ethnography, for example Collins (1981) argues that social structures are just abstractions which have no causal power and as a result Porter (1993:592) adds a fourth problem.

4. There is a need to make explicit the ontological status ascribed to social structures

Many researchers see critical realism as a way to overcome these problems (see Rees and Gatenby 2014, Porter 1993 and Barron 2012), more specifically as an attempt to explain the relationships between social structure and human action. An adequate philosophical underpinning to ethnographic enquiry must be one which “accepts that there is a reality beyond individuals, but which does not over-extend its claims about how much we can know about that or about the

degree to which external reality controls the decisions of individuals” (Porter 2002: 60). Effective ethnographic research “requires both an ontology that asserts that there is a social world independent of our knowledge of it and an epistemology that argues that it is knowable” (Davies 2008: 18). Critical realism provides a philosophical basis for such an integrative position.

Within critical realism, social phenomena are the result of a plurality of social structures (Bhaskar 1989), these structures can only be identified through the examination of their effects, they cannot be perceived. As Porter states (1993: 593) “if we accept the causal criterion for reality – that to be is to be able to do – then the very existence of these effects demonstrate the reality of structures”. Three of the above constraints have been addressed, in that the basic theoretical assumption of critical realism is that human action is enabled and restricted by social structures and these actions reproduce or transform such structures, a point particularly pertinent to this research. In point three above, Hammersley (1990) argues that as ethnographers do not accept the existence of deterministic laws, the theories they generate can only be ideological. In contrast, critical realists argue that the belief that deterministic laws can be “identified through the study of constant conjunctions... fails to recognise the reality of both social and natural worlds” (Bhaskar 1989: 10), therefore the aim becomes the identification of structures which generate tendencies in the behaviour of the phenomena.

### **3.4.1 Positionality and Reflexivity**

Participant observation is where the researcher attempts to “participate fully in the lives and activities of subjects and thus becomes a member of their community. This enables researchers to share their experiences by not merely observing what is happening but also feeling it” (Gill and Johnson 2002: 144). The ethnographic researcher is usually both a participant and observer of the research field, these roles many change throughout the phases of the study and as Shaw and Gould

(2001) suggest, it is not useful to reduce enquiry to either observation or participation alone. It is in fact the combination of, and movement between these positions, which allows an ethnographer to develop a critical understanding. In this research, I was neither a known insider (resident of the research location) nor an unknown outsider (researcher conducting a one off interview) but more a frequent visitor with a similar background and familiar networks. This role has been referred to as participant-as-observer (Gold 1958), active participation (Spradley 1980) and active membership (Adler and Adler 1994). The researcher becomes more involved with central activities but does not fully commit to members' values and norms, although social relationships are established. There are some issues which may develop with this role; the insider might identify with the researcher too much resulting in a stronger observer stance. Alternatively, the researcher might "go native" and over identify with the insider thus losing objectivity (Gold 1958: 221).

Delbridge and Kirkpatrick (1994: 39) argue that we cannot attempt to explain the behaviour for social actors unless we at least try to understand their meanings. Through interaction and communication with participants, the researcher gains a greater understanding and this shared sense of reality is negotiated with others. Central to this process is the notion that people change in the light of the social circumstances in which they find themselves; in this study, trying to understand the processes or mechanisms which shape the identity of respondents is important.

In this research, gaining access to the general community was relatively simplistic due to existing connections and the willingness of participants to respond, however accessing some sections of the community was not so easy, this is discussed in a later section. Leaving the field was a complicated issue, the timing was necessary as the desired data had been collected but a gradual departure was required for a number of reasons. Little attention has been paid in the literature to the process of disengagement (Labaree 2002) as this is not often the concern of the researcher at the research design stage. Jorgensen (1989) suggests leaving over a period of time so that

everybody is prepared for the end of the study. During this research, I continued to maintain social media accounts (discussed later) and participate in community groups for approximately a year after the data had been collected, after which I handed these roles over to community members as a legacy of the research. I was also conscious of comments from participants who indicated their dissatisfaction of agencies and researchers who are present until they have achieved what they want and then disappear again; ultimately I was doing the same and this led to a sense of guilt and frustration. In one particular case, a participant was eager to use my research to prove inadequacies in the local regeneration project, not the purpose of this research. This participant continued to contact me for 'evidence' on a number of occasions after the research had been completed, a tactful disengagement was required to minimise negative impact.

Reflexivity is a central element of ethnographic work, owing to the relationship the ethnographer shares with participants and the ethical issues that flow from this close relationship. Within this thesis, reflexivity is presented in the form of a description of the ethnographer's ideas and past/present experiences (outlined in section 1.5). This can be used by readers to judge the possible impact of these influences on the research; some would argue no further discussion on the author's position is required (see Corbin Dwyer and Buckle 2009). Cousin argues that the debate has shifted from minimizing subjectivity to thinking more about how to bring "oneself into the research process through notions of reflexivity... our knowledge of the world is always mediated and interpreted from a particular stance... the self is not some kind of virus which contaminates research" (2010: 10). The researcher cannot be wholly detached from the social world which they investigate; our view of the world is from within it. The language used in research can be either passive or in the first person, Foley (1998: 110) argues that the author must write in the third person and be "physically, psychologically and ideologically absent from the text... the interpretive voice speaks from a distant, privileged vantage point in a detached measured tone". This viewpoint

seems too far removed for a value-laden ethnographer and I agree more with Eisner's who writes "I want readers to know that this author is a human being and not some disembodied abstraction who is depersonalized through linguistic conventions that hide his signature" (1991: 4).

Positionality in terms of social class is an emerging area within literature (see Mellor et al. 2014, Cousin 2010, Reay 1996, Skeggs 1997). A specific example relative to this topic area is the research conducted by Hurst (2008) which, in common with this thesis, begins with an account of her background as a working class citizen. In her research, Hurst suggested that her position allowed her to build rapport on the basis of common experiences and as a result this increased respondent trust and disclosure, "By giving a voice to working class respondents, they were finally able to find someone who wanted to have a conversation with them" (2008: 349). Mellor et al. (2014) suggest that 'class matching' in qualitative research appears to work particularly well when the research involves working class participants. The preference for class matching appears to be driven by the belief that if interviewed by a middle class researcher, differences of power and privilege in the social world could inhibit marginalised groups and further, that middle class researchers may be unable to adequately understand or represent participants' lives. Matching in terms of reflexivity does have its problems. Rhodes (1994: 550) argues "that matching interviewers and interviewees assumes there is only one truth to be determined by the research and that subject positions are one-dimensional and fixed". This could lead to complacency for the researcher; this was experienced on some occasions within this research, specifically with participants referring to "them and us" and "*you* know what I mean". In fact, individual identities are ever-changing and informed by countless different perspectives and so it is impossible for a researcher to match a participant on all levels (Archer 2002). Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009) noted that sometimes experiences and opinions were shared but on other times they were not, this was not due to the insider/outsider dynamic but that differences are to be expected, as not all populations are

homogenous. Some suggest that academics cannot be objectively considered working class, for example Wakeling (2010: 30) states “it does not follow that the occupational position and life circumstances of an academic can be compared to that of someone in a ‘solidly’ working class occupation such as a bus driver or cleaner... pay and conditions are better in the professions, as are the measurable outcomes for quality of life”. As an academic who identifies as working class, this resonates with me given the earlier mentioned conflicts of class identity I experienced during this research process.

In addition to discussions of my perceived class position, it is also important to recognise my ‘whiteness’ as a key characteristic given my research focus on the white working class. As a ‘racial insider’ (Moore 2013: 9), I must also recognise that, in addition to other social variables, participants in this research may have made judgements about me which may have influenced their responses. In his research, Gallagher (2000) claimed that he was ‘racially unburdened’ as he was white researching white people’s views on race and ‘race matching’ permitted increased access to the research participants. However, Gallagher recognises that, although the majority of whites enjoy many privileges relative to members of other racial groups, “this shared privilege does not mean one can minimise the need to critically assess where one's social location, political orientation, and attitudes on race fit into the research project” (2000: 73). In this research, participants may have been more open to discussions of whiteness with me than perhaps they would have with a researcher who was not white. However, my whiteness may have had an impact on my ability to engage those in the community from other ethnic backgrounds. For example, only one participant was not white and I did not engage members of the growing Eastern European community. If this research was conducted by someone from a different racial background or class, the findings are likely to be different. Matching in terms of class and race undoubtedly provided me with greater access to the research field, particularly in terms of white working class. The

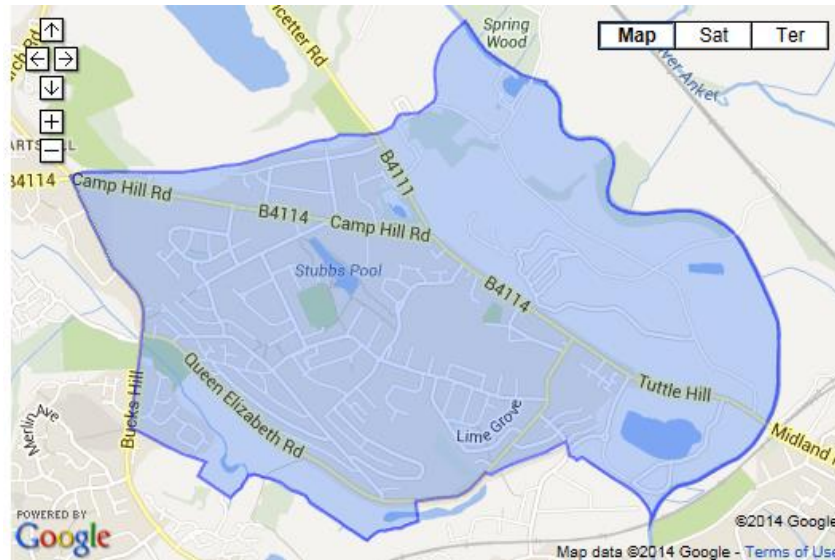


commonality of 'people like us' is advantageous, however the implications on validity and bias must be recognised, this is discussed in section 3.8.

### **3.4.2 The Research Location**

It is difficult to attempt research into the working class without focussing on a particular landscape as this class more than any other is "inextricably linked with the concept of home, a street, a neighbourhood, a community" (Collins 2005: 11). This research is focussed not just on the people but also the impact of the physical environment. The area of Camp Hill in Nuneaton, Warwickshire was identified for this research for a number of reasons. In the first instance, a community was sought which best represented the neighbourhoods identified as 'white working class' in prior literature. Camp Hill is a large, former local authority council estate and, as a former mining community, has hit on hard times following the decline of the coal industry. During the period 1946 to 1956 there were around 3500 houses built in Camp Hill to accommodate the large number of miners who moved down from the North of England. To this day, many residents of Camp Hill still have a somewhat northern dialect. During the 1980s several of the local factories and mines closed down and this caused a stark change to the prosperity of the area. Camp Hill has a history of low employment, poor educational attainment and a declining sense of belonging (Young 2011). According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2010), four of the five Super-Output Areas (SOAs) in Camp Hill ward are ranked within the top thirty percent most deprived SOAs in England. Its most deprived SOA, the Village Centre, is ranked within the top five percent nationally and is the second most deprived SOA in Warwickshire, 52.7 percent of children in Camp Hill are deemed to be living in poverty. The area fares particularly poorly in terms of deprivation linked to Education, Skills and Training where it is ranked as the 125<sup>th</sup> most deprived SOA (out of the 32,482 SOAs in England), placing it within the top half percent of all SOAs (Warwickshire Observatory 2011). Life expectancy in Camp Hill is 7.8 years lower for men and 7.4 years lower for women compared to national

averages. According to the latest Census data (2011), Camp Hill is predominantly white - 96.3 percent (includes *White British*, *White Irish* and *White other*). These figures highlight the ward as being closely aligned to the socially constructed and widely accepted view of white working class communities as identified in the literature.



**Figure 5: Map of the Camp Hill Ward (Google 2014)**

A map of the Camp Hill ward is presented in Figure 5. Camp Hill is 2.5 miles North West of Nuneaton town centre in North Warwickshire. The population of Camp Hill was 7,321 in the last Census (2011); this is predicted to rise in light of new housing provision. An extensive regeneration initiative has created numerous changes to the area, hundreds of houses have been removed with many new houses built.

A further reason for selecting Camp Hill was the accessibility and close proximity of the location to my home and workplace. This enabled greater immersion into the field, flexibility for meeting participants and for gathering additional research such as local press reports and locality forum meetings. Additionally, there has been previous research conducted in Camp Hill which highlighted in the recommendations for further research “the importance of the ‘local’ – a deep understanding

of the local histories and cultures [is] necessary to inform tailored support to local communities with a long history of low engagement in initiatives” (SURGE 2008: 2). In the years since this research was concluded there has been a large-scale, ongoing regeneration project regularly celebrated by local press and practitioners. There have been some major changes through the *Pride in Camp Hill* project which is a community regeneration initiative, aiming to transform the area in and around Camp Hill. “Pride in Camp Hill, and our partners strive to improve the social, economic and physical aspects of life, and also improve key services on offer. Community engagement is at the heart of all of the improvements” (Young 2011). Further insight into Camp Hill and the regeneration project will be explored in a later chapter.

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods**

#### **3.5.1 Secondary Data**

Secondary data can be defined as data collected by others, not specifically for the research question at hand (Stewart 1984, Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1992). For the purposes of this research using secondary data alone is not sufficient due to a number of fundamental limitations to the reliability and validity of findings. An ethnographic approach might not ordinarily rely upon secondary data as the aim is to allow the participant in the field to give meaning and insight to the research questions, however a critical realist philosophy would encourage the gathering of all data which is relevant to the aims. From a critical realist perspective, our knowledge is theory-laden by the social environment in which we inhabit. Researchers must adopt a sceptical view on the basis that humans are inevitably theory laden and shaped by experience, language, culture and norms (Houston 2001). It is therefore necessary to gather data which gives some insight into all three domains identified by Bhaskar (1978). Primary data can provide evidence within the empirical (actual human experiences) domain, however the actual (all events whether experienced or not), and the real (causal mechanism that generate events) domains may exist external to one's knowledge of it and therefore secondary data will be required to provide some evidence to this existence.

Secondary data was collected from a variety of sources, some of which is publically available and other information collected from University subscribed databases, public policy and known industry practitioners. In order to gain background information, data gathered from the 2011 Census, Warwickshire Observatory and local government records were obtained to provide a greater understanding of the Camp Hill area. Previous attempts to measure social capital quantitatively have used the published ONS survey (Harper and Kelly 2003), findings from this and

other similar research will be used to help shape and refine the primary data collection in this research. Throughout the duration of the research, numerous leaflets, community newspapers, promotional materials, posters and photographs have been collected which have been published by the *Pride in Camp Hill* project, local newspapers and other community organisations and housing groups. These materials were used to assist in understanding the environment in which the research is based and to identify the various community initiatives and activities available to residents of Camp Hill. A resident and Director of the Camp Hill Community Radio received Heritage Lottery funding to publish a book recounting memories of the area from 1949 – 1990 to support dementia patients. The book, *Camp Hill: A Sense of Place* (Thomson and Tulip 2012), was produced and permission was granted to use sections from it, with due credit, in this research.

Secondary data is convenient in that it is time saving, often more cost effective and easy to obtain, there is no need to negotiate access or schedule data collection with third parties. Secondary data may be more unobtrusive, particularly useful for gathering sensitive data. In this research, data related to income, poverty, welfare, education and employment for example, might be seen as sensitive information which may not be willingly shared as primary data. Information can also be gathered to provide background detail, as explored earlier, it is necessary to identify causal mechanisms which might not be immediately apparent to participants or the researcher. This research has been conducted over a three-year period; however secondary data has been used to provide more longitudinal insights into the changes that have occurred in the area. However, there are a number of limitations to consider. The accuracy of the data is not known and it is not always possible to know how the data was collected, some researchers do provide data on the research methods but not always at a level to be confident on the accuracy of the findings. Often, prior research fails to outline the sample size, response rate and origin of questions asked unless the research is derived from a reputable journal. Similarly, it is unlikely that the research was collected

for the same purpose as this current research, the questions and aims of the research may differ to a great extent (Denscombe 2007) and although secondary data is usually less costly to obtain, some organisations charge for access to such information. Cowton (1998: 428) states “the fact that the researcher has not been involved in the gathering of the data means that effort needs to be expended in understanding the nature of the data and how they have been assembled.” It is therefore critical to ensure that each secondary data source is examined in order to identify possibly anomalies and subjectivity which may impact on the interpretation of conclusions drawn. Awareness of the nature of bias in secondary data is essential: journal articles, text, media communications are usually representations of the authors own opinions, views and interpretations, therefore a critical stance must be adopted whilst evaluating the data. One must also consider the socially constructed nature of social data, simply reducing it to a numeric form cannot fully encapsulate its complexity (Smith 2008). Due to the delay in publishing articles and documents, most secondary data is out of date as soon as it becomes available. This may also result in conflicting measurements, for example, differing definitions of class might lead to changing interpretations. RGSC, NRS, NS-SEC, GBCS are all previously explored social classifications with distinctively different methodologies and measurements.

Despite the above mentioned limitations, secondary data has been obtained to add context and background information throughout the research and to gain insight into the causal mechanisms which may exist. Using the two forms of data to complement each other rather than act as a substitute adds credibility to findings through data triangulation, serving to make up for the inadequacies of the other or providing confirmation (Cowton 1998). By treating secondary data analysis with appropriate skepticism and respect for its limitations, by demanding that tacit assumptions about the unreliability of secondary data are applied equally to other research

methods, and crucially, by combining secondary data analysis with small-scale in-depth work, Smith (2008) argues that secondary data can provide useful insights and create valuable social research.

### **3.5.2 Measuring Social Capital**

There have been several attempts by researchers to measure levels of social capital (see Harper and Kelly 2003, Cummins 2006, Putnam 1993, Cooper et al. 2010) but these attempts attract a number of criticisms. The concept of social capital appears difficult to measure and the task is made even more difficult by the varying techniques and inconsistencies used in its measurement. Halpern (2008) argues the difficulties in reliability and validity of the research. For example, by asking a small section of a neighbourhood whether they trust their neighbours is unlikely to provide the same results if the question is repeated several months later with a different sample. Surveys of social capital can focus on distinct areas such as the number of voluntary groups (Paldam and Svendsen 2000), trust in the neighbourhood (Griesshaber 2014) and network analysis methods (Franke 2005). There have also been some more elaborate measures which include researching the different forms of social capital and understanding the 'best balance' (see Warr 1987, Berkman and Kawachi 2000). The measurement problem is made difficult by cultural differences; there are obvious national and regional differences in the forms of social capital. As a result, there is no single measure of social capital that can be reliably used. This complexity has led some to argue that social capital can only be understood in its local context (Edwards and Foley 1998). Relationships and shared values are deep rooted in local circumstances and people experience the effects in very different ways (Field 2008), as the OECD (2001) state "much of what is relevant to social capital is tacit and relational, defying easy measurement or classification". Field (2008: 134) argues that government interest has often "concentrated more on measuring and monitoring social capital than doing much about it"; nevertheless, many policymakers invest resources in activities that can be measured in order to attract funding and to draw comparisons. The demand for empirical

measures of social capital exceeds the supply (Rose 1998: 5). A greater understanding of the nature of social capital will improve further conceptual refinement. Public policy cannot aim to enhance the growth of communities' rich in social capital with accuracy until it is known, and the ability to measure and describe what such communities look like and what role social capital plays within them (Stone 2001). Paxton (1996) notes that previous studies provide little explanation for how measures of social capital connect to theoretical definitions and believes that this has resulted in the use of questionable indicators of social capital, including single item measures of it, and in inconsistent results.

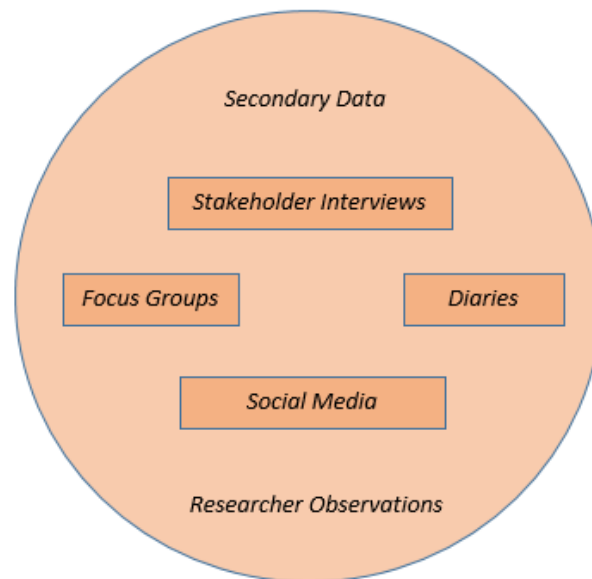
One of the inherent difficulties, particularly relevant to this research, is that the term social capital has no intrinsic meaning to the majority of the population, it is therefore difficult to ask residents direct questions regarding its value to their lives. This research does not attempt to measure social capital although a number of variables have been used from various prior attempts (such as the ONS) in order to develop a deeper understanding of the value of social capital. As Bhaskar (1989) argues, meanings cannot be measured, only understood.



### **3.6 Primary Data**

The data collected for this research evolved over a period of approximately three years observing and becoming immersed in the field as is common in ethnographic research. The third objective of this research is to explore how the voice of the working class is communicated and to what extent their voice is interpreted and heard, it is therefore imperative that data is collected directly from field rather than relying on contested secondary data. The key focus was on qualitative data in that it allows a richer meaning expressed through words which are then classified and conceptualised (Robson 2002). A smaller amount of quantitative data was explored in the form of secondary data as mentioned in the previous section. Triangulation is defined as the mixing of data or methods so that diverse viewpoints or standpoints cast light upon a topic (Olsen 2004: 3) although, in this research it is not suggested that there be one singular answer or definitive truth. Multiple levels of primary data collection have been identified to gather more specific viewpoints on the topics explored in the literature review; this is in addition to researcher observations. This multi-method qualitative approach to the research, through the triangulation of data, aims to demonstrate a depth of understanding of the key issues and provide greater evidence to strengthen discussion and conclusions. These methods were identified to address each of Bhaskar's (1978) ontological domains: empirical, actual, and the reality, with a focus on identifying the causal mechanisms which lead to the empirical reality.

All data collection methods were subjected to a pilot test with peers, residents and members of the supervisory team prior to the commencement of data collection. Advice was also sought from a University ethics advisor to ensure they met with ethical approval. This ensured that the questions and expectations are clear and that data collection methods are aligned with the overarching research aims and objectives. The overarching data collection methods are evidenced in Figure 6.



**Figure 6: Data Collection Framework**

### **3.6.1 Stakeholder Interviews**

Interviews are a familiar and widely used technique sometimes described as a “conversation with a specific purpose” (Cameron and Price 2009: 361). They are often used due to their flexibility and informality, generating rich qualitative data and allowing both the researcher and participant the opportunity to probe and explore deeper meanings to topics and to vary the questions accordingly. The purpose of including interviews as the first stage of data collection was to help shape and define the project before further information gathering from residents commenced. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten key stakeholders in the community to identify their views on social capital, class perspectives and the community of Camp Hill. The interviews were semi-structured to ensure that elements of the research questions are addressed, however, it was equally important to allow for other findings that have yet to be anticipated. Drawing comparisons between the views and perceptions of stakeholders with those of the community members allowed greater understanding of conflicting priorities which has provided valuable insights for analysis in this research. It is important to note here that some of the stakeholders were also residents of

Camp Hill, therefore whilst they engage with local people on a professional level, they also may also present views from the perspective of a resident. This is indicated in Table 7.

As interviews were held individually, clarification was given if required and illustrative examples were drawn from participants to add depth to the later analysis. Interviews were conducted in community centres, offices and in one case a personal home, this maintained confidentiality of the participant and the comfort and safety of both parties. Despite all stakeholders agreeing to waive their right to remain anonymous, pseudonyms have been used in line with the University ethics policy and to reduce the likelihood of a participant being identified. Table 7 details the characteristics of those who were interviewed. Interviewees have agreed to the description of their role and organisation as stated. The stakeholder pseudonyms stated are used in the later analysis to identify the characteristics of the stakeholder.

Stakeholder Pseudonyms	Position and Organisation	Comments
Yvette	Co-Director of local community interest company (Health)	Interview conducted in local school office (Milby School)
Faye	Co-Director of local community interest company (Community engagement)	Interview conducted in local school office (Milby School)
John	Programme Manager – <i>Pride in Camp Hill</i> (Regeneration)	Interview conducted in <i>Pride in Camp Hill</i> office
Barbara	Member of resident's forum, organiser of retired persons' lunch club, member of the <i>Pride in Camp Hill</i> board. Camp Hill resident	Interview conducted in stakeholder's home on request due to weather conditions (heavy snow), and participant's physical disability

Stakeholder ID	Position and Organisation	Comments
Susan	Manager of Camp Hill Early Years Centre (Education)	Interview conducted in the Early Years Centre management office
Arun	Community Outreach Officer (vulnerable families), Faith Leader	Conducted in the CHES (Camp Hill Education, Sports and Social) Community Centre
Tom	Warwickshire County Councillor (Lab) for Camp Hill	Conducted in the CHES Centre
Oliver	Director of Camp Hill Community Radio, member of the <i>Pride in Camp Hill</i> board, organiser of other community-led initiatives, Camp Hill resident	Conducted in the CHES Centre
Roger	Leader of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Councillor (Lab) for Camp Hill, Camp Hill resident	Interview conducted in the Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough council offices.
Colin	Chair of Governors at local school, Minister of religion, Administrator at local children's centre (front desk), Camp Hill resident	Conducted in the CHES Centre

**Table 7: Characteristics of Stakeholders**

### 3.6.2 Accessing Stakeholders

Regular meetings were held with the Project Manager of the *Pride in Camp Hill* initiative who facilitated access to numerous community groups at the beginning of this research. The *Pride in*

*Camp Hill* Residents Forum meets on a fortnightly basis in the Community Café. I have regularly attended this forum, in addition to other community groups and events such as the locality forums and played an active role in the community festival committee, to facilitate a greater understanding of the local environment and to become immersed in the field. These activities also allowed early integration with key stakeholders who expressed interest in future involvement with the research; this demonstrates the added benefit that the researcher is known prior to the commencement of interviews. In all cases, I had met the interviewees on prior occasions whilst in the field, for example, attending a forum or in the Community Café, and therefore, a stronger relationship had developed. Whilst the nature of this research is in no way covert, during these earlier encounters, conversations centred on conversational topics such as the weather, acquaintances and current affairs. This was a matter of general interest but it also helped to build trust and establish relationships with key participants.

Some materials have been removed due to 3rd party copyright. The unabridged version can be viewed in Lancaster Library - Coventry University.

**Figure 7: Location of the CHESS Centre and the Community Café**

During early meetings with the Residents Forum and despite four members (from a total of five) expressing an interest in being interviewed, a more focussed approach was adopted. A number of areas were identified to represent the views of stakeholders (such as education, health and

community engagement), members of the forum presented the names and contact details of stakeholders who met the criteria, in many cases facilitating the introduction to key community stakeholders. Having the advantage of introductions allowed for greater stakeholder engagement with the research. At the first meeting with Oliver, he stated “I wouldn’t normally be involved with these sorts of things but [x] said I could trust you because you’re one of us and it sounded right up my street”. My position in the community as participant-as-observer (Gold 1958) undoubtedly allowed greater access due to shared experiences and background, this position was explored in an earlier section. During each interview, participants often mentioned the names of other stakeholders in the community and this allowed greater access to other participants. For example, the leader of the children’s centre (Susan) recommended I approach a community worker (Arun) who would have more of an insight into community networks and informal groups.

Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that is often used by researchers to identify possible participants in the field when locating them alone may prove to be difficult. Biernacki and Waldorf identified some problems associated with snowball sampling, however they dispelled the myth that snowballing is self-propelling and that once started it maintains its own momentum. Rather, the researcher “must actively and deliberately develop and control the sample’s initiation, progress, and termination” (1981: 143). This was found to be true. A certain element of control was required to enable the alternative views of others to be captured. In some cases, a particular stakeholder was contacted as a result of a comment raised in an interview for example “I should imagine you’d want to speak to [x], he’d have something to say about this ... though he hasn’t done much for us lately” (Barbara). In addition to snowball sampling, an intensity sampling approach was adopted, selecting those with considerable interest or knowledge of the community and environment. Powell and Connaway further define intensity sampling as “the process of selecting or searching for rich or excellent examples of the phenomenon of interest”

(2004: 190). For example, Barbara, Oliver and Roger have spent the majority of their lives living and working in Camp Hill. In addition to knowing the area well and living through many changes, they are also well-known in the area. This is evident from spending a few moments in their company and witnessing the number of residents who acknowledge them and share familiar stories. Baker (2006) argues that the researcher may choose different sampling techniques dependent on the stage of research and the familiarity of the environment; extended time in the field increases the researcher's ability to judge such characteristics.

Locality meetings are held on a quarterly basis and represent the views of residents from Camp Hill and the neighbouring Galley Common district. Each meeting sees representatives from Warwickshire County Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, West Midlands Fire Service, *Pride in Camp Hill*, Warwickshire Police and a differing number of residents. Despite numerous attempts, it proved impossible to obtain consent to interview a member of Warwickshire Police. The two Community Support Officers who regularly attended the Locality meetings have a good relationship with local residents and were reluctant to volunteer to be interviewed in fear of jeopardising this relationship; their Sergeant and Inspector presented the same view. They did however guide me towards secondary data available in the public domain.

### **3.6.3 Interview Approach**

Although there are many advantages of conducting interviews, it is important to identify potential disadvantages. Despite being described as conversations (Cameron and Price 2009) they differ in significant ways, and require different skills. Interviews are prone to bias and as such, require careful planning and recording in order to generate valid reliable data. Skills are required in establishing a rapport, asking clear questions, steering the interview and actively listening. Within ethnographic research the interview may be seen more as a friendly conversation (Spradley 1980), often the participant may not be aware that they are being interviewed. For the purposes of this

study, covert research was strictly forbidden under the University's ethics policy; all participants must read a participant information sheet and sign an informed consent form (available in the appendices). Additionally, completely unstructured interviews were discouraged, for ethical approval to be granted an interview template was required. Conducting interviews can be repetitive and time consuming; transcribing is an arduous task and as a result, I ensured the sample size remained at a manageable size without reducing the depth of findings. The skills of the interviewer can influence the findings; care must be given to the tone of voice, verbal nods, non-verbal cues and body posture. Each stakeholder presented a different viewpoint to examine as they each originate from a different organisation within the community. Care was taken in the guided interpretation of the questions asked, for this reason further probing questions were highlighted in the interview design with allowances for previously unconsidered responses to be captured and explored. Spradley (1980) identified three important elements to ethnographic interviews firstly the *explicit purpose*, both interviewer and interviewee are aware there is a purpose to the meeting, although this purpose is clearer to the researcher and as such they should take the lead in directing the discussion. Secondly, *ethnographic explanations* must take place to inform the participant about the overall project, how the data will be recorded, how the interview will be structured and how the questions will be asked. Finally, *ethnographic questions* should be used to include descriptive, structural and contrasting question types.

The interview question template can be found in Appendix One. The interview questions were generated from themes acknowledged in the earlier literature review, previous secondary research and from areas identified as significant in earlier fieldwork. Ultimately, the questions were designed to address the overarching research questions, with a specific focus on exploring the earlier mentioned limitations in existing literature and research. Open questions were also asked to



uncover any structures and mechanisms missing from the initial conceptual framework. Table 8 outlines the origins of the questions asked.

Question and Theme	Origin
1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 18 Class identity, togetherness and perceptions of class	Adapted with permission from the topic guide used in the following research and publication. Beider, H. (2011) <i>Community cohesion: the views of white working-class communities</i> . The Joseph Rowntree Foundation
3, 16 Social capital and barriers to involvement	Adapted from the Home Office Citizenship Survey (2005) available online, and identified as common themes through early researcher observations
2, 4, 5, 6 Voice, networks and communication in Camp Hill	Identified through researcher observations and discussions in the field prior to stakeholder interviews
11, 13, 14, 17 Communication, voice and agency in wider society	Influenced by earlier literature review, subsequent researcher observations, discussions in the field and to establish the existing networks/activities (actual reality)
15, 16 Social capital	Used to determine the level of understanding of key terminology and to provide clarity if required

**Table 8: Stakeholder Question Influencers**

### **3.6.4 Resident Focus Groups**

Using focus groups for the second stage of data collection was deemed to be the most appropriate method to gather residents' views. There has been some attention to the ways in which inequalities such as class may influence data collection, for example, Mc Dermott (2004) suggests that one-to-one interviews may be intimidating or exclusionary for working class people. As the name indicates,

the purpose of focus groups is to focus discussion on a particular issue (Bell 2010: 165). Four focus groups were held to further explore the areas identified and discussed in the literature and stakeholder interviews. The aim of the focus groups is to observe different perspectives and capture the evidence of tacit knowledge sharing. In order for the atmosphere to be permissive and relaxed Hayes (2000: 395) recommends that groups are carefully balanced in relation to age, sex and ethnic status, to avoid participants becoming socially constrained and to allow them to discuss views freely. The focus groups were conducted between August 2013 and January 2014, comprising a total of eighteen Camp Hill residents of which there were six males and twelve females; the youngest participant was nineteen and the eldest sixty-four.

Facilitating focus groups requires complex skills in guiding and energising the group, there may be a number of interactions happening simultaneously. This additional complexity can often make transcription difficult; identifying multiple voices proved to be a challenge as did interruptions and quieter utterings. Whilst focus groups can be very valuable, it is important to understand the nature of group behaviour; participants may feel restricted in presenting their views and a level of conformity can occur. Some quieter members may have strong views that are not heard. This can happen when there are some dominant participants. The success of focus groups depends on strong facilitation skills to obtain the views of all members, to ensure the discussion remains within the scope of the research and to provide context to the discussion without imposing personal bias (Cameron and Price 2009:398).

### **3.6.5 Accessing Focus Group Members**

Community members from Camp Hill were approached to participate in focus groups by invitation, poster/news articles, social media and introductions made by key stakeholders. The sampling technique used for the focus groups comprised of two layers. Initially a purposive approach was identified to ensure that responses could be gathered from participants according to the earlier

identified research areas. The goal in focus groups is to gain insight and understanding by hearing from people in depth, Morgan states that this “requires selecting a purposive sample that will generate the most productive discussions in the focus group” (1998: 56). The secondary sampling technique was self-selected, therefore, responses could be gathered from willing participants within predetermined demographics (e.g. resident of Camp Hill). An article was included in the July 2013 edition of the *Camp Hill News* which is distributed to most properties within the Camp Hill ward. A Facebook community group was utilised to also recruit residents to the focus group; this proved to be the most fruitful of all methods and was a useful tool for communication (via private message) with participants regarding the date, time, location of the groups and reminders. This Facebook group also proved to be beneficial for gathering further data from residents and will be discussed in more detail in a later section. I was keen to ensure that the groups did not solely represent the views of those who already engaged in community groups and known networks, there were a number of individuals who were familiar to me from my time spent in the community, meeting stakeholders and attending forums. In order to ensure the voice of those who are not generally active in the community in a formal sense, it was necessary to utilise personal networks and then snowball sampling to encourage wider participation. In some cases, participants were asked to bring other residents they may know from their street, or a friend who lives in the area. This resulted in greater diversity in the focus groups with some members stating that they had not previously been involved in any community consultations.

Although the groups were somewhat structured, participants were influenced by the interactions of other group members, these interactions formed part of the collected data. Group members may challenge others’ ideas and assumptions more effectively than in an interview and help raise their concerns on matters which are important to them. In some groups, there were some more dominant members who provided more frequent responses. In order to ensure all members had

the opportunity to present their views it was necessary to encourage a response by asking questions such as “[participants name], how do you feel about that?” or “do you all share that experience?” Interestingly, I found that this approach encouraged some differences of opinion which facilitated more discussion and insightful responses.

The focus groups were held in a neutral location, the local community centre (CHESS), this appeared to be the most convenient location for residents in term of proximity and accessibility. Mellor et al. (2014) noted the influence of the general atmosphere of the location in terms of the participant willingness to ‘open up’ to the researcher, and that being able to speak honestly about their opinions is determined by who might overhear what is being said. The CHESS centre has a number of available rooms, the room selected as most appropriate allowed the group to sit in a circle around a table, and this helped to establish a sense of territoriality and personal space that makes participants more comfortable (Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook 2007). Whilst the CHESS centre may be met with some reservations (see later discussion), other than the residents own homes (ruled out due to ethical concerns and mixed groupings), there were no other locations which provided a confidential, neutral environment in which to conduct the focus groups. Table 9 presents the characteristics of the focus groups. The pseudonyms identified in Table 9 are used in the later analysis to attribute the quotations to each participant and focus group.

Focus Group	Make up of Group Members and Pseudonyms	Comments
A	Three males and one female (Steve, Barry, Martyn, Val)	Recruited through <i>Camp Hill News</i> article, social media and posters. Conducted in the CHESS Centre. Held at 11am on 16 <sup>th</sup> August 2013.
B	Four females and one male (Charlotte, Jenna, Emma, Cheryl, Geoff)	Recruited through <i>Camp Hill News</i> article, social media and posters. Conducted in the CHESS Centre. Held at 3pm on 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2013.
C	Three females and one male (Denise, Sandra, Mandy, Mick)	Recruited through <i>Camp Hill News</i> article, social media and posters. Conducted in the CHESS Centre. Held at 4pm on 17 <sup>th</sup> September 2013.
D	Four females and one male (Debbie, Marion, Natalie, Norma, Rick)	Recruited through established connections during time spent in Camp Hill. Conducted in the CHESS Centre. Held at 1pm on 24 <sup>th</sup> January 2014.

**Table 9: Characteristics of Focus Groups**

### **3.6.6 Focus Group Approach**

I facilitated the focus groups alone; it was felt that introducing a ‘stranger’ to the group would contaminate the responses. Krueger states that “people often feel more comfortable sharing their real thoughts and opinions with a person they know or with someone whose background is similar to theirs” (1998: 5). Krueger suggests conversational questions are essential to create and maintain an informal environment because the focus group is a social experiment, “The wording of the questions should be direct, forthright, comfortable and simple” (1998: 3). Additionally, there should be no jargon or assumptions of understanding, focus group questions were peer reviewed

outside the research field to minimise this risk. Prior to the start of the focus group, refreshments were provided to help make participants feel welcomed and comfortable, this also allowed some off-topic conversations to take place before the session commenced thus enabling more focused discussion.

The focus group question template can be found in Appendix Two. The focus group followed a semi-structured approach; a number of key areas were identified from both secondary data, earlier stakeholder interviews and from areas identified as significant in earlier fieldwork. Table 10 outlines the origins of the questions asked. The first section of the focus group was activity-based for two main reasons: firstly, to act as an icebreaker as not all group members were known to each other; secondly, to identify the known activities and groups which existed in the local community. This served as a rudimentary indication of engagement in organised local activities (social capital) but also, from a methodological perspective, their knowledge of what exists when considering Bhaskar's (1978) domains of reality. Participants were first asked to identify the groups and activities they were aware of (empirical); they were then asked to identify the groups that they would like to see in the community. Finally, they were presented with a list of previously identified (actual) activities/groups and asked to highlight the ones they were aware of. The later questions were designed to address Bhaskar's (1978) third ontological domain of the real, the causal mechanisms which lead to the empirical reality.

Questions and Themes	Origin
1,2,3 Social capital and networks	This activity was inspired by the stakeholder interviews and as well as being an icebreaker, it is also to identify what community activities residents are aware off (empirical reality)
20 Types of social capital	This was designed to act as an indicator of social capital and its value in times of need
4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 Class identity and changing perceptions	Adapted with permission from the topic guide used in the following research and publication. <i>Beider, H. (2011) Community cohesion: the views of white working-class communities.</i> The Joseph Rowntree Foundation
5, 7, 8 Community and networks	Identified through researcher observations and discussions in the field prior to stakeholder interviews
6 Barriers to communication	Adapted from the Home Office Citizenship Survey (2005) available online, and identified as common themes through early researcher observations
13, 15, 16, 17, 18 External perceptions, networks and voice	Influenced by earlier literature review and subsequent researcher observations and discussions in the field

**Table 10: Origins of Focus Group Questions**

Both interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded to aid the recollection of events at the data analysis stage and this may have presented some potential limitations. Residents may have censored their responses if they felt that the recordings may be shared with other parties although Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook (2007: 7) argue that there is little reason to believe that recording alters the responses of members given that the group setting already makes all comments public. With all recordings, participants tended to be slightly nervous at the outset, but within a few

minutes they were generally much more forthcoming with responses. The researcher can only reassure participants of the confidentiality of the research, where collected data will be safely stored, when it will be destroyed and how they may withdraw their responses should they no longer wish to participate.

### **3.6.7 Research Diaries**

The decision to adopt the use of diaries was initiated to gain a greater understanding of the day-to-day lives of residents in relation to their networks, as previously discussed; this was not an attempt to measure social capital or to document social networks, but to follow the lives of the residents in a less obtrusive way. Interviews and focus groups rely on memory, asking residents to recount experiences and values may lead to generalised and idealised accounts of their social lives. Ethnographers can use diaries to gain access to the lives of the individuals and communities being studied thus avoiding the need to intrude and be continually present throughout the research process. Using diaries may also help to address topics which might be too sensitive for the participant to discuss using other data collection methods (Corti 1993). This may be true when asking people to discuss social class and to identify social connections. Alaszewski (2006: 2) identified the defining characteristics of a diary are to include: *regularity* – documenting specific events organised over a period time; *personal* – the individual controls access to the diary; *contemporaneous* – entries are made at the time of the occurrence so the diary is not distorted by problems of recall; and a *record* – entries record what an individual considers relevant and important.

For this part of the study a representative sample was not important, the individual's diary is valuable in its own right (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Primarily a self-selective sampling technique was used to recruit participants for completing diaries; the same strategy was adopted as with recruiting to focus groups and these ran concurrently. Residents responded to the article



included in the Camp Hill News and to the social media request for assistance. In addition, snowball sampling was used to recruit further participants, in most cases this was through established connections within the community. Two respondents attended both a focus group and completed a diary at their request. The characteristics of the diary participants are outlined in Table 11 and the pseudonyms used in the later analysis are stated.

Diary ID	Declared Characteristics
Diary 1 (Elaine)	Female, age 34. Diary completed 13/12/13 – 20/12/13
Diary 2 (Hollie)	Female, age 30. Diary completed 14/12/13 – 21/12/13
Diary 3 (Neil)	Male, age 58. Diary completed 13/12/13 – 20/12/13
Diary 4 (Denise)	Female, age 50's. Diary completed 18/09/13 – 25/09/13
Diary 5 (Lucy)	Female, age 31. Diary completed 06/12/13 – 13/12/13
Diary 6 (Beth)	Female, age 25. Diary completed 17/09/13 – 24/09/13
Diary 7 (Tina)	Female, age 40's. Diary completed 17/09/13 – 24/09/13
Diary 8 (Bob)	Male, age 57. Diary completed 16/09/13 – 23/09/13
Diary 9 (Paul)	Male, age 55. Diary completed 19/08/13 – 26/08/13
Diary 10 (Sandra)	Female, age 50's. Diary completed 07/04/14 – 14/04/14

**Table 11: Characteristics of Diary Participants**

Residents were asked to complete a diary over a seven-day period; in the diary, they recorded details of their social connections and networks. They were able to select the time period which was convenient to them but which also avoided less normal periods of time such as holidays or other untypical activities. Prior to diary completion, face-to-face training was given to participants

with full details of what was required and to help put them at ease. Figure 8 evidences a section of the instructions given for guidance. In addition, some fictitious examples of completed entries were provided to demonstrate the level of information that would be preferred and contact details documented should the participants wish to seek clarification at any point during the seven-day period (Corti 1993).

Please record every connection you make, for example, this could be face to face, phone, social media or email. For each connection please complete the template provided as soon as possible after the event, if you run out of space please continue on separate paper. You are not required to include details of networks or connections during work time unless this connection is specifically related to activities which take place outside of normal working hours. You are not required to include connections with the people who live in the same household as you.

**Figure 8: A Sample of Guidance Instructions Provided to Diary Participants**

A diary template (Appendix Three) was provided to give some structure to the participants' responses and to minimise intrusion into their social worlds (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). A possible issue in the interpretation of the diary concerns the understanding of what the author wants the researcher to know as opposed to what the underlying reality is. "The opportunities for putting a gloss on reality are all the greater in diaries ..." (Clarkson 2003: 82). The template was provided to also mitigate the risk of 'glossing' and a concluding conversation was held at the point of diary submission which provided the opportunity to further discuss the findings.

The template aimed to record the following information for each connection made:

- 1) Identification of connection – Friend/relative/other (e.g. doctor, teacher, employer)
- 2) Location of connection – Telephone/online/school/community centre
- 3) Frequency of connection – Daily/weekly/monthly/ad hoc
- 4) Origins of connection – How was this connection originally made?

- 5) Participants further comments – strength and value of connection, a viable future connection etc.

In order to put the participant at ease and to allow for varying abilities, they were provided with the option of how they wish to collate and present their diary. Nine diaries were hand-written and one was electronically completed due to a self-identified disability. Each diary had varying levels of detail and differing numbers of connections, this will be explored in a later section. In some cases, the participants were eager to discuss their diary in more detail. One participant (Neil) spent around two hours discussing his week with me when I collected his diary; a number of valuable observations were made which have been included in this study. A second participant (Denise) also chose to submit six pages of handwritten text with her diary and labelled it 'my story' in which she detailed a very personal account of key events in her working class life. The participant felt unable to tell her story in any other way but expressed her willingness for it to be included in this research; her story was far bigger and varied than the diary template permitted.

A key area of concern was the ability to engage participants in the research. Some residents may have been willing to be involved due to general interest in community development and possibly the impact this research may have on the area. One of the main drivers of this research is to identify potential barriers to increasing levels of social capital, for this reason the views of the more disengaged members of the community were encouraged, those who arguably have lower levels of social capital. It is common in research of this nature to financially incentivise participants and reimburse them for their time and whilst this may raise some ethical questions, it was necessary to encourage a positive response. Residents who attended the focus groups were given a £15 high street voucher and those who completed a diary were given a £40 voucher, a high street voucher was chosen rather than cash payment. Using payment as an incentive may be seen to be controversial in that no persuasion or pressure should be exerted on participants (Alderson and

Morrow 2004). Some researchers suggest that using an incentive increases the sample quality because a payment encourages a greater response and therefore may represent a wider section of the community (see Groves and Peytcheva 2008). Some concern has been raised that participants who may be financially disadvantaged could be seen to be vulnerable as they need the money and their consent might not be freely given where payment is involved. Another perspective suggests that it is ethical to pay disadvantaged participants because it provides them with the dignity of economic reward for their labour (ESRC 2010). In this research the incentive payment does not override the principles of freely given and fully informed consent and the guidance as recommended by Wendler et al. (2002) was followed:

- develop guidelines for when and how payment is made
- ensure a clear and explicit justification for paying participants
- ensure that participants who choose to withdraw from the research will still receive payment
- consider carefully any cases where there is concern that people are consenting because of payment and not because they wish to take part
- develop a general policy on describing payments in the consent process

### **3.6.8 Social Media**

Having spent time within the community, it emerged that the use of social media appeared to be one of the preferred methods of communication. This was evidenced in a number of ways. Firstly, through the response to social media requests for research participants; the most successful strategy. Secondly, on viewing the research diaries it became evident that some were using it as means of connecting with others; somewhat surprisingly this was not reserved for only the younger

participants. Finally, as a user of social media living within Nuneaton it became apparent that much discussion was taking place regarding the town but more specifically regarding Camp Hill. There was a notable absence of one particular demographic within the community; there had been no response to this research from males below the age of forty-five. However, it became apparent that younger males may be choosing to present their views online. The preferred social media platform was Facebook and there were a number of pages being used by residents of Camp Hill. For this research, a page was created entitled *Camp Hill Focus* with the initial intention of recruiting participants but as the page evolved it was being used for a variety of purposes, for example, promoting community activities, discussing memories, sharing news about lost pets and other community related concerns. Another Facebook page had been established called *Nuneaton Memories* where residents were discussing the history of the town in which a number of posts related to Camp Hill, additionally the *Nuneaton Community Forum* had similar content. An amended ethics application was submitted to gain approval to use the data in this research, approval was granted provided the page owners agreed, and fortunately they were compliant. It is not entirely clear whether this additional data can be classed as primary or secondary data however as the information is in the public domain and not collected for the specific purpose of this research one can make the assumption that it is secondary data.

As Facebook is a relatively recent phenomenon, its use only gaining momentum in the last decade, uncertainty still exists about the most effective way to use Facebook for research. Wilson, Gosling and Graham (2012) highlight three key reasons why Facebook is relevant to social research, firstly interactions on Facebook create a large amount of observable data, this provides new opportunities to study human behaviour which may previously have been difficult to access. Secondly, the popularity of Facebook is changing the way many people share information and relate to one another, it has become a core way of life and their online and offline lives have

become partly integrated. Thirdly, the rise of social media brings both dangers and benefits, the dangers relate to concerns over privacy and information disclosure. Particularly relevant to this research are the benefits associated with the strengthening of social ties. The data collected for this research focused on the three Facebook pages previously highlighted, a search was conducted of all posts, comments and pictures which related specifically to Camp Hill. No personal profile information was gathered, only data which was publically posted to the groups. For this reason, the comments used from Facebook in this research will remain anonymous. This will result in a lack of demographic information regarding the participant and an inability to prove representation from the younger male residents; an issue recognised earlier. Whilst some have criticised social media sites in that they allow profile owners to display idealized characteristics that do not reflect their actual personalities (see Manago et al. 2008), others have argued that in fact people tend to express their real personalities on Facebook, rather than idealized versions of themselves (see Back et al. 2010, Ivcevic and Ambady 2012). This research is not overly concerned with online personality representations; however, the aim is to capture additional views regarding Camp Hill and to develop an understanding of how social networks may influence social capital and voice.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Framework**

The data analysis using a retroductive strategy begins by filtering the data into themes and categories. There are many approaches to doing this filtering and for this thesis the approach suggested by Crinson (2001) will be used as guidance. Crinson suggests that the transcribed interview and focus group data is coded and then abstracted into themes or conceptual categories however, this only represents the first stage in the retroductive process. If left at this stage, only the empirical and actual domains, from a critical realist perspective, have been analysed, and the domain of the real (causal mechanisms) has not been fully explored. Thus, the next step is to establish theoretically deduced categories from the literature which may offer more context to the particular discourses presented by the participants. Smith and Elgar (2013) note that “laying bare the reasons for action requires bringing in contextual knowledge acquired about a subject from theory and ideas”. In order to complete retroductive inference, the final stage requires exploration of the conditions for the social phenomena through the exploration of causal mechanisms which can contextualise the investigated discourses. This process then searches for the connections between the three domains of reality: empirical interpretations; actual events; and the deeper casual mechanisms.

A wealth of primary data was gathered; Table 12 below demonstrates the scale of primary data obtained to inform this research.

Data Origin	Total Duration of Data Recordings	Number of Words Transcribed
Stakeholder Interviews <i>Total of 10 participants</i>	372 minutes	51,008
Focus Groups <i>Four focus groups with a total of 18 participants</i>	194 minutes	35,110
	Number of Entries Submitted	
Diaries <i>Total of 10 diaries</i>	167	

**Table 12: Scale of Primary Data Collected**

In addition to this data, further information was collected from social media sites and from artefacts gathered throughout the duration of the research period. The purpose of gathering additional secondary data was to provide greater contextualisation and to further corroborate the primary data gathered. For example, the previous section (3.6.8) highlights why social media data was sourced. Some secondary data was located to provide background (for example, demographics of Camp Hill) and in some cases directly targeted to exemplify a key point (for example newspaper headlines or resident information websites).

The data from the stakeholder interviews and focus groups were transcribed, the diaries were scanned and the social media records were collated. In addition, numerous artefacts collected over the time spent in the community were analysed. From this data, codes were identified; the coding structure emerged throughout the process of transcription and the numerous subsequent reviews of them and other data collected. As Saldana (2013) states, there is no best way of coding qualitative data, and that even if prescribed codes have been identified it is likely that they will need to be amended and renamed. During this analysis there were several cycles of coding as



further primary and secondary data was collected from the community. An example of how codes were identified can be demonstrated through the code developed for identifying data which related to class definition (CLASSDEF). The original research question highlighted this as an area of investigation which resulted in the design of questions for the interviews and focus groups. From the findings, a broader theme of class identity was confirmed which included data related to the CLASSDEF code (for example, class is a lived experience, class is a feeling inside, class is a story). In some cases, a code was developed to collate data which had not been previously anticipated but yet emerged from the collection of data; an example of this is CLASSPRIDE. This was not specifically asked in the interview or focus group questions but transpired in the response to other questions related to class identity.

Elder-Vass (2010) suggests categorising data into entities and parts. For this research, the earlier mentioned framework provided by Spradley (1980) was adapted to act as a guide to identifying various observational dimensions and to establish a structure from both primary and secondary data to which codes could be assigned.

<b>Observational Dimension (Spradley 1980)</b>	<b>Interpretation of Observational Dimensions in this Research</b>	<b>An Example of Codes Utilised</b>
Space	Physical regeneration, social spaces, proximity of resources	REGEN+, REGEN-, SOCIAL+, SOCIAL-
Actor	Stakeholders, residents, social media, researchers, policymakers	RESI/SELF, RESI/OTHER, AUTHORITY, AGENCY
Activity	Community groups and forums, informal networks	GROUPS+, GROUPS-, CH-NETWORKS, EXT-NETWORKS
Object	Community artefacts, housing provision, public services	REGEN+, REGEN-, AGENCY
Act	Community engagement, response to external communication	MEDIA+, MEDIA-, COMM-ACTION
Event	Group engagement, informal networks, responsive behaviour	CH-NETWORKS, EXT-NETWORKS, BEHAVE+, BEHAVE-
Time	Memories and reminiscence, old versus new, span of research, community changes	HIST+, HIST-
Goal	Social mobility, constructing identity, life goals, aspirations	SOCMOB, ASPIRE
Feeling	Perspective of others, apathy, disconnect, miss-trust, acceptance, loss	CLASSDEF, CLASSPRIDE, LANG+, LANG-, TRUST+, TRUST-, WWC+, WWC-, OTHERS, THEM-US

**Table 13: Nine Observational Dimensions Applied to Thesis (Adapted from Spradley 1980)**

Initially, consideration was given towards Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) however several researchers have highlighted that CAQDAS does not help towards analytical thinking, coding, reduction of bias or improving the quality of analysis (see Lewins and Silver 2007, Saldana 2013 and Silverman 2009). Critical realism research emphasises relationships, connections, and creativity, and computer software may lead to a decrease in sensitivity about these (Sobh and Perry 2006), hence transcriptions and artefacts were manually coded firstly using

Microsoft Word which were then imported to an Excel spreadsheet for easier sorting and manipulation, Figure 9 below provides an example of this.

Code	Excerpt	Source	Participant
CLASSDEF	It means people who've got a job and go to work every day. You know, they're not the bosses they're the toilers, the workers.	Stakeholder	Barbara
CLASSDEF	Cos I worked in a factory all my life, most of my life anyway. I'm retired now but I did work in a factory... I were never a boss. My father was erm... a miner and my mum worked at Courtalds and we were just ordinary working class people.	Focus Group	Sandra
CLASSDEF	Its people whose only income, whose only main method of income is to go to work every day and to work for the vast majority of their lives in a job that is relatively lowly paid	Stakeholder	Roger
CLASSDEF	I think the concept of class becomes increasingly difficult to define, because of the growth of office jobs really.	Stakeholder	Roger
CLASSDEF	They are all having to work for a living and will work for the vast majority of their lives because they have no choice other than go to work.	Stakeholder	Susan
CLASSDEF	Hard workers, down to earth and basic	Focus Group	Jenna
CLASSDEF	Seeing your own way through life, earning and living	Focus Group	Emma
REGEN-	Roads aren't wide enough, insufficient parking spaces and not enough social housing	FaceBook	Anon
REGEN-	It's a bit boxy, people are on top of each other. And they took away 'The Camp'	FaceBook	Anon
REGEN-	Well they've ripped the heart out of Camp Hill now haven't they	Focus Group	Mandy

**Figure 9: Example of Coding Strategy and Application**

Once the codes were identified, the literature was explored to provide additional theoretical insight to the themes already identified in the first stages of analysis. In the presentation of this thesis, direct quotations were included to present the voice of the participants. These quotations were selected to support discussion of the themes and the overall conceptual framework as addressed in the data analysis and conclusions. For example, when discussing definitions of class, the coding spreadsheet was filtered to display quotations relevant to the thematic area (CLASSDEF) and quotations selected based on relevance and to avoid repetition of similar points or data saturation. Such repetition was then portrayed through a discussion on the prevalence of such views and through visual presentations such as the use of Wordle (see Fig. 13). Finally, contextualisation of causal mechanisms was explored through synthesis between both primary data and the established theoretically deduced categories from the literature to provide more context to the particular discourses presented by the participants.

### **3.7.1 Codes to Contextualisation**

In order to demonstrate how the data was analysed, I will use the above example to explore how one code (CLASSDEF) was identified, how a theme developed and how the context of theory informed the relationship between the three domains of reality.

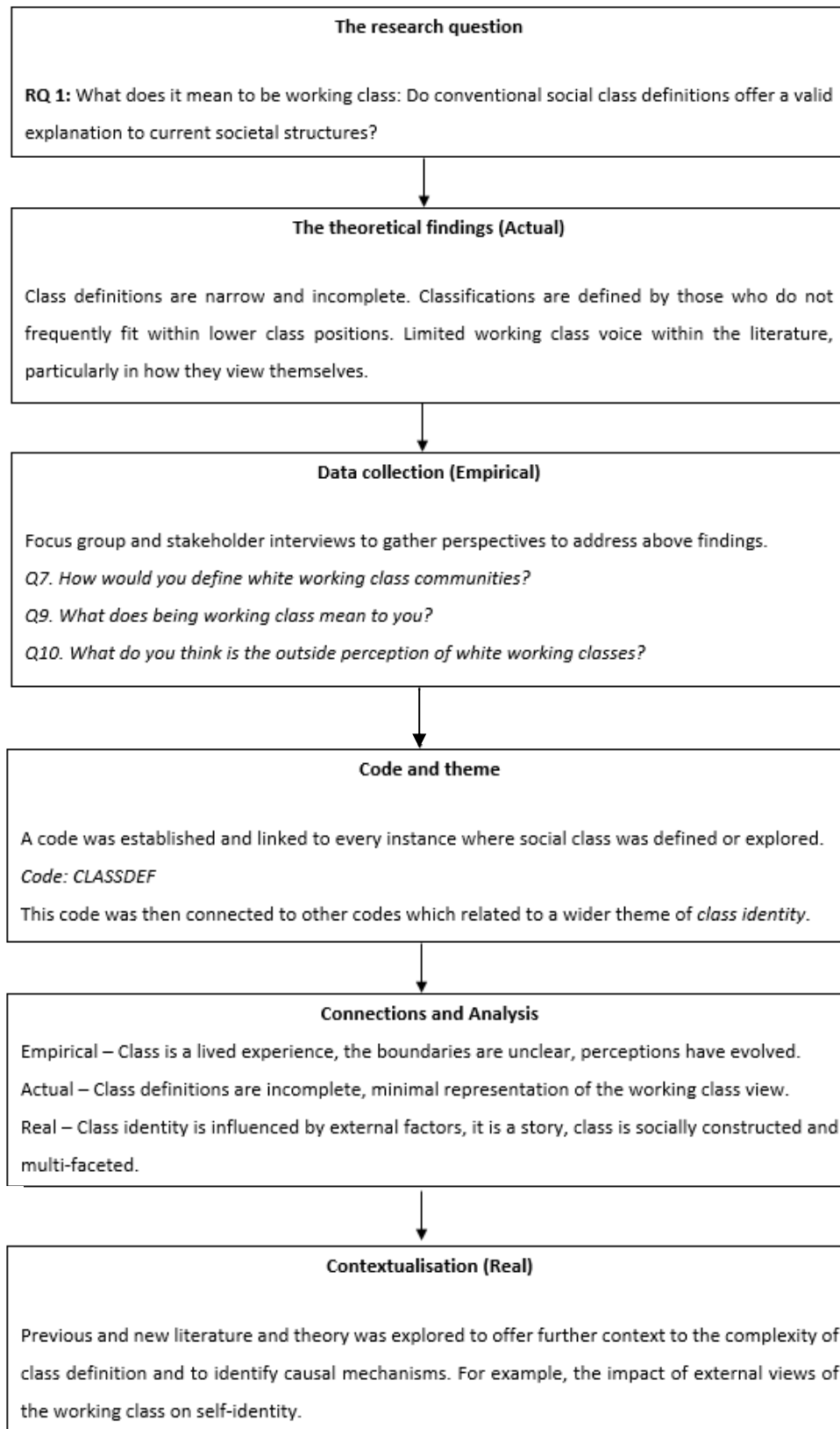


Figure 10: An Example of Code Development to Analysis

### **3.8 Validity and Bias**

It is recognised that tests and measures used to establish validity of quantitative research cannot be applied to qualitative research, there are ongoing debates about whether terms such as validity, reliability and generalisability are appropriate to evaluate qualitative research (see Rolfe 2006, Golafshani 2003, Noble and Smith 2015). Issues surrounding validity and bias are often raised in ethnographic research and are further questioned when the researcher is a 'participant as observer'. Given that critical realism recognises that people are theory-laden, it is impossible to remove bias from research. In this thesis, I have been transparent, indicating my position and background from the outset and so it may be obvious to some where bias may stem from. Throughout the duration of this research my perceptions and beliefs changed, partly due to being immersed into the community but also due to extensive reading of numerous sources, this will be explored in a later chapter.

Johnson (1997: 282) defines validity as research that is "plausible, credible, trustworthy and therefore defensible". Although validity is often a greater concern to positivist research, there are still some strategies that researchers can use to promote validity. As Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) suggest, ethnographic research is very high on ecological validity because it involves studying social phenomena in their natural settings. One threat which is particularly pertinent to observational research is that of researcher bias, this may be the result of selective observation, selective recording of information and selective data interpretation. Delbridge and Kirkpatrick (1994: 43) note that being part of the social world being studied, it becomes difficult to detach from it, or "avoid relying on our common-sense knowledge and life experiences when we try to interpret it", confirming the point raised earlier regarding the theory-laden nature of individuals. Johnson (1997) suggests using multiple observers which was not possible in this research due to the required integration into the community. The interview and focus group questions were externally

verified to assist in the reduction of bias at the design stage however, this intervention can only help so much as the interviews and focus groups were designed to be semi-structured.

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) acknowledge the threat of subject error; this refers to data which may be unreliable due to unforeseen changes in circumstance. For this reason, they suggest choosing situations of subjects who are as far as possible 'normal' examples of the population under study. It is very difficult to make this selection given the sampling strategy of this research but efforts were made to encourage 'life as normal', for example, asking participants who were completing a diary to select a time period that reflected an average week of their life. In order to reduce interpretive bias, some quotations are stated at length verbatim in the analysis, this reduces the extent to which quotations can be selected and edited but also allows the interpretation of greater meaning (Adler and Adler 1994). The data presented in later chapters will represent the voice of the participants. It is my intention to ensure that their voice is heard and, as a result, there is no added exaggeration, the truth is not exceeded and the quotations presented are exactly as they were told. Ultimately, the use of triangulation to examine different perspectives within primary data and theoretical findings helps to improve validity. In this research, using interviews, focus groups, diaries and social media reduces the likelihood of bias to some extent as multiple sources of data are utilised to triangulate different perspectives.

Generalisability is a form of external validity, although critical realists see this to fall within the positivist paradigm and it is thought by some to not be relevant to research of this nature. As Camp Hill and its residents were not randomly selected, it would make it difficult to generalise the findings, it is not my intention to attempt this beyond any of the rough generalisations that can ordinarily be made from qualitative research. In my view, the increasing use of generalisations throughout society can actually be damaging to a community, there are a number of examples of this within this thesis. The information provided in this methodology chapter should allow the

reader to make their own informed decision about to whom the results might be generalised (Johnson 1997: 290), and whether they might wish to duplicate the study with others in the future.

### **3.9 Ethical, Health and Safety Issues**

According to Spradley (1980: 20), the complexity of observation and ethnography makes it “difficult, if not impossible, to adopt a single set of standards”. He suggested that researchers follow ethical guidelines to include: (1) study participants come first; (2) their rights, interests, and sensitivities should be safeguarded by the researcher; (3) participants have the right to know the aims of the researcher; (4) the privacy of the participants must be protected; (5) the participant should not be exploited or harmed in any way; and (6) reports should be made available not only to sponsors but also to the participants and the general public. One must also consider the impact of involvement on the participant, the self-reflective nature of focus groups, interviews and diary completion can stimulate thoughts and feelings that could initiate positive and/or negative changes. Prior to data collection an awareness of, and access to other forms of support was identified for further guidance as required.

Full ethical approval was granted in line with Coventry University ethical policy and procedures. When any changes were planned for the duration of the research, further guidance and approval was sought and granted before further data collection commenced (see appendices 11-12). All participants were provided with a comprehensive *participant information sheet* and a signed *informed consent form* was obtained prior to commencement of data collection (see appendices 4-9). Confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process and thesis completion, all participants were advised that they are able to withdraw from the research at any time and a copy of the transcripts and research findings were available on request to all who were involved. All data collection materials will be destroyed after successful defending of the thesis.



A health and safety risk assessment was completed (see Appendix Thirteen) and submitted with the above-mentioned ethical approval, the research was not conducted in any environment deemed to be unsafe. The majority of interviews and focus groups were held in public community centres during normal working hours and a third party was advised of the time and location.

This chapter has identified and critically discussed the methodology, methods and conceptual framework utilised within this research. The forthcoming chapters present and analyse the research findings which result from the above detailed methodology. This data will be synthesised with the earlier literature and the overarching research questions will then be addressed.

## 4.0 Class Identity

This and the following chapter, present findings from the data collected during this research. The data collection was structured in line with the overarching thesis framework (Figure 11). As outlined in the previous chapter, semi-structured interviews and focus groups allowed for the general themes of class identity, voicelessness and disconnect, social capital and networks to be further explored.

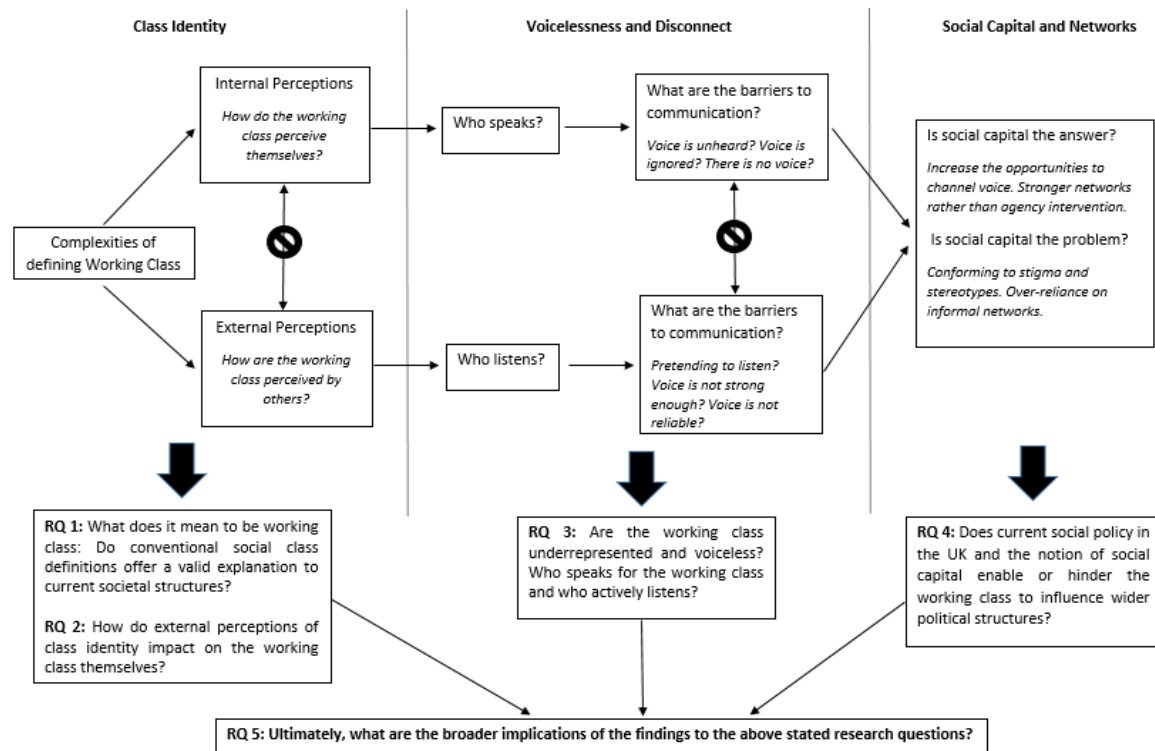


Figure 11: Thesis Conceptual Framework Revised

The data is presented concurrently with the analysis, an approach which is common in qualitative, ethnographic research. Further literature and insights are gathered to inform findings not previously anticipated; this is the norm with a retroductive mode of inference. It is necessary to follow this approach as a critical realist; without revisiting the literature, it becomes very difficult to gain an understanding of the causal mechanisms (real) which effect actual human experiences

(empirical) and the existence of all events whether experienced by participants or not (actual). The aim of this analysis was to establish the empirical domain within the framework of critical realism, which is then synthesised with the actual domain as demonstrated by the example provided in Figure 10. The table below demonstrates the structure of the following two chapters, outlines the link to the overarching research questions, and addresses the limitations/weaknesses apparent in the existing literature.

Overarching Research Question and Existing Literature Limitations	Key Area of Analysis/Theme
<p><b>RQ 1:</b> What does it mean to be working class: Do conventional social class definitions offer a valid explanation to current societal structures?</p> <p><i>Limited evidence of the working class voice in determining class definitions. Have perceptions of the working class changed over time?</i></p>	<p><b>Class Identity</b></p> <p><i>Defining Class</i></p> <p><i>Changes in Perceptions of Class</i></p> <p><i>Working Class or Underclass?</i></p> <p><i>Whiteness</i></p> <p><i>Social Mobility and Exclusion</i></p>
<p><b>RQ 2:</b> How do external perceptions of class identity impact on the working class themselves?</p> <p><i>Limited literature to explore the impact of negative perceptions on the working class. Prior research suggests that perceptions need to be changed but little discussion on how.</i></p>	
<p><b>RQ 3:</b> Are the working class underrepresented and voiceless? Who speaks for the white working class and who actively listens?</p> <p><i>Research explores the concept of voicelessness from several angles; voice is unheard, unreliable, ignored,</i></p>	<p><b>Voicelessness and Networks</b></p> <p><i>Physical Disconnect</i></p> <p><i>Metaphorical Disconnect</i></p>

<i>blocked etc. This needs to be explored from within the working class and stakeholders/agencies.</i>	
<b>Overarching Research Question and Existing Literature Limitations</b>	<b>Key Area of Analysis/Theme</b>
<b>RQ 4:</b> Does current social policy in the UK and the notion of social capital enable or hinder the working class to influence wider political structures?  <i>Judgements within prior research and from policymakers regarding notions and types of social capital are made without fully exploring its value and existence within the working class. Suggestions regarding how social policy should be developed from grassroots level is weak.</i>	<b>Social Capital and Networks</b>  <i>Political Disconnect</i>  <i>Voicelessness and Networks</i>
<b>RQ 5:</b> Ultimately, what are the broader implications of the findings to the other stated research questions?	Throughout analysis and conclusions.

**Table 14: Framework of Data Analysis**

There were some clear themes which emerged from the analysis, some of which further reinforce the earlier discussion from the literature review. In addition, there were some examples of particularly strong feelings and viewpoints in terms of disconnect and misrepresentation, somewhat surprising given the rhetoric of apathy and disinterest often alluded to in existing literature, research and more frequently media. Within this chapter, the following themes are explored:

*Defining Social Class (RQ1)* - All participants clearly understood the concept of social class, they quickly identified their position within the class spectrum but were unable to clearly define class boundaries preferring to reminisce about class identity from a historical perspective. It appears that sub-classes exist amongst the working class; the notion of a 'lower' class with a clear separation

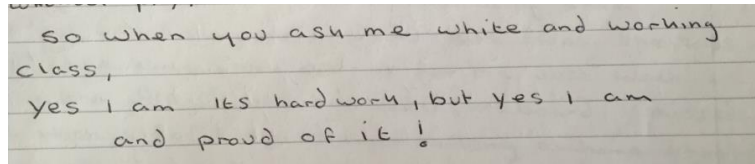
from the respectable working class most participants identified with. Some respondents discussed class in terms of income and/or occupation but many referred to class markers such as clothes, language, social practices and lifestyle choices.

*Perceptions of class (RQ2)* – Despite demonstrating a sense of pride in their class position, most participants were aware of the stigma associated with the working class, many drew upon the outside perspective in terms of local viewpoints and wider political and media representations. The findings also reinforce many of the earlier points raised regarding social mobility and the exclusion of the working class.

This chapter will explore these themes further using examples from both secondary and primary data gathered in Camp Hill whilst also projecting these to wider discourses. Where direct quotations are included, I have used the pseudonyms identified in the methodology to indicate the characteristics of the participant whilst also ensuring anonymity where possible.

#### **4.1 Defining Class**

The subject of social class was explored with all participants; it was a concept that all were aware of yet few were able to articulate concisely. Class position was not directly referred to until questioned specifically, but a clear notion of a social hierarchy was evident. The findings support the previously discussed view that accurately defining class to everyone's satisfaction is an impossible task, definitions of the working class are diversified. However, many identified as working class before the question was specifically asked, and almost all respondents clearly stated that they are working class, despite some belonging to the middle class according to the earlier mentioned theoretical definitions. On the national scale, the BSA (2013) reports that sixty-one percent of respondents to their research identify as working class, evidently class position is still recognised. This refutes Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst's view that, with class comes cultural baggage and, as a result, "defining oneself in class terms is seen as a political statement most people are unwilling to make" (2001: 878). Only one respondent refused to identify as working class, but also refused to be identified as any class, suggesting instead that classism is discrimination, much like racism; a point raised later. The class ambivalence suggested by Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst (2001) and the dis-identification amongst the disadvantaged working class expressed by Skeggs (1997) were also not apparent. Such dis-identification may have been seen as a form of betrayal in front of peers, the pride associated with identifying as, and being, working class was strongly evident amongst participants despite the negative perception which is believed to be held. Of the twenty-eight participants who stated they were working class, eighteen used the word 'proud' in the sentences following their self-identification. Some even stated that they would not change their class identity despite any changes to their personal circumstances.



**Figure 12: Handwritten Account from Participant (Denise)**

*"Yes I'm working class, very much so, and proud of it. I won't change." (Charlotte)*

Such class pride may be seen as a defiant response to external perceptions of their 'lower' position in society. Sayer (2002) suggests that being proud to be working class has a rationale in that their lack of any undeserved advantage relative to others allows them to occupy the moral high ground. Any success achieved is a result of hard work rather than inherited wealth or the luck of birth position, in fact, they could claim they are owed a debt because of their disadvantage and relative social exclusion. Such pride in one's class position could be seen as problematic in that it demonstrates a form of apathy and acceptance rather than any drive to amend perceptions of the working class. In the earlier discussion, it was identified that researchers suggest perceptions should be changed. It appears to be a complex issue, particularly when trying to understand *how* changes can be made.

Participants were asked *How would you define white working class communities?* and *What does being working class mean to you?* The responses were collated and are presented as a word cloud in using *Wordle*<sup>16</sup> in Figure 13. Presenting data in this way is an emerging method of visually representing qualitative data which demonstrates the frequency and variety of words used (Ramlo

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<sup>16</sup> Wordle is one of many online tools which have been developed to design and create word clouds. See [www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net)

2011). It allows common words to be emphasised and viewed in one method rather than presenting it in other forms such as a table or graph.



**Figure 13: The Frequent Terms Associated by Respondents when Defining or Being Working Class**

From the language and terms used, we can observe that the emphasis was on paid work; work that is seen to be manual and hard. Specific job roles were used as an example of typical working class employment, such as bus and lorry drivers, factory workers, builders, general labourers and “anything which involves getting your hands dirty” (Oliver). As Camp Hill is an ex-mining community, understandably many of the residents associated mining with the working class, a vocation frequently referred to in media when discussing the ‘lower’ social classes. There was a strong emphasis on working hard in low skilled, low paid work in order to pay bills with little left over. Working class people are referred to as ‘down to earth’, ‘respectful’ and displayed a sense of solidarity. There was a sense of ‘knowing your place’, working class people are always the ‘toilers’ never the bosses. Defining what it meant to be working class presented a varied response, during



interviews and focus groups this question often led to hesitation, with some saying that it was impossible to describe.

*“You could walk into Asda tomorrow and pick twenty people and I think they’d all have a very different perception of what a working class, white working class was.” (Yvette, Stakeholder)*

Participants frequently referred to the way you were raised, what sort of house you live in, the things you do, the way you speak and “the way you were conditioned growing up” (Oliver). Some referred to the physical appearance of the working class in terms of calloused hands, lined faces and bad teeth (Colin, Sandra). One stakeholder suggested that class definitions do not mean very much, especially in the community and that putting people into classes is discrimination (Arun), another stated that she does not like to “put people into compartments” (Susan). No participant responded with any reference to formal measures of class such as the NRS or NS-SEC, this could be seen as a rejection of social class as a rigid, recognised structure or it could be that participants are not aware of these systems of classification. Although, for formal clarification purposes, residents of Camp Hill would likely fit within classes 5, 6 and 7 of the GBCS. Savage et al. (2013) notes that the *Precariat* (7) are mostly represented amongst old industrial areas but away from large urban areas, blue-collar workers and higher than average social housing. This is a fairly accurate description of Camp Hill. Although, fifteen percent of the population fit in the precariat class only one percent of GBCS respondents fitted this profile, as Savage (2015:333) puts it, the GBCS’s “missing people”. Savage argues that the elite and well-educated found the research to be a good way of expressing their cultural confidence, the precariat did not. “Rendering their invisibility more visible is vital to bringing contemporary class relationships to light” (2015:333). To many, their class was identified as a story, as suggested by Boyce (2014), participants frequently backed up their identity based upon the jobs they or their parents had for example, miner, bus driver, pot bank, factory worker, cleaner and lorry driver. Nine of the ten stakeholders used the story of their

upbringing to justify being working class and in all focus groups, participants spent some time exploring their backgrounds. That class is a 'lived experience' is supported by many researchers (see Kuhn 1995, Charlesworth 2000), or as Baggini states in *Welcome to Everytown* "class is a state of mind" (2007).

*"It's how you're brought up. It's a mind-set, you might become a bit richer but you will always be working class."* (Barbara, Stakeholder)

*"It's where you come from, my mum was a cleaner and dad worked on pot bank."* (Jenna, Participant)

*"And I think it's also how you feel inside. I'm technically middle class but I don't feel middle class I still feel working class. I feel at one with people erm ... I have to say I feel more at one in this building [Council Office] with the cleaner than I do with some of the directors."* (Roger, Stakeholder)

In the last quote above, the respondent suggested that class is a feeling inside of you. This point echoes Kuhn's statement, "Class is not just about the way you talk, or dress, or furnish your home; it is not just about the job you do or how much money you make doing it; nor is it merely about whether or not you have 'A' levels or went to university, nor which university you went to. Class is something beneath your clothes, under your skin, in your reflexes, in your psyche, at the very core of your being" (1995. 98).

## **4.2 Changes in Perceptions of Class**

The findings suggest some evidence of the changing perception of class, particularly with reference to the younger generation having less interest in their class identity. In the focus groups, older participants appeared to have a stronger view regarding social class and validating their position, whilst younger respondents tended to agree with these views and seemed to be strongly influenced by the views of their elders. The findings from the GBCS are similar and demonstrate that younger respondents were less likely to identify themselves with a social class suggesting that class identities could be becoming less powerful over time and that younger people are more resistant to them (Savage 2015). However, Allen and Mendick (2013) argue that as the younger population age, perhaps they will begin to see its prevalence more having 'lived' the experience. Additionally, Hollingworth and Williams' (2009) paper argues that social class is still a major force at work in young people's lives; particularly in the context of schooling and education. The complexity occurs because young people do not recognise the traditional narratives related to social class, instead recognising terms such as 'chav' or 'dosser'. Many of the younger participants were already quite aware of the negative stereotypes associated with the working class.

Respondents reflected the shifting debate with reference to a new breed of working class, those in the service sector or office workers, "I think that most people in Nuneaton don't do manual jobs any longer and I think it's still a very working class town" (Roger). The concept of the educated working class person had changed and it appears that the concept of ordinary people doing extra educational work had only served to swell the middle class. Five stakeholders acknowledged that you cannot be working class and be recognised as being educated. One stakeholder (Colin) felt that working class is an old fashioned, out of date term. Another suggested that the term should be abolished because it is derogatory and that "all people should be proud to work, it's a commitment to civil society" (Tom).

Memories of previous times were frequently expressed and often romanticised but it was also recognised that times were hard, particularly during the miners' strikes of the eighties. In the earlier literature review, there appeared to be a conflict in terms of positive memories of a 'golden age', in contrast with the view that life was tougher for the working class historically. The findings in this research mirror this conflict, participants appeared to move from 'life was good back then' to 'kids today don't know they're born'. The working class had a bond which brought them together in solidarity and support for each other mirroring the 'golden age' defined by the Britain Thinks Survey (2011). Whilst the survey suggests these characteristics are disappearing, there is strong evidence of its existence in some areas of Camp Hill, this will be explored later. Older respondents referred to times when doors were left open, people chatted in the front gardens, children played in the streets and raising a family was a communal effort. For many, this romantic notion of the past stems from the simplicity of how life used to be.

*"It used to take me an hour to walk to the shops because every Tom, Dick and Harry would stop me for a chat, it was great. It's a five-minute round trip now... that's pretty sad isn't it?"* (Sandra,

Participant)

*"We used to be on the doorsteps, we'd speak to anybody. It ain't the same nowadays, we're not in and out of each other's houses."* (Jenna, Participant)

*"When we were little 'uns we used to play down the bottom woods for hours. I won't let my kids in the street nowadays, too many bloody weirdos about."* (Denise, Participant)

*"Kids nowadays don't know they're born. It was tough back then but I reckon we were happier, the simple life eh?"* (Oliver, Stakeholder)

This reminiscing may reflect the feelings of loss and longing opined by Loveday (2014), the intensity of changes in Camp Hill and in wider society may leave some residents bewildered by the pace of

these changes. This nostalgia or longing is for a home that no longer exists, perhaps a sentiment of loss and displacement as many of the older residents were born and raised in the condemned houses (explored later). One participant stated “we make the best of what we’ve got in the hope that things will improve in the future” (Susan). The possibility of imagining a better future is held by many, one in which the value of working-class lives is accorded recognition and worth (Pickering and Keightley 2006, Loveday 2014).

Several authors have acknowledged that working class people are rarely taken seriously (see Lawler 2005, Back 1996). It is considered that working class people cannot know or understand themselves and their situation, instead believing that they cannot articulate their understandings, perceptions and feelings particularly well. This research suggested the opposite. Participants were easily able to discuss their feelings and perceptions regarding their position in society, although there are some examples of a lack of confidence and apathy. The confusion lay in the inability to provide a clearly defined boundary to the definition of the class with which they identify: a problem shared by theorists and wider society.

Participants were generally quite sceptical about the external perception, particularly how the media portray the working class, and the world that is presented on television.

*“You look at the media, look at the BBC... I’m generally a big fan of the BBC but look at the presenters on BBC One there is hardly anybody with a working class background, the vast majority have been to public schools. I think that’s the view put across, is that the working class are some other section that live in a different world and I think that’s got worse, I don’t think it’s got any better.” (Roger, Stakeholder)*

*“All of the people on the telly are posh, you know they’re rich and just think we’re scum.” (Marion, Participant)*

*“The media really don’t help us raise aspirations within the working classes. With programmes like Benefits Street and Shameless, people have just given up trying to change perceptions. Now they just play along.” (Oliver, Stakeholder)*

As explored by Hills (2015), any visitor to Britain following our media could be forgiven for thinking it is all very straightforward. A majority suffering the effects of the economic recession are forced to pay handouts to a minority living on benefits who have never worked and have no intention of doing so. This was raised by both stakeholders and residents, several stakeholders were concerned with the way local and national media portray Camp Hill and similar neighbourhoods. One (John) commented on the way a national television programme portrayed Camp Hill in a documentary regarding a local ‘paedophile hunter’ (Channel 4: 2014a). The main figure in the programme asked “Do you know this [Camp Hill] is the roughest place in the Midlands?” The stakeholder was frustrated and felt that the programme appeared to undo “years of work put in to change to perception of the area” (John). A resident (Debbie) gave the example of how local media reports crimes, “the Trib [local newspaper the *Nuneaton Tribune*] will always say ‘Nuneaton man attacks partner’ but if he’s from Camp Hill they will always say ‘Camp Hill man...’ they never do that with Whitestone [more affluent area] people or other areas of Nuneaton”. Media portrayals often further the view that the working class are forgotten and voiceless and that they are unlikely to vote (Nelson 2014), therefore it does not matter how they are presented in the media because it is unlikely that there will be political repercussions. A stakeholder stated “the only people with a real voice are those in the media and those in the establishment” (Tom).

*“If we’re talking about in the media, I often hear that somebody was brought up on a council estate, which I was, but the immediate impression for that is that it was lawless, most people didn’t go to work, there was vandalism etc. There was an image in the media that a council estate was bad, which is totally overlooking the great number of people that were brought up on council*

*estates. So I think white working class is seen as a sort of subculture. Which you might call lower working class I suppose.” (Roger, Stakeholder)*

### **4.3 Working Class or Underclass?**

A common similarity amongst participants was that the working class *worked*, a clear distinction was drawn between those who did and did not work, and being in employment allows one to make a positive contribution to society. It was frequently cited that working class people do not claim benefits and do not depend on anyone else. It was expressed by some that relying on benefits was not an option, welfare dependency was perceived somewhat negatively and the allocation of resources was not shared equally.

*“Young mums with their houses, people on benefits for years yet seem to be better off than me with their cars outside and latest fashions which I can’t afford.” (Cheryl, Participant)*

*“You hear about so and so, sixteen and pregnant and you think ‘Yeah, I’m paying for that’, carry on love, the tax man will just keep clobbering me every month not you.” (Jenna, Participant)*

In all of the focus groups it was implied that those who do not work, do not belong to the working class. Some referred to an underclass or a ‘lower’ class and the stigma associated with welfare dependency was apparent, with residents distancing themselves from those deemed to claim unfairly. One participant advised that she worked as a cleaner at the Job Centre and would see people from Camp Hill ‘signing on’. She knew that they were working as well but wouldn’t report them as they had seen her, would know it was her and there would be repercussions. This reflects the views of Goffman (1970) who highlights the circumstance as being culturally offensive or unacceptable and the longer the dependency lasts the more likely it redefines one’s social life in terms of the stigma. Jensen (2014) reports on a symbolic distinction between ‘worker’ and ‘shirker’, ‘striver’ and ‘skiver’, a distinction frequently referred to by participants in this research.

*“A Chav is a chav, a chav is not a worker, they’re the dossers, sitting around all day doing nothing.” (Mandy, Participant)*



There was only minimal evidence of participants using the negative language and labels identified in the earlier literature review to describe those who are not working or are claiming welfare. None of the stakeholders used derogatory terms, in two focus groups there was a discussion which led to using terms such as 'dossers' and 'scroungers', yet none referred to the more animalistic terms outlined in the earlier literature. This may be due to the nature of a recorded focus group or interview. It may also be a form of solidarity for those in a similar situation to themselves. Some participants stated that they had at some point been dependent on welfare due to a variety of factors. There did appear to be a general acceptance of those receiving welfare to support low incomes from employment and for those who have, or care for someone who has medical needs. Within the focus groups there were several participants who were currently unemployed or in receipt of welfare due to health issues, these reasons were legitimised by other group members on the basis that either they had already contributed enough in tax to the welfare system or that theirs was a genuine need for welfare.

*Mick: "Oh dear, I think I'm a chav."*

*Sandra: "Yeah, you do wear a cap and joggers."*

*Mandy: "But you did work on the coal board for forty year....."*

*Sandra: "You've put more than your fair share in the pot, you ain't no chav."*

*Mandy: "No, you're definitely not 'Mick', don't you worry about that."*

Participants were keen to be defined within the respectable or moral boundaries rather than the immoral underclass as Buckingham (1999) describes. The pride and willingness to be identified as working class appears to be more prevalent if a 'lower' class is identified; therefore, participants were not admitting to be on the lowest rung of the social ladder. One resident (Cheryl) noted that

she had been advised that she could use the food bank but refused because “that just ain’t me”. There are, however, many users of the food banks in Camp Hill; such is the demand, that other foodbanks in the County send their surplus donations to Camp Hill. The denial of support reflects the stigmatisation of such support and welfare, as identified earlier by Titmuss (1974). This stigma causes problems for those in real need of help. It is more acceptable to be working class if there is a category which sits below them and separates them from the stigma of failure often pinned upon an underclass. There was a general acceptance, particularly among residents that those who do rely upon welfare unjustly were not ‘people like us’, as Smith (1992) and Morris (1994) recognise: they lie outside of any class hierarchy or societal structure. One resident wrote down her experiences and handed them to me with her completed diary, it is worth quoting her view at length.

*“When I left my job I was so down, bored, I missed the work life. I volunteered for HomeStart for a bit which passed the day when kids were at school. I got a job for twenty hours a week but still needed council tax and housing benefit help. I became ill and was put on three medications but I couldn’t afford the prescriptions so I only took one. Kids grew up and I got more hours, for once I felt good, standing on my own two feet, with this came confidence but it took its toll. I was working two jobs, one straight after the other to make ends meet. My doctor told me if I didn’t slow down I was in line for a stroke or heart attack. I couldn’t slow down too much as I had rent, bills to pay. Damned if I do, damned if I don’t.” (Denise, Diary)*

When asked what the outside perception of the working class is, some of the residents translated this to mean the outside perception of Camp Hill. Figure 14 presents the words most frequently used by participants.



**Figure 14: Frequent Terms Respondents Perceived as Being the Outside Perception of the Working Class**

The outside perception of the working class was viewed as wholly negative by stakeholders and within focus groups, and that there is a stigma attached which cannot be easily shaken off. One stakeholder commented that “working class should be a proud term, not derogatory” (Roger). Respondents reported a feeling of being tarnished as uneducated, dumb, dangerous, lawless, trouble and labelled as layabouts, criminals, scum, crap and chavs. When asked how these perceptions could be changed, the majority of residents suggested that they cannot and that it wasn’t worth trying. One stakeholder expressed the difficulty of changing perceptions.

*"I use the metaphor of the rough pub that they avoided to go to when they were first drinking. Now you know what that pub is in your own mind. I know what the pub is in my mind. That pub has either closed down or changed management ten times and been refurbished four times but the perception is still the same." (John, Stakeholder)*

Hanley (2007) discusses the option of playing up to the stereotypes that many people on the outside so desperately want to believe, if you cannot beat them then join them. It might be easy for outsiders to lay the blame on those who are deemed too weak to climb the ladder of social mobility but the pressure may only increase the feeling that “you are simply not entitled to the best that life has to offer” (2007: 181). The outside view of Camp Hill was also perceived as negative, one participant described a time when it was referred to as “the armpit of the universe” (Roger), other terms such as “tramp hill” (Norma), “sink estate” (John) “scum of Nuneaton” (Barry) and “council scum” (Jenna) were used. Some provided specific examples of how they were demonised by those outside of Camp Hill, for example being denied a loan due to their postcode (Roger) and losing a cleaning job once their area of residence was identified, “in case I might steal the family jewellery.” (Debbie)

*“[They’re] scared of us like we’re dangerous and trouble, think we’re thick and look down on us.”*

(Rick, Participant)

*“I wasn’t born in Camp Hill, I was born in Stockingford [neighbouring ward], you’d never get me living in Camp Hill cos of what I’d heard but I moved to Tudor Road with my fiancée. I’ve never regretted moving to Camp Hill, I wish I’d moved years ago.”* (Geoff, Participant)

*“They say ‘Ah you’re from Camp Hill’, they ask how many kids you got? What benefits you claiming? Bet your old man’s out of work. We’re not horrible people.”* (Arun, Stakeholder)

*“When they hear you’re from Camp Hill, they look down their noses at you”* (Natalie, Participant)

*“Camp Hill people keep coal in the bath and abuse their children. Pit-bull dogs are looked after better than their children. St. Georges flags, skin heads, criminals and layabouts. There’s good and bad in all.”* (Colin, Stakeholder)

This is reminiscent of Orwell's (1937: 34) depiction that miners only keep baths to store coal in, not for cleanliness. Many key stakeholders were keen to change the perception of Camp Hill and had taken various steps to try and alter the outside view, but one commented "perceptions of Camp Hill are always hard to overcome, I'd love to know how to change people's minds, I really don't know how" (Susan). Residents generally recognised that the stigma associated with Camp Hill will not change, somewhat worn down by many years of negative viewpoints. This view was expanded by some to include any council estate across the country (Mick, Jenna). As a deprived neighbourhood, Camp Hill could be seen as "a no-go area for some" and a "no exit zone for others" (SEU 2002:4).

#### **4.4 Whiteness**

Participants throughout all elements of data collection and observations made little direct reference to 'whiteness'. Camp Hill is predominantly white British (96.3 percent) with a small, but growing, Nepalese community from the local Army barracks (Queens Gurkhas 30<sup>th</sup> Signals Regiment) who appear to be well respected in Camp Hill and the wider Nuneaton community. The Ministry of Defence purchased a small number of houses built as part of the regeneration to house retired members of the regiment. There is a small minority of black (2.02 percent) and Asian (2.18 percent) residents (Census 2011), some residents did comment on the lack of ethnic minorities in the area (Sandra, Emma, Tom).

*"I don't really know anybody outside that are not... white. I mean I don't... I'm sorry to say I don't... there's a couple of people on the estate that I know and I get on ever so well with them, I think they're lovely but erm... I don't really know that many people to have an opinion."* (Barbara, Stakeholder)

According to Stenning et al (2006), it is estimated that over 400,000 Eastern Europeans arrived in the UK between 1947 and 1951, the period immediately following the Second World War. This wave of migrants comprised a combination of post-war refugees and displaced persons as well as European Volunteer Workers (EVW's) who arrived under a scheme, which permitted the immigration of thousands of workers into regions with unmet demand for labour in post-war reconstruction (McDowell 2009: 20). During this period, a number of Hungarian refugees were housed in a residential centre in Camp Hill along with other people who moved from Poland, Latvia and the former Yugoslavia for work in local mines. Some of the older residents met their partners through the residential centre and this brought some early diversity to the area (Thomson and Tulip 2012). In one focus group, reference was made to the small but growing number of Eastern Europeans moving to the area in more recent years

*“Drayton Way is like little Poland, but they don’t cause us any problems” (Sandra, Participant)*

*“I’ve got nothing against them, I’ve got nothing against any of them really” (Mick, Participant)*

As identified by Clarke and Garner (2010: 46) the real test of belonging in a working class community is the attainment of invisibility. “Hiding oneself and keeping the noise down” is seen to be the correct behaviour for minority groups. Although Eastern European migrants are white-skinned, Moore (2013) noted that they are frequently viewed as a different ‘shade’ of white because ‘they’ do not perform whiteness in the same way as ‘us’. This can be seen by the language used in the quote by Sandra above, “they do not cause us any problems” and by Mick, “I’ve got nothing against them”. Both suggest a barrier exists which disassociates ‘them’ from ‘us’. It is not entirely clear from these research findings the extent to which Eastern Europeans are integrated in the community. The Director of the regeneration project suggested that when a new Polish family arrives in Camp Hill they seek out one particular woman who helps them meet other Polish families. Whilst this was not overtly apparent from the focus groups, it appears that there could be a divide between Eastern Europeans and other community members. As discussed previously, the existence of various ‘shades’ of whiteness recognised by Hartigan (1999) could be significant in that the class markers of difference recognised by community members see Eastern European migrants as ‘racially’ white, but culturally ‘other’ through clothing and hairstyles, language, labour and working conditions. Moore (2013) argues that marginal white groups are perceived by dominant whites as ‘not quite white’ enough to fit in mainstream society through their construction of the ‘other’ as seen in the comments shared by participants in this research.

The minimal reference to whiteness or minority groups in Camp Hill may be because of the predominantly white ethnicity of the area, however, one stakeholder (Oliver) suggested that this view may change if there was a sudden influx of non-white residents threatening to take a share of

valuable resources. The only reference to unequal sharing of resources was to the newer 'problem families' which have moved in as part of the regeneration, not in terms of their ethnicity (discussed later). Although, as highlighted by Garner (2009), Eastern Europeans sometimes face the same response as black and Asian migrants. In Camp Hill the population of Eastern European migrants has risen but they do not appear to have threatened the availability of resources, particularly in terms of social housing, in one focus group they discussed the view that "Polish people work damned hard, they don't claim or anything" (Denise). The Director of the regeneration project stated that the Eastern Europeans who have moved into the area are either privately renting or have bought a house, he also noted that they are seen to be accessing public services in the area particularly with the local schools and parent/child groups. What was not clear was the extent to which Eastern Europeans are integrated with other members of the community.

It may be that residents in Camp Hill do not see whiteness as a defining characteristic of class or that it is considered irrelevant to most white people, as they do not identify with having a racial or ethnic identity (Clarke and Garner 2010). The argument is not that whiteness is actually invisible, but that it appears so unmarked to the majority of white people that in their eyes, it is not a core part of their identity. Perhaps residents see solidarity with other minority groups, as Jones (2011) argues that the white working class have themselves become a marginalised ethnic minority. The notion of 'dirty whites' or 'filthy whites' are associated with the white working class through media portrayals (Nayak 2003). The marginalisation of the working class in terms of overall white identity shows an overlap with the concept of 'dirty whiteness' and 'clean whiteness' to illustrate the complexity of whiteness and class (Beider 2015). The limited discussion regarding race and ethnicity amongst participants could simply suggest that they are not the racists that they are frequently labelled to be, one resident commented "I don't see the difference between white working class and black working class, isn't it just about working and working hard?" (Denise). Only one



participant in this research was non-white (Arun), he was a prominent member of the Muslim community in another area of Nuneaton but worked in the Early Years Centre in Camp Hill. He commented that as a black professional he had never encountered any major issues working in the community, he stated “I class it as a very white ethnic community, ethnic community because it is deprived, aren’t we all just struggling to survive together? (Arun)” As stated by Hill (2009), “patronising comments about the white working class serve only to reinforce the rhetoric of race while subtly distracting us from the realities of class division”. Working class people of all ethnicities will always lose out from an economic system based on the values and beliefs of those above them.

**4.5 Social Mobility and Exclusion**

The pride in being working class was evident from those interviewed and, as such, the aspiration to be socially mobile appeared minimal. Although social mobility in Britain is said to be declining (Milburn 2014, Harrison 2013), it appears to be even more so with the participants of this study. The gap between the wealthy and the ‘lower’ classes was highlighted by a number of participants (Faye, Oliver, Colin, Martyn, Sandra). Data taken from the Warwickshire Observatory (2015) suggests that Camp Hill falls well below the national averages in terms of the social mobility trackers used by the government. For example:

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**Table 15: Social Mobility Trackers - Camp Hill / National Average (Warwickshire Observatory 2015)**

The *State of the Nation* report (SMCPC 2013) warned that “entrenched inequality and flatlining mobility have been decades in the making”, the report highlights the difficulty and slow progress of breaking the transmission of disadvantage from one generation to the next. In Camp Hill, there has been a history of unstable relations with the labour market with the decline of industry in the area (mining, brick and tile works). This has seen two generations with limited work opportunities and the younger generation are likely to have experienced parents out of work.

At the same time, there was a notion of betrayal from some towards those who move away from the working class, some suggesting that class is where you're from, not what you are now, this also creates jealousy from those left behind.

*"Some people will not acknowledge that they are working class, they deny their past. They detest their own lives. They don't want to be ordinary working people. Those who are middle class detest the working class, they don't want to pay them what they're worth because they'd be nothing left for themselves. They pay themselves much more for little extra effort and work. It's just exploiting the workers."* (Barry, Participant)

*"The likes of those upper classes, they look down at the likes of us, they ain't got a clue about hard work or what it's like to struggle."* (Sandra, Participant)

*"The working class are very honest; they just say what they think. The middle class don't do that."*  
(Oliver, Participant)

There was some confusion over what being middle class meant. When do you change from working class to middle class? How do you know when you have switched? In one focus group (B), members agreed that being middle class is about personal aspirations, manners and morals which are different to those possessed by the working class. Another group (D), said that the working class swear a lot more than the middle class. Sayer (2005) suggests that different social groups attempt to claim for themselves certain virtues which others are believed to lack. In particular, the example of the working class identifying as down to earth whereas the middle class are pretentious. "It is particularly strong in groups which are anxious about their position in terms of both how they are regarded from above and the risk of falling into the groups below them" (Sayer 2005: 953). It seems that defining the middle class is just as troublesome as defining the working class. Some academics state that it is declining, others that it is increasing in size. Jones (2014) argues that the middle class

only exists as a barrier to keep the working class away from the upper class or, as Wahrman (1995) described, the middle class act as a kind of mediating force between the small aristocratic upper class and the working class majority. One stakeholder suggested that the middle class “are really just working class in denial, if you have to earn a living to survive then you’re working class” (Colin). In opposition to the negative views of the working class, McKenzie (2015) stated “I understood my position in society as working class but I thought that was the best class to be. The middle class were boring, and the upper class were cruel – they hurt animals and sent their children away”, perhaps this is a form of defensiveness to justify the validity and contribution of the working class in society.

One participant (Norma) commented that working class people do not necessarily aspire to move up the social ladder because they are happy with their lives as they are. There are some contradictions with other findings where participants discuss the possibility of a better future (outlined later). Although, it was widely recognised that those from working class communities do not have the same opportunities in life as the wealthier in society. This view draws parallels with the idea of ‘knowing your place’, with one participant (Norma) remarking about someone who has “ideas above their station” for wanting to go to University. This may represent a form of oppression enforced upon similar communities, a betrayal from their origins.

*“You’ve got to look at the bright child in the, you know, the working class family and the not so bright child in the better off and they’re always going to do better.” (Faye)*

A recent report from the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2015) recognised that success is considered to be just reward where it has been achieved on the basis of merit, but a social injustice if gained as a result of parental wealth and status. “A society in which the success or failure of children with equal ability rests on the social and economic status of their parents is

not a fair one. Not only is it unfair but it is a waste of the talents of those with potential from less advantaged backgrounds; damaging for the individuals, the economy and society” (2015: 1). As working class people struggle to break through the class ceiling, middle class children frequently benefit from a glass floor protecting them from slipping down the social scale. Several authors recognise that middle class families frequently use their own connections to advance their children’s education (see Allat 1993, Ball 2003, Reay, David and Ball 2005). The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission report found that less able, richer children were thirty-five percent more likely to become high earners than brighter, poorer peers. One participant (Natalie) commented, “families which struggle always aim to make a better life for their children, we always want for them more than what we had when we were younger”.

Residents frequently referred to the struggles faced as a working class person, and that the gap between the rich and poor is getting wider. However, some also suggested that you do not owe anyone, except perhaps a mortgage, and what little is left over was not saved but spent on ‘playing hard’. The view of not owing anyone may be exaggerated in that many are known to owe debts, payday lenders particularly focus on those receiving lower incomes. One resident informed me privately that she had relied upon loan companies for years to pay for Christmas and birthday presents and she was not alone amongst her peers. There appear to be feelings of shame associated with borrowing money or dependency on others, an admission that some participants were unwilling to share with peers. The Office of Fair Trading believes as much as £1.8 billion a year is lent in the UK by payday lenders (OFT 2015). Borrowing money from payday and doorstep lenders are almost entirely utilised by those without the adequate means to loan funds from more legitimate sources, this may be due to irregular income, a poor credit rating or unfixed accommodation. In order to legitimise their ability to participate in regular consumer society, people perhaps look to such lenders to source funds which allow them to purchase items which

demonstrate their worth as individuals and are therefore not “flawed consumers” (Bauman 2005). Data on the levels of debt in Camp Hill were not available for this research, however some stakeholders raised this as an issue, with one stating “debt is the biggest problem in Camp Hill” (Susan). There are a number of agencies in operation to support residents with debt problems across the area (Health Centre, Early Years Centre, CHESS Centre, Primary School and Opportunities Centre) which suggests it may be a bigger problem than apparent in focus groups. The perception in the focus groups suggested that being in debt was not something that would typify the working class but it is unlikely that a participant would admit to this in a group environment as this would be a statement of failure to manage resources and be a part of ‘regular’ society. It may be that not being in debt or dependent upon welfare is an aspiration of the ideal for the working class, but such aspirations are not always achievable in the realities of working class existence.

#### **4.6 Class Identity: A Summary**

This chapter sought to identify how the working class viewed themselves (RQ1<sup>17</sup>). Existing literature and research provided minimal evidence of the working class voice in terms of class definitions and perceptions of class. The primary data gathered from participants demonstrated a clear awareness of the concept of social class and of a class hierarchy. Respondents were unable to clearly define class boundaries but emphasised the role of hard and manual work as a key characteristic, almost all defined themselves as working class and displayed a sense of class pride. The idea that social class was a rigid, recognised structure was rejected in favour of historical perspectives, stories and background information. This finding highlights the causal mechanisms evident in defining class; historical values and meanings attributable to class position do not stem from conventional structural definitions. This reminiscing of previous times presented some contradictions moving from describing a 'golden age', to discussing how times were tough for the working class. These contradictions were also apparent in the earlier literature review where theorists appeared not to agree on whether life is getting more difficult for the working class, or that it could be the terms to define and describe them are simply evolving. This contradiction presents problems to the working class and policymakers alike given that political discourse is overwhelmingly aspirationally driven for everyone.

Participants were keen to draw a distinction between the working class and non-working class. The notion of a 'lower' class exists with a clear separation from the respectable working class most participants identified with. They recognised the gap between the rich and poor and presented a

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<sup>17</sup> **RQ 1:** What does it mean to be working class: Do conventional social class definitions offer a valid explanation to current societal structures?

conflict in terms of social mobility: from one view, the hope for a better future; to the other, that they are happy with their position in society. The external perceptions of class (RQ2<sup>18</sup>) were recognised and explored by participants, particularly in terms of the stereotypes represented within the media. Coverage within existing literature and research regarding the effect of these perceptions on the working class appeared to be limited, however, discussions with participants paint a picture of hopelessness. Portrayals of the working class in the media focus on the negative extremes which appear to stigmatise and reinforce this as typical of all who are working class. It is increasingly rare for such representation to investigate and illustrate the root causes and causal mechanisms of such circumstances. As a result, poverty and welfare dependence is seen as a personal choice due to negligent behaviour, rather than a growing societal issue originating from a widening gap in social mobility and increased social exclusion. The lack of power to change external perceptions was evident from residents, there was a sense that it was somewhat easier to go along with the stereotypes. Stakeholders presented the will and desire to bring about a change in perceptions but were unable to articulate *how*, in many cases, recognising the inability to bring about any long-term change in external views.

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<sup>18</sup> **RQ 2:** How do external perceptions of class identity impact on the working class themselves?



## 5.0 Voicelessness and Disconnect

This chapter will explore the sections of the overall thesis framework which address voicelessness and disconnect, and social capital and networks.

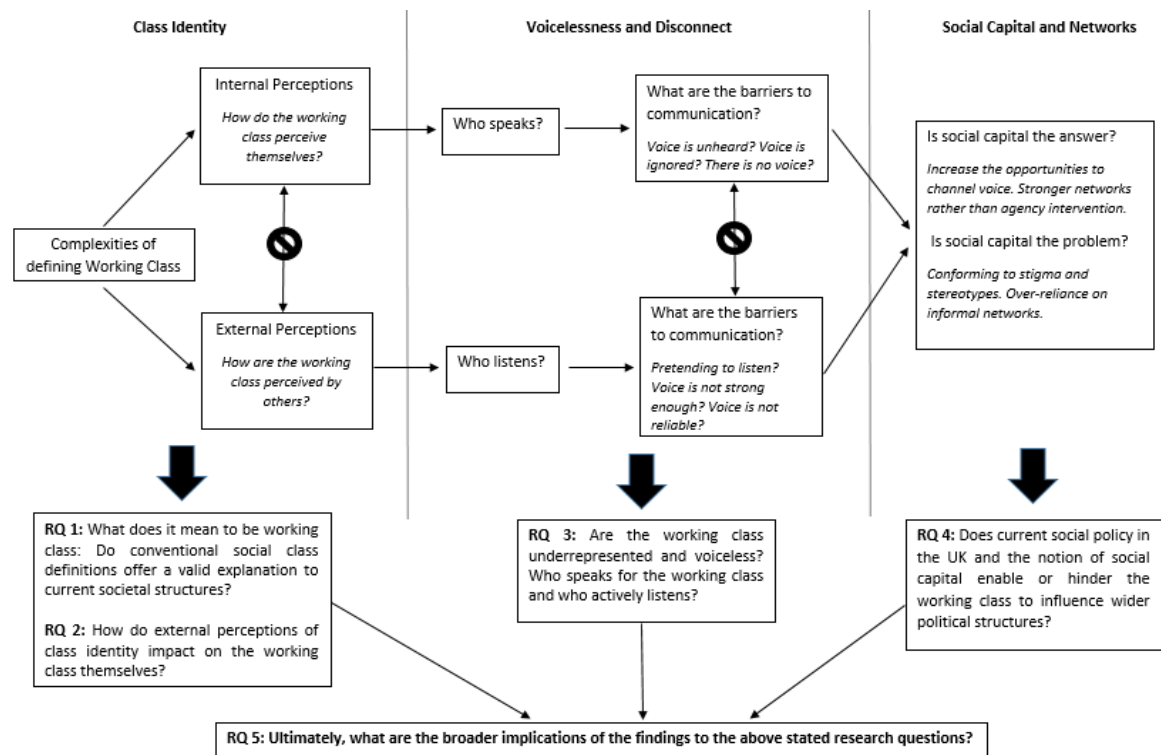


Figure 15: Thesis Conceptual Framework Revisited

Participants were keen to share their experiences regarding how their voice is communicated, in particular for residents, this related to the restricted opportunities for them to be heard and their voice valued. For stakeholders, the frustration stemmed from the lack of engagement by the community in local consultations and initiatives. Within this chapter, the following themes are explored:

*Disconnect and Voice (RQ3)* – There were many examples of disconnect provided by both stakeholders and residents. This disconnect took two general forms; physical, and metaphorical. Physically the changes to the area with the ongoing regeneration provided an example of residents’

perceived lack of control over how their community and environment develop. The metaphorical disconnect was evident through the perceived lack of opportunities to voice concerns and be listened to. In terms of stakeholders, this disconnect was the lack of understanding of the best ways to communicate with residents.

*Community Networks and Social Capital (RQ4)* – Residents frequently referred to the diminishing of community in the area, brought about by a variety of factors. Where formal networks and groups exist, there was evidence of apathy and distrust which prevented engagement. Evidence of formal or bridging social capital was low but informal or bonding social capital seemed to be higher, although in some cases this too appeared to be diminishing in recent years.

## **5.1 Physical Disconnect**

All who responded to this research frequently highlighted the changes in Camp Hill in recent years. Observations prior to data collection demonstrated the strong opinions regarding the regeneration project from both stakeholders and residents alike. As a result, the questions asked were designed to address these issues to gather views but also to move on and allow other topics to be covered. Many of the points raised by participants regarding the regeneration demonstrate how local perceptions can be represented in wider discourse. In this research, the regeneration project provides an example of how changes in the physical environment can have an effect on local residents, particularly in terms of traditional working class 'estates'. It also demonstrates how formal policies and agency intervention can impact upon the social networks which exist within these communities. Finally, this project provides the opportunity to explore how the voice of the working class is utilised within large scale policy changes at a grassroots level. We can establish how the residents were consulted, how their views shaped the project and how key agencies chose to interact with the community. Ultimately, this provides key information on how the working class may be seen as voiceless (RQ3<sup>19</sup>) and how social policy/social capital may enable or hinder working class identities to influence wider political decisions and structures (RQ4<sup>20</sup>).

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<sup>19</sup> **RQ 3:** Are the working class underrepresented and voiceless? Who speaks for the working class and who actively listens?

<sup>20</sup> **RQ 4:** Does current social policy in the UK and the notion of social capital enable or hinder the working class to influence wider political structures?

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**Figure 16: The Four Phases of the Camp Hill Regeneration Programme (Pride in Camp Hill 2014)**

*“Pride in Camp Hill is a community regeneration partnership, started in 1999, which aims to deliver long term physical, social, economic and service delivery change to Camp Hill. The aim is for Camp Hill to become a thriving, sustainable community through a series of measures, all developed with maximum community involvement.” (Pride in Camp Hill 2011)*

The regeneration area stretches over 50 hectares. The programme was divided into four phases (see Figure 16), and includes new homes, improvements to retained housing, construction of a new village centre, provision of community and recreational facilities, retail space, the integration and implementation of training and development initiatives and the redevelopment of a disused quarry into a mixed use scheme involving industrial units, leisure facilities and residential use (Pride in Camp Hill 2014). The first phase saw the completion of 172 mixed tenure housing on previously undeveloped land. The second phase created a village centre with shops and community facilities and the construction of 232 new mixed tenure homes. The third phase was the largest stage of the regeneration project with £13.5 million investment from Advantage West Midlands and £11.3 million from Homes and Communities Agencies (HCA) National Affordable Housing Programme.

The fourth phase (ongoing) will see further new homes and some light industrial units. Across all four phases around twenty-five percent of homes are defined as affordable.

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**Figure 17: Phase Three – Camp Hill Regeneration Project (IDP n.d)**

The third phase of the regeneration project was the most controversial in that 370 properties were demolished to make way for more than 800 new homes. Figure 17 demonstrates the new housing provision. A number of compulsory purchase orders were granted and, as can be expected, this generated a reaction from many residents.

*“When we first heard about the regeneration program all we heard was they were going to knock our houses down and people did get... I mean I went up and down outside the Council House with me banner you know, but then we knew it were going to happen anyway.” (Barbara, Stakeholder)*

*“Our mum was devastated, she cried for ages cause us kids had been born in that house and dad died there and you know, it’s not just bricks and mortar, it’s our memories.” (Emma, Participant)*

*"They demolished our homes, our homes. They just say houses but they were our homes, it's horrible."* (Sandra, Participant)

*"When they started the demolition my first thought was 'so where's the community going now then?'"* (Colin, Stakeholder)

The regeneration of Camp Hill evoked strong responses from stakeholders and residents alike. Many viewed the project to be negative but, in most cases, necessary to improve the area physically. A clear divide emerged between the old and new areas of Camp Hill, with residents from the old area suggesting they had been forgotten (Debbie) and left behind (Barry), one even suggested it was "like bloody Berlin, the Berlin wall separating us" (Natalie). Figure 16 demonstrates the old and new parts of Camp Hill which residents describe. Crow and Allen (1994) suggest that an 'encapsulated community' can form between residents when newcomers pose a threat to the existing community bonds. This can result in living 'parallel lives' (Home Office 2001) to those who live in the changing community around them. It was apparent in Camp Hill that those living in the old parts were disengaged from the newer areas, some felt that they were not allowed access to the newer areas and use the new community facilities, thus creating more social exclusion.

Despite the changes to the area, residents remain resilient and want to stay living in the area. Stakeholders also commented that residents wanted to stay living in Camp Hill, "Once you've lived in Camp Hill you'd never want to live anywhere else, it's a wonderful place to be" (Oliver). Figure 18 presents some Facebook posts to the local *Nuneaton Memories* page, posters were negative about the regeneration and changes to the area, but keen to defend their positive memories and decision to stay in Camp Hill. There are further examples of such posts in Appendix Fourteen.

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**Figure 18: Facebook Posts to Nuneaton Memories Page (February 2014)**

Residents expressed a lack of control over the changes taking place with some suggesting the regeneration was a form of social engineering (Oliver, Geoff). Stakeholders with responsibility for the project stated that one of the aims was to break up the dominance of social housing. It was felt that more affluent people had been “parachuted in” but also “problem families” had been moved in with little consultation with existing residents. This mirrors the findings of Hibbitt, Jones and Meegan (2001: 153) who suggested that some areas become “dumping grounds for troublemakers” during periods of regeneration. Some residents cited examples of residents forced to move out of Camp Hill who “cannot get back in if they tried” (Charlotte). Warwickshire’s *Quality of Life* report (Warwickshire Observatory 2013) identified that forty-eight percent of families on the County’s Priority Family Programme are in Nuneaton and Bedworth with the highest proportion across the whole County living in Camp Hill (8.4 percent).

*Mick: “Is this even a working class estate now? I would say 50% of this estate don’t work.”*

*Denise: "Yeah, this is where I would step in and say the 50% on this estate that don't work are the 50% that were put on this bloody estate that weren't born here."*

*Sandra: "Yeah, they're the ones drinking and drug takers..."*

*Denise: "Cos someone who was born on the estate and grew up on the estate has respect for the estate."*

*Mick: "It's the bloody councils fault. What's the point of regenerating if they're just gonna move the rough families into a brand new house? They'll just do the same here that they did there."*

*"They're still putting the problem families up here so all the nice houses in the world aren't going to make it a better place unless they get rid of the problem families." (Barbara, Stakeholder)*

It was felt by some that newer residents who had moved onto the estate were advantaged over those who had lived in Camp Hill for many years, particularly those who remain on the old estate. This point was raised by a stakeholder (Arun) who suggested that residents in the older part of Camp Hill displayed jealousy towards those in the newer houses. Some residents suggested that they had not received a fair price under the compulsory purchase orders because the money they received was not enough to buy one of the new houses being built therefore forcing existing residents to move out and newer people to move in. Somerville (2011) describes this as *anti-gentrification*, the response of existing residents to the influx of a different class of person. Traditional working class communities have been "colonised by more affluent people with different tastes and a different culture" (Allen 2008), which can result in a rise to house prices making it more difficult for existing residents to purchase houses on the estate. Government policies have facilitated and encouraged gentrification through various policies of regeneration as experienced in Camp Hill. The average cost of a house in Camp Hill has risen by five percent since 2007, compared to the national rise of 8.8 percent (ONS 2015). So it does not appear that house prices



have increased disproportionately, however what cannot be accurately established due to a lack of information, is the difference in data between the new and old areas of Camp Hill.

It was acknowledged that consultations had taken place at the beginning of the project, a view supported by key stakeholders, but that the consultation involved very limited options “that had already been decided beforehand” (Natalie).

*“They say they wanted community involvement but they didn’t listen to the community. It was done as ‘we think this is best for the community, this is what you need’... They work 9 to 5... They weren’t around in the social hours so they don’t get it.” (Colin, Stakeholder)*

*“The people getting all the praise for this project ain’t from here, they don’t know Jack from Jill. They don’t live here but they make all the decisions.” (Jenna, Participant)*

The new parts of Camp Hill have “too many strangers” and existing residents “don’t feel comfortable” (Marion), however residents in the old part of Camp Hill still recognise it as a close-knit community, furthering the earlier mentioned concept of an encapsulated community. One stated that the regeneration “took the heart out of Camp Hill” (Mandy). Figure 19 provides some further examples of the views of local residents regarding Camp Hill and the perceived changes that have occurred. There are further examples of such posts in Appendix Fourteen.

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**Figure 19: Facebook Posts to Nuneaton Memories Page (September 2014)**

Some participants had moved to the new houses and stated their general satisfaction with the physical style but felt that the regeneration had affected the sense of community, several stated that they did not know their neighbours and that very few people speak to them when they are in the street. Many felt that the community spirit in the old Camp Hill had not been established in the newer areas. Residential mobility has consistently been found to be negatively correlated with social capital at the neighbourhood level (Teachman, Paasch and Carver 1996). In communities with a high level of turnover, particularly due to urban clearance, it is likely they will experience lower social capital as they tend not to get to know their neighbours or “put down roots” (Halpern 2008: 262). Halpern also cites the mistakes made in focusing on the poor quality of housing and physical environment while failing to see the potential value and importance of the social capital of residents. Classic studies, such as that by Young and Willmott (1957), highlight the toll that forced relocation can take upon residents who find social networks and lifetime friendships broken as a result.

There was an overwhelming response for more social spaces such as pubs and social clubs where they could meet in a more informal setting. Residents were nostalgic about the Camp Hill Working

Men's Club (referred to by locals as the 'Social Club') which was demolished as part of the regeneration project.

*"Everyone went to the Social Club, it was always a busy place with football teams, darts, dominos. They used to organise days out at the seaside, races and they'd take the pensioners and kids out on day trips. Plus, the usual parties of course, children's, Christmas and Easter. It was always family orientated... it was a thriving club and I cannot understand why we cannot have the same again."* (Resident cited in Thomson and Tulip 2012: 57)

When specifically asked about the demolition, the Director of the regeneration project stated that a new pub was part of the original plan but residents in the local vicinity voted against this, prior to which no breweries responded to the tender. Some residents held the view that the plans for a pub were scrapped due to a limited budget. The area outlined for the pub at the time of writing is a green space close to the centre of Camp Hill but due to several reasons, including the increasing number of pub closures nationally (CAMRA 2014), it is unlikely a new facility will be provided. Oldenburg (1997) notes that the decline in community spirit is a symptom of the lack of third places, defined as a place which is neither home (first place) nor work (second place). He states that third places are "vital for community formation and maintenance" and that "the dominant activity is not *special* in the eyes of its inhabitants, it is a taken-for-granted part of their social existence. It is not a place outsiders find necessarily interesting or notable. It is a forum of association which is beneficial only to the degree that it is well-integrated into daily life" (1997: 271). Oldenburg also indicates that these third places should be accessible to residents and viewed by them as their own. This point is further explored by Gilchrist (2009) who recognises the need for communal spaces which are neither private nor public. Such spaces should be accessible to all people in the community, a "home from home" where regular users can share the space, converse and engage with one another whenever they chose (Schuler 1996). Hickman's (2013) research into third places

in deprived neighbourhoods in Great Britain bears similar characteristics to these findings in Camp Hill. He states that the infrastructure of a neighbourhood is important in that it performs a functional role in providing key services but, it can also be argued, that it provides a key social function by offering public space where residents can interact, or act as 'social velcro' as identified by Hanley (2007: 61). Communal spaces allow for greater social interaction which are not governed by overly formal etiquette but where safety, open access and civic responsibility can be assured (Cooper 1998) and where unplanned, informal interactions can take place (Massey 1994).

Residents of disadvantaged areas are less likely to socially interact in a work environment, they are more likely to become economically inactive and therefore lack the opportunity to interact outside the neighbourhood. For this reason, Hickman states "a strong case can be made for arguing that third places in deprived neighbourhoods are likely to be more well used than their counterparts in better off areas, and play a greater role in the lives of their residents" (2013: 2). Residents expressed a desire for a community centre, somewhere "for the community, not a County Council office building" (Charlotte). In July 2014, the last remaining pub on the outskirts of Camp Hill closed, a serious blow to communal life (Orwell 1937). *The Camp* was referred to nostalgically by residents.

*"On its busiest nights it felt like the centre of many of the customer's world. The darts and dominos teams won loads of tournaments and of course all the wives and kids tagged along too."*

(Resident cited in Thomson and Tulip 2012: 57)

*"There is no community spirit now... when they pulled down the old pub they pulled down the community."* (Resident cited in Thomson and Tulip 2012: 48)

Hunt and Satterlee (1986: 523) indicated that for many "the pub may operate as the centre of their social life, especially if there are no other social activities". In one focus group, residents expressed the need for a pub or social space which allows a "community buzz across generations" (Mick).

Many of the community activities which currently exist do so according to life stages, for example the local school, children's dance classes and the various over-fifties activities. The CHESS Centre was established as part of the regeneration project to act as the local community centre, it houses many community groups with some paid local authority staff and several other volunteers. Whilst most participants were aware of the CHESS centre, many indicated that it is too formal as people must sign in and out at the front desk. Cooper (1998) states that communal areas should provide arenas for social interaction that are not governed by formal etiquette and that offer open access and informality for users.

*"This [CHESS centre] is supposed to be a community centre but very few people come here unless it's for a very specific reason, because this is no community centre. To me a community centre is where you go for a cup of coffee and meet your friends... not here you don't."* (Charlotte, Participant)

*"The CHESS Centre is always very quiet; it has no buzz."* (Colin, Stakeholder)

*"It's a nice building I guess, but you can't just go there for a natter with your mates, it's a bit official for that really, there's CCTV and people watching you all the time so it's really only for proper groups and whatnot."* (Barbara, Stakeholder)

Savage (2015: 342) noted that people want to socialise in a different place to where they may have to go to access support from agencies. The CHESS centre has a very different environment to that of a typical pub, social club or cafe. *Pride in Camp Hill* (2011) stated "The project will offer many advantages including improved housing, leisure facilities, retail options and commercial opportunities", the leisure facilities have yet to materialise in the four phases of the regeneration programme.

Residents and some stakeholders expressed concern with the amount of space allocated in the regenerated area. Comments were made regarding the density of housing, lack of parking spaces, narrow roads and small back gardens, “they’ve put four houses where there used to be one” (Martyn). There was also concern about access for emergency vehicles, an issue I have witnessed first-hand driving through the area. The style and colour of the new housing has been likened by some to *Balamory*, the children’s television programme (Rick). Many residents, when reminiscing about the old Camp Hill, talked of times when children could play in the woods but those opportunities no longer exist. In one focus group (B), participants discussed the lack of activities for families, “They built these houses for families but there’s nothing for families to do. Keep the kid’s active ‘cause when they get bored, they get naughty” (Jenna).

The regeneration affected other aspects of the area, the restrictions and limits on shopping and retail can be seen in Camp Hill. Many smaller, independent, local shops were closed in favour of a new Co-op store, arguably a disaster for independent shopkeepers. In 1937, Orwell highlighted the preference given to the Co-op in regenerated areas, almost eighty years later it appears to still be true (1937: 65). The other shops in the village centre, at the time of writing, consist of a fish and chip shop, betting shop, chemist and a beauty salon. There is little choice compared to the independent shops which existed before. Hanley makes the observation that such estates are rarely desirable and that “someone, who, lives in a proper house, in a proper town, sat on the floor of an office one day with a box of fancy Lego bricks and laid out, with mathematical precision, a way of housing as many people as possible in as small a space as could be got away with. And, in doing so, forgot that real people aren’t inanimate yellow shapes with permanent smiles branded on their plastic bodies” (2007 5). The regeneration of Camp Hill was essential, the Director of the regeneration project outlined that the need for new housing went far beyond making the area more aesthetically pleasing. The ex-miners’ houses were not safe due to the construction type. The

houses had been built in the 1950's using the 'Wimpey no fine' method, originally this was to allow the house to breathe better but fifty years on it acted as a sponge and the concrete took on water and rotted the steel frames of the houses. It is difficult to establish how the regeneration might have been more positively received. It seems simplistic to solve the issues by building a social club/pub and more green space. Perhaps re-establishing a sense of community is something that will happen over time, although such discussions are outside the scope of this research.

It may be argued that for Camp Hill residents, all three of Oldenburg's 'places' have been disrupted in recent years. For many, their home life (first place) has changed due to relocation, the movement and dispersion of friends and family and for some the upheaval of watching their former home demolished. Several residents talked about living on a building site, one stakeholder commented on the effect that this has had on the children in the community.

*"One of the mums was chatting with me and she said that all her seven-year-old daughter had ever known was living on a building site. Nowhere is safe for them to play cause of huge trucks and building and the dust everywhere."* (Arun, Stakeholder)

The closure of the local pit, Daw Mill, in 2013 has also had a negative impact on employment in the area as one of the main employers of residents in Camp Hill. Previous employment had also been in quarrying. The local quarries, Windmill Hill and Judkins closed in 1950 and 1990 respectively. Figure 20 demonstrates the quarries, collieries, mills and brick and tile works observed in Camp Hill in 1945 (Ordnance Survey 1945), all of which no longer exist.

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**Figure 20: Camp Hill Land Use in 1945 (Ordnance Survey 1945)**

Residents have experienced changes to their place of work (second place) and most economically active residents work outside Camp Hill, commuting to Nuneaton or Coventry due to the lack of opportunities within the area. Whilst generally, unemployment has fallen in the region, there has been an increase in those deemed as long-term unemployed which accounts for twenty-eight percent of all unemployed residents. Youth unemployment has increased from three percent in 2011 to twenty-three percent in 2014 (Warwickshire Observatory 2013), it has often been reported that the longer it takes to enter employment the harder it can become. Communities in Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough are much more likely to be at risk of intergenerational unemployment than other areas in the County (Warwickshire Observatory 2013). One stakeholder (Susan) talked specifically about how policymakers need to be more innovative in their thinking in order to break the cycles from one generation to the next. The opportunities for employment within the geographic boundaries of Camp Hill are very slim. One resident explained how she became unemployed after her husband left her. He always drove her to work and the children to school. When he left, she had no transport and no family to offer support, so she was forced to leave her job and relied upon welfare until her children were old enough to go to school alone and she then



found part time work as a carer (Val). The lack of employment opportunities, further exacerbated by the decline of local industry, not only has an economic effect but also threatens their sense of identity. As Hanley (2011) argues, the loss of jobs over time “has not simply been damaging economically but also culturally”.

The *Pride in Camp Hill* regeneration programme began in 1999 and the data presented in this thesis does not demonstrate any significant improvements to bring Camp Hill in line with the wider Warwickshire County. For example, it is still seventeen percent below the County in terms of educational attainment, the out of work benefit claimant rate is 21.5 compared to the County figure of 8.1 and it is the second highest area in terms of teenage pregnancy (Warwickshire Observatory 2013). One stakeholder (Arun) reflected on his role as a Community Outreach worker, he explained how he had begun working fifteen years ago in Camp Hill, focussing on families ‘in need’. “The cycle continues in this community, the children of those families are back at the centre now as teenage mothers. They’ve never left Camp Hill”, he went on to comment that the centre is “packed with even more families and children in need than ever before”. A number of studies have shown that regeneration initiatives targeted at poorer communities over the years do not improve their position relative to other communities. Dorling (2007) reported evidence of increased polarisation with rich and poor living further apart. Regeneration has made little appreciable difference, in some cases it actually made it worse for those who still live there (e.g. enabling more affluent neighbours to move out). Leunig and Swaffield (2008) suggest that current policies mean that poorer towns will continue to get poorer relative to the rest of the country. When the national economy is doing well they will get gradually poorer, when the economy is doing badly they will get poorer faster.

## **5.2 Metaphorical Disconnect**

*"A thousand influences constantly press a working man down into a passive role. He does not act; he is acted upon. He feels himself the slave of mysterious authority and has a firm conviction that 'they' will never allow him to do this, that and the other." (Orwell 1937: 44)*

Residents frequently spoke of 'them and us', there was a clear disconnect evident between decision makers and residents. Hills highlights the distinction from the perspective of higher classes "We are always in work, pay our taxes and get nothing from the state. *They* are a welfare dependent underclass, pay nothing to the taxman and get everything from the state" (2015: 1). From the opposite perspective, "We go to work every day... We're the toilers, the workers" (Barbara), *they* are "born with a silver spoon in their mouths, who avoid paying taxes... haven't got any idea of what it's like to struggle from day-to-day" (Barry).

The findings suggest that residents prefer to stay within their closed groups of friends and families; there is minimal evidence of bridging or linking social capital. Stakeholders state low levels of engagement in community groups and a lack of understanding of how residents communicate between themselves. The community which does exist would not be easily identified by those who are from outside the area.

*"If you just sit in your house and wait for things to come to you ... Well they ain't." (Barbara, Stakeholder)*

*"Due to the lack of uniformed groups we thought that there was no community here. We made a mistake." (John, Stakeholder)*

*"Since the regeneration they have completely left the old part of the estate out, we don't know what's going on anywhere. I wouldn't know where to look anyway." (Martyn, Participant)*

There are a number of groups, networks and services which operate in Camp Hill as outlined in Table 16. These were identified from a number of sources including the *Camp Hill News*, stakeholders, residents, CHESS Centre adverts and researcher observations. Participants were asked to first list the groups, services or networks they were aware of without sight of the following list, secondly to outline what they would like to see in Camp Hill and finally, after seeing the list, to identify which they had awareness or experience of.

Group, service or network	Number of residents who independently demonstrated awareness	Number of residents who independently stated a need	Number of residents who were aware of the activities
CHESS Centre	10		17
GP Health Centre, Healthy Living Network and Health Store	3		17
Book and Toy Library (Part-time CHESS)	7		17
Dentist	1		16
Church/ Sunday School	3		16
Children's Centre/Early Years Centre	7		14
Zumba (CHESS)	1		13
Camp Hill Summer Festival	7		12
Pride in Camp Hill Project Office (CHESS)	3		11
Citizens Advice Bureau (relocated to town centre 2014)		2	11
Youth Club (CHESS)	6	2	10
Fit and Hearty Group (CHESS)	8		10
Silver Surfers (CHESS)	1		10
Camp Hill Scouts (CHESS)			10
After School Clubs			10
Over 50's Luncheon Club (Church Hall)	6		9
School Parents/Governors Meetings			9
Christmas Fayre (CHESS)			9
Neighbourhood Watch		1	9
Adult Learning Centre (CHESS)	4		8
Allotment Society			8

Group, service or network	Number of residents who independently demonstrated awareness	Number of residents who independently stated a need	Number of residents who were aware of the activities
Residents Forum (Community Café)	4		8
Dazzlers Dance Group (CHESS)	6		8
Community Radio Project	2		8
Camp Hill Holiday Scheme			7
Line Dancing (CHESS)	2		7
Children's Football Club (CHESS)	4		7
Walking for Health (GP Centre)	3		7
Family Support Service (GP Centre)		2	5
Legal Advice Service (CHESS)			5
Elderly Persons Keep Fit (CHESS)	1		4
Knitting Group (CHESS)	1		4
Opportunities Centre and Work Club (closed December 2015)	2		4
Karate (CHESS)			4
Slimming World (CHESS)	1		4
Drug/Alcohol Advice (GP Centre)		2	3
Elderly Persons Dance Group (CHESS)	1		3
Locality Forum (alternating between CHESS and Galley Common)			3
Weekly MP Clinics (CHESS)			3
Debt/Financial Advice (GP Centre)			3
Young Parents Group (CHESS)			3
Friends of the Dingle Field	1		2
Relate – Marriage/Relationship Advice (closed 2013)			2
Elderly Persons Art and Crafts (CHESS)			2
Short Mat Bowls (CHESS)	1		2
Hobby Box (CHESS)			1
Acorn Counselling Service (CHESS)			1

**Table 16: Groups, Networks and Services Identified in Camp Hill<sup>21</sup>**

With the exception of those highlighted, these groups are initiated and at least part funded by public funds. The CHESS centre hosts many of these activities with some paid local authority staff and several other volunteers. Many of these services have been established in response to issues which have arisen in the area, or as the result of research conducted by local and central government agencies. The GP-led Health Centre comprises of many health improvement-based services such as smoking cessation support, healthy eating advice, exercise guidance, drug and alcohol advice and a sexual health clinic. Within the CHESS Centre there is a legal advice service, debt and financial advice, family support, young parents club and Acorn Counselling Service. The adult learning centre primarily focuses on providing support and educational opportunities to help residents gain the confidence and skills required to secure employment and to contribute to life style improvements (Pride in Camp Hill 2013). The Camp Hill Holiday Scheme aims to send young local children on holidays and trips that they would not normally be able to experience. The scheme is free but in order to qualify, children must undertake local community activities such as clearing gardens. The parents of the children on the scheme are encouraged to engage with support services. This suggests a form of forced engagement from the families of participants, in order to have the opportunity to go on the trips, families must become involved with support services in order to develop themselves.

*“Schools, residents, community groups, agencies and individuals can make referrals to the scheme. The resulting contact with local families enables Pride in Camp Hill community officers to work directly with them, hopefully encouraging the families to view them as more*

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<sup>21</sup> Groups and activities highlighted in Table 16 indicate those which are not publically-funded but are community self-funded and organised.

*accessible. Parents and volunteers are fully involved in the process by being invited to planning and fundraising meetings. It is hoped that this direct involvement in the project will give them ample opportunity for self-development.” (Pride in Camp Hill n.d)*

Many of the participants commented that there were more activities than they had previously thought and that the issue with engagement might be due to the lack of knowledge that these groups and services exist. This presents an example of how Bhaskar's (1978) three ontological domains can be represented in society. Firstly, the empirical domain, those groups which residents are aware of and have experienced. Secondly, the actual domain, those groups which exist outside of the knowledge of participants. Thirdly, the domain of the real, the causal mechanisms which create the need or existence of such groups. The causal mechanisms in this case may be the response of agencies to demographic factors in Camp Hill, for example the high number of children in poverty (52.7 percent), the high youth unemployment rate (23.26 percent), the higher than average number of smokers (22.4 percent) and the number of teenage pregnancies (48.8 per 1000) (Warwickshire Observatory 2013). According to many researchers, increasing social capital is the answer to these problems so creating groups and activities could be seen as an attempt to increase the social capital of Camp Hill residents. Blair (SEU 2002) argued that people were becoming detached from society and from citizenship in its widest sense; this view was supported by Giddens (2000) who identified that a culture of social capital might be the solution to social exclusion, cycles of poverty and deprivation. However, as Hanifan noted a century ago, community-led initiatives are likely to have a greater affect than formal agency interventions, “tell the people what they ought to do, and they will say in effect, ‘mind your own business’, but help them to discover for themselves what ought to be done and they will not be satisfied until it is done” (1916: 138). The difficulty lies in how best to ‘help them discover for themselves’, it suggests that agency intervention is required in some form or another and the balance must be right. Somerville (2011)

discusses 'active communities' where members are involved in activities of mutual interest and for the common good, although somewhat problematic to define, an active community is developed from within. Banks (2007) recognises that a community requires a sense of belonging, solidarity and significance among its members (similarities with social capital) therefore an active community is about mobilising this social capital. However, attempts to mobilise and engage may only patronise already active communities. Excessive state intervention can affect social capital negatively (Fukuyama 2001) and mask the problems which it seeks to remedy by ignoring the needs that the community expresses themselves (see Somerville 2011, Muntaner et al 2000). One stakeholder stated "we can put together groups based on what we think they need or want but that may not be what they want. We have to listen to what people want" (Susan). A lack of trust in formal agency was implied by many residents, one suggested that services exist to "tell us what to do... like 'do as I say not as I do'" (Jenna) and "they think they know better but they don't" (Colin). Events arranged and managed by local residents (those highlighted in Table 15) were spoken of more positively, for example the Camp Hill Summer Festival.

*"The festival brings people together, more than anything else. More people know about it, more people take part in it, more people attend it and it seems to be a Camp Hill thing run by Camp Hill people. Most of the stallholders and the festival group are all local people. I think it is better known, not trying to do anyone any damage but, it's better known than the residents group, which has never had much more than a small number of people from a small area." (Roger, Stakeholder)*

The festival is run by a committee of local residents and is well attended each year, approximately 2500-3000 people attended in 2013 which is almost half of the population of Camp Hill. The festival committee chairperson stated that they "won't let any agencies near because people won't come

if we do. They know we are just like them; we don't look down on them like they do". In the past, it has attracted some funding from local agencies but often these type of events are underfunded and suffer as a result. The festival was cancelled in 2015 for this reason. The *Friends of the Dingle Field* was created by residents to improve a small piece of green space in the area to make it more useable, they campaigned to have a new bench and pathways and were successful in gaining support and funding from the housing developers and the *Pride in Camp Hill* project. The issue in a more disadvantaged community like Camp Hill, is that residents who act as volunteers do not have the personal funds and resources to support many community-led initiatives as would be experienced in more affluent areas, arguably a failure in the concept of the Big Society. A stakeholder commented that "there's no central voluntary organisations, it's fragmented. Individuals work tirelessly but it's the minority, just a few. There's very little they can do on their own" (Arun). Another stated "it's just small groups with little influence, the same few involved in everything" (Tom).

The local church, St Anne's and St John's was frequently referred to by residents. Whilst some stated they were not particularly religious, they gave examples of times when the church became involved with the local community. The Priest, Father Jim Sneath, died on the morning before one of the focus groups and residents were visibly upset by the news. The hope was that the new priest would be equally as engaging. Many people in the local community talked about when the church was first built in the 1950s, the funding for the church came from local residents who bought paper bricks in return for a donation. Figure 21 demonstrates some of the Facebook comments regarding this. A focus group member stated that "the people of Camp Hill own the church, they paid for it. No one had better touch it" (Sandra). The regeneration has been sympathetic to the church, as demonstrated by the Director of the project, the church has been made the focus of the development with views of the church maintained from surrounding areas.



Some materials have been removed due to 3rd party copyright. The unabridged version can be viewed in Lancaster Library - Coventry University.

**Figure 21: Facebook Posts to Nuneaton Memories (October 2014)**

Much of the apparent disconnect centred on a lack of understanding of people's lives. Residents felt that those making key decisions did not understand the way in which the community operated, and most do not live in Camp Hill or even Nuneaton.

*"They don't listen to us; they pretend to but they've made their minds up already. They ask you what you think but they already know the answer. It's their way or no way."* (Rick, Participant)

*"They haven't done what they said they would. They're not interested in people like us."* (Mandy, Participant)

*"The people that tell us what we should be doing don't live here. They drive home at half five in their Jags, so how do they know what goes on after they have left?"* (Charlotte, Participant)

*"A lot of people think they know what is best for a community that they have nothing to do with, how can that be best for the area?"* (Resident cited in Thomson and Tulip 2012:64)

It is recognised that the leader of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council chooses to remain as a resident of Camp Hill, as do a number of key stakeholders interviewed, some of the stakeholders have become so due to interest in the area from a resident perspective. The Council Leader felt that disconnect happened at a point beyond that of local levels. Many decisions are made at County level and through various central government interventions that the local Council are forced to implement. However, a County Councillor stated “I don’t have a voice in the council chambers, not really. I mean, I try but, you know... it’s just whatever filters down from Westminster” (Tom). The policies are set by people who do not understand the area and therefore “do not care about the residents beyond bricks and mortar” (Roger). The various interventions give the impression that the residents cannot be trusted to manage themselves and this leads to a lack of engagement. The lack of trust may also stem from those at the bottom who are fearful in a society that so clearly values them so little (Dorling 2014). Prior to the *Pride in Camp Hill* project, there is a history of other initiatives which are aimed at improving the lives of residents and facilities in the area. A stakeholder (John) acknowledged that these initiatives are short lived; once the funding runs out they move on and therefore, residents are sceptical of such projects. Another stated “what will happen when the funding runs out? We’ll just be left to figure it out for ourselves again” (Oliver). As Purdue (2001) states, trust is complicated and respect and collective accountability on the part of leaders and participants is required, residents are unlikely to build trust and respect with agencies if so many have let them down before. This, in turn, will have an effect on levels of social capital given that many believe its development is closely linked to the amount of trust in a community, as Putnam states “Trustworthiness lubricates social life” (2000: 21). Some of the agencies involved in the early part of the *Pride in Camp Hill* project have been withdrawn from the area and, at the time of writing, the project itself is under threat due to lack of funding.

When considering definitions of class, in particular the GBCS, the groups, activities and networks identified in Table 16 are unlikely to be defined as 'highbrow' culture. Participants were not specifically asked about the ways in which they engage in cultural activities however, they were asked to identify the activities they would like to see established in Camp Hill. As discussed previously, the majority of answers related to a pub or social space, a leisure centre, and in one case an indoor play area for children. As Savage (2015) found in the GBCS research, those with lower education levels and with a lower income favoured 'lowbrow' culture. The kind of activities which are viewed to be 'highbrow' (such as the ballet, opera or theatre) are costly and not realistically affordable to those without the financial means to engage. Bourdieu (1990) recognises that it is those with the most power who decide which cultural activities are tasteful, the culture of the working class is often considered tasteless or even immoral, wrong or criminal (see Lawler 2005a, Skeggs 1997). This leads to a situation where the working class in general are defined as lacking culture and not measuring up to respectable standards.

### **5.3 Political Disconnect**

*“The continuance of social evils is not due to the fact that we do not know what is right, but that we prefer to continue doing what is wrong. Those who have the power to remove them do not have the will, and those who have the will have not the power” (Tawney 1913)*

In 2008, 36.2 percent of Camp Hill residents who voted in local council elections chose a BNP candidate which led to a win, although the candidate stood down after seventeen months and the ward returned to Labour (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council 2015). Standing argues that the working class are frustrated and angry, but are also dangerous because they have no voice, and “hence they are vulnerable to the siren calls of more extreme political parties” (2011:146). Several participants stated that they had voted BNP at the time, all were previous Labour voters but felt dissatisfied with the party. The emergence of the BNP in 2008 led to significant media, political and academic interest, Rhodes (2011) highlights the focus on the extent to which BNP support was predominantly concentrated in traditional Labour heartlands, amongst ‘the white working class’. One resident (Denise) recalled a time where she was asked to wear a blue, red or yellow t-shirt at work on polling day, she refused as none of them were BNP colours. Given the recent voting intentions in Camp Hill, I expected to experience some evidence of racist language or attitudes in the research, as mentioned previously, this did not occur. Residents who confirmed they had voted for the BNP gave alternative reasons which related more to the failure of other mainstream parties. Prior to the election, the BNP had been particularly active in the community; some gave examples of campaigners mowing lawns, doing people’s shopping and transporting residents to the polling station.

*“I voted BNP because no other party bothers with us. As it turned out the BNP were just the same.” (Emma, Participant)*

*"I never know who to vote for, they're as bad as each other. The BNP were at least knocking doors in the streets." (Barry, Participant)*

The supposed neglect of the white working class was highlighted by Blears when suggesting that "estates that have been ignored for decades; voters taken for granted; local services that have failed; white working-class voters who feel politicians live on a different planet. In such a political vacuum, the BNP steps in with offers of grass-cutting, a listening ear and easy answers to complex problems" (cited in Meikle and Cobain, 2008). The whiteness of the working class was also highlighted by Labour MP, Hodge who argued that, "they can't get a home for their children, they see black and minority ethnic communities moving in and they are angry" (cited in Kite, 2006: 1). Several media commentators have also commented on the anger and frustration of the white working class (see Hari 2008, Aaronovitch 2004, Bounds 2015). These accounts focus on a homogeneous, fixed view of the white working class portraying this group as often the only, constituency of the BNP. Rhodes (2011: 103) argues that "such discourses suggest the turn to the BNP is an inevitable outcome of this undifferentiated group's political disaffection, inherent susceptibility to racism, and competition with minority ethnic populations for scarce resources". Reducing individual views to one single entity of 'white working class' is problematic in that it overlooks the internal diversity of the group. Bottero (2009) notes that ignoring differences in skill, income, employment status, gender, age and housing tenure leads to class labels, such as 'white working class', which then becomes an inaccurate reflection of class realities. Such ignorance in the differences between those within the white working class also leads to whiteness not being accurately addressed, and therefore differences in the diversity of the group beyond race are oversimplified.

From both the earlier literature review and the participants' responses it is apparent that voting occurs in short-term cycles, there is limited evidence of a political long-term view. In the most

recent general election, UKIP failed to gain any seats in Nuneaton and Bedworth, although they did gain a 14.4 percent share of the vote, the figures for general elections at ward level are not available. Camp Hill has experienced a low turnout at local elections, 20.03 percent in 2013 and 24.97 percent in 2014 (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council 2015)<sup>22</sup>. Participants who did not vote gave reasons such as; it will not make a difference, they're all as bad as each other, and they only look out for themselves.

*"No change until MPs look after us rather than themselves. MPs promise to changes things, get in power and don't." (Colin, Stakeholder)*

*"It's like with the government isn't it? 'Vote for me, I'll do this, I'll do that', they come in and guess what? They don't do it. Feet under the table, thank you very much." (Jenna, Participant)*

Most frequently highlighted was the difference between 'them and us'. MPs are perceived to be privileged, privately educated and do not represent the general population. The Leader of the Local Council stated:

*"I think parliament has so few people with a working class background now in every party that they have no idea what working class lives are like, or used to be like, or what their parents were like because they've retired these people and they have on the whole been replaced by barristers in every party. The number of barristers in parliament is amazing. And so people in working class jobs have been pushed out gradually so there's been sort of a gentrification of parliament if you like. I think we're sometimes seen as being a bit cranky because we questioned or perceive that we*

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<sup>22</sup> In the most recent local election (2016), the voter turnout in Camp Hill was 23.4% and Labour retained the seat. However, UKIP gained a 25.3% increase in vote share gaining second place (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council 2016).

*know what's best for people in Camp Hill, and we felt that people thought they weren't being listened to and I say that as I was council leader when this project, this regeneration, all went through and stood up against a lot of views where people were against it but now I feel that some of the points that people were making were completely right and I was wrong." (Roger, Stakeholder)*

The lack of understanding of local issues and the context in which low-income earners live (Manning and Holmes 2013) is frequently reinforced by participants, thus resulting in disengagement *not* apathy as often espoused. Residents' views mirrored the views at a national level, they are not treated fairly by government (Beider 2011): they are unrepresented (Newsnight 2008): and MPs are not trustworthy (Jones 2014). One focus group which included several ex-Miners identified that their dissatisfaction and political disengagement began when "Thatcher ruined us and the unions. She crushed people like us. She wanted to kill the working people and protect the posh ones" (Martyn). The perception was that they are all 'posh' and MPs have no interest in our lives. "They're all from Eton and posh schools, they're not interested in people like us" (Steve).

## **5.4 Voicelessness and Networks**

Many residents stated that they do not feel that they have a voice, some identified that their views are not listened to and others suggested that they have given up trying to be heard.

*“They don’t listen to us. It’s all about profit and their own careers, they pretend to listen. We just be quiet now there’s no point speaking out. They make the decisions before they even ask. They don’t want to know what our problems are. If you really bother them over and over again they might do something to just get rid of you.” (Natalie, Participant)*

*“They speak for you, not with you or on behalf of you.” (Oliver, Stakeholder)*

*“We chit chat about our moans and groans, I keep moaning but no one listens.” (Neil, Diary)*

Some of the older respondents referred back to the lack of unions nowadays which has resulted in there being no single strong voice for the working class any longer. Some stakeholders identified that there are many routes that voices can be channelled through now, and more opportunities to be heard than the union days, although they recognised the ‘union mentality’ which continues to exist in Camp Hill. One stakeholder expressed frustration with trying to engage residents stating “people need to take a more active role, they expect others to do it for them, they don’t want to do it themselves” (Tom). Another stakeholder suggested that “they are very good at complaining but not so good at doing anything about it” (Barbara). The Manager of the Early Years Centre provided an example of when there was an issue with the facilities. She created a Parents Board and advertised open office hours but no-one visited her and stated “we cannot get parents to join the Board, we don’t know how to convince them” (Susan). It was suggested that “if your try to formalise any arrangements people will back off” (Colin).



Some participants highlighted the oppositions faced when raising their views about the issues they encounter, often these are related to a lack of funding. *Pride in Camp Hill* introduced a 'Community Chest' (Pride in Camp Hill 2013a) which aims to provide funding to help local community groups. There are a several caveats for applying for the funding for example, "projects need to be viable and of a definite benefit to the area". See Figure 22 for more information about the community chest funding.

Some materials have been removed due to 3rd party copyright. The unabridged version can be viewed in Lancaster Library - Coventry University.

**Figure 22: Community Chest Funding Guidelines (Pride in Camp Hill 2013a)**

These guidelines formalise the funding opportunities and such formalities could easily dissuade community members from applying. An application would force residents to engage with a number of agencies without a guarantee of success, although it may seem necessary to avoid the abuse of the funding opportunity. Some felt that there are always rules set by agencies which prevent the community voice being heard and that a lack of funding is "just an excuse to blame others because no-one will take responsibility" (Oliver). A resident (Barry) described one case where he raised the problem of noise pollution from mini motorbikes but despite approaching various agencies he was told that it was not their responsibility. Another similar situation was raised at a multi-agency locality forum and was advised 'that's not what we're talking about today'. A number of

stakeholders indicated a low level of engagement in community forums and MP clinics. I attended a locality forum in which there were representatives from the NHS, Police, Fire Service, local Councillors and MP's and the regeneration project, only three residents attended. It was acknowledged that residents only attend if they have an issue to raise but it was also recognised that many of the forums were not well advertised. The Camp Hill locality forum is paired with a neighbouring ward, Galley Common, it is a far more affluent area and perhaps residents feel uneasy with sharing their views in such an environment. Despite this, there were several examples of where residents had raised concerns and actions had been taken as a result. For example, during a focus group discussion (C), a resident raised the issue of the Dingle field and how he wanted to use the *Friends of the Dingle Field* group to raise money to repair paths and install some benches. He visited the *Pride in Camp Hill* office and enquired, as a result the funds were later granted and the improvements were made. The resident did suggest that he approached several other residents to help form the committee but "sometimes it's just like too much hard work to be involved, they won't take part" (Sandra), thus furthering the earlier argument that perhaps residents steer away from formalised arrangements. One stakeholder gave the example of when a resident approached her for help:

*"There was a lady with terrific damp in the house, everything were going mouldy. They used to have to put clothes on to go to bed at night, not get undressed. Anyway, we took photos and... for Council. Anyway she got her heating and everything sorted out, so we do get things done".*

*(Barbara, Stakeholder)*

Some suggested that the people of Camp Hill do have a voice but that they are not given enough opportunities to provide feedback and have their voice heard, or that '*they don't want to hear what we have to say*'. One suggested that "giving the working class a voice unsettles the political balance; they restrict the voice so they do what they wanted to in the first place" (Oliver). There were also

some examples of residents who had an issue but did not feel confident raising it. One example provided was a resident in a housing association property whose front door wouldn't close properly (Norma). She had reported it but no action had been taken to remedy it. Other members of the focus group suggested she "march up there and give them what for" (Marion) but she commented "oh I wouldn't know how to put it; I'd just waffle on". Savage (2015) suggests that well-educated people have the ability and confidence to deal with formal agencies, particularly in advancing their cause and being assertive, the result of which means they are able to get better services from these agencies. Others who are less qualified and lack such traits may feel underqualified, ashamed or are unable to clearly articulate their voice. They may lay the blame on themselves for this lack of confidence and feelings of intimidation. A stakeholder suggested that it takes confidence for an individual to lead initiatives to make improvements, "not everyone has it. They do not feel equipped" (Tom). The CPPP (2000) found a level of anger, distrust and cynicism among citizens when faced with meetings filled with jargon, conducted in surroundings which people did not find comfortable (for example Figure 22 above). They described endless paper based questionnaires from a variety of initiatives, plans and reports that did not highlight peoples' real concerns in plain language and monitoring arrangements (often conducted by independent experts) which did not get to the root of the problem.

Despite the *Pride in Camp Hill* website (2011) declaring that "there has been regular and extensive resident consultation throughout the whole of the Camp Hill programme", it was commonly felt that the issues in the community were pre-empted, the solutions were already decided and that they "do not have the best interests of the community at heart" (Colin). Residents who attended early regeneration consultation meetings noted that they had "obviously already made their minds up, we didn't have free reign over what happened, they told us the options they had already decided" (Oliver) and suggested that the approach was "we've got some wonderful solutions for

you, which one do you dislike least?" (Colin). Another resident stated "they say you can join us and tell us what you want, so you do, but that's as far as it goes" (Jenna). Leather, Ferrari and Cole's (2009) review of the housing market renewal *Pathfinders* used the example of the Manchester Salford Partnership, a similar regeneration initiative to Camp Hill. They demonstrated that all of the key decisions on the programme had already been taken before residents were consulted and the purpose of the consultation was then simply to ensure that the programme went ahead as smoothly as possible (2009: 60). The programme managers did not contact community groups preferring to rely on resident groups formed by the regeneration scheme, another similarity with Camp Hill.

*"Members of the public do not decide the game that is being played; they do not determine the rules of play, the system of refereeing or, indeed who plays; and the cards are stacked in favour of the more powerful players. In fact, many find they are in the wrong game altogether." (Taylor 2003: 123)*

Taylor goes on to state that public sector cultures assume that the public will not understand the complexity of the decisions that have to be made. Non-professional opinion is either dismissed as uneducated or ruled by self-interest. It was felt that community consultations were just arranged to appease residents and those who form members of residents' associations are selected to suit the aims of the projects and are not a fair representation of all residents. A stakeholder commented that "people were approached and recruited to the forum, they chose who they wanted to tow the party line" (Colin). From my own observations in Camp Hill, it did appear to be the same few residents getting involved in consultations and forums, highlighting the inequalities which can exist *within* a community. The data gathered for this research included some members of the forum but the majority fell outside of the group. Skidmore (2006) noted that those already well connected

tend to get better connected and that participation tends to be dominated by a “small group of insiders who are disproportionately involved in a large number of governance activities”.

*“I haven’t seen any communities develop as a result of a community development officer’s work.*

*It’s not a community if someone is being paid to create a community.” (Colin, Stakeholder)*

The Community Development Exchange define community development as the building of active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual trust, “It is about changing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives” (2001). Although there appears to be a stigma associated with support agencies, there is a sense that this is somewhat declining. Some stakeholders believe that there is more engagement with formal agencies, specifically with the younger generation and parents of young children. For example, all of the younger females were aware of the Early Years Centre and had visited on occasions to either engage in the various groups centred on children and young families in the area, or to see the Health Visitor. The general perception of the Centre was positive. The Early Years Centre (formally a SureStart Centre) is accessible to all residents both in Camp Hill and the wider borough, it is also situated in the older section of Camp Hill and has existed for many years before the regeneration. The Director of the Centre commented on the nature of those who attend.

*“We try to encourage more local families to come here but the majority of parents who bring their children are not the sort of people we really want to attract. Of course, everyone is welcome, I don’t mean for you to take this the wrong way but the people who come voluntarily are not the sort of families that need our help” (Susan, Stakeholder)*

All participants had positive views of health services particularly the NHS. When asked who they would turn to in a medical emergency, all stated that they would dial 999 and would trust

healthcare professionals. Most also stated that they would contact the police if they witnessed a crime, although some commented that the Police might not actually attend, and the residents themselves may be able to solve the problem more effectively. This form of self-policing will be explored later.

Participants of the older generation had some awareness of the over-fifty's groups but all focus group participants in this research stated that they had never attended them, in some cases due to looking after grandchildren. Many could not state why, saying either it wasn't their 'thing' or that they'd never really thought about it. This lack of awareness was acknowledged by several stakeholders who recognised that there needs to be a strong motivation to attend, or a commonality as seen with parents of young children. It is clear that some effort has been made to engage elderly people in the community due to the number of formal groups available, but historically people of that generation are more likely to be members of less formal groups or social activities. Pahl and Spencer (1997) suggest that the older generation need the mental and physical support of bonding social capital which is often not provided by the looser connections made at formal groups.

The general apathy and distrust of formal agencies does not necessarily mean that residents of Camp Hill are disconnected from each other, as one resident stated "there's a community here but 'they' wouldn't see it" (Jenna). One resident made the comment that "the barriers are often imagined by agencies to explain why people don't engage in things they don't want" (Denise). Somerville (2011) suggests that a strong community can be identified in two ways; firstly, where the connections between members is strong: and secondly when the community as a whole is powerful. Where member relationships are strong this may be through mutual obligations or a common identity, for example, social class or culture. Members of a community are brought together through shared life experiences. A powerful community would not typically demonstrate

the same strong bonds but would have the resources and capacity to prosper. Middle class communities might appear stronger than working class communities because they have greater resources at their disposal, even though working class communities have far stronger bonds. Throughout the research, there were several examples of times when people look out for and rely upon other residents. Stakeholders recognised it to still be a very 'close-knit community' despite the previously mentioned divide between the old and new areas. One case highlighted in a focus group described a situation where a well-known resident was murdered, the attacker "will never show his face in Camp Hill again as he will be lynched" (Sandra). Other forms of 'self-policing' were evident, for example, the lack of any crime statistics surrounding the area inhabited by *The Outlaws* (self-identified) who allegedly monitor the area and enforce sanctions on those found to be behaving inappropriately. The red circle in Figure 23 demonstrates the region surrounding the accommodation of *The Outlaws*, no crimes were reported in the vicinity, the numbers depict crimes committed in the wider area of Camp Hill during the same period.

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**Figure 23: Crime Map of Camp Hill (Streetcheck 2015)**

The lack of reported crimes does not necessarily mean that crimes are not committed, it is possible that the public take the law into their own hands or that there is an 'anti-grassing' culture in the area. There were several examples of more positive support from other members of the

community, highlighting the informal networks which exist in Camp Hill. These networks are unlikely to be recognised by any agencies as the high barriers to entry would exclude them, as recognised by some stakeholders, and they would 'close ranks' if threatened. A resident explained that he was a newcomer having 'only' moved into the area ten years previous, he stated that it had only been in the last two or three years that he has begun to feel like "they let me in" (Colin). Relationships with neighbours, friends and families have value for both the individual and society but it appears that these are not recognised as valuable connections by those on the outside. Hall (1999) recognised that working class communities have greater levels of informal sociability than higher classes, but the measurement of informal social capital is very problematic and this may be why such networks appear invisible to others. Many residents are fiercely protective of their community and there are several instances of how the community unites in times of crisis, in particular times when a child is in danger.

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**Figure 24: Missing Child Facebook Posts (April 2014)**

Figure 24 presents a Facebook post from April 2014 when a young child went missing on his return from the local primary school. In two hours, the post was viewed 11,140 times and shared by 228 people. The child was found by residents and returned home safely. A member of a focus group



described the time her house was on fire; residents provided her with clothes, food and a place to stay until her house was habitable. The local community raised several hundred pounds to allow her to replace her children's toys and clothes, many items of furniture were donated. Other instances include the support provided to a family when their son drowned in the local lake, the large number of residents who attended a young mums' funeral and the support provided to a local celebrity 'paedophile hunter' (see The Guardian 2014). There is evidence of mutual help and support within the completed diaries, for example driving a friend to a job seekers group as they didn't have the money for transport (Neil), fetching a prescription from the chemist for someone unable to leave the house (Tina) and walking with an elderly lady to keep her company because she "seemed lonely" (Beth). The distrust in formal agency is exemplified by one particular example given during a focus group. When a daughter's friend was 'kicked out' by her mum at the age of thirteen, she took her in as one of her own.

*"I wanted to help [child], no one else was going to, and she's a lovely kid. There was no way we were gonna let social services have her, god knows where she'd end up. From that day she just become one of us. I still call her one of mine now and she's nearly thirty." (Marion)*

It was apparent that the family is very important, many residents provided examples of when the support of a family member was needed. A stakeholder (Susan) recognised that children were the main thing that brought the community together, in particular if a child is hurt, hence the high-standing in the community of the resident 'paedophile hunter' mentioned previously. Since 2009, a resident has organised a campaign to 'Feed a Family at Christmas', this involves gathering donations from local residents to give poorer families in Camp Hill enough food to cook a Christmas meal.

The reactions of the working class in times of crisis and need has been noted by some researchers, with a particular emphasis on 'closing ranks', as supported by stakeholders in Camp Hill. Hunter and Staggenborg (1998) term these 'networks of necessity' as crucial mechanisms for the survival of those who are disadvantaged in society. Lewis (1961) recognised that the very poorest survived because of their strong local social networks among their families, friends and neighbours, he termed it a 'culture of poverty' which was further reinforced by the lack of trust in any formal agency or institution. More recently this term was used by right-wing political parties to demonstrate sub-standard behaviours and values, however Lewis had attempted to examine the value systems that the poorest live within, and therefore demonstrating the actions of people with limited choices due to inequality in society, rather than laying the blame on them for their situation. The participants have demonstrated that they are aware of the outside perception of their self-identified class, this may be the reason why they chose to stay among people like themselves. As Savage (2015: 358) stated "It was always more important to this group of people to be liked and respected within their own community than outside it". The norms and sanctions detailed by Coleman (1998) can constitute a form of powerful social capital. A community with strong norms and sanctions may also serve as a constraint to some, for example *the Outlaws* as mentioned above. However, this may also prevent individuals straying from the norms to pursue a different activity which can result in imposed sanctions on them even if it might be for the individual's greater good, such as going to college and having "ideas above their station" (Denise). The social norms are the (usually) unwritten rules and values that characterise the community members and in the modern day may include such things as parking vehicles in appropriate spaces or even looking out for each other's children as demonstrated above. Several studies have identified the value of community networks in enhancing people's ability to cope with difficulties and in times of crisis, sharing scarce resources is common among communities living in poverty and crucial to the survival of some.

*"I bet them lot up Whitestone [more affluent area of Nuneaton] wouldn't be able to lend a pound or a cup of sugar off of the neighbour. You know they'd help you here, people are much more friendlier." (Rick, Participant)*

*"We're all in it together, we're all the same, we're all skint." (Steve, Participant)*

The welfare of the community is intertwined with the welfare of individuals within it (Van Vugt, Chang and Hart 2005: 586) and personal sacrifices will be made to support others. Informal relationships are most likely to be called upon in times of crisis and are often resorted to before professional, sometimes stigmatised, agencies are contacted (Gilchrist 2004, Gabarino 1983). During the focus groups, residents were asked who they would turn to in certain situations which were presented to them (see Appendix Two). Some residents stated they would just "suck it up" (Jenna) or "just get on with it" (Barry), but for almost all cases the immediate contact would be a family member, friend or neighbour.

*"The community had something important to rely on... the community had each individual member of it. They knew where they had come from, what they were made of and how they had dealt with past challenges. The individuals of Camp Hill understood in the most basic terms that family, friends and acquaintances would make them laugh even if the world went under."*

(Thomson and Tulip 2012:60)

Graeber (2014) states that working class people may be presented as "less meticulous about matters of law and propriety than their 'betters', but they're also much less self-obsessed" and that they seem to care more about their friends, families and communities, "they're just fundamentally nicer". He notes that the working class are the caring class and are more likely to seek employment which help others, such as nurses, cooks, carers, cleaners etc. Such employment is often known to attract a lower wage and such roles are demonised and sometimes used to highlight a point of desperation. For example, "I'd rather clean the pub toilets than claim benefits" (Sandra) and "I

wiped arses for a living just to make ends meet” (Facebook comment). These job roles are essential, the views of how one might contribute to society were explored by some participants.

*“Just because you’re a street cleaner doesn’t mean you’re unsuccessful, why should it be demonised as a lower-class job? No one should be demonised for their contribution to society.”*

*(Faye, Stakeholder)*

In one focus group (B) there were two female friends who both had young children and were single parents. One of them worked full-time as a carer in a residential elderly care home. Her friend looked after her children, taking and fetching them from school and nursery, no payment was exchanged. The cost of childcare meant that she would not be able to work without this support. Her friend received welfare support as she was not working. They argued that they were both contributing to society, whilst one felt stigmatised due to welfare dependency, without her support both would be dependent on welfare, therefore they believed that both were contributing to society. Another example became apparent in a completed diary (Tina), this resident was unemployed and receiving several forms of welfare support. However, she volunteered as a Club Secretary and Treasurer for a local youth football team, raising funds and holding meetings in her kitchen, she estimated this took up at least twenty hours of her week. These examples provide evidence of people who, despite being welfare claimants, make a contribution to society, but this contribution would not be recognised by any formal measure. Policymakers and various agencies would not be aware of such informal support mechanisms and networks.

As explored in an earlier section, agencies are formed on a perceived needs basis, this is particularly common in deprived and troubled neighbourhoods due to various measures and performance indicators. This can potentially lead residents to believe that their wellbeing depends upon “being a client with special needs that can only be met by outsiders” (McKnight and Kretzmann 1993: 2).

However, Jones (2013) suggests that an asset-based approach could establish that many people are already providing informal care for each other, this can be seen to exist in Camp Hill from the examples previously cited. There is potential to “increase the social capital which results from informal exchanges and interactions between residents... instead of viewing residents as ‘problems’, where action is seen as compensating for a deficit, communities and residents are seen as being rich in talents and abilities” (Edwards 2012:2). An asset-based approach provides an opportunity to consider the process of relocation of power from agencies and service providers to the community and therefore recognising the contribution to society that residents are making.

Most residents reported that their friends and family are located within Camp Hill. There was some difference between those who live in the old part and those in the regenerated area. In the older area of Camp Hill people state that they still generally know most of the people in their street; in several cases they had a number of close relatives living nearby. Residents who lived in the regeneration zone reported that they did not have as strong relationships with other residents in the street.

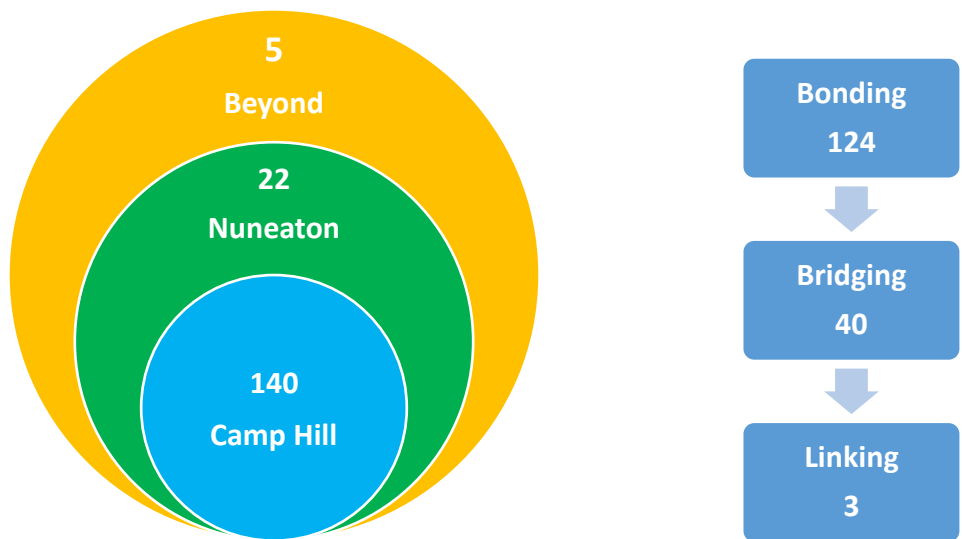


Figure 25: Diary Entries to Demonstrate Location of Connection and Form of Social Capital

The diaries were analysed and each connection was identified in terms of location and form of social capital, the result are summarised in Figure 25. The completed diaries indicated that the majority of connections are made within Camp Hill and with family, close friends and neighbours. Bridging social capital is demonstrated through connections made via a child's school, walking the dog, seeing the local GP and speaking to the Postman. The only instances of linking social capital were through contact with the Job Centre located in Nuneaton town centre. All of the connections which fell outside of Camp Hill and Nuneaton were with family and friends who had moved from the area, these connections were made via Facebook and residents had moved due to relocation and enrolling in the Army. There were some diaries which demonstrated a stark lack of networks and connections. For example, one resident (Bob) made a total of eight connections in one week. Of these eight connections four were through a phone call to the same friend and three were visiting the Post Office. When collecting the completed diary, the resident was keen to discuss his life but stated that he preferred to stay in his flat as he "didn't have anything in common with anyone anymore" (Bob).

Date: 19-8-13	Time: 10-00A.M.
Identification of connection - Friend/relative/other (e.g. doctor, teacher, employer)	
Postman	
Location of connection - Telephone/online/school/community centre/other	
Outside my flat	
Frequency of connection - Daily/weekly/monthly/adhoc	
Occasionally	
Origins of connection - How was this connection originally made?	
Got talking to Postman soon after she started on Round	
Participants further comments - strength and value of connection, will you see them again? What do you know about this connection and what do they know about you? Please add anything else that you think might give more information about this connection.	
I see the Postman now - again - we either say a few words or just hello.	

Date: 21-8-13	Time: 12-00P.M.
Identification of connection - Friend/relative/other (e.g. doctor, teacher, employer)	
Jobcentre with friend. (Don't know her name)	
Location of connection - Telephone/online/school/community centre/other	
Jobcentre meeting	
Frequency of connection - Daily/weekly/monthly/adhoc	
Once a fortnight	
Origins of connection - How was this connection originally made?	
I first met this girl about 5 years ago	
Participants further comments - strength and value of connection, will you see them again? What do you know about this connection and what do they know about you? Please add anything else that you think might give more information about this connection.	
When I sign on, this girl is usually there to deal with my application. It is only a short meeting, but we say hello in town as well.	

Date: 16 December	Time: 11:30
Identification of connection - Friend/relative/other (e.g. doctor, teacher, employer)	
Brian [redacted] Unemployment Officer	
Location of connection - Telephone/online/school/community centre/other	
Recruitment Office	
Frequency of connection - Daily/weekly/monthly/adhoc	
Fortnightly	
Origins of connection - How was this connection originally made?	
Through the Job Centre	
Participants further comments - strength and value of connection, will you see them again? What do you know about this connection and what do they know about you? Please add anything else that you think might give more information about this connection.	
I have to see Brian regular but don't know anything about him	

Figure 26: Examples of Bridging and Linking Social Capital

Date: 19 December	Time: 11:30
Identification of connection - Friend/relative/other (e.g. doctor, teacher, employer)	
Aunty Heather	
Location of connection - Telephone/online/school/community centre/other	
Her house	
Frequency of connection - Daily/weekly/monthly/adhoc	
Daily	
Origins of connection - How was this connection originally made?	
Family	
Participants further comments - strength and value of connection, will you see them again? What do you know about this connection and what do they know about you? Please add anything else that you think might give more information about this connection.	
See her everyday know everything about her as she does me We are like partners in crime.	

Date: 13.12.12	Time: 5 00 pm
Identification of connection - Friend/relative/other (e.g. doctor, teacher, employer)	
Friend John	
Location of connection - Telephone/online/school/community centre/other	
In car on way to work.	
Frequency of connection - Daily/weekly/monthly/adhoc	
I speak to John almost daily, he lives up the road and works with me.	
Origins of connection - How was this connection originally made?	
I met John when he owned a first encampment nearly 9 years ago.	
Participants further comments - strength and value of connection, will you see them again? What do you know about this connection and what do they know about you? Please add anything else that you think might give more information about this connection.	
I will definitely see John again we love a gossip and catchup. I know alot about him and his life	

Date: Thursday 12th Dec	Time: 8am
Identification of connection - Friend/relative/other (e.g. doctor, teacher, employer)	
Neighbour	
Location of connection - Telephone/online/school/community centre/other	
outside the front of our house on way to school.	
Frequency of connection - Daily/weekly/monthly/adhoc	
Can be daily or twice a week	
Origins of connection - How was this connection originally made?	
I have known my neighbour most my life with living in the same estate	
Participants further comments - strength and value of connection, will you see them again? What do you know about this connection and what do they know about you? Please add anything else that you think might give more information about this connection.	
I will see her again today we spoke about our landlord because our house has been helped with air heating not working.	

Figure 27: Examples of Bonding Social Capital

Some residents reported the difficulty in travel beyond Camp Hill. This places restrictions on their ability to travel for work or social activities. Public transport was highlighted as being inadequate, particularly for the older generation who cannot walk the distance to the new bus stops. A stakeholder (Tom) stated that people in Camp Hill cannot access the emerging work opportunities in North Warwickshire due to the lack of reliable public transport. A resident (Barry) also commented that he could not afford the bus fare so relied upon the free *Tesco* bus which took him to a neighbouring town every few weeks. The cost of buying and maintaining a car was beyond the means of some who responded. In Camp Hill, thirty-two percent of households do not own a car which is almost double the figure for the wider Warwickshire County which stands at seventeen percent (Warwickshire Observatory 2013). This demonstrates how a community can become socially excluded as Dorling (2014: 7) recognises, a quarter of households are now disregarded in what is considered access to normal infrastructure. The lack of transportation refutes Coleman's (1990) earlier view that communities are declining due to the increase in transportation which allows the separation of work and residence. This may be so in more affluent areas but is not often the case in poorer communities. In Camp Hill, the lack of employment opportunities forces residents to travel to other towns and cities for work which may have an impact on relationship building with neighbours. However, many participants felt trapped within the confines of the area, thus reducing the opportunities for them to access sources of bridging capital and establishing weak ties.

More generally, respondents stated that the working class had been persuaded to be quiet using a number of methods with the aim of reducing the demand for improvements, "we're ignored... we are just kicked back down" (Natalie). There is evidence to suggest that this has resulted in a lack of confidence to speak out and as one stakeholder commented "we need to build more self-esteem in families to help them access support and reduce their dependency on others to help them break



out of a cycle of poverty” (Arun). Historically, some have argued that the working class were a dangerous force of “commoners who would drag down standards and lead to social and cultural decline if they were allowed too much influence” (Savage 2015: 26). It was also recognised that there is little support for working class communities, organisations do not exist to bring people together as they have done previously (working men’s club and unions) with the focus on members being working class. Residents recognised the existence of the Nuneaton Muslim Society, Polish Advice Centre and the Nuneaton Irish Society, one participant suggested that it would not be allowed “because they do not want to give us the opportunity to speak out” (Charlotte). In the current climate, it is likely that any form of organisation for ‘white working class people’ would be viewed as some form of right-wing, racist society, this highlights the issue that they do not have the opportunity for greater legitimacy in the way that other ethnicities have.

Most stakeholders expressed a desire to communicate and listen to members of the community, some identifying that they do need to listen more. However, all expressed a lack of understanding at how best to communicate with residents, that it was “very hit and miss” (Oliver), with ‘word of mouth’ being the most popular channel to communicate. Understandably, this is a very difficult way to ensure that messages are clearly communicated and heard. One resident suggested that the only sure way of communication is to “get to know people, build strong lasting relationships and then you can communicate. But only on their terms” (Colin).

*“It tends to be the Postmaster, the chip shop owner, people who are visual, where people connect is where they become the font of all knowledge.” (John, Stakeholder)*

*“I have no idea how to engage residents anymore, we try everything and anything to get the message out there.” (Susan, Stakeholder)*

*"We try with the Camp Hill News but half the time... well it's possibly a little bit better now 'cause... we found out the biggest problem with that is there's a lot of illiteracy, that's the word. But, they did start running lessons and that to help people to read and write and they still do so erm... we try the Camp Hill News, we put posters up and then by word of mouth really. That's the only way we can do it, it's a big problem." (Barbara, Stakeholder)*

Some materials have been removed due to 3rd party copyright. The unabridged version can be viewed in Lancaster Library - Coventry University.

**Figure 28: Camp Hill News Issues January 2013, April 2015 and January 2014.**

The Camp Hill News is widely circulated, although some residents in the older part of Camp Hill report that they do not receive every copy. All residents cited the Camp Hill News as a source of information but many found that this was overly positive, did not report 'real news', and only communicated news that had already happened not upcoming events. Some of the stakeholders raised concerns about literacy skills and that they know of households where no one could read (Barbara, Arun, Colin), and skill levels are low (Tom). This has an effect on the best forms of communication, one might argue that those families are among those in most need of support. Collins (2005) recognises that historically it fell on the middle class to speak and write for the working class due to illiteracy and low levels of education, therefore their voice would be limited,

not heard or even interpreted in the wrong way. A few residents likened the Camp Hill News to propaganda, only publishing good news stories which show the regeneration project in a good light and failed to include useful information for the residents in the older parts of Camp Hill. The Director of the project stated that the original aim was to let people know about what is going on but that the aim changed “it’s much more now about the impact of what we’ve done is having on local people ‘cause we’ve learnt that showing the impact of what we do has more of an impact on people’s engagement” (John). The Director stated that the magazine is now more about the impact an activity has had on an individual rather than the activity itself, he notes that it is a difficult concept to get across but that it has resulted in more residents being engaged in community activities. There appears to be an issue with the style and tone of the messages being communicated. Project funders are likely to be concerned with impact, not the residents themselves, unless it has direct implications for them.

## **5.5 Voicelessness and Disconnect: A Summary**

Participants demonstrated a clear level of voicelessness and disconnect (RQ3<sup>23</sup>). Although previous literature and research identified that the voice of the working class was limited, it was limited from the perceptions of the working class themselves. This research presents some evidence which contributes to those earlier findings and exposes some of the causal mechanisms which leads to the lack of voice, and ultimately, power. This disconnect took two general forms; physical and metaphorical. The regeneration project provided an example of how the working class are consulted on matters which impact on their lives, within this research it was apparent that consultation on such matter was limited and, in some cases, not present at all. Physically, the changes to the area with the ongoing regeneration exemplified residents' lack of control over how their community and environment develop. It was generally described as a negative change; it may have been perceived more positively had residents been provided with greater opportunity to be involved in key decision making. The regeneration was perceived as a form of gentrification; a quick fix to bring about a change to the area in terms of resolving some of the societal issues which existed, although more recent key measures suggest that this has not resolved such societal issues. The changes to Camp Hill have had an effect on the maintenance and development of social capital, particularly in the new, rebuilt areas. This has been compounded by the lack of social spaces for residents to come together, build networks and develop a unified voice. This unearthed scepticism from participants in that a purposeful restriction appears to exist which actively prevents the voice

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<sup>23</sup> **RQ 3:** Are the working class underrepresented and voiceless? Who speaks for the working class and who actively listens?

of the working class from being heard. This permits policymakers to make decisions prematurely and select the appropriate voices that support their cause.

The metaphorical disconnect was evident through the lack of opportunities to voice concerns and be listened to, there were frequent views shared which divided *them* and *us*. Despite the earlier perceived reduction in social capital, it was evident that strong, bonding social capital exists in Camp Hill. Stakeholders were able to recognise this due to the high barriers to entry and the inability to find a way of effectively communicating to residents. There are numerous groups, activities and services which exist, the majority of which have been created through policy driven agencies rather than residents stating a need (RQ4<sup>24</sup>). There was evidence of apathy and distrust which prevented engagement in these groups, although some mechanisms exist which appear to almost force engagement (such as the holiday scheme). The community-led activities were better attended but a lack of funding and resources meant that sometimes they became unsustainable. Stakeholders recognised the need to listen more, they demonstrated a will to engage with residents but were unable to suggest ways to encourage greater activity.

Stakeholders and residents alike recognised wider issues of disconnect, particularly in terms of central government policy decisions and politicians themselves. The lack of understanding of working class lives was referred to often, particularly in terms of flawed decision making. The elite nature of political structures added to the lack of trust which surfaced several times during interviews and focus groups. This lack of trust was evident from both angles, firstly through the perceived view that policymakers do not trust the working class to manage without intervention and do not have adequate skills to contribute to policy development. Secondly, that the working

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<sup>24</sup> **RQ 4:** Does current social policy in the UK and the notion of social capital enable or hinder the working class to influence wider political structures?

class do not trust policymakers, partly fuelled by a history of ignorance but also due to the lack of understanding of their lives. Within Camp Hill, voting patterns appear to be short term, with residents favouring those who appeared to represent the working class view the most. However, a level of disengagement was also apparent as many held the view that 'no one speaks for me'.

## **6.0 Conclusions**

This overarching aim of this thesis seeks to identify and analyse the perceptions and representations of social class and voice within working class communities, exploring the impact/influence this has on individuals, the local community and the wider implications for social policy. This thesis makes several contributions to the knowledge base surrounding social class identity and the consequences of a disconnected and voiceless segment of society on individuals, the local community and for social policy more broadly. The review of the existing literature suggested some contested areas and omissions in the subject area which further refined the research objectives and questions. Table 17 identifies the research questions along with the gaps and limitations identified within the existing body of knowledge. The findings from this research have contributed to addressing these gaps and provided greater insights to further inform wider discourse.

Contested Areas Identified in the Existing Literature	Overarching Research Question and Alignment with Research Objectives
Conventional social class theory focusses on measures such as economic and employment status; this does not accurately reflect the way class is viewed today. There is a distinct lack of working class perspectives regarding definitions of social class, particularly in terms of how they view themselves. Additionally, there is a conflict within the existing body of knowledge regarding the change in views towards class over time. There are suggestions that the working class are (again) becoming more demonised, far from the respectable and hardworking characteristics which have been lauded at times. This contrasts with the view that historical perceptions of the working class have also been negative but that perhaps the terms are evolving.	<b>RQ 1:</b> What does it mean to be working class: Do conventional social class definitions offer a valid explanation to current societal structures?  <b>Research Objective:</b> To critically review and compare traditional and contemporary definitions of social class with a focus on the complexity of changing class identities
There are numerous derogatory terms and labels used to describe those who occupy the 'lower' classes; these are regularly documented within media. Existing research tends to explore the impact of this in terms of common themes such as social exclusion, poverty and welfare dependency. However, there appears to be a limit to the discussion of the <i>effect</i> such labels and media representations have on the working class themselves. Existing research suggests that negative perceptions need to be changed but there are limited proposals regarding <i>how</i> this can be achieved.	<b>RQ 2:</b> How do external perceptions of class identity impact on the working class themselves?  <b>Research Objective:</b> To develop a greater insight and understanding of how the working class are represented by policy makers, the media and local/central agencies
Contested Areas Identified in the Existing Literature	Overarching Research Question and Alignment with Research Objectives

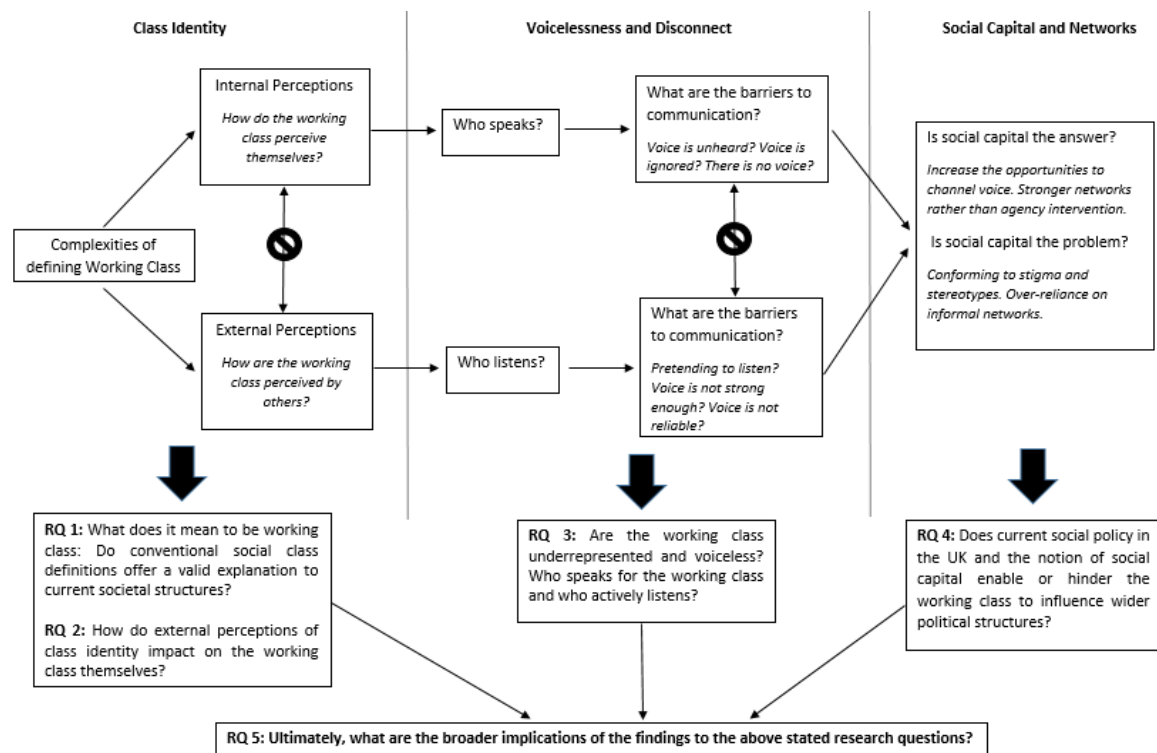


<p>Prior research explores the concept of voicelessness from several angles; voice is unheard, unreliable, ignored, blocked etc. There is sufficient evidence within the existing literature to assume that a level of voicelessness and disconnect occurs within and towards the working class but it would be unjust to arrive at this conclusion without hearing the views from those to which the discussion is directed. To fully address this research question, it is critical to ask working class people themselves for their own explanations and understandings of why this disconnect exists.</p>	<p><b>RQ 3:</b> Are the working class underrepresented and voiceless? Who speaks for the working class and who actively listens?</p> <p><b>Research Objective:</b> To develop a greater insight and understanding of how the working class are represented by policy makers, the media and local/central agencies</p> <p><b>Research Objective:</b> Using a specific case study, explore how the voice of the working class is communicated and to what extent their voice is interpreted and heard</p>
<p>Contested Areas Identified in the Existing Literature</p>	<p>Overarching Research Question and Alignment with Research Objectives</p>

<p>The concept of social capital, as a major social policy concept and instrument aimed at the working class, is widely discussed within existing literature; there are varying definitions and ways of interpreting the theory and practice. It forms the basis of many social policies, interventions and initiatives in the UK. Judgements are frequently made by academics and policymakers regarding the effects of social capital without fully understanding its value to working class communities. This needs to be further researched to establish how it may be better understood in order to influence wider political structures. Within the field of community development, it is often suggested that social policy should be developed from a grassroots level. This recommendation needs to be explored further, particularly in terms of how it could be developed.</p>	<p><b>RQ 4:</b> Does current social policy in the UK and the notion of social capital enable or hinder the working class to influence wider political structures?</p> <p><b>Research Objective:</b> Synthesise the findings from primary data collected with the existing literature on class identity, disconnect and social capital.</p> <p><b>Research Objective:</b> To critically evaluate the social policy implications of a voiceless, disconnected working class</p>
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**Table 17: Research Questions, Objectives and Existing Literature Limitations**

The thesis framework in Figure 29 below outlines the linkages and barriers between internal and external perceptions of the key themes: class identity, voicelessness and disconnect, social capital and networks. The themes were found to be connected in that each had an impact on the other. The themes of voicelessness and disconnect, and social capital and networks were analysed within the same chapter due to the level of influence each of the concepts has on each other. This framework thus makes a contribution to existing knowledge, and could be adopted as a conceptual basis for future research, to demonstrate the connection between the three key themes and indicating the impact of internal and external perceptions of social class and voice.



**Figure 29: Thesis Framework Revised**

For clarity and comprehension, this chapter will address each individual research question in order to demonstrate the contribution to the knowledge that this thesis asserts. In addition, the overarching aims and objectives of this research are discussed to enable a holistic view of the impact and implications of this thesis.

## **6.1 Research Question 1: Class Identity**

*What does it mean to be working class: Do conventional social class definitions offer a valid explanation to current societal structures?*

Conventional social class definitions do not sufficiently offer a valid explanation of current societal structures in terms of the working class. This is because working class identity has become blurred due to a number of factors (e.g. trade union weakening, long-term unemployment, marginalisation, 'social mobility', 'classless' discourses, concepts of the underclass etc.). Nevertheless, working class people themselves characterise being 'working class' through a lens of holistic lived experience/journeys, rather than defined as economic, occupational, or other 'classification'.

From the outset, the complexities of defining social class were clearly apparent. Academics and other socio-economic classification stakeholders cannot agree on a clear definition of the boundaries to which societal structures operate. In fact, the existence of social class itself is disputed by some, particularly those who wish to minimise debates on the effects and prevalence of class inequalities in mainstream society. This research demonstrates that politicians and policymakers cannot agree on a clear definition, many cannot agree on the characteristics which define members of social classes and cannot clearly agree on the reasons or causal mechanisms which lead people to belong to certain social classes. It is important to note here that all of the recognised defined structures of class were likely categorised by the educated middle class with little, if any, input from the working class themselves – a section of society thus defined by those with little experience of it. This highlights the need to explore further the working class voice in terms of class definitions, identity and perceptions of class; how do the working class perceive themselves? This thesis reinforces the school of thought that the working class themselves are also unable to clearly identify and articulate the boundaries of the class to which they, quite proudly in this case, state they belong (see Savage 2015, Kuhn 1995, Monk 1970, Bottero 2009). However,

respondents demonstrated a clear awareness of the concept of social class and of the existence of a class hierarchy through various markers such as work role, respectability and reciprocity.

The external negative perceptions of working class people portrayed in media were recognised, and whilst the term 'underclass' was not used directly, participants frequently raised the notion that a sub-section or 'lower' class exists with a clear separation from the 'respectable working class' notion that most participants identified with. This thesis rejects conventional and rigid definitions of social class as a valid explanation of societal structures. Class is a lived experience both in participants' current lives and through their historical journeys frequently shared within this research. Social class cannot be reduced to economic, occupational or even distinct cultural categories; it is formed and defined through the stories that people tell from their real experiences. This was demonstrated when participants referred to their backgrounds and holistic life experiences when identifying their class identity. The reminiscing of previous times presented some contradictions within this research, moving from describing a 'golden-age', to discussing how past times were tough for the working class, mirroring those paradoxes identified in prior research (see Boym 2001, Hall 2012 and Pickering and Keightley 2006).

The lack of clear understandings of class identity results in policies and decisions which are likely to be based upon flawed definitions. One stakeholder (Arun) summed this up stating "if we can't figure it out, how can they figure out if we're working class or not? You have to fit in a box, you have to fit in a category. The government are obsessed with putting people into categories". We appear to be no further forward in offering any meaningful definitions of social class; they are still complex, nuanced and very difficult to articulate. Policies are adopted, crucial decisions are made and agencies are formed in order to tackle issues which are clearly linked to the working class, yet no one can offer a definition which clearly organises people into this segment of society. It would be overly simplistic for this thesis to identify its own definition of social class; working class life is

misunderstood and cannot be reduced to simplistic, one-dimensional narratives from policymakers, the media and others in 'the establishment'. However, the working class perspectives explored and assessed in this thesis can contribute to debates around a better understanding of the working class, informed by working class people themselves, which could inform future definitional development.

### ***Implications and Further Research***

In summary, this thesis has highlighted the problems of class definitions, from recognised theoretical class structures, to the views of policymakers and of the working class themselves. There is a lack of clarity in terms of how class is defined but this raises wider questions. Does class *need* to be defined? Is there an alternative to contemporary definitions of class? Further research should explore class identity with a particular focus on assisting the working class to understand their own position. It is apparent that policy decisions are made based upon flawed definitions, therefore it is necessary to further explore alternative approaches which better reflect the identity, values and needs of the working class.

## **6.2 Research Question 2: Perceptions of Class**

*How do external perceptions of class identity impact on the working class themselves?*

Contemporary external perceptions of class identity are developed and skewed by recent intensifications of media prejudice towards the working class and so-called ‘underclass’ – often perceived as one ‘underclass’ (e.g. via ‘poverty porn’). This impacts on working class people negatively in two ways – (1) more broadly, as per impacts of any prejudice, and (2) working class people view it as a threat to the respectable working class identity many associate with. To bolster such an identity, working class people *also* use prejudicial and derogatory concepts to identify those ‘below’ them – ‘higher’ social classes are not the only ones who look down on others – it happens within and between ‘lower’ social class groups, which has implications for discourses and ideologies viewing the working class as one homogenous group.

The existence of social class in society serves to highlight the differences between people in terms of economics, culture and lifestyles. The demarcations of class are widely defined, discussed and disputed (see Skeggs 1997, Prandy and Bottero 2000, Savage 2015, Goldthorpe 1996, Reid 1977). Such differences are frequently communicated through media, popular culture and within towns and cities across the country. The visibility and prominence of such differences can lead to conflict or stigmatisation and reinforces competition between each societal group. But, competition can also exist within each group. As stated above, this was exemplified when participants were keen to identify a social class which existed ‘below’ their interpretation of the working class; stigmatising those worse off than ourselves is not just the realm of the privileged. This promotes deeper questions such as ‘whose lives are better?’ and ‘whose life is worth the most?’ There is a growing intensity of stigmatisation directed at the more disadvantaged, the complexities of class identification often generate a negative reaction towards those at the ‘bottom’. A shared negative discourse directed against those poorer than themselves may be seen as a potential way for other

groups to find commonality or to promote their own legitimacy. Such narratives suggest that people living in poverty are seen as problematic; not the root causes of poverty, which create disadvantage in the first instance. The challenging and questioning of stigma and stereotypes is essential to avoid further damaging the lives of those already struggling to actively participate in mainstream society. Those people who occupy some of the 'lower' positions in society are acutely aware of the negative perceptions but are helpless, and in many cases, apathetic about how attitudes could be changed. The working class (and indeed 'underclass') need to be presented in a different way, a way which avoids marginalisation and misrepresentation in the form of mockery and demonisation (See Jones 2011, Tyler 2003). Such media representation is frequently exaggerated for entertainment purposes which, in turn, hardens attitudes to notions of social welfare and misleads the general public into believing such behaviour is typical of the working class. Discrimination in many forms is frowned upon in today's society, for example, racism, sexism and ageism are all socially unacceptable and in most cases enshrined in laws. However, class based discrimination is generally more socially acceptable and there is little legal recourse in reality.

Prior research goes some way towards suggesting that perceptions need to be changed but falls short of making realistic suggestions about *how*. Stakeholders engaging in this research presented the will and desire to bring about a change in perceptions but were also unable to articulate *how*, recognising the inability to bring about any long-term change in external views. This research clearly highlights the issues that such derogatory stereotypes can have on working class people. Therefore, some responsibility lies with the channels of communication (such as mainstream media), which perpetrate and broadcast negative portrayals, to present the working class in a realistic light rather than highlight and magnify the extremes. It is also suggested that such portrayals presented as 'poverty porn' should focus on addressing and exposing the root cause of poverty and exclusion. Coverage within the existing body of knowledge regarding the effect of these perceptions on the



working class appeared to be limited. This thesis contributes to addressing this gap by highlighting the impact of negative media portrayal on the working class. The external perceptions of class were recognised and explored by participants in this research, particularly in terms of the stereotypes represented within the media. The lack of power to change external perceptions was evident; discussions with participants paint a picture of helplessness, apathy and overwhelming hopelessness. There was a sense that it was somewhat easier to go along with the stereotypes. However, through the fieldwork in this study, it was apparent that explaining people's situations through histories and stories might offer improved understandings of individuals' situations. Such mechanisms, whilst intensive and intimate, may have potential to counteract negative knee-jerk reactions to perceived 'problem' groups in society.

The working class 'know their place' in society and they know that they are looked down upon and ridiculed; one of the reasons as to why they may choose to 'stay among their own'. To be respected and admired by their own community is even more important when it is unlikely that such respect will come from outside. Their resilience and ability to cope and support each other in times of crisis is often mistaken as being uncooperative with 'outsiders', having questionable values, making bad judgements and having poor taste. The working class are highly visible through many channels of media, popular culture and discourse, yet their positive contribution to society remains invisible to many. As Savage (2015: 358) states "today's class culture is too loaded towards the privileged to allow them a place". The working class are finding that opportunities to improve their lives are slim and they are living in a world which is "meaner, harder and more corrupt" (Hutton 1995: 3). The position of one's family at birth still determines the starting point in life, the working class are not in that position due to behaviour but because of the circumstance in which they find themselves, and which they have not chosen. Within this research, the gap between the rich and poor was recognised and presented a conflict in terms of social mobility. From one view, the hope for a better

future, to the other, that people are happy with their position in society and sense the pressure to remain 'grounded'. This highlights the many contradictions and tensions within working class narratives – parents want their children to have more than they had, but at the same time they want them to respect their 'roots', whilst some even took offence at the idea of climbing the social mobility ladder, claiming it would be a betrayal. This thesis asserts that the working class *do* have aspirations, but these are different to those (middle class) aspirations commonly advocated in, and driving, social policy.

### ***Implications and Further Research***

This research highlights the impact of stigmatisation and the stereotypes frequently associated with the working class, on the working class themselves; class discrimination requires greater parity with other forms of discrimination. It has been recommended that there is a need to change perceptions, yet it is recognised that this is not a simple task (see McKenzie 2015, Hanley 2007). The mainstream media needs to better represent the working class rather than the current trend in sensationalising the extremes. It would be beneficial to conduct a systematic analysis of media representation to gain a greater understanding of the scale of the demonisation identified in this thesis. Measures should then be taken to ascertain exactly how this could be changed through, for example, more accurate depictions of working class life and how the focus can be shifted to exposing the root causes and causal mechanisms rather than the extremes of resulting actions and behaviours.

### **6.3 Research Question 3: Voicelessness and Disconnect**

*Are the working class underrepresented and voiceless? Who speaks for the working class and who actively listens?*

Previous representation (such as trade unions and a 'traditional' Labour Party) has been significantly diluted, leaving a vacuum that has, at times, been filled by right wing interests. The regeneration case study highlights not only the limited influence of working class residents on the regeneration programme, but also the limited influence of some local stakeholders on the development of the area (who attempted to listen to, and speak for, the working class). This demonstrates more broadly the centralised nature of a political system which does not listen to relatively powerless working class interests.

The working class have been described as voiceless, but this raises numerous concerns. Some have claimed that their voice is unheard or not acknowledged, or that they have chosen to remain silent and therefore do not communicate their views. It has also been suggested that their voice is not strong enough or that it may be deemed to be uneducated, ill-informed or unreliable (see Savage 2015, Collins 2005). Throughout this research there have been conflicting arguments regarding the communication and representation of the working class voice. Although previous literature and research identifies that the voice of the working class was limited, the actual knowledge base itself is arguably limited in terms of the perception of this issue from the working class themselves. In this thesis, the idea that they are unheard is evidenced and exemplified through the accounts of residents in Camp Hill, particularly in times where major decisions need to be made. The regeneration project provided an example of how the working class are consulted on matters which impact on their lives. Within this research it was apparent that consultation on such matters was limited and, in some cases, not present at all. Physically, the changes to the area with the ongoing

regeneration exemplified residents' lack of control over how their community and environment develops. It was generally described as a negative change by participants in this research; it may have been perceived more positively had residents been provided with greater opportunity to be involved in key decision making. More broadly, the national policy of housebuilding expansion during the 2000s has benefitted Camp Hill's new incomers, yet other groups have also been a victim of housing-led regeneration; driven by a 'mixed tenure' approach, it has been funded by a 'regime' which pushes for quantity over quality. In doing so, this side-lines the embedded community's priorities for communal facilities and third spaces and is driven by national political goals, local investment targets and future council tax revenues. The regeneration was perceived as a form of gentrification; a 'quick fix' to bring about a change to the area in terms of resolving some of the societal issues which existed, although more recent key measures suggest that the regeneration project has not resolved such societal issues compared to the original aspirations of the programme. Participants suggested that those in positions of power appear to make decisions regardless of the community voice. It seems apparent that during consultations the views of residents were listened to in an attempt to gain their compliance, but that key decisions had already been made which satisfy policy agendas and wider interests. The working class, as exemplified within this thesis, appear to have little influence over decision making, so it is somewhat understandable why some argue that it is senseless to listen.

It has been suggested that it is a conscious decision to prevent engagement or restrict voice. Perhaps those in power purposely restrict the working class by reducing the opportunity for them to contribute and input their views, as their agendas are different. Some argue that it was for this very reason that Thatcher reduced the power of trade unions (see Wilkinson and Pickett 2010), such restrictions reduce the voice which allows those in power to do as they see fit. As Orwell (1937) suggested, the working class can only get on in life if *they* tell us we can. There is evidence

in this research that there are occasions where issues seem to be unnecessarily overcomplicated, jargon is used and information is selectively distributed. Whilst cynical, this could be seen as an attempt to reduce their power and enforce greater compliance or an effort to reduce the ability of the working class to organise themselves and become a larger, more united voice. The forced dispersion of communities can prevent them joining together and mobilising as previously demonstrated by the attack on the unions in the 1980s. Examples of such processes within this research could be the closure of public spaces, in particular the local pubs, none of which have been replaced in the regeneration. The only community building in Camp Hill (the CHESS Centre) is monitored and moderated by County Council-paid employees; perhaps also an example of how the working class are not perceived to be trusted to make decisions and look after themselves.

The changes to Camp Hill have had an effect on the maintenance and development of social capital, particularly in the new, rebuilt areas. This has been compounded by the lack of social or third spaces for residents to come together, build networks and develop a unified voice (see Oldenburg 1997, Hickman 2013). This unearthed scepticism from some participants in that a purposeful restriction appears to exist, which actively prevents the voice of the working class to be heard. This enables policymakers to make decisions in their own interests and select the appropriate voices which support their cause. Such initiatives are also a truly concrete example of how middle class values are subtly imposed upon the regenerated area, and to a wider extent, the working class – the idea of quiet, incremental and invisible creeping of certain values gradually forcing change within people who have different values. Davies (2004) suggests that citizens should organise themselves outside of formal agencies and governmental interventions or they will be pulled towards the agendas of the powerful and coerced in believing this is the right way. Davies goes on to advise that the working class should strike, demonstrate and protest in order to reduce the inequality of power between state and citizens. A society moves forward when the underclass overcomes the

resistance of a class on top of them (Welshman 2006). Within this thesis, there were several examples of residents who were very aware of the commitment that is required to 'organise', further compounded by the lack of available resources necessary to take such action. Davies' 'call to arms' for the working class to empower themselves might be yet another middle class aspiration imposed on an already exhausted and disillusioned working class.

There is also a school of thought that the working class are constructed as 'problematic' and are then acted upon to resolve the problem. The development of social policy and various agency interventions suggests that the working class are not capable of managing themselves and their own wellbeing. Their lives do not meet the standard of those in higher social classes and therefore policies are developed in an attempt to rectify their mistakes, values, behaviours and errors of judgement. At a local level, there is *some* evidence that when issues are raised by residents, action is taken to remedy them; it is understandable that local stakeholders are keen to promote these opportunities. This thesis highlights that, despite this, many appear to be sceptical of voicing their concerns and issues, partly due to the lack of impact in the past, but also due to the perceived lack of understanding from stakeholders regarding the issues that matter to such residents. The metaphorical disconnect was evident through the lack of opportunities to voice concerns and be listened to, there were frequent views shared which divided *them* and *us*.

### ***Implications and Further Research***

This research provides evidence to claims in the prior literature that the working class are voiceless. It goes on to contribute further, presenting the views of the working class themselves, asserting that their voice is unheard, blocked and sometimes ignored, but that this is further compounded by a segment of society who are reluctant to speak out for a variety of reasons. The barriers to communication exists from both ends of the field, this is further exacerbated by a lack of

understanding of each other's lives. The routes to improved dialogue are known by professionals (informal, word of mouth etc.), but those routes do not fit in the formal framework in which professionals are required to operate. Agendas between working class communities and professional agencies, politicians and policymakers appear to be 'divergent' – their values are different, the means are varied, aspirations and needs are diverse. This results in a lack of trust, disconnection and, given power structures, ultimately a lack of voice. The implications of this result in a lack of engagement, limited understanding, and the inability to recognise or accept the real needs of working class communities.

#### **6.4 Research Question 4: Social Capital and Networks**

*Does current social policy in the UK and the notion of social capital enable or hinder the working class to influence wider political structures?*

Social capital assumptions are made by policymakers that the working class should be able to progress by acquiring 'different' social capital (linking / bridging), even though the working class has primarily much more bonding social capital. This switching from one capital to another is assumed to be some kind of simple building process – but it is clearly a very challenging thing to do, with few resources to do it. Furthermore, there is little incentive for working class people to engage in this agenda – structures are not established in their interests anyway (e.g. the very precarious employment options available to 'move on/up').

It could be argued that due to limited social capital and restricted networks, some working class people are unable to access the channels required to get their voice heard. Like Hanley's "wall in the head" (2007), residents in Camp Hill can only have knowledge of opportunities and networks based on what they can glean from the people around them. This presents a problem for those who aim to increase social mobility within communities; how can one be encouraged to access something that they do not know exists, or do not know how to navigate in order to benefit from it? This exemplifies the need for a critical realist perspective in order to understand the nature of awareness and knowledge of opportunities available. Residents only have access to those opportunities that they are made aware of (empirical), as opposed to all of the opportunities available to them (actual); very few are likely to acknowledge the causal mechanisms that generate the opportunities and events in the first instance; perhaps this is because the causal mechanisms are not operating in their own interests, so there is little benefit even acknowledging them.



For some participants involved in this research, there was no desire to be upwardly mobile, they were content with their role in society. This view is not encouraged by politicians and policymakers who are keen to raise aspirations. That increasing social capital and social mobility is the 'answer' appears overly simplistic. Policymakers and politicians have stated that recreating the bonds of civic society and creating a culture of social capital is the answer to resolving many societal issues, but fail to demonstrate examples of measures which can be taken to achieve this. The closest any recent government has got, in terms of action, was the Labour Party in 1997 who arguably attempted to provide an infrastructure that would facilitate growth thus resulting in an environment where social capital can thrive (see Somerville 2011 and Halpern 2008). In the case of the Big Society, such responsibility is passed to the voluntary/charity sectors and civil society with minimal fiscal support or resources.

Judgements are frequently made by theorists and policymakers regarding the effects of social capital without fully understanding its value to working class communities. This focus on the effect of increased social capital fails to address the root causes which prevent the establishment of the desired improvement in levels and types of social capital required for social mobility. A key factor which affects residents' ability to build levels of bridging and linking social capital is the lack of opportunities to enter employment locally. It appears simplistic to recommend that more jobs should be created in the area, but providing opportunities for residents to become more economically active would go some way to improving both levels of social capital and future economic prosperity. Unfortunately, in Camp Hill the opposite has happened, exemplified by the closure of the Opportunities Centre in 2015. To compensate for this, local and national agencies should seek to establish additional prospects for employment, perhaps through incentives to private businesses or through the relocation of public services. However, such initiatives are well beyond local powers, and it is also recognised that many employment opportunities are poorly paid

and often insecure, which continues to add to the precarious position often faced by the working class.

This thesis supports the view that working class communities tend to have strong bonding social capital and much less bridging and linking social capital than those in higher classes. However, the findings also highlight that bonding social capital is vital for survival in a disadvantaged area, and there are several examples within the data to exemplify its value to working class residents in times of crisis and need. The rhetoric that the working class have low levels of social capital may also be flawed in that bonding is the least visible form of social capital and is therefore difficult to observe and measure. This thesis demonstrates the critical nature of bonding social capital in working class people's lives, and that bonding social capital is higher within working class communities because other types of social capital are beyond the reach of their resources and awareness. Stakeholders involved in this research recognised that they found it difficult to identify the community networks and links due to the lack of visibility, compounded by the high boundaries to entry for outsiders which exist in such closely bonded networks.

The findings from this research go some way to suggesting that there should be minimal intervention to build social capital; individuals should be allowed to freely engage in activities. Social capital requires trust, and social life would be problematic without high levels of trust (see Newton 2001). Given that the working class arguably demonstrate a lack of trust outside of their close-knit groups, it is understandable that levels of bridging and linking social capital are weak. Trust requires mutual respect and a collective accountability which is not evident between communities, agencies, policymakers and ultimately governments. In order to increase social capital, it is necessary to develop ways of rebuilding trust with the community, although it is recognised that this is a slow and difficult process. There was evidence within this research that those who do possess wider networks can often access additional resources which ensure actions

are taken. However, the restricted ability to articulate issues in an 'acceptable' way stems from far more factors than just limited social capital and networks. The power of those in higher positions in society can be seen to intimidate the working class and reduce their confidence to speak out. This research confirms the lack of self-efficacy held by some working class residents who believe that they are not of equal standing when it comes to education, understanding and intellect. This is also a frequently cited reason why people disengage with politics; it is too complex, and other priorities critical to survival are far more urgent to residents. Communication and engagement with external agencies and networks was further complicated by a strong lack of trust. This lack of trust appeared to originate from a long held view that any formal agency will simply 'meddle' in their lives and then disappear. Most prevalent was the view that those in higher positions in society had little or no understanding of the daily lives of the working class and the communities in which they live. The higher classes cannot comprehend the experiences of the poorest sections of society having never encountered a life consumed by scarce resources, poverty or deprivation. However, those in power are those who to make crucial decisions, yet are not representative of British society (Jones 2014). This is a further factor which leads to political disengagement or, as explored earlier, leads voters to more extreme political parties who claim to speak for them, often as the only form of protest which appears to be available. The elite nature of political structures adds to the lack of trust, which surfaced several times during interviews and focus groups within this research. This distrust was evident from both angles; firstly, through the perceived view that policymakers do not trust the working class to manage without intervention and do not have adequate skills to contribute to policy development: secondly, that the working class do not trust policymakers, partly fuelled by a history of ignorance but also due to the lack of understanding of their lives and priorities.

Many of the groups and activities in Camp Hill have been developed in response to perceived societal issues, in some cases forcing engagement, demonstrating a top-down approach to policy development. Within the field of community development, it is often suggested that social policy should be developed from a bottom-up, grassroots level but suggestions regarding how this can be done remain weak. This research contributes principles on how communities might be better engaged in policy development. The major barrier appears to be convincing policymakers to listen and appreciate the views at grassroots level, given that their interests and views seem dissimilar. These findings suggest that, rather than formal interventions, communities could be better supported to strengthen networks and increase trust through more modest but less 'conditional' resourcing, more communal spaces to meet and access to support when required (see Taylor et al. 2007). This is essentially a form of community-driven capacity building or asset-based approach. If formal networks are not utilised, then resources could be provided to help support and fund informal groups and networks in the community, but care must be taken to avoid unnecessary jargon and bureaucratic processes to promote access. Attempts to generate social policy from a grassroots level need to be more innovative. Perhaps a starting point for this is greater exploration of where policymakers/agencies and residents have at least *some* common ground regarding their interests.

If the problems in defining social class have taught us anything, then we know that one's position is far from static; this is no different to the development of policy. It is important to recognise the significance of localism and the diversity of those to which policy is developed for. The establishment of universal social policy will only alienate those to whom it does not apply, or to those who do not recognise or agree with its need. If policymakers could increase efforts and resources to collaborate with local groups, the voluntary sector and informal networks, then greater progress could be made in terms of addressing the factors which cause much of the

deprivation, poverty and social exclusion experienced. In short, rather than trying to change citizens' participation so it fits existing structure, the structures should be change to fit the nature of people's participation. As Skidmore (2006) states "the goal of policy should not be to invent ever more structures of participation, even though this is much easier to do, but to invest in changing cultures of participation in the long term". However, a more 'hands off' approach does not fit with the increasing trend towards greater accountability and monitoring regimes for spending public money. The political agendas of engagement are not in line with residents' wishes for improvement, it belongs to someone else's ideology, not theirs.

### ***Implications and Further Research***

The findings from this research demonstrate the strength and value of bonding social capital within working class communities; this appeared at is strongest during times of crisis and need. Such bonds are not often visible to those outside of the community and innovative methods must be adopted identify and to gain access to these networks to establish a greater understanding of their value. Policymakers and stakeholders could learn from the ability of the working class to cope and support each other in times of crisis. There is an opportunity to conduct further research into generating more innovative ways of communicating views and concerns originating from a grassroots level. Stakeholders involved in this research recognise the importance of communicating via 'word of mouth', this does not fit with the methods imposed by traditional top-down communicators, which thus warrants further exploration. More informal communication methods might be a risk worth taking to permit greater influence over decision making and policy formation through a 'bottom-up' approach. Policy generation led from a grassroots level would also require the removal of jargon, bureaucracy and complex processes, representing a change from the current approach to policy development.

## **6.5 Research Question 5: The Wider Impact**

*Ultimately, what are the implications of a voiceless, disconnected community/segment of society?*

The implications of a voiceless, disconnected segment of society are relatively clear – there will be an increased blurring (even destruction) of working class identity; inequalities will increase even further; more prejudice will result from such inequality; more hopelessness will result within those affected by it; and ultimately more cost to broader society in dealing with the potential fall-out from it. This is not new – it has been seen historically here and elsewhere across the globe.

The regeneration of Camp Hill can be seen as symbolic of the wider issues related to the working class: how they are consulted; how their voices are represented; and how their lives matter to others. The regeneration began in 1999 and, as stated previously, the statistics do not document any significant improvement against social objectives since then. There are a number of studies following similar regeneration projects which suggest that such initiatives targeted at poorer communities, over the years, do not significantly improve their position across a number of indicators, relative to other communities. Studies also suggest that dramatic changes to the physical environment can restrict progress on social goals. Residents of Camp Hill advise that a sense of community still exists in the older areas which has yet to be established in the newly regenerated area. It is arguable that there has been too much of a focus on the geographic neighbourhood in Camp Hill, despite the Director highlighting the focus on the community's social needs. There has been a wealth of research into regeneration and community development, particularly in recognising that communities are not homogenous entities and that many differences and divisions exist within them. It could be argued that inward mobility will stabilise over time, once the regeneration is complete, residents will be able to lay down roots and the community and social capital will develop in a new form and become 'established'. The findings from this research do identify further research opportunities here. In particular, the use of informal

social spaces such as pubs, social clubs and community centres which allow the community to congregate, interact and share their lives. This thesis contributes to the view that these third spaces (Oldenburg 1997) are vital to all communities and in particular deprived neighbourhoods (Hickman 2013) as a mechanism to permit more informal community organising, perhaps via a 'light touch' approach (see Taylor et al. 2007). This could present an opportunity to empower residents to increase supportive networks rather than the frequently presented view that such organising is only a vehicle to threaten existing formalised structures. It would be beneficial to investigate, perhaps through a comparative study, how these social spaces are integrated across the many regeneration initiatives across the country and in wider working class communities.

It was undoubtedly clear from conversations with stakeholders in Camp Hill that they cared deeply about the wellbeing of residents and the area. In most cases, they had chosen to live and/or work there and were passionate about helping improve the lives of Camp Hill's residents. Their frustrations focussed on a lack of funding and the lack of engagement from members of the community, they appear to be fighting a losing battle to engage residents who have been let down so many times in the past. Stakeholders displayed a real motivation to improve the area but had almost admitted defeat when it came to finding the best way to communicate with residents, word of mouth was clearly the best method yet this is known to be notoriously difficult to disseminate and monitor. They were as equally frustrated as the residents at the inability to change perceptions, both of Camp Hill, and in the wider external views of the working class. From the other angle, they were frustrated by the perceptions and stigma associated with agencies established to support those in need. Stakeholders who were involved in social policy and interventions at a local level demonstrated a similar lack of voice and disconnect as the residents in which they serve. They appeared equally frustrated by the lack of power they had to instigate change and access the vital funding required to resource community needs. This suggests that the blockage in communication

and voice exists beyond the local level which is further exacerbated by the increasing trends in centralisation, accountability and monitoring systems for spending public money locally. Central government must share and devolve more power in order to create an opportunity for greater collaborative working and therefore allowing communities to take greater control in the redesign of services. Greater transparency and accountability is required at a national level to improve the provision of services and to reduce the metaphorical disconnect and lack of understanding of 'ordinary' lives. Resources are aimed at projects not people, this means that people are unlikely to see how money is spent. Heightened understanding at a local level will permit an increased focus on communities where the need is the greatest, improving the targeting of resources in a climate of austerity.

Within this research, political processes have been explored in terms of social policy, class and disconnect, there is however opportunity to expand this to consider further research into the changing landscape of politics in Britain. The relationship between social class and political preference has changed dramatically in the last few decades, the boundaries are now very much blurred. The Labour Party is no longer seen as the automatic choice for the working class in the same way that the Conservatives are no longer the party for the wealthier and elite, however political disconnect remains class-based. The rhetoric is that politicians are all the same and the distinctions between mainstream political parties are narrowing. This thesis has provided additional insight to this via further narratives from the perspective of the working class and therefore it is recommended that the relationship between politics and social class is explored further.

This thesis asserts the implication that the lens is pointing in the wrong direction. The media focus on the working class and the poorest in Britain only furthers the discourse of ridicule and disgust, made even more prominent with the increasing levels of 'poverty porn' and tabloid sensationalism.



Some have argued that the lens should be shifted towards those who fit the other extreme, those who hold the majority of wealth and power and whose economic capital is growing at a far greater rate than the national economy. There is some evidence of demonisation towards them but such people have the resources to fend off such scrutiny. The moral arguments appear different to those targeting the working class. In Piketty's words "the more you have, the more you get" (2014), any gains in society are unevenly spread with a privileged class who have access to a better education, employment, health and housing. Britain is far from a meritocracy. The top one percent hold a disproportionate amount of power, whether this is through political means or through the ownership of large corporations and mainstream media outlets. A strong and equal society should be measured by the economic success, health and attainment of those within the 'lower' classes. All groups in society benefit from greater equality, including the middle and upper classes yet the focus appears to remain on satisfying the demands of a small, wealthy elite. Restricting the voice, influence and power of the working class permits such inequality to prevail. Any attempts to become organised, educated or connected presents a threat to the elite and ultimately the established order.

## **6.6 Final Conclusions: Overall Aim Revisited**

The overarching aim of this research sought to explore and critically analyse the importance of perceived class identities, voicelessness and disconnect within the working class, asking what impact/influence this has on individuals, the local community and the broader implications for social policy, discourse and wider society. The importance of perceived class identities, voicelessness and disconnect is a significant concern in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain. Internal perceptions of working class identities (i.e. from working class themselves) are viewed as being under severe threat from the various historical developments that have weakened the political, economical and social power of this group; from intensifying media perceptions which characterise the working class as so-called 'underclass' through examples of 'extreme' behaviour; as well as via recent political discourses around social mobility, social capital and meritocracy. External perceptions continue to marginalise working class identity, blurring it into so-called 'underclass' identities, and bolstering societal discourse and social policies that are punitive, rather than supportive, self-determined or emancipatory. Voicelessness and a disconnect of the working class are inevitable symptoms of such processes, which will ultimately cost wider society more in the longer-term, not just financially, but in terms of democratic freedoms.

Several key objectives were established in order to address the overall aim and research questions. Firstly, to critically review existing definitions of class, both traditional and more recent contemporary explanations to gain a greater focus on the complexity of changing class identities. Secondly, to develop a greater understanding and more insight into how the working class are represented within the media, by policy makers and wider society. Thirdly, to explore how the voice of the working class is communicated and to what extent their voice is interpreted and heard, this was addressed using a single case study. Fourthly, to synthesise the findings from the primary data collected with the earlier explored literature on perceptions of class, identity and social capital.

Finally, to critically evaluate the social policy implications of a voiceless, disconnected and misrepresented working class.

The overarching aim sought to establish the importance of class identity and whilst it was clear that defining social class was problematic, the significance of class identity was strongly felt by participants in this research. The negative perceptions of the working class as portrayed in the media provoked defensive responses and demonstrated a resilient sense of class pride amongst the working class. The importance and impact of voicelessness and disconnect on the working class is demonstrated through several aspects of this research from the regeneration initiative to the political assumptions and decisions made. The limited opportunities to project their voice highlights the lack of control the working class have within their communities and wider society, this can lead to inward looking communities with limited networks. The result of which can ultimately lead to wider societal issues regularly focussed on by policy makers, such as declining social mobility, increased poverty and limited long-term aspirations. However, this research recognises the strength of working class communities in times of crisis and need, this is not immediately visible to those on the outside.

The conceptual framework developed and refined by this thesis demonstrates the links between the concepts of class identity, voicelessness and the importance of social capital and networks to the working class. It would be valuable to test and further inform this framework through future research which aims to establish whether similar conclusions can be drawn from research within other working class communities. There are number of opportunities for further research, outlined above, regarding these contemporary issues which have an effect on communities and citizens in the present day. Decreasing social mobility, widening gaps of inequality, increasing poverty, immigration and austerity agendas - all of these are emotive subjects which frequently feature in public discourse and promote a diversity of views from all sections of society. Appendix 15 provides

an overarching summary of the thesis findings and broader implications which is synthesised with the original framework and aim. This framework is original in that it is further informed by the views of the working class themselves, an area limited in the existing body of knowledge. The findings from this research expose a number of issues which contribute to understandings of class identity, voicelessness and disconnect, and the value of social capital and networks to the working class.

## **6.7 Limitations of the Study**

It is important in any research to identify and address the limitations of the study; this section will highlight those which have been identified. In addition, there were many points throughout this research where topics were raised which fell outside of the scope of this thesis. There are other variables which frame the many debates on society. Issues which relate to race, faith, age, sexuality and disability for example, can all be examined from the lens of social class. However, they are all substantial topics which warrant a focussed study and have only received peripheral attention within this thesis, the core focus being on the working class.

One particular key variable which appeared throughout this research was gender, more so within the literature review. There are many studies regarding gender and a steady growth of research into gender and social class. Savage (2015) found in the GBCS that men tend to self-identify as a higher class whereas women a lower, this was not prevalent in my study and thus may warrant further research. In particular, the role of masculinity and class was apparent, many have argued that the male identity is fixed to a work role (e.g. mining) and questions are raised to ask what happens when this work role disappears, as has been the case in many working class communities. Work often provides status and pride among peers with males, the ability to provide for the family is a measure of success. There are several academics who raise the issue of single parent families, in particular female single parents who arguably have lower levels of social capital and restricted networks due to the lack of a male provider, more transient lives and fewer relations to other adults in the community (see Murray 1990 and Portes 1998). However, others present the opposite view that women are much better equipped to manage relationships, build and maintain networks and generally help others to get along together in a community (see Gilchrist 2009). They devote more time to nurturing networks, promoting neighbourliness and contributing to voluntary organisations (see Young and Wilmott 1957, Griffiths et al. 2009). Stakeholders in this research highlight the role

of women in the community and their ability to 'hold the family together' and deal with crises. The last century saw a change in the role of women and work with more women entering the (remunerated) workforce than in any time previously. For some, this demonstrates a threat to the masculine pride associated with work (see Nayak 2006). Women are able to do a 'man's job' although gender equality is still of great concern in contemporary Britain. My personal reflections throughout this study have focused on my role as a working class woman in academia, it is a growing area of research and also worthy of continued research focus.

A voice not adequately represented in my research is that of males below the age of forty-five, despite attempts to engage this group using additional data collection tools such as social media. This could be due to a variety of factors such as being unavailable to comment due to work commitments or more deep-seated discourses surrounding historical identity, society and civic participation (see Fine et. al. 1997). This appears to be common within similar research and such disengagement is worthy of further investigation. Engaging younger males in this research may have influenced the findings, particularly as it appears from this research that as people grow older their identity appears to become more consolidated owing to a longer period of history to reflect upon.

The subject of race and whiteness was not a major theme deduced from the primary data gathered, although referred to at some points. As previously explored, this might be due to other, more recent, changes to the community of Camp Hill (e.g. regeneration) or the result of an increased empathy with other marginalised groups. This is an emerging topic with several studies over the last decade contributing to the debate, some of which present different findings to this research (see Beider 2011). The opportunity to explore this further within working class communities would be valuable; particularly as the nation continues to become more diverse and as topics such as immigration continue to receive attention within the media.

Whilst the decisions made regarding data collection methods provided a wealth of primary data, other methods may have influenced the findings differently. For example, interviewing residents on an individual basis may have drawn out a more 'open' view on the subject matter; particularly apparent when addressing issues such as levels of debt. Within focus groups participants were keen to express their view that the working class 'didn't owe anyone anything', yet privately disclosing to me that they had relied upon borrowing in the past. At the same time, focus groups highlight what discourses are socially acceptable, and what issues are more contentious or even taboo in communities or groups - again, as in the case of debt. Furthermore, it is also recognised that interviews can be intimidating, particularly to the working class as highlighted by McDermott (2004). One of the key concerns from the outset of this research was the ability to encourage residents who do not ordinarily engage in community affairs to become involved in the focus groups and diary completion, as an alternative to the pressures of one-to-one interviewing. It was reassuring that most of the participants were from this category, but it is acknowledged that there are many others within the community who were not consulted and whose views have influenced the direction of the findings. Including an incentive may have had an impact on participation; perhaps a higher incentive may have encouraged more to engage, although this could result in greater ethical implications.

This research has focussed on Camp Hill, Nuneaton - one geographical area in Britain. Due to restricted resources and limited time, the study is relatively small in scale and an opportunity exists to undertake similar research elsewhere or on a larger scale, although it is important to note that it is the *depth* of knowledge gained which is of upmost importance to greater understanding, not necessarily the quantity of data gathered. Whilst the views of participants in no way represent the working class in its entirety, this research has resulted in specific findings and a contribution to knowledge that is worthy of further exploration in a similar vein in other similar contexts. It would

be interesting to conduct this research in other working class areas; some have attempted to do so albeit with differing focusses and aims (see Pearce and Milne 2010, Beider 2011, Hibbitt, Jones and Meegan 2001, Todd 2014). Repeating research on class within more affluent middle class areas might also present interesting results in terms of drawing comparisons.

My position is theory-laden and I have identified a clear stance on the subject area which has been clarified during the development of this thesis, although my views have become more informed and have changed throughout the research process. Would a researcher with a different background and beliefs discover the same findings and conclusions? Mellor (2014) suggests that the findings are likely to be different given that the working class are unlikely to discuss the subject as freely to anyone who wasn't 'one of them'; class matching is important. As a self-identified working class woman, a level of rapport with participants was possible which may have aided greater trust and disclosure. However, my position may have also impacted on the interpretation of results and conclusions, as Rhodes (1994: 550) argues "matching interviewers and interviewees assumes there is only one truth to be determined by the research and that subject positions are one-dimensional and fixed". Additionally, as a white researcher and 'racial insider' (Moore 2013: 9), the findings are likely to have been interpreted in a different way than if a researcher with a different racial identity or person of colour had conducted the analysis. Matching in terms of class and race undoubtedly provided me with greater access to the research field, particularly in terms of white working class. The commonality of 'people like us' is advantageous, however one must recognise the limitations that such matching has on the overall research conclusions.



## **6.8 The Ever-Changing Landscape and Concluding Reflections**

Since the primary data collection stage of this research there has been a General Election, which saw the Conservative Party regain power and gain a majority parliament. In 2015, the media spotlight turned on Nuneaton as the barometer ‘swing seat’ of the election, the first key marginal seat between the two main parties. A Labour win was predicted but the seat saw a swing of three percent towards the Conservatives which proved to be an (accurate) indication that they were set to win. The overall success of the Conservative Party could provide evidence that older models of class are outdated, the distinctions between class boundaries are blurred and more complex than ever before. In June 2017, a ‘snap’ General Election was held, the result of which was a ‘hung’ parliament. The Conservative Party, with the largest number of seats, stayed in power with support from the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). We are currently experiencing wider gaps in economic inequality with a small percentage of elite who are prospering and an increasing number of citizens living in poverty and deprivation.

During 2015 and the early months of 2016 the country saw anti-austerity marches, regular protests, junior doctors strikes and other similar politically motivated actions. In June 2016, the EU referendum dominated political debate and media coverage, once again the discourse appeared to returned to social class. Headlines such as ‘Britain is in the midst of a working class revolt’ (Harris 2016), ‘Brexit is a fake revolt – working class culture is being hijacked to help the elite’ (Mason 2016), ‘Working-class Britons feel Brexit and betrayed’ (Jones 2016), and ‘Brexit is the only way the working class can change anything’ (McKenzie 2016) were cited. Emphasis on the referendum appeared to provide the opportunity for the working class to have a say, a possibility that something might change for them if they voted to leave. The working class did not want to vote for the status quo, they wanted a change because they were not happy with how things were prior to the referendum. Mason (2016) stated “In many working class communities, people are getting

ready to vote leave not just as a way of telling the neoliberal elite to get stuffed. They also want to discomfort the metropolitan, liberal, university-educated salariat for good measure. For many people involved, it feels like their first ever effective political choice... like the first time they have ever had control". The referendum also led to further stigmatisation of the working class through calls that they were 'thick' or racist (see O'Neill 2016). If political apathy did exist, then the public response to recent events suggests that politics in Britain has suddenly become interesting again.

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I opened this thesis with a statement of my position, a short autobiography to demonstrate the way in which my background, interests and values have led me towards this research. I wanted to present my motivation for gaining a better understanding of perceptions of class and the way in which the working class are represented within the public sphere. Additionally, I wanted to resolve some unanswered questions I had regarding my own class position. Whilst I have gained an immense level of new knowledge, my position on the class cusp remains. My experience of ethnographic research in Camp Hill was at times thought provoking but personally rewarding and valuable; I became very involved in community life and I felt drawn into their daily lives. Residents always welcomed me and this made it very difficult to withdraw and untangle myself once the research was complete.

I was recently asked by my manager to consider my long-term career plans; he became frustrated that I did not have one beyond my current position. This is something I do not tend to focus on and I was forced to reflect on the reasons why. I feel very lucky to be in my current position, I have achieved more than I ever thought possible and so aspirations to progress further seem unrealistic. I recognise the fraudulent feelings and fear of being caught out as expressed by Munt (2000) and the escapee guilt identified by Hanley (2007). I am still coming to terms with having 'ideas above my station'. This research has led me to form stronger, more informed views about society - I feel

better equipped to discuss societal and political matters, despite how frustrating it often seems. I am determined to continue my research within the topic area.

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## **8.0 Appendices**

### **Appendix One - Stakeholder Semi-Structured Interview – Question Template**

#### **Contact details:**

Leanne de Main

Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry, CV1 5FB

Tel: 02476 887415

Email: Leanne.demain@coventry.ac.uk

*Issue Participant Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form*

#### **Research Background**

My name is Leanne de Main, I am a PhD student at Coventry University. Following this interview, I will transcribe your answers and ask you to approve the transcript before I use it as part of my research. I will be recording this interview to allow me to later recall and type up your answers. Once the research is complete I will destroy the recording.

The overall aim of this research is to identify and analyse the importance of perceived class identities and voicelessness within the working class, asking what impact/influence this has on individuals, the local community and the wider implications for social policy.

You have been asked to participate because you are a key stakeholder in the community. I would like to gather your views on a number of topics and this interview will help to develop ideas and analysis that will address the research objectives. I will not use your name in the research and will endeavour to maintain anonymity at all times. However due to the nature of the sampling techniques used there may be a small possibility that your comments could be attributed to you. Please speak openly and honestly.

Any questions?

*Ensure Consent Form is signed and start recording*

#### **Introduction**



Ask each participant for:

- Name (*with consent*)
- Organisation and role
- Length of involvement/ employment
- Ask for background (*as appropriate*)
  1. Why did you become a member of <organisation>?
  2. Why did you choose to work in Camp Hill?

### **Camp Hill**

1. What effect has the regeneration of Camp Hill had on how people come together?
  - Do you think people want to stay/leave?
  - People enjoy living in this area? Feeling safe?
2. What changes would you like to see in Camp Hill?
  - Whose responsibility is this?
  - How can you make this change happen?
3. What are the barriers to involvement in local groups? How often?
4. In your opinion, how can the voice of the community be better heard?
  - Where do people go if they have problems?
  - Positive action on local issues?
5. What is the best way to communicate news to people in this area?
6. How can we encourage residents to 'speak out'?

### **What does it mean to be 'white working class'?**

7. How would you define white working class communities?
  - social class D and E
  - values and approach
  - indicators such as social housing tenant

- nationality British
- ethnicity white
- Other

8. Do you consider yourself to be working class?

- Yes/no - Why?
- Has there been a change to your social class?

9. What does being working class mean to you?

- Respectful working classes?
- Aspiration to be socially mobile?

10. What do you think is the outside perception of the working classes?

- In particular Camp Hill
- Education
- Health
- Economical
- Crime

11. Do you think there has been a change to the views of the working classes?

*Why?*

- Housing
- Community
- Media
- Society
- Employment

12. How can we present working class communities in a different way?

- better representation from local authority
- listening to issues and concerns of this community
- effective leadership and projects

- investment in community organisations
- better PR
- Other

13. Research has suggested that the working classes are 'voiceless', what do you think this means?

14. How do you think the voices of the working class could be communicated?

- Whose responsibility is this?
- What is your role in encouraging these voices to be heard?
- Who listens?
- Perceived control over the community?

### **Social Capital**

15. What do you understand by the term social capital?

*Define as necessary*

- Networks and ties
- Types of social capital, bonding, bridging and linking

16. Describe the extent to which social capital exists in Camp Hill

- What brings people together?
- What drives people apart?
- Friends/family in the area? Outside?

17. What are the organisations which seek to represent local residents at community or at a wider level?

- local authority
- political parties
- voluntary sector and community organisations
- resident associations

- other

18. Do these organisations bring different types of groups together?

If YES

- how is this achieved
- community development worker
- common norms/ reciprocity
- delivery and outcomes
- Other

If NO

- perceived as representing sectional interests
- ethnicity or class or both
- money goes to different organisations
- ineffective leadership
- Other

**Thank you very much.**

**Is there anything you would like to add?**

\*\*\*\*

## **Appendix Two - Focus Group – Question Template**

### **Contact details:**

Leanne de Main

Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry, CV1 5FB

Tel: 02476 887415

Email: Leanne.demain@coventry.ac.uk

### *Issue Participant Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form*

### **Research Background**

My name is Leanne de Main, I am a PhD student at Coventry University.

I will be recording this focus group to allow me to later recall and type up your answers. Once the research is complete I will destroy the recording. The overall aim of this research is to identify and analyse the importance of perceived class identities and voicelessness within the working class, asking what impact/influence this has on individuals, the local community and the wider implications for social policy.

You have been asked to participate because you are a community member. I would like to gather your views on a number of topics and this will help to develop ideas and analysis that will address the research objectives. I will not use your name in the research and will endeavour to maintain anonymity at all times. Please speak openly and honestly.

Any questions?

Ensure Consent Forms are signed and start recording

### **Introduction**

Ask each participant for:

- Name (with consent) and age
- Length of time living in Camp Hill
- Family and employment (*optional*)

## **Camp Hill**

- 1) Using the Post-its please list all of the activities, groups, community centres and forums that you are aware of in Camp Hill and stick them in box A

*A flip chart will be provided to act as box A*

- 2) Using Post-its indicate which activities, groups, community centres and forums do you think should be available in Camp Hill and stick them in box B

*A flip chart will be provided to act as box B*

- 3) Separate the activities, groups, community centres and forums listed below in to two piles:
- a) Those you have heard of before
  - b) Those you have never heard of before

*Residents will be provided with a number of activities, groups, community centres and forums which have previously been identified by stakeholders and earlier fieldwork.*

<b>Healthy Living Network</b>	<b>Elderly Persons Dance Group</b>
<b>CHESS Centre</b>	<b>Elderly Persons Keep Fit</b>
<b>Youth Club (CHESS Centre)</b>	<b>Knitting Group</b>
<b>Children's Centre/Early Years Centre</b>	<b>Opportunities Centre</b>
<b>Adult Learning Centre</b>	<b>Locality Forum</b>
<b>Dentist</b>	<b>Weekly MP Clinics</b>
<b>GP Health Centre</b>	<b>Camp Hill Summer Festival</b>
<b>Over 50's Luncheon Club</b>	<b>Christmas Fayre</b>
<b>Church</b>	<b>Elderly Persons Art and Crafts</b>
<b>Library</b>	<b>Residents Forum</b>

<b>GP Patients Forum</b>	<b>Neighbourhood Watch</b>
<b>School Parents/Governors Meetings</b>	<b>Camp Hill Scouts</b>
<b>Windmill Social Club</b>	<b>CHESS Football Club</b>
<b>Camp Hill Holiday Scheme</b>	<b>Legal Advice Service</b>
<b>Pride in Camp Hill Project</b>	<b>Walking for Health</b>
<b>Relate – Marriage/Relationship Advice</b>	<b>Acorn Counselling Service</b>
<b>Citizens Advice Bureau</b>	<b>Debt/Financial Advice</b>
<b>Drug/Alcohol Advice</b>	<b>After School Clubs</b>
<b>Family Support Service</b>	<b>Dazzlers Dance Group</b>
<b>Silver Surfers</b>	<b>Young Parents Group</b>
<b>Line Dancing</b>	<b>Karate</b>
<b>Zumba</b>	<b>Next Steps Job Club</b>
<b>Allotment Society</b>	<b>Community Radio Projects</b>
<b>Hobby Box</b>	

4. What effect has the regeneration of Camp Hill had on the people who live here?

- Do you think people want to stay/leave?
- People enjoy living in this area? Feeling safe?
- How people come together?

5. What changes would you like to see in Camp Hill?

- Whose responsibility is this?
- How can you help make this change happen?

6. What things might prevent people from becoming involved in local groups?
7. Where do people go if they have problems?
  - Friends/relatives
  - Teacher/school
  - 'Official' such as social worker/police
  - Internet/social media
8. How do you find out about activities in Camp Hill?

**What does it mean to be 'white working class'?**

9. How would you define white working class communities?
  - values and approach
  - indicators such as social housing tenant
  - nationality British
  - ethnicity white
10. Do you consider yourself to be working class?
  - Yes/no - Why?
  - Has there been a change to your social class?
11. What does being working class mean to you?
  - Respectful working classes?
  - Aspiration to be socially mobile?
12. What do you think is the outside perception of white working classes?
  - In particular Camp Hill
  - Education
  - Health
  - Economical
  - Crime



13. Do you think there has been a change to the views of the working classes?

*Why?*

- Housing
- Community
- Media
- Society
- Employment

14. How can we change the way people think about white working class communities?

- better representation from local authority/council
- listening to issues and concerns of this community
- effective leadership and projects
- investment in community organisations
- better PR

15. Research has suggested that the working classes are 'voiceless', what do you think this means?

16. How do you think the voices of the working class could be better communicated?

- Whose responsibility is this?
- Who listens?

### **Social Capital**

17. What brings people together in Camp Hill?

18. What drives people apart?

- Causes of conflict/differences

19. In the following situations, who would be the first person you contacted and how would you contact them?

- You witness someone being attacked outside your home
- Your child develops a high temperature
- Your fridge or freezer stops working
- You have a big argument with your partner/friend
- You have no money until next week and you need some groceries
- Your neighbours are playing loud music at 3am

20. Do you have family or close friends nearby?

- a. Outside the area?

**Thank you very much.**

**Is there anything you would like to add?**

### **Appendix Three – Diary Template**

Thank you for agreeing to complete a diary for research purposes. You are required to complete a diary over a 7-day period, this should be during normal day to day activities so please avoid less normal periods of time such as holidays or other less common activities.

Name (optional) ..... Age.....  
Gender.....Dates of completion: From ...../...../..... To ...../...../.....

Please record every connection you make, for example, this could be face to face, phone, social media or email. For each connection please complete the template provided as soon as possible after the event, if you run out of space please continue on separate paper. You are not required to include details of networks or connections during work time unless this connection is specifically related to activities which take place outside of normal working hours. You are not required to include connections with the people who live in the same household as you.

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Time:</b>
<b>Identification of connection – Friend/relative/other (e.g. doctor, teacher, employer)</b>	
<b>Location of connection – Telephone/online/school/community centre/other</b>	
<b>Frequency of connection – Daily/weekly/monthly/adhoc</b>	
<b>Origins of connection – How was this connection originally made?</b>	
<b>Participants further comments – strength and value of connection, will you see them again? What do you know about this connection and what do they know about you? Please add anything else that you think might give more information about this connection.</b>	

## **Appendix Four – Informed Consent Form – Stakeholder**

### **Research Topic**

Working class, perceptions, the outside view and networks.

### **Research Aim**

The research will identify and analyse the importance of perceived class identities and voicelessness within the working class, asking what impact/influence this has on individuals, the local community and the broader implications for social policy and public discourse.

- |   | <b>Please initial</b> |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions                                  | <input type="text"/>  |
| 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason   | <input type="text"/>  |
| 3. I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in confidence  | <input type="text"/>  |
| 4. I understand that I also have the right to change my mind about participating in the study.  | <input type="text"/>  |
| 5. I agree to be recorded and for anonymised quotes to be used as part of the research project  | <input type="text"/>  |
| 6. I understand that due to the small sample sizes involved my responses to questionnaires and interviews could possibly be attributed to me personally by readers of the report. | <input type="text"/>  |
| 7. I agree to take part in the research project   | <input type="text"/>  |

<b>Name of participant</b>	
<b>Signature of participant</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>Name of Researcher</b>	
<b>Signature of researcher</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

## **Appendix Five – Informed Consent Form – Focus Groups**

### **Research Topic**

Working class, perceptions, the outside view and networks.

### **Research Aim**

The research will identify and analyse the importance of perceived class identities and voicelessness within the working class, asking what impact/influence this has on individuals, the local community and the broader implications for social policy and public discourse.

**Please initial**

- |  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions | <input type="text"/> |
| 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason                            | <input type="text"/> |
| 3. I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in confidence   | <input type="text"/> |
| 4. I understand that I also have the right to change my mind about participating in the study.   | <input type="text"/> |
| 5. I agree to be recorded and for anonymised quotes to be used as part of the research project   | <input type="text"/> |
| 6. I agree to take part in the research project  | <input type="text"/> |
| 7. I confirm I have received my £15 voucher  | <input type="text"/> |

<b>Name of participant</b>	
<b>Signature of participant</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>Name of Researcher</b>	
<b>Signature of researcher</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

## **Appendix Six – Informed Consent Form – Diaries**

### **Research Topic**

Working class, perceptions, the outside view and networks.

### **Research Aim**

The research will identify and analyse the importance of perceived class identities and voicelessness within the working class, asking what impact/influence this has on individuals, the local community and the broader implications for social policy and public discourse.

**Please initial**

- |  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions | <input type="text"/> |
| 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason                            | <input type="text"/> |
| 3. I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in confidence   | <input type="text"/> |
| 4. I understand that I also have the right to change my mind about participating in the study.   | <input type="text"/> |
| 5. I agree to submit my diary and for anonymised quotes to be used as part of the research project   | <input type="text"/> |
| 6. I agree to take part in the research project  | <input type="text"/> |

<b>Name of participant</b>	
<b>Signature of participant</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>Name of Researcher</b>	
<b>Signature of researcher</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

## **Appendix Seven – Participant Information Sheet – Stakeholders**

### **Participant Information Sheet**

#### **Information about the project**

##### **Research Topic**

Working class, perceptions, the outside view and networks.

##### **Research Aim**

The research will identify and analyse the importance of perceived class identities and voicelessness within the working class, asking what impact/influence this has on individuals, the local community and the broader implications for social policy and public discourse.

##### **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen as a key stakeholder of the community in Camp Hill Nuneaton, where this research is based.

##### **Do I have to take part?**

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary, you do not have to be involved if you do not wish to.

##### **What do I have to do?**

You will be asked to either attend an informal interview. Full details will be given to you and any questions you have will be answered honestly.

##### **What are the risks associated with this project?**

There should be absolutely no risks to you as a result of taking part in this research. If at any point you feel this is not the case, please contact the researcher using the details below.

##### **Withdrawal options**

If at any time during this research you decide not to be involved, you can decline any further commitment without giving any reason and all data relating to you will be destroyed.

##### **Data protection and confidentiality**

All data once collected will be held in a secure environment where only the researcher can gain access. In the final project all names will be removed. However, due to the way you have been selected to participate in this research, it may be possible for you to be identified from any comments you have made.

##### **What if things go wrong? Who to complain to**

If you wish to discuss this research further you can contact the researcher using the details below or the Supervisor, Professor Harris Beider on 07974 984370.

### **What will happen with the results of the study?**

The results of this study will help develop a thesis in preparation for the completion of a PhD at Coventry University. This will be reviewed by key personnel at the University and external experts in the field of study.

If you would like to know more about the results of this research in the future, please notify the researcher using the details below.

### **Further information and key contact details**

Leanne de Main  
Coventry University  
Tel: 02476 795104  
Email: [L.demain@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:L.demain@coventry.ac.uk)



## **Appendix Eight - Participant Information Sheet – Focus Groups**

### **Participant Information Sheet**

#### **Information about the project**

##### **Research Topic**

Working class, perceptions, the outside view and networks.

##### **Research Aim**

The research will identify and analyse the importance of perceived class identities and voicelessness within the working class, asking what impact/influence this has on individuals, the local community and the broader implications for social policy and public discourse.

##### **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen as a resident of the community in Camp Hill Nuneaton, where this research is based.

##### **Do I have to take part?**

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary; you do not have to be involved if you do not wish to.

##### **What do I have to do?**

You will be asked to attend an informal focus group. Full details will be given to you and any questions you have will be answered honestly.

##### **What are the risks associated with this project?**

There should be absolutely no risks to you as a result of taking part in this research. If at any point you feel this is not the case, please contact the researcher using the details below.

##### **Withdrawal options**

If at any time during this research you decide not to be involved, you can decline any further commitment without giving any reason and all data relating to you will be destroyed.

##### **Data protection and confidentiality**

All data once collected will be held in a secure environment where only the researcher can gain access. In the final project all names will be removed and the data will be destroyed once the project is complete.

##### **What if things go wrong? Who to complain to**

If you wish to discuss this research further you can contact the researcher using the details below or the Supervisor, Professor Harris Beider on 07974 984370.

##### **What will happen with the results of the study?**

The results of this study will help develop a thesis in preparation for the completion of a PhD at Coventry University. This will be reviewed by key personnel at the University and external experts in the field of study.

If you would like to know more about the results of this research in the future, please notify the researcher using the details below.

**Further information and key contact details**

Leanne de Main  
Coventry University  
Tel: 02476 795104  
Email: L.demain@coventry.ac.uk

## **Appendix Nine – Participant Information Sheet – Diary**

### **Participant Information Sheet**

#### **Information about the project**

##### **Research Topic**

Working class, perceptions, the outside view and networks.

##### **Research Aim**

The research will identify and analyse the importance of perceived class identities and voicelessness within the working class, asking what impact/influence this has on individuals, the local community and the broader implications for social policy and public discourse.

##### **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen as a resident of the community in Camp Hill Nuneaton, where this research is based.

##### **Do I have to take part?**

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary; you do not have to be involved if you do not wish to.

##### **What do I have to do?**

You will be asked to complete a diary for seven days. Full details will be given to you and any questions you have will be answered honestly.

##### **What are the risks associated with this project?**

There should be absolutely no risks to you as a result of taking part in this research. If at any point you feel this is not the case, please contact the researcher using the details below.

##### **Withdrawal options**

If at any time during this research you decide not to be involved, you can decline any further commitment without giving any reason and all data relating to you will be destroyed.

##### **Data protection and confidentiality**

All data once collected will be held in a secure environment where only the researcher can gain access. In the final project all names will be removed and the data will be destroyed once the project is complete.

##### **What if things go wrong? Who to complain to**

If you wish to discuss this research further you can contact the researcher using the details below or the Supervisor, Professor Harris Beider on 07974 984370.

##### **What will happen with the results of the study?**

The results of this study will help develop a thesis in preparation for the completion of a PhD at Coventry University. This will be reviewed by key personnel at the University and external experts in the field of study.

If you would like to know more about the results of this research in the future, please notify the researcher using the details below.

**Further information and key contact details**

Leanne de Main  
Coventry University  
Tel: 02476 795104  
Email: L.demain@coventry.ac.uk

## **Appendix Ten – Diary Voucher Receipt**

### **Voucher Receipt**

#### **Information about the project**

##### **Research Topic**

Working class, perceptions, the outside view and networks.

##### **Research Aim**

The research will identify and analyse the importance of perceived class identities and voicelessness within the working class, asking what impact/influence this has on individuals, the local community and the broader implications for social policy and public discourse.

**Please initial**

1. I confirm that I have received a £40 voucher for my participation in this research

<b>Name of participant</b>	
<b>Signature of participant</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>Name of Researcher</b>	
<b>Signature of researcher</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

## **Appendix Eleven – Original Ethical Approval**

### **REGISTRY RESEARCH UNIT**

#### **ETHICS REVIEW FEEDBACK FORM**

(Review feedback should be completed within 10 working days)

**Ethics review number: P1122**

**Name of applicant:** Leanne De Main .....

**Faculty/School/Department:** [Business, Environment and Society] BES Economics, Finance and Accounting.....

**Research project title:** The Role of Social Capital: A Journey into the Lives of Families in the Community [working title]

Comments by the reviewer

**Name of applicant:** Leanne De Main .....

<b>1. Evaluation of the ethics of the proposal:</b>										
Satisfactory										
<b>2. Evaluation of the participant information sheet and consent form:</b>										
Satisfactory										
<b>3. Recommendation:</b> (Please indicate as appropriate and advise on any conditions. If there any conditions, the applicant will be required to resubmit his/her application and this will be sent to the same reviewer).										
<table border="1"><tr><td><b>X</b></td><td>Approved - no conditions attached</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Approved with minor conditions (no need to re-submit)</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Conditional upon the following – please use additional sheets if necessary (please re-submit application)</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Rejected for the following reason(s) – please use other side if necessary</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Not required</td></tr></table>	<b>X</b>	Approved - no conditions attached		Approved with minor conditions (no need to re-submit)		Conditional upon the following – please use additional sheets if necessary (please re-submit application)		Rejected for the following reason(s) – please use other side if necessary		Not required
<b>X</b>	Approved - no conditions attached									
	Approved with minor conditions (no need to re-submit)									
	Conditional upon the following – please use additional sheets if necessary (please re-submit application)									
	Rejected for the following reason(s) – please use other side if necessary									
	Not required									

**Name of reviewer:** Anonymous..... **Date:** 13/05/2011

## **Appendix Twelve – Amended Ethical Approval**

### **REGISTRY RESEARCH UNIT**

#### **ETHICS REVIEW FEEDBACK FORM**

**Name of applicant:** Leanne De Main ..... **Reference number:** P25902

**Faculty/School/Department:** [Business, Environment and Society] Strategy and Applied Management

**Research project title:** Being Voiceless: Perceptions of class identity, misrepresentation and disconnect from a working class perspective.

Comments by the reviewer:

<b>4. Evaluation of the ethics of the proposal:</b>										
The applicant has addressed all questions and explained how she intends to use social media for her research project.										
<b>5. Evaluation of the participant information sheet and consent form:</b>										
Not provided. Not applicable.										
<b>6. Recommendation:</b> (Please indicate as appropriate and advise on any conditions. If there any conditions, the applicant will be required to resubmit his/her application and this will be sent to the same reviewer).										
<table border="1"><tr><td><b>X</b></td><td>Approved - no conditions attached</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Approved with minor conditions (no need to re-submit)</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Conditional upon the following – please use additional sheets if necessary (please re-submit application)</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Rejected for the following reason(s) – please use other side if necessary</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Not required</td></tr></table>	<b>X</b>	Approved - no conditions attached		Approved with minor conditions (no need to re-submit)		Conditional upon the following – please use additional sheets if necessary (please re-submit application)		Rejected for the following reason(s) – please use other side if necessary		Not required
<b>X</b>	Approved - no conditions attached									
	Approved with minor conditions (no need to re-submit)									
	Conditional upon the following – please use additional sheets if necessary (please re-submit application)									
	Rejected for the following reason(s) – please use other side if necessary									
	Not required									

**Name of reviewer:** Anonymous..... **Date:** 25/07/2014

## Appendix Thirteen – Health, Safety and Risk Assessment



### STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECT RISK ASSESSMENT

Person(s) undertaking project:	Leanne de Main
Project supervisor:	Prof Harris Beider

Brief outline of project:  <i>Outline the types of activities that will take place or items fabricated i.e. face to face interviews, public surveys, water sampling, machining vehicle parts, brazing etc.</i>	Focus groups, face-to-face interviews and participant diary keeping. Data collection confined to one community area in Warwickshire.
--	--

Dates of study (from – to)	September 2009-September 2016 (Data Collection 2013-2014)
Location(s) of activity:  <i>Country and specific area.</i>	Camp Hill, Nuneaton, Warwickshire

Will the project involve laboratory work?  <i>If yes, you will be required to complete separate risk assessment(s) prior to carrying out any laboratory work.</i>	No
Will the project involve workshop work?  <i>If yes, you will be required to complete an induction and may carry out a separate risk assessment(s) prior to carrying out any workshop work.</i>	No

Will the project involve travel? <i>(If yes, complete this section as fully as possible. The form may require review prior to travel to add missing details)</i>	No
--	----



Approximate dates of travel:  <i>Your supervisor must have details of travel plans once confirmed.</i>	N/A	
Arrangements to maintain contact with the University:	N/A	
Emergency contact information:	School/Faculty contact (Daytime): 02476 746151 24hr University contact (Protection Service): 02476 888 555 Local healthcare/emergency services: N/A	
Has suitable travel insurance has been obtained? <i>(Please attach a copy of certificate)</i>	N/A	
If EU travel, has EH1C card been obtained?	N/A	
Has advice/vaccinations from GP been sought <i>(where appropriate)</i> ?	N/A	
Are medical kits required <i>(i.e. in countries with poor healthcare facilities)</i> ?	N/A	
Are there any warnings issued by the FCO* against travel to the area?	N/A	
Have you registered with the FCO* service LOCATE? <i>(British nationals only)</i>	N/A	

\*FCO = <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/>

**PLEASE USE THE HAZARD CHECKLIST AS A GUIDE WHEN COMPLETING THIS SECTION.**

Hazard	Precautions to be used
<b>Work factors:</b>  <i>E.g.: dealing with the public, interviewing on sensitive issues, lone working, driving, working on boats, laboratory work; biological, chemical hazards etc.</i>	Whilst dealing with members of the public I will ensure that research is conducted in a mutually agreed, safe environment. I will follow the Ethics Policy of Coventry University whilst dealing with any potentially sensitive issues making sure that participation is entirely voluntary and will cause no harm to either party. Lone working will be kept to an absolute minimum and working outside of daylight hours will be completely avoided. I will ensure that a member of my family is aware of my contact details and location at all times. Aside from primary data collection all other research will be desk based and conducted from the University offices or my home.

<b>Site specific factors (in the field):</b>  <i>E.g.: remote area, construction site, local endemic diseases, political unrest, terrorism risk etc.</i>  <i>If travel abroad see FCO* website – list any risks greater than there would be for the UK</i>	Research will be conducted in a community which has recently undergone substantial regeneration. As stated above, all research will be conducted in a safe environment and in accordance with CU ethics guidance and policy.
--	--

<b>Environmental factors (in the field):</b>  <i>E.g.: extremes of temperature, altitude, weather conditions, tidal conditions, cliffs, bogs, caves, mountains etc.</i>	There are no expected risks associated with extreme environmental factors.
---	--

**Equipment:**

*E.g.: operation of machinery,  
use of specialist equipment,  
manual  
handling/transportation,  
compressed gases, etc.*

There are no expected risks associated with use of equipment.

**Other:**

*Detail any special arrangements  
required, i.e. permissions  
required, accommodation,  
travel, catering etc.*

I do not foresee any special arrangements which are required.

**Appendix Fourteen – Further examples of Facebook Posts Regarding Internal and External Perceptions of Camp Hill**

Some materials have been removed due to 3rd party copyright. The unabridged version can be viewed in Lancaster Library - Coventry University.

This is one of the most positive posts and comments I've read on fb for a while, there are a lot of good people in Camphill

Some materials have been removed due to 3rd party copyright. The unabridged version can be viewed in Lancaster Library - Coventry University.

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## Appendix Fifteen – The Thesis Framework Developed

