

***“I don’t want the world, I want to be able to live in it”:* Brexit and belonging in a working-class urban locale in Northern England**

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**Abstract**

The United Kingdom’s decision to leave the European Union in the 2016 referendum represented an important moment in bringing questions about belonging to public attention. Within these debates the notion of the working classes as ‘left behind’ gained particular traction, with it being proposed that it was disaffected and predominantly white residents of deindustrialised towns and cities who delivered the ‘Brexit’ vote based largely on their resentment towards immigration and the impacts of globalisation on labour markets, articulated through a defensiveform ofnationalism. This thesis investigates the ‘left behind’ arguments and considers to what extent local belonging is raced and classed. Using a place-based approach it explores the ways that local residents variously related to the EU referendum, aiding understandings of the category of whiteness, and how local belonging is impacted by experiences of migrant settlement and policy initiatives surrounding cohesion and integration. The research was conducted with members of an increasingly ethnically and socio-economically diverse urban working-class locality in the North of England, examining their attitudes, beliefs and concerns in relation to Brexit and belonging. The study contributes to the rapidly developing sociology of Brexit literature and theories concerning the ‘left behind’, producing an in-depth analysis of the interplay of race and class*.* The data was gathered using a qualitative multi-methods approach based ontwenty-seven semi-structured interviews, extended participant observation undertaken primarily in a local community centre, and auto-driven photo-elicitation techniques. Drawing on new theories of social class and work critically exploring whiteness, the research explored how residents articulate belonging in relation to the Brexit vote and the nation’s post-referendum future. My findings highlight the significance of both the ideological underpinnings of racism in terms of racialised notions of belonging and entitlement and the material underpinnings of racism in terms of competition over resources. The data further revealsa more complex and multi-dimensional picture of life in working-class communities than is popularly assumed and, from this, the thesis argues that a characterisation of members of the working class as ‘left behind’ is an inadequate conceptualisation and that a focus on the idea of being ‘left out’ of wider society is needed. Unlike the explanation of the ‘left behind’, this avoids blaming the working classes for their marginalisation and deprivation by facilitating recognition of the wider structural causes of growing inequality.

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**Chapter 1. Introduction**

*“I didn’t want to go into Europe forty years ago. You know, I didn’t want to go, I couldn’t see the benefits of it.”* (Geoff: retired, white Gallatin resident)

The United Kingdom’s (UK) referendum vote to leave the European Union (EU) on the 23rd June 2016 by a slim majority of 51.9 per cent to 48.1 per cent starkly portrayed the deep divisions present in British society in terms of attitudes towards Europe alongside questions about belonging in relation to migration, race, national identity, inclusion and exclusion. The above quote from my interview with Geoff indicates the strong views which some people held on the topic. This thesis is based upon a qualitative multi-methods approach to data collection, exploring how residents in a predominantly working-class urban locality in Northern England articulate belonging in relation to the ‘Brexit’ vote and the nation’s post-referendum future. The research was undertaken in Sheffield (the reasons for this are discussed in greater detail in the methodology chapter) – a major city in Northern England. A focus on the North of England is important as debates about who was most likely to vote Leave in the referendum contain a strong geographical connection to post-industrial towns and cities in this part of the country*.* Sheffield itself closely reflected the nationwide EU referendum results. Sheffield has also experienced the detrimental impacts of deindustrialisation, alongside being characterised as a highly polarised and segregated city. I conducted the research in the city’s ‘Gallatin’ ward (this name is a pseudonym). This has historically been a predominantly white working-class urban locale; however the area has become increasingly ethnically and socio-economically diverse in the past two decades. The research generated understandings of the dynamic contemporary conditions of belonging byexploring how the Brexit vote can be better understood through the lens of class, race, whiteness, locality and place-based belonging. The study’s research aims, which will be covered in detail later in the chapter, explored:

1. The raced and classed nature of local belonging,
2. The ways in which residents variously relatedto the EU referendum can aid understandings of the category of whiteness,
3. How local belonging is impacted by initiatives surrounding cohesion and integration.

The project is a sociological study informed by other disciplines, notably urban studies, urban geography and politics in order to better understand this complex topic.

This first chapter serves to introduce the central concerns of the thesis. It begins by discussing the important themes of the work, establishing these in the context of the Brexit vote. I go on to set out the key aims and objectives of the study, detailing the research questions which guided the project. The chapter then introduces the research location and fieldwork approach. I furtherdiscuss some ofthe challenges raised by conducting research into politically contested and sensitive topics. The chapter ends by setting out the structure of the thesis.

The EU referendum produced particularly stark divisions acrossthe electorate, especially in England where the Leave vote was highest*.* Statistics from the Lord Ashcroft poll (2016) – the largest survey of voters conducted on the day of the referendum – reveal that eighty per cent of Leave voters thought immigration was a force for ill (compared to only twenty per cent of Remain voters), whilst those who described themselves as ‘English not British’ also voted overwhelmingly (seventy-nine per cent) to Leave. This is important as Englishness tends to beclosely associated with whiteness (Ware 2001), thus reiterating the important role played by ideas about race in the referendum. This thesis demonstratesthat considering dynamics at the local level – such as changing localities and different patterns of migration settlement - can help to account for the complexity of the vote, thereby aiding understandings of Brexit. Received by many as an unexpected result, the overall vote to Leave has been popularlycharacterised as an ‘uprising’ and ‘backlash’. Much early work on Brexit has crudelyfocused on the so-called ‘left behind’ group (see for example Goodwin and Heath 2016, Shipman 2017), arguing that it was older, white working-class residents of England’s deindustrialised towns and cities, predominantly in the North*,* who were the voice of Brexit. The ‘left behind’ contention constructs members of the white working class as having passively failed to keep pace with economic and social change. This group are seen to be cast adrift by mainstream politics, voting on the basis of growing socio-economic marginalisation and resentment at immigration and the changes wrought by globalisation and economic restructuring (Ford and Goodwin 2017, Goodwin and Heath 2016, Shipman 2017). Debates concerning the ostensible white working class, immigration and diversity constitute a highly contested and politicised field which has been made more acute by Brexit.

In its response to the political landscapes which emerged following the Brexit vote academic enquiry is, arguesEmery (2018), in danger of reiterating long-held conflicts between class and race as frames of explanation. A key case in point is the disagreement between Goodhart (2017) and writers such as Bhambra (2017) on the causes of the Brexit vote. Goodhart (2017) maintains that it is possible to bifurcate the British population into ‘Somewheres’ and ‘Anywheres’. The former are portrayed as a largely immobile group whose social boundaries extend little beyond where they live, whilst the latter are depicted as comprised of the socially, economically and geographically mobile metropolitan liberal elite. It is the unevenness of economic and cultural changes since the 1960swhich, argues Goodhart (2017), have resulted in ‘Somewheres’ being ‘left behind’. Goodhart (2017) characterises the Brexit vote as the result of a ‘Somewhere’ backlashagainst the dominance of the interests of ‘Anywheres’. Bhambra (2017) rigorously critiques Goodhart’s (2017) work, taking exception to the way that Brexit has been framed as a white working‐class backlash against losses of identity andsocial capital, arguing that this fails to consider the racial nature of voting. Through my work I show that race and class are not competing and opposing frames of explanation, recognising the importance of both in aiding understandings of Brexit and belonging and integrating an analysis of these by scrutinising debates through the lens of locality. My research answers the call of Burrell and Hopkins (2019) for a spatially anchored analysis of Brexit which foregrounds the intersections of place, race and class. This thesis engages with key debates surrounding Brexit through its focus on how residents of a deprived urban locality in Northern England variously related to the EU referendum vote in the context of their hopes and fears surrounding belonging, immigration and cohesion. The study is, however, also an analysis of pre-referendum England as participants were asked about their motivations for voting. The researchthereby contributes to understandings of the Brexit result by shedding light on people’s lived experiences in the years preceding it.

**Introducing the key concerns of the thesis**

Migration, race and whiteness

Migration and concerns surrounding it were claimed by the popular media and much of the academic press as being of crucial importance to the Leave vote (Clarke et al 2017, Goodhart 2016, Meleady et al 2017, Sayer 2017, Swales 2016, Virdee and McGeever 2018). Notwithstanding the fact that the question of the configuration and interaction of increasingly diverse urban localesas a resultof immigration has recently received a good deal of attention, the contested focus on race, migration and belonging generated by Brexit is not an unprecedented or unique anti-migrationimpetus (Rogaly 2019). Indeed, British immigration policies reflect a long-standing practice and the colonial politics of coding racialised preferences in an attempt to restrict the movement of some groups(Solomos 2003). There is a tendency for racialised immigrants to be viewed as threatening to the ‘indigenous’ population’s monopoly on claims to nationalbelonging and identity – concerns which were prominent in popular discussions surrounding the EU referendum. There also exists a close association between anxieties about societal cohesion and migrant integration (or lack of), with Theresa May claiming as Home Secretary in 2015 that “when immigration is too high … it’s impossible to build a cohesive society” (Stone 2017). Linking social cohesion with strong immigration controls has been a consistent feature of British immigration policy through legislation since the beginning of the twentieth century and has a far longer history, dating back at least to the Middle Ages (Winder 2004). Questions surrounding claims to belonging and cohesion in the context ofincreased diversity are important themes in the datawhich will be considered inchapter four.

Within the broad field in which my research sitsconcerning questions of immigration and race, mywork incorporates a methodological focus on whiteness and the working classes. This stems from my aim of ensuring that the muted voices of those in the Gallatin community are amplified, producing a nuanced account from residents themselves which explores their feelings and perspectives. It has been shown in previous writing that ideas about race shape white people’s lives as well as those of non-white people (Byrne 2006, Frankenberg 1993). As put by Frankenberg (1993):

*‘To speak of whiteness is […] to emphasize that dealing with racism is not merely an option for white people – that, rather, racism shapes white people’s lives and identities in a way that is inseparable from other facets of daily life.’ (p6).*

The role of race in white people’s lives makes studying whiteness both necessary and timely given the context of the Brexit vote and the increased visibility of whiteness in popular and academic discourses. I have been particularly influenced by the work of both Frankenberg (1993) and Byrne (2006) which established the importance of examining the accounts of white women to explore the construction of whiteness. Studying whiteness in Gallatin is, I argue, important in terms of understanding whiteness at a time when the voices of residents of such communities are taken from them and misused by politicians, the media and academics who purport to speak for these communities. The dominant contemporary narrative of Britain’s white working class as ‘left behind’ gives this particular urgency. Critically examining whiteness and revealing the concerns of such communities is, I believe, important in order to reflect on and critique the racialised ‘left behind’ narrative. Pilkington (2016) has engaged with the challenges of researching marginal whiteness in her work with members of the English Defence League (EDL). She makes a strong argument for why whiteness and racist voices need to be researched so that racism and the appeal of racial sense-making itself can be better understood. Pilkington (2016) argues that research can be undertaken in the interests of understanding how respondents make sense of the world regardless of the researcher’s own political alignment, with sustained engagement playing a crucial role in this. As noted by Pilkington (2016), the interpretivist framework of enquiry provides epistemological justification for research focusing on marginalised groups as it seeks to understand the social world through the meanings that the relevant actors ascribe to it.

Class

It is necessary to briefly introducethe various important debates concerning the white working class which have been brought to the fore by the Brexit vote. One such discourse, in which the work of Bhambra (2017) has been particularly influential, has been a view of the white working class as an anti-multicultural political category, citing the ways in which resentment towards immigration and diversity has been exploited by politicians. Others, such as Virdee (2017 and 2014), highlight the importance of not marginalising the BAME working class. The popular political and media focus on the working class as an ostensibly white entity problematically obscures the existence of minority members of the working classes. Writers such as Rhodes et al (2019) and McKenzie (2017a, 2017b, 2015 and 2012) have furtheremphasised the importance of not neglecting the concerns ofsocially excluded, poor white members of society, drawing attention to experiences of marginalisation and deprivation among this group. These arguments all contain merit and helped to inform the development of my research focus, with these debates forming a key part of the rationale for my research questions.

By paying attention to classed experiences and interpretations, this thesis seeks to demonstrate the continued importance of social class. This is of relevance in the context of political attempts to remove class from British consciousness (McKenzie 2015) in the last few decades, alongside assertions that class has been overtaken by other forms of identification (Beck 1992, Giddens 1991). Recent developments in relation to Brexit have, however, led to increased popularinterest in class, with a particular focus on the supposedly ‘left behind’ white working class. Prior to the EU referendum, the twenty-first century saw something of a renewed academic focus on class as a result of the ‘cultural turn’ (see Savage et al 2005 and Savage 2015, for example). The Brexit vote and ensuing discussions cruciallydemonstrate the need to return economic and political concerns to the core of analyses of class and its relationship to race. My place-based sociological interest in class further elucidates the importance of these dimensionsof class in contemporary Britain*.*

The thesis seeks to make a further important contribution through the positive accounts of working-class lives it provides*.* In doing so, I extend the work of Skeggs (2004 and 1997) - which focuses on critiquing negative depictions of the working class - by exploring positive local attachments, experiences of community and belonging. The data discussed in chapters four to six points to the complexity of working-class lives and outlooks; signalling the need to better recognise and attend to this in academic work and wider popular discourses. I seek to disrupt the neoliberal re-emergence of the narrative in which a section of the white working class are depicted as culturally deficient and their political attitudes are labelled “parochial and intolerant” (Ford and Goodwin 2014, p279) by an increasingly well-educated, socially liberal electorate. This thesis portrays a more nuanced picture of working-class lives than that contained in the ‘left behind’ thesis and many popular explanations of Brexit, elucidating the positive meanings and experiences containedin working-class culture.

A problematic view of race and class as separate and distinct is compounded by the fact that working‐class studies have tended to neglect issues of race (Emery 2018, Roediger 1991) *–* in much the same way that literature on whiteness has a tendency to sideline questions of class.Recent major political events, notably the UK’s vote for Brexit and the United States’ election of Donald Trump in 2016, have highlighted the need for closer attention to be paid to the convergenceof race and class. Race and class are often compartmentalised and wrongly viewed as opposing frames of understanding (Isakjee and Lorne 2019, Shaheen and O’Hagan 2017). Disaggregating race and class helps to explain why communities are divided and misunderstood, whilst the solidarity which ought to exist across all those in the working classes struggling on low incomes is undermined.Despite the EU referendum evidencing race and class coalescing - as depictions of the working class as a specifically white entity which has supposedly been ‘left behind’ gained particular currency - work on Brexit has, problematically, largely continued to treat these as separate. As Benson (2019) reminds us, race and class are fundamentally intertwined, with the longer histories of the two unable to be disentangled when attempting tomake sense of the contemporary political crisis in Britain. In this thesis I seek to make a theoretical and conceptual contribution to emerging analyses of Brexitby considering race and class together through an in-depth analysis of the interplay of these in Gallatin. It is in this context that my focus on an increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse area which was once a predominantly white working-class locale is bothvalid and necessary.

This doctoral study builds on work critically exploring whiteness as it contributes to understandings of the meaning and role of whiteness in notions of belonging and place-based identities. The thesis critically evaluates the application of theories of whiteness to debates surrounding the Brexit vote in Gallatin, alongside contributing to an understanding of the role of whiteness in individuals’ sense of local belonging. It builds on Beider’s (2015) call for a more complete analysis of whiteness and working-class identities beyond a homogenising description of whiteness as an unmarked norm. This is important as it enables the research to evidence the oft-overlookedrelationality between white people of different social classes. Thisaspect of lived identities is largely excluded from theories about whiteness as work which considers the position of the white working class tends, erroneously, to study this group in isolation.

Urban geography, place and Brexit

The complexities of the Brexit vote indicated the need to produce a sociological account which is informed by place-based analysis (Isakjee and Lorne 2019). Whilst there has been little agreement on how the vote for Brexit can best be explained, the ways in which race and class map ontopolitical geographies has played a key role in many attempts to account for the vote. As I introduced earlier, a focus on the so-called ‘left behind’ has gained particular traction (see for example Ford and Goodwin 2017, Goodwin and Heath 2016). As the argument goes, it is residents of Britain’s (ex-) industrial towns and cities, united by economic insecurity and marginalised by, inter alia, the changing contours of the UK labour market and ‘the [re]orientation of mainstream parliamentary politics’ (Rhodes et al 2019, p3) who voted to Leave the EU. This juxtaposes the alleged ‘fortress mentality’ of borders, insular identifications, conservative traditions and outdated skill sets with cosmopolitan inhabitants of dominant global spaces (Wyly 2015). It demonstrates that the ‘left behind’ has a strong geographical connotation relating with the North and, more particularly, post-industrial (often smaller) towns and cities – thus signalling the ways in which places and populations are spatially ‘left behind’ due to being geographically, as well as economically and socially, peripheral. Brexit has thus raised profound questions about the complex actualities of working-class life within ‘left behind’ neighbourhoods.

This narrative has not, however, gone unchallenged. Its focus on marginalised ‘left behind’ communities is seen as misplaced by Bhambra (2017) and, as Dorling (2016) highlights, the core Brexit voter was propertied and pensioned - and therefore middle class. Whilst this critique is crucial to bear in mind, looking again reveals that working-class people from so-called ‘left behind’ areas in the North did indeed play a role in the Brexit vote. This suggests the existence of acomplex and stratified Leave vote. Whereas Dorling (2016) works to highlight the role of the Southern middle-class Brexit voter, we should not forget the very real concerns of the white working class, in the North and elsewhere, and how the intricacies of these fed into the Brexit vote. There is still, then, a necessity for empiricalenquiry into the experiences and views of the working classes in Northern post-industrial spaces. This thesis explores their role in the Brexit vote and the ensuing debates and fractions within the country.Crucially, it is not fully understood how Britain’s marginalised actors respond to persistent social inequalities and political disenfranchisement. There has, for example, been a lack of work on BAME voting patterns in the 2016 referendum. My study critically engages with the ‘left behind’ thesis and discussions surrounding this in relation to the vote for Brexit, seeking to produce a robust depiction of views and experiences in such communities, grounded in empirical data.

Through its analytic focus on the EU referendum in relation to locality and community, my research demonstrates the limits and dangers of viewing Brexit through an ahistorical lens. In fact, I reveal the explanatory potential of Brexit in contributing to debates on class, race and place. For the most part, there was an ongoing question about how central Brexit was to the lives of Gallatin’s residents, with other debates often seeming to be far more important in the community – such as access to housing. The focus of my research further enabled me to explore the nuances and practices of political engagement. I talk extensively about this in chapter six, exploring the high incidence of not voting in the EU referendum amongst my participants and significant degrees of political disillusionment – a theme I return to it in the concluding chapter. This importantly reveals the fallacies contained in the notion of an angry white working-class electorate delivering the Brexit vote.

Urban geography and place also play a role in policies concerning the configuration and interaction of increasingly diverse populations. The community cohesion policy agenda came to prominence in England following the 2001 riots in a number of Northern towns (Bloch et al 2013, Hudson et al 2009, Jones 2014, Neal et al 2013) in an attempt to engender an emphasis on shared belonging, dominant values and national identity alongside cross-cultural contact (Jones 2014). The election of the coalition government in 2010 signalled a repositioned focus on the concept of integration, alongside retreat from national-level policy on the configuration of diversity (Beider 2015). Initiatives by successive governments have incorporated a focus on the importance of local contexts. For example, the ‘Our Shared Future’ document produced by The Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) emphasised the role of place and cohesion, recognising local-level differences between areas. The ways in which approaches to cohesion and integration impact local belonging represent additional themes in the thesis*.* Recognition of the role of place and geography in terms of local cohesion is important to our understanding of the vote for Brexit as more diverse areas of the country were more likely to vote Remain.

The themes which have been introduced here – namely migration, race, whiteness, class and place in the context ofBrexit – are discussed in greater detail in the literature review chapter.

**Aims and objectives**

The central aim of this thesis is to provide a sociological account of the ways in which the EU referendum can be understood in terms of urban space*,* place-based belonging and localism within the setting of an increasingly diverse working-class urban locale in Northern England. During the subsequentchapters I will explorethe role ofideas concerning whiteness, race and class in discussions of Brexit and belonging. The project was guided by my research questions, set out below, which were addressed throughout all stages of the research. These themes and concerns will be picked up in chapters four to six, before the concluding chapter of the thesis engages again with answering the research questions.

The focus of the study was enabled by the application of the following research questions:

1. To what extent is residents’ sense of local belonging raced and classed?
2. In what ways does residents’ support and lack of support for leaving the EU enhance theoretical and conceptual understandings of the category of whiteness?
3. To what extent are residents’ sense of belonging and attachment to place influenced by initiativessurrounding cohesion and integration?

Research question one specifically concerned the conditions of belonging which existed in Gallatin, seeking to probe the importance of race and class in this. The second question connected this discussion to the EU referendum. I was conscious in my wording to allow for an examination of the diversity of ways in which individuals related to Britain’s departure from the EU – encompassing Remain, Leave and indifferent perspectives. This question furtherenabled me to engage directly with theories and conceptual understandings of whiteness. The final research question directed my engagement with the role of wider forces, enabling me to explore the role of cohesion and integration policy debates in residents’ discussions of fairness and sense of place.

My research deals with relevant issues arising from England’s specificsocio-political context which have, largely, not yet been adequately considered from a sociological perspective. Significantly, little importance has been attached to providing a nuanced account of the concerns of those in marginalised working-class communities. Notable exceptions to this are the work of McKenzie (2017a, 2017b, 2015 and 2012), Rhodes’ et al’s (2019) recent study in Oldham and Rhodes (2012, 2011 and 2010) earlier work in Burnley, which will be discussed in the following literature review chapter. McKenzie’s work provides a ‘narrative from the inside’ by seeking to make the largely left out and stigmatised voices in her working-class community heard. I have also been influenced by Rhodes et al’s (2019) study which seeks to re-frame the dominant ‘left behind’ narrative through a critical exploration of class, race and place. Rhodes et al (2019) show that the ‘left behind’ assertion oversimplifies the complexity of views held by members of the white working class by reducing working-class politics to anti-immigrant discourses and racial resentment. I have been particularly drawn to the fact that these studies provide an empathetic and timely account of a group whose voices are often excluded and derided. Older formulations of working-class identity and their political organisation are also part of this derision. This work further shows how members of these groups are politically mobilised when it is expedient to do so, for example as part of the so-called ‘multicultural backlash’. This literature helped to inform the premise, aims and methods of this doctoral research.

**The research project and methods approach**

The research location and design

I chose to conduct the research in Sheffield, a major city in Northern England and one of the largest city-regions in the country. Sheffield returned a fifty-one per cent Leave majority (BBC News 2016a), thereby closely mirroring the nationwide EU referendum results. The city is highly economically segregated and Sheffield could arguably be classed within the category of post-industrial spaces which have ostensibly been ‘left behind’ as a result of deindustrialisation. In relation to Nayak’s (2019) call for the need to explore and understand what the experiences are of those in England’s original industrial revolution spaces, Sheffield presents as a good place to critically examine the ‘left behind’ thesis in the context of the lived realities andviews of residents in Britain’s communities that have been marginalised as a result of economic restructuring. Practical considerations were also significantin my decision to conduct the research in Sheffield. The fact that I grew up in the city and have continued to live there for the majority of my adult life meant that there was less need for a period of familiarisation with the place before beginning the fieldwork. I was also able to draw on my local knowledge when deciding which part of the city to conduct the research in. I could then utilise my pre-existing social networks to aid the process of embedding in my research locale*.* Basing the research in the same city that I live in had further practical benefits as it allowed me to more easily remain connected tothe Sociological Studies Department at the University of Sheffield at the same time as I undertook data collection. This was helpful as it prompted me to continue engaging withacademic materials and identify connectionsbetween these and my data whilst I was conducting fieldwork.

I chose to conduct the research in Sheffield’s ‘Gallatin’ ward. My PhD research project is unique in the sense that it is concerned with issues surrounding cohesion in Gallatin - as research on this tends to be undertaken in other areas of Sheffield; typically those home to more high-profile inter-ethnic tensions. In contrast, Gallatin has arguably been over-researched in terms of the impact of deprivation. The present study thus represents an important departure from previous work as it extends existing knowledge by considering how the pertinent issues surrounding Brexit interplay with Gallatin’s deprivation and changing demographic make-up to influence ideas surrounding belonging. Gallatin has historically been a predominantly white working-class urban locale; however, the area has become increasingly ethnically and socio-economically diverse in the past two decades. The nature of the place is more complex and heterogeneous than would popularly be expected of so-called white working-class areas. This reflects the complexities that are often hidden behind the homogenisation that these places are subject to. For example, Gallatin has long been a Labour stronghold but bucked the trend of many other similarlocales in the 2019 general election as the seat was held by Labour. Moreover, there has been a distinct lack of right-wing activism in the area, evidenced by the absence of significant EDL and British National Party (BNP) support. Indeed, none of my sample indicated that neither they themselves nor anyone they knew had been involved in these forms of political activism (although I did not explicitly probe this). This is significantas EDL and BNP support has been higher in neighbouring towns, for example, the child sexual exploitation scandal in nearby Rotherham has made the town a consistent focus of EDL activity (see for example Williams 2014). It is also important to acknowledge the various positions in relation to Brexit which emerged from the research. Of my local resident sample, comprised of twenty-one individuals, ten had voted to Remain in the 2016 EU referendum, four had voted to Leave and seven had not voted. This evidences the complexity of orientations towards Britain’s membership of the EU and discussions surrounding thisin Gallatin. A more thorough discussion of Gallatin and explanation for why this was chosen as the site of the research will be provided in the methodology chapter.

Reflecting further on importantbiographical motivationswhich shaped the study, my curiosity surrounding the key themes of my research stemmed largely from my existing sociological interests. During my undergraduate degree I became interested in the sociology of race, especially critical studies ofwhiteness*.* This inspired my Masters dissertation research project, which I undertook in 2017, exploring the relationship between whiteness and perceptions of ethnic difference in the North East of England. My PhD proposal and subsequent research sought to build on my critical academic engagement with whiteness by exploring the role played by ideas and expectations surrounding this in the context of the vote for Brexit. I was particularly interested in the EU referendum as whiteness appeared to have played a crucial role in the vote through the idea of Britain as a white-majority nation which underpinned discourses of the Leave campaign (Bhambra 2017). The referendum result - which came as a shock to many in academiaand some sections of the press - obliged the political and media establishment to recognise and discuss the continued relevance of class and persistence of class inequalities (Evans & Tilley 2017). Class is a topic which I have long had an interest in, prompted by my early experiences of growing up in Sheffield which, as I have outlined, is a very socially polarised and segregated city. The discussions which took place in the aftermath of the Brexit vote raised the question of who possesses a ‘voice’ (Burrell and Hopkins 2019)*.* This made me query to what extent the concerns of residents in so-called ‘left behind’ areas were actually being heard, as it appeared that people from outside these communities seemed to have assumed the authority to speak on their behalf. In designing my doctoral research I sought to draw on my interests in the sociology of race and class, combining an analysis of the two in relation to Brexit and belonging in a way which was sensitive to the concerns of residents in marginalised communities like Gallatin.

The methods and fieldwork approach

The contested and difficult nature of Brexit and belonging made the choice of research methods central to grapplingwith these topics. I adopted a qualitative multi-methods approach as I believed this to be the most appropriate way of engaging meaningfullywith the themes of my research. By drawing on qualitative forms of data collection I was able to invest participants with a considerable degree of power and thereby generate data rich in understandings of how individuals make meaning of their social world (Hesse-Biber 2010, Rubin and Rubin 2012). I chose to use a number of different data collection methods because, as Hesse-Biber (2010) writes, qualitative multi-methods approaches hold a great deal of potential in terms of aiding our understanding of the social world. My methods were chosen based on my convictionthat they would generate data appropriate for answering the project’s research questions. I thus used my aims and objectives as an overarching framework to help guide my methodological design(Mason 2018)*.*

The data collection spanned the period from October 2018 to August 2019. I commenced fieldwork using two methods - semi-structured interviews and photo-elicitation interviews. For the participants who took part in both, these took the form of repeat interviews. The semi-structured interviews – whichtwenty-one local residents and six local practitioners and representatives took part in - enabled me to pursue guided, and therefore morefocused, discussions whilst also allowing scope for participants to raise topics which they felt were important. These semi-structured interviews broadly explored the themes of belonging, cohesion and Brexit. The additional use of auto-driven photo-elicitation methods enabled the project to gain a unique understanding of participants’ perspectives in relation to place-based belonging. Fifty-one photos were taken between the five residents who took part in this part of the study. Using photographs was helpful in terms of engaging members of marginalised communities who are not used to taking part in research. The visual data generated for the research, along with participants’ discussion of this, was particularly fruitful as it served to further emphasise key themes from my previous discussions with residents as their photographs prompted them to reflect on these topics in new ways.

As discussed in detail in the methodology chapter, early in the data collection stage of the research I identified the need to incorporate an ethnographic element into the study through taking notes on my participant observation due to the difficulties I encountered recruiting Gallatin residents for interviews. This enabled me to draw upon the morespontaneous and informal discussions I had with local people. This was possible due to my extensive volunteering role with Gallatin Community Organisation (GCO). I chose to work with GCO as they represent an important presence in the Gallatin community, engaging a significant number of residents in their community development work. GCO is a community-based charity which seeks to work with local people to regenerate the neighbourhoods in Sheffield’s Gallatin ward. In total I undertook around one hundred hours of participant observation, mainly through my relationship with GCO, thereby becoming a recognised and active member of various groups and events I attended.

It is important to provide an account at the outset of the thesis of who I interviewed for the research (a more detailed discussion of the study’s participants and their recruitment will be provided in the methodology chapter). My local resident interviewees represented a roughly equal gender split of nine men and twelve women. Of these twenty-one local residents, eighteen of these described themselves as white British. Whilst I believe that my research was largely successful in terms of attaining a robust account of attachment, belonging and community in Gallatin, it is important to note that this was primarily – although not exclusively – from the perspective of the area’s white residents. The study’s decision to engage closely with debates surrounding the ‘left behind’, which is presented as a white working-class phenomenon, meant that it was necessary, with this conceptual focus alongside the time and resource confines of a doctoral research project, to focus much of my recruitment energy on this group. Indeed, there exists little research on the BAME Brexit Leave vote. My intention was not to marginalise BAME residents or neglect to include their perspectives but to interrogate the ways in which whiteness and ‘whitening’ Brexit were evoked and worked in ‘left behind’ communities. I did, however, include three BAME residents in the research as I sought to attain a somewhat more thorough and complete picture of belonging and attachment to place in working-class communities.

Whilst much of the discussion in the subsequent chapters focuses on the so-called ‘white working class’, it is important to acknowledge that I perceived a small number of my local resident sample to be positioned as middle class at the time of the research. This was based largely on their occupation and cultural practices, which emerged from both the demographic information sheet which participants were asked to fill in and my discussions with them. Engagement with a number of Gallatin’s middle-class residents was largely a result of my snowballing and convenience sampling approach. It is important to remember that all residents lived in an area with an overwhelmingly working-class make-up and reputation, thereby producing experiences based on this which I explore at length in chapter four’s discussion of place stigma.Moreover, the inclusion of some middle-class individuals in the research highlights the at times neglected contemporary diversity – in terms of both class and ethnic background – in traditionally white working-class areas. Whilst literature on superdiversity and gentrification focuses on this, Gallatin cannot really be described as gentrified but the existence of a small number of middle-class residents shows the dangers of homogenising places. My youngest participant was thirty-two years old which means that the research failed to engage with the perspective of younger generations. Having said this, the age of my local resident sample ranged from thirty-two to seventy-seven years old and thereby encompassed a number of different age cohorts. The older age profile of my sample is likely a reflection of the primary recruitment channels I utilised – namely weekday community groups which tended to be used by older, and in many cases retired, residents. As I outlined earlier, it is important to bear in mind that my sample included more local residents who had voted to Remain rather than Leave - ten had voted to Remain, four had voted to Leave and seven had not voted. These statistics alone reveal the fallacy of oversimplified depictions of working-class communities.

Alongside local residents, in order to collect data for research question three and understand the policy approach to Gallatin, I interviewed six official figures from both the city and local ward level. These took the form of semi-structured interviews lasting around one hour. I interviewed three members of staff from GCO, including the CEO and the community development officer, one of Gallatin’s local councillors, a member of staff from a housing association in Gallatin and an important individual in the city-level strategic approach to cohesion. These participants were chosen based on the salience of their work to my overarching research concerns. Through speaking to these individuals I was able to more fully engage with my final research question, concerning the role of cohesion and integration initiatives in residents’ sense of belonging, as they were well placed to situate discussions about dynamics in Gallatin within a wider context. Three of these individuals were also residents of Gallatin and were therefore able to offer a unique perspective on both their own experiences and knowledge about broader patterns of changein the area across and beyond their lifetimes.

**Conducting research into politically contested, sensitive and emotive topics**

I would like to now introduce some of the challenges involved with studying class, race and Brexit, which I will return to in later chapters. These represent sensitive and often highly emotive topics, incorporating contested terminology. Whilst I refer extensively to the ‘white working class’, I appreciate that this is a disputed term. Crucially, it belies the fact that a homogenous white working class has never existed in Britain (Bhattacharyya 2017), alongside being undergirded by problematic assumptions which exclude ethnic minorities from this category (Hanley 2017). A focus on the white members of the UK’s working classes is, however, important in the context of the research’s focus as it is the votes of this group which have been popularly and politically labelled as the key cause of the Leave decision. Indeed, the ‘white working class’ have become synonymous with the ‘left behind’ (Isakjee and Lorne 2019) and attempts to explain the vote for Brexit. Whilst this evidences the further marginalisation of BAME groups who are similarly ‘left behind’ and ‘left out’, to avoid using the term ‘white working class’ would misrecognise the importance of this ostensible category to contemporary discussions surrounding Brexit and questions about immigration and race. Thus, whilst it is important to recognise the existence of a BAME working class, there is a need to interrogate and problematise the political construct of a homogenous white working class. As Brubaker (2002) states, the task is to see such constructed groups as ‘a key part of what we want to explain, not what we want to explain things with’ (p165).

I also draw extensively on the term ‘race’. ‘Race’ represents a conceptual and rigid hierarchical ordering of demarcated groups of people who are defined as sharing important biologically inherited traits (Macionis and Plummer 2008). It is more than simply an idea, having a long history and playing an important role in political values and systems such as slavery, colonialism, post-colonialism, institutional discrimination and everyday racism. These aspects of racial thinking have formed a central part of the fabric of British society, including working-class culture (Virdee 2017).Race is, however, now widely recognised as a social construct with no scientific basis, leading to calls from some quarters for social scientists to stop using the term to avoid perpetuating the historical legacy of colonialism and slavery on which ideas surrounding race were built. Gilroy (2000), for example, argues that race is not real but has very real social and political consequences, stating that we ought to move beyond discussions of ‘race’ as to continue using the term, in his view, gives it apparent legitimacy. He argues that we need to show how it is racism that delivers the concept of race, stating that it is racism that needs to be addressed.

Rhetoric has altered over time in order to mould the core elements of race and racism to today’s world (P. Collins 2004, Garner 2010). Bonilla-Silva (2006) has argued that twenty-first centuryracism reproduces inequalities through ‘subtle, institutional, and apparently non-racial’ practices (p3). Race thus plays a continued role in ordering the social world, working as a sense-making device*.* The enduring power of race as a means of categorising and dividing people means that it impacts all our lives (Byrne 2006, Frankenberg 1993), as noted by Ahmed (2002):

*‘Although we might say there is no such thing as race as the intrinsic property of bodies, this does not mean that race does not exist, as an effect of the very way in which we think, know and inhabit the world’ (p47).*

This has led Byrne (2006) to argue for the continued academic use of the term in order to reflect that the performativity of race remains important inthe construction of identity and everyday experiences. This thesis follows the approach of Byrne (2006) as I believethat my participants’ use of the term race is important to acknowledge. For example, Steve (a seventy-seven year old white male resident) spoke during his interview of his experiences of mixing with “almost any race you want to think of”. Whilst I recognise the inherent issues with the term race, anavoidance of using the word would result in a failure to do justice to the outlooks and understandings of my participants who drew on populist ideas about race to help make sense of their social world. Thus, whilst ‘race’ is a highly problematic social category, it nevertheless formed an important part of the everyday lexicon that was called on by my participants.

The nature of Brexit further raises specific challenges for social researchers. The divisive and emotional nature of Brexit politics is important to recognise, as is the sensitive field of study in which my research sits. This necessitated a reflexive approach to the research which incorporated a good deal of time spent planning my research approach and elements of this, such as my interview guide. I reflect on this in greater detail in the methods chapter of the thesis. Moreover, far from being a momentary event, the UK’s decision to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum represented the beginning of lengthy, contested and rapidly evolving debates and negotiations. As put neatly by Rogaly (2019), ‘Brexit is not a single, one-off event but a process’ (p28) relating to migration policies and national identity. This is challenging for researchers exploring Brexit and was something which I had to contend with throughout the course of my doctoral research. Indeed, on a number of occasions my participants and other people who were aware of the topic of my doctoral research joked that I may never be able to complete my PhDas it appeared at times that negotiations and contestations surrounding Britain’s departure from the EU would never end! The procedural nature of Brexit, occurring in a rapidly changing social and political world, meant that it was necessary to ensure that I remained engaged with unfolding events and debates in order to inform my conversations and interviews with local residents. The highly disputed, unpredictable and unstable nature of Brexit was epitomised in the calling of a general election in December 2019. This was a largely unprecedented move as general elections usually are not held in December – with this last occurringin 1923 (BBC News 2019a). As the election took place a few months after I finished data collection, it is not something my participants reflected on in the research data. Nevertheless, the election’s occurrence during the final stages of my data analysis whilst I was beginning to draft the empirical chapters of my thesis made it an important and unexpected factor to bear in mind as I attempted to analyse and make sense of my data.

Whilst the constantly evolving nature of Brexit posed challenges to the research process, the dynamic and ongoing nature of Britain’s departure from the EU presented opportunities to engage Gallatin residentsin conversations about the topic. For example, reflections in my field notes taken at a community arts and crafts group on 1/4/19 record that I raised the topic of Brexit with Geoff (a white, retired local resident who participated extensively in the research and whom I will discuss in the subsequent empiricalchapters). This conversation was stimulated by the fact that Britain’s original date for leaving the EU had passed the previous week without the country’s departure. This demonstrates the opportunity to bring up current news items on Brexit in order to generate dialogue with local people. This was particularly important as I generally otherwise struggled to prompt in-depth and meaningfuldiscussions about Brexit. As will become clearas the thesis unfolds, I found local people in Gallatin to be far more willing and keen to talk about their locale and experiences of this. I therefore drew upon Brexit news items as opportunities to prompt discussion surrounding this. Researching Brexit therefore presented certain opportunities alongside considerable challenges.

This discussion of the study of sensitive and contested fields of debate will be returned to in greater depth in the methods chapter in which I critically reflect on my positionality and how I approached a number of important ethical considerations.

**Structure of the thesis**

The next two chapters will explore in greater detail a number of the themesintroduced here. The literature review follows, presenting a critical discussion of dominant work and theories relevant to the concerns of the thesis*,* comprising the foundations of the empirically drivenarguments presented in chapters four to six. The review documents the existing literature which underpins this, specifically exploring the themes of whiteness, class, Brexit, the ‘left behind’, place and belonging. Chapter three outlines the methodological approach taken and the researchmethods chosen to conduct the study, explaining and justifying the qualitative multi-methods approach adopted. The chapter introduces the research setting and participants in detail, describes how the data was analysed and discusses the role of positionality. Finally, I will outline the specific ethical concerns of the research and indicate how these were negotiated and managed before, during and after fieldwork.

Chapters four to six provide analytical insights into the data. Chapter four is concerned with the themes of belonging and place-based attachment,considering the ways in which understandings of the Brexit vote can be aided by an analysis ofthese*.* Considering the relative importance of different tiers of belonging, I argue that attachment at the neighbourhood level acts as a valuable resource to Gallatin’s residents. The chapter also discusses the place-based stigma which residents perceive to be attached to Gallatin, exploring the ways in which this often serves to reinforce localattachment. Through further discussion of how local residents relate to the significant demographic changes which Gallatin has undergone in the past couple of decades, the datahighlights that the area is more diverse than ostensibly ‘left behind’ neighbourhoods are depicted as. This discussion highlights the contradictions and inconsistencies in the perspectives and experiences of residents in Gallatin.

Chapter five is concerned with themes which emerged from the research centring on notions of unfairness in relation to ideas about whiteness. The example of perceptions of unfairness in terms of housing allocation will be explored in depth as this emerged from the data as an important issue*.* I draw on work critically exploring whiteness to situate contemporary discourses of white resentment in the historical guarantee of both belonging and entitlement (Ware 2008) which whiteness has contained, considering the role that these attitudes played in the 2016 EU referendum. The findings presented in chapter five further add to understandings of racist and xenophobic sentiment in contemporary Britain by demonstrating the ways in which often initially legitimate concerns about access to scarce resources become racialised and experienced as a threat to white access and entitlement.

Chapter six explores the marginalisation and exclusion experienced by Gallatin residents. The data reveals a sense of powerlessness in late modernity, encompassing various dimensions of loss as a result of change over time. The crucial role played by deindustrialisation and austerity in creating social problems and exclusion will be highlighted. ‘Austerity’, write Cooper and Whyte (2017), describes a period in which the government cuts public expenditure in order to reduce public debt. The chapter reflects on an important finding of the research - namely the failure of a significant number of Gallatin residents to vote in the EU referendum. The chapter’s focus enables a critical engagement with the ‘left behind’ thesis, drawing on the research’sdata to argue that it is more accurate to conceptualise marginalised members of the working classesas increasingly ‘left out’.

The final chapter reviews the central arguments and key findings of the thesis, reflecting on how the data helps to answer the project’s research questions alongside discussing empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions made by the study. The chapter identifies implications for policy and practice alongside directions for future research, outlining further ways that these research outcomes could usefully intersect with other themes and fields to expand existing knowledge.

**Chapter 2. Literature review**

This chapterprovides the theoretical and conceptual foundations for undertaking the research. It will critically review the established literature surrounding the themes of whiteness, class, Brexit, the ‘left behind’, place and belonging. In doing so, the following sections serve to set out the key themes and concerns of the thesis, alongside highlighting some of the limitations of existing work and theories. These knowledge gaps helped to shape the focus of my research questions.The first chapter introduced the topics of migration, race, whiteness, class and place in the context ofBrexit. Literature relating to these will be critically discussed in greater depth in this chapter. This is important as these topics, and the subtopics within them, are those most salient to the focus of this thesis and helped to inform the focus and aims of the study.

The chapter will begin by considering literature critically exploring whiteness and race, premised on the contention that ideas about whiteness and what it means to be whiteare central to examining accounts of the Brexit vote. As Bhambra (2017) alerts us, much work on the EU referendum has failed to note the racial nature of the vote due to a narrow focus on class. Whilst agreeing with Bhambra on the need to better foreground discussions of race, I argue that both race and class need to be considered through anentwined lens. The chapter thus moves on to discuss sociological work on class, connecting this to literature on whiteness. In the introduction chapter I made a case for why whiteness matters in understanding Brexit. I argue that there are limitations of much work on whiteness in terms of its (non-)treatment of class. I also explore the incidence of deprivation in relation toausterity in the discussion of whiteness in this chapter, highlighting that this is an experience shared by both white and BAME members of the working classes. The chapter then considers the emergent literature on Brexit, critically discussing the ‘left behind’ thesis as a framework for interpreting the vote. I argue that, whilst there are important lessons to be learnt fromthe ‘left behind’ thesis, the argument is flawed in a number of ways. I also explore the role of migration and race in the EU referendum. The final section will consider work relating to place and belonging, making a case that there exists a need to pay close attention to the political geographies of Brexit due to the divergent and distinct political geographies which emerged from the vote. I will argue that it is important to bring the separateyet closely related themes of race, class and placetogether in order to better inform our understanding of the Brexit vote and concerns in working-class communities. I emphasise the multi-dimensionality of my research – incorporating a focus on race, class and place – through this chapter’s review of existing literature, arguing that it is impossible to gain a thorough understanding of Brexit without considering the entwined, contingent and situational nature of these.

**Whiteness and race**

I introduced the importance of sociological work on whiteness to the concerns of the thesis in the preceding chapter, arguing that the study of whiteness in communities like Gallatin is of contemporary importance. Race played a pivotal role in the EU referendum vote, most prominently in terms of the shifting power and nuances of whiteness (Burrell and Hopkins 2019). Sayer (2017), for example, has drawn attention to the ‘centrality of white supremacism and xenophobia’ in the Brexit victory (p102). Whilst the EU referendum has undoubtedly generated increased attention surrounding the category of whiteness, whiteness has in fact been an academic topic of discussion for many decades, with the critical study of whiteness representing an established and important sub-area within the study of racism. Early approaches to whiteness from a sociological perspective mainly came from black scholars such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon who sought to highlight the ways in which the relative invisibility of whiteness maintains white supremacy, alongside drawing attention to the normative and thereby invisible nature of whiteness for many white people. There has, however, been a recent ‘critical rush to whiteness’ (Hill 1997, p3) as a field of sociological study. The critiques by black feminists of white feminism’s failure to attend to racism helped generate academic interest in whiteness among white scholars in the 1980s and since (Byrne 2006, Ware 1992). More recently there has been a focus on the white working class in terms of anti-multiculturalism discourses (see for example Dench et al 2006, Goodhart 2004). In the current socio-political context of the rise of right-wing populism across Europe and the United States - encapsulated in the election of Donald Trump and the UK’s vote for Brexit in 2016 – narrativesconcerning the ‘white working class’ have assumed an increasingly prominent position.

This section will provide a critical overview of the body of literature surrounding whiteness, suggesting that, although providing valuable insights, there is a tendency for some work to offer only a partial description of the way whiteness operates. It will look at the privileged position of whiteness as a racial identity. The mutable and socially constructed nature of whiteness will then be reflected upon, followed by a consideration of the role played by ideas concerning whiteness in UK immigration policies. It will go on to connect this to contemporary discourses of resentment in England, with a discussion of racialised narratives of resentment and unfairness regarding competition over social resources.

Whiteness as a position of power and privilege

Sociological work has revealed that whiteness has traditionally been a discourse of power and a position of structural advantage and privilege (Frankenberg 1993, McIntosh 1997, Ware 1992, Ware and Back 2002), embedded in routine interactions and processes of identification (Duster 2001). White privilege operates on both a structural and day-to-day level, bestowing benefits on those categorised as white (McIntosh 1997). Empirical work (Hage 1998, Wells and Watson 2005) in majority-white countries such as the UK, United States and Australia has shown that the systematically privileged nature of whiteness leads to those who can lay legitimate claim to this identity enjoying a natural sense of belonging. Wells and Watson’s (2005) interviews with London shopkeepers, for example, found that people who were not white, anglophone and Christian were largely excluded from conceptualisations of belonging.

It is widely recognised that whiteness is the norm in British society (see for example Beider 2015, Byrne 2006, Hall 2013, McCrone and Bechofer 2010, Parekh 2000, Ware 2001), thereby playing an important role in the national identity. Indeed, Duster (2001) writes that, in countries like Britain with a majority-white population, ‘whiteness is deeply embedded in the routine structures of economic and political life’ (p114), thereby assuming a normative quality. Much of the literature to date exploring whiteness has noted its status as an unmarked and thus unseen norm which is often invisible to white people (Bonnett 1997, Byrne 2006, Dyer 1997, Frankenberg 1993, Phoenix 1997). Garner (2007) states that ‘whiteness is invisible because its normalisation guides scrutiny away from it’ (p34). This makes whiteness hard to pin down and explicitly define, thereby imbuing it with power. The normative status of whiteness – and by extension its invisibility – is demonstrated by the fact that white people are commonly viewed as non-raced. This contrasts starkly with the hypervisibility of non-white people who are often described and categorised using language relating to race and ethnicity (Puwar 2004, Wildman and Davis 1997). In a research project on the social identities of young Londoners, for example, Phoenix (1997) found that white respondents were likely to view themselves as ‘raceless’. This highlights that whiteness is often an assumed and ‘normal’ category which is equated with simply being human for many white people (Bonnett 1997, Laclau 1990, Mills 1997), thus giving it a powerful aura of neutrality (Hughey 2012). Despite offering valuable insights,some of these accounts of whiteness as a position of advantage have a tendency to beone-dimensional due to their homogenous portrayal of whiteness, thusoffering only a partial description of the ways in which whiteness operates. The literature covered in the remainder of this section indicates the need to add more nuance and complexity to ourunderstanding of whiteness.

Whiteness as a contradictory and mutable category

It is important not to lose sight of the fact that whiteness is a socially constructed category (Bonnett 1997, Frankenberg 1993, Phoenix 1997) which is dependent on wider social, cultural and political contexts. Whiteness is therefore a race product which is about unequal relationships of power and privilege, rather than being based solely on physical differences, such as skin colour. As noted by Bonnett (1998), the mutable nature of whiteness means that gaps occur between the category of whiteness and people who appear white. This leads to some populations, both historically and contemporarily, being considered ‘not quite white’ (Garner 2004). For example, the ‘white working class’ is a relatively new category. Exploringthe history of Britain’s working classes reveals that they have been racialised and excluded from whiteness due to the problematic and undesirable connotations which have been attached to them. The working classes were constructed as marginal to whiteness in Victorian Britain through assertions of their purportedly ‘uncivilised’ and ‘primitive’ nature (Lawler 2012). Bonnett (2000) has argued that the working classes became ‘white’ as part of the process of building an inclusive British national identity. This served to advance the idea of British superiority whilst simultaneously fostering social cohesion. This demonstrates the historically contingent and mutable nature of whiteness, bound up with notions of respectability. The importance of ideas about whiteness to the construction of the working class has contributed to the obfuscation of working-class heterogeneity. Literature on the ‘left behind’ represents an example of this as these narratives have a problematic tendency to conceptualise the ‘white working class’ as a homogenous, objective and fixed entity.

The focus of contemporaryracialisation discourses on migrants from the EU further demonstrates the ways in which whiteness is a contradictory and mutable category. The 2004 A8 accession saw eight countries, including Poland and Hungary*,* join the EU. Citizens of these new member states received freedom of movement to live and work in Britain. This helped lead to the racialisation of ‘white-skinned’ Eastern Europeans in twenty-first century Britain (Fox et al 2012), meaning that these migrants have often not been able to draw on the presumed cultural capital associated with whiteness. It is these white migrant populations from Eastern Europe who have been the primary focus of migration debates and concerns in Britain in recent years, alongside often being the targets of xenoracism (Cole 2015), which in turn fuels anti-migrant discourse. Fox et al’s (2012) research on Hungarian and Romanian migrants in the UK helped to reveal the state’s immigration policy to include elements of institutionalised racism. This manifests itself through implicitly invoking shared whiteness as a requisite for racialised inclusion. They argue that invoking cultural difference – such as labelling Eastern European migrant populations as possessing uncivilised cultural traits - works as a racialised basis of exclusion (Fox et al 2012). This highlights the mutable and socially constructed nature of whiteness (Burrell 2009, Byrne 2006, Frankenberg 1997, Nayak 2007).

UK immigration and whiteness

Shared ideas of belonging and identity help to constitute national boundaries, with ideas surrounding what it means to be ‘white’ overlapping importantly with representations of the ‘nation’ (Condor and Fenton 2012, Garner 2012, Gilroy 1987). It has been widely noted (Byrne 2006, Hall 2013, McCrone and Bechofer 2010, Parekh 2000, Ware 2001) that, in the words of Beider (2015), ‘whiteness has been, and continues to be, the dominant norm in British society’ (p176). Colonialism is important to consider in relation to this as a key postcolonial legacy has been the entrenchment of a cultural and political racism (Back 1996*,* Bhambra 2016, Gilroy 2006) which incorporates resentment about changing local populations and national identities. The close coupling of whiteness with Britishness is evidenced by British immigration policies’ tradition of coding racialised preferences in an attempt to restrict and control who can enter the country and lay legitimate claim to a British identity (Cohen 1994, Solomos 2003). This has led postcolonial scholars such as Bhambra (2015) and Hall (2017) to state that white nationalism as a form of racism has a long history in the UK, linked to the nation’s colonising past, immigration laws and governance of minorities. Immigration has been a contentious issue throughout British and English history (Bloch et al 2013, Winder 2004). Immigrants have often been viewed as threatening to the white ‘indigenous’ population’s monopoly on claims to national belonging and identity. There also exist concerns that migrants will fragment the dominant culture through an infusion of their practices and values (Byrne 2007, Sandelind 2018). The period spanning from the Second World War to the 1980s witnessed the targeted and racialised control of commonwealth migration through a number of immigration acts.

Policy agendas of the past few decades have focused on managing and restricting migration alongside promoting social cohesion (Bloch et al 2013). Concerns about social cohesion were clear in the Home Office’s ‘hostile environment’ policy which sought to make staying in the UK as difficult as possible for people without leave to remain. The hostile environment policy has been linked to Brexit, with Burnett (2017) arguing that the racist violence which followed the vote took its cue from the broader racist policies, practices and narratives of the government which served to create an ‘atmosphere of suspicion’ (p89). These discourses have been driven by concerns surrounding the rising numbers of migrants from the EU, the increasing diversity of non-EU migration to Britain, the growing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers seeking to enter the country, and concerns about terrorism and Islamification which have seen the complex racialised associations of Muslims with particular characteristics. These trends, alongside increased attention on the impacts of globalisation, have helped to fuel concerns that Britain is in crisis as it has supposedly become ‘too diverse’ (Goodhart 2004). A key argument of the Leave campaign was that a vote for Brexit would allow Britain to better control the flow of migrants into the country (Wadsworth et al 2016). Fears surrounding negative impacts of migration were reflected in the final Brexit vote, as those who viewed migrants as a strain on the welfare state and a threat to British culture were more likely to vote Leave (Goodwin and Milazzo 2017). The literature has highlighted how different migrants have had different forms of control, media focus and political debate – for example postcolonial migration, Irish migration, EU enlargement, refugees and asylum seekers. This thesis engages with these topics as I consider the role of Gallatin residents’ concerns about migration and cohesion in the Brexit vote and discussions surrounding belonging.

White resentment

It is instructiveto connect theoretical discussions surrounding whiteness to the production ofresentment in Britain. Ware (2008) attributes discourses of xenophobic white resentment directed towards migrants and non-white people to the historic guarantee that whiteness has contained of both belonging and entitlement in Britain. Cases of poverty experienced by white people are labelled as inversions of the natural order as anger is directed at racialised ‘others’ who are viewed as gaining unfair advantages over the ‘indigenous’ white population (Hewitt 2005, Rhodes 2010). Resentment is thus articulated based on a racialised sense of entitlement (Watson and Wells 2005). While Bhambra (2017) seeks to dismiss such discourses, arguing that improvements in the position of ethnic minorities have merely reduced the white working class’ relative advantage, feelings of resentment should be considered and addressed. These feelings will be explored in the thesis as I examine both racialised resentment and the other forms which resentment takes – for example highlighting place-based resentment in relation to areas of Sheffield which participants felt excluded from.

It is important to recognise the longer, pre-EU referendum history of white working class resentment. Drawing on a qualitative research study conducted in Greenwich, Hewitt (2005) describes the incidence of white backlash in this London borough as a response to ‘official policies aimed at providing equal rights’ for members of minority groups (p5). This, as Rhodes (2010) notes, has been a feature of England’s political landscape since the 1980s, developed from the Conservative MP Enoch Powell’s infamous 1968 ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech, and traced through Thatcherism and again to New Labour. Gest’s (2016) ethnographic case study also shows haw longer trends have shaped a feeling of socio-political and economic marginalisation in white working-class politics. His portrayal of Dagenham shows the impacts of the decline of manufacturing work and the privatisation of public housing – both of which have occurred in Gallatin.

A numberof contemporary studies have identified a perception among some white people that their concerns are viewed as unimportant by wider society based on a racialised picture of policies as working to disadvantage them. This leads to accusations of reverse racism due to a belief that whiteness now operates as a site of discrimination. An important piece of work on this comes from Rhodes (2010). In a research project based on thirty-four in-depth interviews with British National Party (BNP) supporters in Burnley (a town which, like Gallatin, is situated in Northern England), Rhodes (2010) found that multiculturalism, equality and diversity policies alongside perceived ‘political correctness’ were viewed as institutionalising the exclusion of white people. Many participants felt that their culture and interests increasingly lacked recognition, arguing that discrimination against white people goes unrecognised (Rhodes 2010). It is, however, important to note the nuances contained in Rhodes’ argument. His research revealed that a sense of ‘unfairness’ was not restricted to the poorer wards in the town - in fact the BNP enjoyed significant success in more affluent areas. Rhodes (2010) thus shows that, whilst BNP support has tended to concentrate in some of the most deprived boroughs in England, within these districts the party drew considerably from those living in more affluent wards.

Dench et al (2006), in their re-study of Young and Wilmott’s (1962) famous work on family ties among the white working-class population of East London, evidenced white resentment in relation to housing. The authors identified bitterness among the white majority population as priorities for receiving housing were viewed as working in favour of Bangladeshi newcomers (Dench et al 2006). The typically larger family sizes of minority groups, coupled with other factors such as refugee requirements, community activism and a tendency to occupy the poorest housing stock, meant that it was often easier for them to demonstrate housing need in the allocation system (Beider 2015, Dench et al 2006). Dench et al’s (2006) work has, however, been heavily criticised. The research served to generate debate about racism among the white working class. Bourne (2006), for example, criticises the authors for, in her view, seeking to ‘find existential and psychological explanations for white racism’ (p94) and thereby trying to explain away prejudice. Bhambra (2019a) similarly critiques the conclusions of Dench et al (2006), taking issue with their argument that established residents’ concerns about newcomers are legitimate as the latter have not yet contributed sufficiently to deserve help and assistance from the state. The debates raised by the book serve to evidence the contested nature of discussions surroundingthe whitening of working-class identities, white resentment and racialised notions of unfairness. There is a need to update work on white resentment as the existing literature is based on research undertaken before the EU referendum. My work examines if and how resentment informs the perspectives of my white participants.

The literature has also explored concerns among the white population about cultural loss. This work has highlighted the existence of anxieties about national identity and the integrity of the nation based on fears that migrants will fragment dominant British culture through an infusion of their practices and values (Byrne 2007, Sandelind 2018). Kaufmann (2018), for example, has written that resentment based on a belief that white identity is under threat from non-white immigration serves to fuel right-wing populism. Indeed, fears surrounding the negative effects of migration were reflected in the final Brexit vote as analysis of data from the BES by Goodwin and Milazzo (2017) reveals that those who viewed migrants as a threat to British culture were more likely to vote Leave.

Competition over social resources

Constructions of white working-class resentment have focused on competition for social resources – such as housing, jobs and schools – alongside a perception of cultural loss. It is important to recognise that this competition is set up in a context of entrenched inequalities and poor populations’ shared experience of hardship. In terms of access to social resources, there exists a long and troubled relationship between race and housing. The fact that recent years have seen demand for social housing outstrip supply in much of the country has created concerns about this, with migrants often being accused of causing housing shortages – as Dench et al (2006) identified in their research. Robinson (2010), for example, notes that ‘the perception that new immigrants are unfairly advantaged in the allocation of social housing is one of the most frequently cited injustices of new immigration in Britain’ (p57). There has thus been a widespread erasure of the role played by the actions of the state over recent decades, for example the commodification and financialisation of housing alongside economic deregulation and the contraction of the welfare state (Powell and Robinson 2019). Competition over other resources such as jobs also represents an important focus of racialised concerns. For example, Garner’s (2012) research with white Britons on the construction of identity highlighted the ways in which his participants lamented competition over jobs with migrants, with one claiming that “they are wiping us out and taking our jobs” (p453). My research considers to what extent competition over social resourcesis viewed as an important issue by the participants.

It is important to situate discourses concerning access to an increasingly scarce supply of social resources in the wider social and political context which has seen white working-class people positioned as losers in multicultural Britain (Lawler 2012, Tyler 2015, Ware 2008). Narratives about jobs and new homes only being for non-white people relates to this fatalistic rhetoric by portraying members of the white working class as losing out to minority groups. The media and politicians have, states Tyler (2015), used this sense of abandonment as an explanation of white working-class resentment and expressions of racism directed towards ethnic minorities and immigrants. Arguments surrounding the basis of contemporary white resentment will be drawn upon and extended in chapter five which explores racialised narratives of unfairness.In this I suggest that there is a need to consider the role of ideas about whiteness in order to aid understandings of contemporary resentment and how, in this way, the white working class becomes a construct for anti-multiculture arguments.

This review chapter now turns its attention to literature on class. In doing so, I highlight some of the limitations of whiteness studies and demonstrate how literature on race and class could better inform one another.

**Whiteness and social class**

Beider (2014), referencing E. P. Thompson, stresses that class – and by extension the working class - is very hard to define as ‘‘class’ is a slippery concept’ (p335). Class has been studied from many different angles – such as socio-economic, socio-cultural or psycho-social. Dealingwith class is made harder by the fact the twenty-first century has witnessed repeated political attempts to remove class from the political agenda. New Labour’s use of the language of exclusion, for example, contributed to a denial of the continued importance of social class (Shilliam 2018). Further back, the John Major Government was very keen to pronounce class no longer an issue – for example through the claim that ‘we’re all middle class now’. Class and poverty, however, remain crucial in determining our life’s trajectory (McGarvey 2017).

It is worth briefly reflecting on the fact that understandings of class have shifted considerably over the last half a century. The ‘cultural turn’ in class analysis has seen class in twenty-first century Britain become defined less by your job and income and more by cultural practices and affectiveelements. For example, the Great British Class Survey, which ran on the BBC website in 2011, focused on the emotional facets of class. This work by Savage (2015) and his colleagues argued that there are diffusions and granularities within the traditional distinctions between upper, middle and working class which have been caused by trends relating to globalisation, culture, migration, and precarity. Whilst I appreciate that there have been significant shifts in both the meaning of andresearch on class, my work seeks to reassert the centrality ofeconomic and political dimensions of class whichworkto produce distinctive experiences for those categorised as part of the ‘white working class’.

This section of the literature review complicates our understanding of the category of whiteness and helps to set up a discussion of the ‘left behind’ in the next section. It will begin by exploring the limitations of whiteness studies in terms of accounting for white working-class experiences, before considering the interplay of race and class. I will discuss Virdee’s contribution to examining the relationship between race and class, examining the value of his work alongside citing how the thesis will extend this. The section then considers the existence of poverty and deprivation among members of both the white and BAME working classes. The chapter will end by discussing classed exclusion and stigma.

It is important to recognise the ways in which ‘whiteness’ may be mediated by class (Garner 2007, Haylett 2001). The work of Rhodes (2011) has demonstrated the need to problematise the category of the ‘white working class’ to account for the fact that this is a diverse and fragmented population. In terms of the EU referendum vote,place is important in understanding the perspectives of white working-class voters as it cannot be assumed that voters in different areas share the same perspectives. This points to the need to explore the vote for Brexit at the local level, thereby enabling a more granular analysis of the white working class to be attained. Somework critically exploring whiteness (see for example Hughey 2012 and 2010, McIntosh 1997) has, however, failed to incorporate class into its analysis and therefore inadequately accounts for the experiences of poorer white people in particular. It is questionable how far members of the white working class can draw on the cultural capital and claims to belonging which are typically associated with whiteness. Despite this, Hughey (2012 and 2010) persists in arguing for the homogeneity of white identities and world views. His study of a white nationalist group and a white anti-racist group found surprising similarities, as both groups made meaning of whiteness by drawing on similar racist stories and world views (Hughey 2012). Whilst this work is invaluable to understandings of the ways in which white racial supremacy is maintained, Hughey’s concept of 'hegemonic whiteness' appears middle-class specific and somewhat difficult to reconcile with white working-class experiences (stemming largely from the fact that many of his research participants were professionals or those with a college degree). Far from benefiting from the trappings of a white identity, the whiteness of the working class is often visible precisely because it does not meet middle-class ‘standards’ (Beider 2015).

The interplay ofrace and class

Virdee’s work on the relationship between race and class is important to consider in order to better understand the history of the working classes. In Virdee’s 2014 book ‘Racism, Class and the Racialized Outsider’ he argues that race is central to the way class works. Virdee seeks to reconceptualise the concept of class to include the ethnic diversity of England’s working class and the role of anti-racism and racism within this over the last two centuries. His influential analysis comes from a Marxist perspective – an aspect of his work which it is worth drawing attention to as there is a tendency for Marxist analyses of class to overlook race. The shifting relationship between class and race is the key tenet of the book, illustrating how ‘race was constitutive in the making of the working class in England across two centuries’ (Virdee 2014, p8). This work shows that it is not acceptable that race and racism have rarely featured in academic accounts of class in Britain (Virdee 2017). History shows us that expansions of the nation to include the working class went hand in hand with a racialised nationalism which excluded newer arrivals and, writes Virdee (2017), ‘this dual process of democratization and racist exclusion was to be repeated throughout the twentieth century’ (p15). Virdee’s work is thus valuable in terms of clearly establishing the relationship between colonialism and the construction of whiteness and national belonging in Britain (Rogaly 2019). Emery (2018) has similarly attested to the inaccuracyof treating race and class as distinct and separate entities, arguing that the growing presence of a BAME industrial working class was crucial in emergent constructions of whiteness and ensuing negotiations about racialised working-class geographies. An important critique of Virdee’s (2014) work on the interplay of race and class is that he offers a more historical perspective as he explores developments from the nineteenth century to 1989. Thus, whilst drawing on the insights offered in Virdee’s earlier work by foregrounding the interplay between ideas aboutrace and class, this thesis also extends knowledge by considering this relationshipin twenty-first century post-referendum England.

Virdee’s insights develop the preceding discussion of whiteness by exploring the ways in which considering class complicates understandings of this. The work discussed helps to reveal that, as noted by Webster (2008), there exists a hierarchy of whiteness in which some people are viewed as less white and are therefore less able to draw on the benefits associated with a white identity. The literature discussed here suggests that the class position of poorer white people serves to largely exclude them from the trappings of white privilege (Beider 2015)*.* This highlights that it is limiting to view whiteness solely in terms of racial domination (Wray 2008) as whiteness cannot be claimed equally by all white people (Garner 2007, Haylett 2001). However, it is necessaryto note that their racial categorisation nevertheless works to bind them into national identity narratives. This thesiswill help to further these discussions and debates surrounding class, race, whiteness and national identity as I build on the call of Beider (2015) for a more complete analysis of whiteness and working-class identities, thereby moving beyond a homogenising description of whiteness as an unmarked norm. This fills an important gap in the established literature by considering whiteness in relation to both the production of the vote for Brexit and relevance in the post-referendum English context.Considering the role of poverty and austerity politics of the past decade is important in this context, as I go on to show.

Poverty and austerity

Poverty and deprivation experienced by both white and BAME working-class communities furtherthrows into question unmitigatedclaims about whiteness operating as a position of privilege and advantage. In the United Nations special rapporteur’s 2018 report on poverty and human rights in the UK, it was recordedthat fourteen million people – a fifth of the population – live in poverty (Alston 2018). The report further revealed the role played by government policiesas it cited numerous ways in which the overall safety net has been reduced since 2010 - for example through the benefit freeze and cap, the reduction of legal aid, the reduced funding of local authorities, and cuts in other specific services. Social class emerges as important in the context of the austerity politics enforced by successive Conservative governments since 2010 as those in low socio-economic positions are the most likely to have been detrimentally impacted by these measures (Alston 2018, Emejulu 2016) - meaning that austerity has exacerbated pre-existing insecurities (Cooper and Whyte 2017). It is important to note that some research on poverty fails to include BAME groups (see for example Daly and Kelly 2015). Through my research I highlight that poverty and deprivation is a reality for members of different groups in Gallatin.

A review of the existing literature indicates that poverty and austerity were important factors to consider in relation to the Brexit vote, but these need to be understood further – something which this thesis contributes towards. Both Benson (2019) and Cooper and Whyte (2017) have argued that there exists a direct link between rising social and economic inequality, experienced as a result of austerity, and the Brexit vote. This thereby fits with the ‘left behind’ argument. Cooper and Whyte (2017) cite the fact that austeritymeasureshave had a disproportionate impact on working-class families of all ethnicities, arguing that austerity represents a class project. The intensification of inequalities through austerity measures means that where we live and work has a significantimpact on patterns of wealth and inequality. Cooper and Whyte (2017) thus conclude that the Leave vote is directly connected to the continued politics of austerity and its effect on communities, thereby proposing a link between deprivation, marginalisation and Brexit. The professedlink between austerity and Brexit has, however, been criticised by Ford (2019) who argues that UKIP and Leavesupporters actually endorsed austerity. Moreover, the limited research that exists shows that working-class BAME voters were more likely to vote Remain (Ashcroft 2016, Swales 2016). In light of this debate, it is important to bear in mind that austerity is one among a number of factors which played a role in the Brexit vote (Fetzer 2018). This highlights the topic’s complexity and the misplaced nature of explanations based on one factor– be that race, class or austerity. These are themes all considered in my work.

Class, exclusion and stigma

Claims that whiteness is an unmarked and unseen norm (Bonnett 1997, Byrne 2006, Dyer 1997, Frankenberg 1993, Phoenix 1997) are thrown into question by the devaluation of white working-class identities in political and popular media discourses. The practice of marking working-class identities as ‘other’ means that members of this group have not always been able to silently align themselves with the label of white and the privileges this identity accrues. A number of writers (see for example M. Collins 2004, Hanley 2007, Jones 2011) have noted the increasing problematisation of the white working class in recent decades. The work of Tyler (2013), for example, has demonstrated the amplification of stigma surrounding the working classes through ‘poverty porn’, displayed on television programmes such as ‘Benefits Street’ – a reality documentary which follows the lives of residents on Britain's most benefit-dependent streets. Wacquant (2019) has similarly drawn attention to the revival of Victorian caricatures of the poor as scroungers and addicts who are to blame for their own deprivation which has occurred as a result of the convergence of long-term policy changes, recent media panics and the emergence of ‘poverty porn’ television shows. A result of the scorn and contempt generated by this is that members of the white working class are labelled as ‘undeserving’ of social care or support and are instead viewed as in need of ‘tough love’ policy interventions (Wacquant 2019) and derided as ‘chavs’ in underclass discussions (Jones 2011).

A further form of exclusion which it is necessary to discuss is that relating to publicspace. Noble and Poynting (2010) have written about the experiences of Arab and Muslim Australians in terms of their access to public spaces and freedom to move. Through their research into the racist vilification experienced by young Arab and Muslim Australians in the wake of September 11th 2001, they link movement through local public space to a spatialised regulation of national belonging. This evidences the role that incivilities directed towards Arab and Muslim Australians play in this (Noble and Poynting 2010). Another important piece of work to consider is Puwar’s (2004) book entitled ‘Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place’. In this Puwar (2004) argues that the spaces we occupy are not empty or neutral, but are instead imbued with history and meaning. By exploring the examples of women and minorities entering fields where white male power has traditionally been firmly entrenched, Puwar (2004) makes the case that bodies become hypervisible when they enter spaces in which theydeviate from the norm.Whilst Puwar (2004) states that it is unusual for white Britons to feel out of place in the UK, this argument crucially fails to consider class-based experiences. Puwar (2004) largelyneglects class due to her concern with the experience of female and racialised bodies. Noble and Poynting’s (2010) work, whilst offering valuable insights into racialised spatial exclusion, similarly fails to adequately consider class*.* This thesis will thus build on the work of Noble and Poynting (2010) and Puwar (2004)on spatial exclusion by discussing the need to examine how this is experienced by members of the white working class in terms of their relational sense of belonging at the local level in the area and city in which they live.

There exists a gap in knowledge surrounding the extent to which the inhabitants of England’s original industrial revolution spaces, such as towns and cities in Northern England, experience a sense of exclusion and marginalisation (Nayak 2019).One notable exception, which was introduced in the first chapter of the thesis*,* is the workof McKenzie (2017a, 2017b, 2015 and 2012). McKenzie’s research seeks to provide a ‘narrative from the inside’ of the experiences of those living in left out and stigmatised neighbourhoods, thereby enabling members of systematically excluded communities to tell their stories. Her work is primarily based in Nottingham’s St Ann’s estate – where McKenzie herself lived for over two decades. McKenzie’s research is valuable in terms of providing an empathetic yet honest account of the concerns *–* including those which are problematic and racialised *-* of marginalised and stigmatised working-class communities. McKenzie’s work importantly serves to challenge popular one-dimensional constructions of working-class experience, arguing that council estates and the people who live in these areas should ‘not only be seen as lacking’ (McKenzie 2015, p13). This thesis will build on McKenzie’s work by exploring further positive aspects of working-class life and culture which are often ignored. Like McKenzie, the research undertaken for this thesis serves to give voice to those in excluded and marginalised communities (Power 2015). My research focuses on a different time and place to that of McKenzie, meaning that it is instructive to compare my findings with hers.

There are, however, limitations of McKenzie’s work which needto be acknowledged*.* It is, for example, questionable to what extent she addresses questions surrounding race and ethnic diversity. It is useful to connect and compare her work to that of Rhodes et al (2019). Rhodes et al’s (2019) study sought to reframe the dominant ‘left behind’ narrative through a critical exploration of class, race and place in Oldham. The research was based on fifteen interviews with a diverse group of Oldham residents, secondary analysis of census data and archival research. Rhodes et al’s (2019) work highlights that the ‘left behind’ narrative problematically imagines a racialised category comprised of members of the white working class, thereby obscuring the disproportionate experiences of poverty and the detrimental impact of austerity on BAME populations. Such a framing excludes minority populations from social class. Rhodes et al (2019) found austerity to be viewed as a more pressing political concern than immigration and Brexit. Rhodes et al (2019) draw attention to the fact that ignoring the role of external factors in shaping the contemporary reality of working-class lives has helped lead to problematically simplistic, as well as racially exclusive, imaginings of the ‘left behind’ – which work to oversimplify the complexity of the views held by members of the white working class by reducing working-class politics to anti-immigrant discourses and racial resentment. The study’s focus on the views of working-class residents from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds highlights the exclusion and stigma experienced by all members of the working classes – something which McKenzie’s work largely fails to recognise.

Whilst this literature review will now turn its attention to Brexit and the ‘left behind’, the themes of whiteness, race and class will continue to be pertinent due to the important role these play in discussions surrounding the EU referendum.

**Brexit and the ‘left behind’**

### This section of the literature review has been deliberately placed after those concerned with race and class as these comprise key elements of the Brexit literature. In this part of the chapter I seek to provide a critical overview of dominant narratives that have attempted to explain the Brexit vote. This will help to establish the basis for analysis in the subsequent empirical chapters of how Brexit was discussed by Gallatin residents. The section begins by looking at the role of migration and race in the Brexit vote before reflecting on the role played by nostalgia and whiteness. I will then consider the ‘left behind’ thesis. In doing so I critically discuss the arguments in existing literature in relation to the Brexit vote and poor white ‘left behind’populations in post-industrial areas, arguing that much work fails to foreground the voices of those in marginalised working-class communities.

Migration, race and the Brexit vote

Changing localities and different patterns of migration settlement can help to account for the complexity of the urban Brexit vote, pointing to the need for analyses to take a more micro-level approach. An interesting case to consider is that of London. Whilst the capital overall voted convincingly (59.9%) to Remain, taking a deeper look at the vote at the local level reveals a more mixed picture. Barking and Dagenham, for example, voted overwhelmingly (62.4%) to Leave (BBC News 2016). It is telling that this is an area in which the BNP have enjoyed a good degree of support following the decline of manufacturing and rapid social change (Rhodes 2011). The white British population has decreased in the area from 80.86% in 2001 to 49.46% in 2011 (London borough of Barking and Dagenham 2018) – thereby indicating the extent of change in the locale. This contrasts starkly to the superdiverse (Vertovec 2007) borough of Hackney - the third most ethnically diverse borough in England and Wales (Neal et al 2013) - in which 78.5% of the electorate voted Remain (Wise and Noble 2016). There thus appears to exist in Hackney a positive conviviality and sense of community-in-difference which is able incorporate migrants and minorities into conceptualisations of belonging (Wise and Noble 2016). It is, however, also worth rememberingthat BAME groups were more likely to vote Remain (Ashcroft 2016, Goodwin and Heath 2016a). This discussion highlights the importance of paying close attention to the relationship between the diversity of places, their class profiles and the Brexit outcome - signalling the need for a more spatially granular analysis of debates surrounding the EU referendum result. This is a gap in the literature which the thesis fills, exploring the interplay between place and the Brexit vote in a deprived urban neighbourhood in Northern England.

The academic press and popular media reported that the vote for Brexit was driven by anti-immigrant prejudice (Clarke et al 2017, Goodwin and Milazzo 2017, Meleady et al 2017, Sayer 2017, Swales 2016, Virdee and McGeever 2018, Wadsworth et al 2016), with Goodhart (2016) describing Brexit as a vote against mass immigration. Goodwin and Milazzo’s (2017) research explored how immigration shaped public support for Brexit, drawing on aggregate-level data and individual-level survey data from the British Election Study (BES). This revealed that those who were intensely opposed to immigration were around forty percentage points more likely to vote Leave than Remain (Goodwin and Milazzo 2017).

National identity also appeared to play a role in the vote as seventy-nine per cent of those who describe themselves as ‘English not British’ voted to Leave (Ashcroft 2016). This has links to the previous discussion of whiteness as English identities tend to be viewed as closely related to notions of ancestry and whiteness, with Englishness having long-held racialised connotations (Leddy-Owen 2014, Virdee and McGeever 2018). Virdee and McGeever (2018) conceive of Englishness as containing two core elements. The first of these is a link between English national feeling and a longing for Empire. The second is situated in the structural decline and class decomposition that Britain has undergone in the neoliberal era. They argue that Englishness has been reasserted in the form of a racialised and insular nationalism which was voiced through Brexit (Virdee and McGeever 2018). It is further worth noting that English nationalism is particularly defensive. The rhetoric present in the racialised aspects of the Leave campaign, however, is not new. Kundnani (2000) wrote at the turn of the century that there existed a sense that the English need to rediscover their identity. He argued that contemporary English nationalism has been driven by a sense of loss created by devolution, globalisation, multiculturalism and European integration.

There is, then, considerable evidence to suggest that concerns surrounding immigration and national identity played an important role in individuals’ decisions to vote Leave. A key limitation of these analyses, however, is that they are based on quantitative data. This enables only a partial understanding of the sensitive and highly political nature of the debates concerning Brexit and migration due to its more numerical basis (Bryman 2012). As I discuss in chapter three*,* I chose to utilise a qualitative methodological design to enable theresearch to attain a fuller and richer understanding of these discourses.

Nostalgia and whiteness

Nostalgia and collective memory are important to consider in relation to the Brexit debates. de Saint-Laurent et al (2017) highlight the role that collective memory plays in creating and defending a certain vision of the national future. They cite the example of UKIP’s Brexit campaign promise that a vote to Leave would enable the British people to ‘take back control’. This drew on a specific representation of Britain’s past in the form of the British Empire to argue that a future without the rest of Europe was both possible and desirable. The authors conclude that ‘the past has never been as relevant for the present’ (de Saint-Laurent et al 2017, p147). The role of whiteness in these formations of the past and national identity is important to consider. It has been argued that the rhetoric surrounding the successful Brexit campaign was based on a nostalgic view of Britain’s colonial past (Bhambra 2017) in which the white British population sought to ‘retain the privilege and entitlement that comes with being (indigenously) white’ (Sayer 2017, p103). The successful campaign for Brexit was aided by these nostalgic discourses based on a glorified, nostalgic vision of the nation ‘pre-immigration’ as all white and both economically and socially prosperous (de Saint-Laurent et al 2017, Demir 2017, Seidler 2018, Virdee and McGeever 2018).

This has important links to the work of Gilroy (2006) which has adapted the concept of melancholia and applied this to neo-imperialist politics. Gilroy (2006) has shown that a condition of ‘postcolonial melancholia’ has served to obstruct the process of working through the legacy of colonialism. This manifests itself in an inability to value everyday multiculture due to a continuedlongingfor the racially homogenous culture which is imagined as having existed in the past. The rhetoric of the Leave campaign drew on affective and emotional geographies of loss and belonging to appeal to those who have yet to come to terms with the loss of empire and the resulting decline of Britain’s power on the global stage (Virdee and McGeever 2018)*.* This narrative of the campaign, however, deliberately ignored the long multicultural history of Britain (Bhambra 2019b, Young 2008) through its focus on an ‘ideal’ of whiteness which is embodied in ideas about empire and colonialism. Virdee and McGeever (2018) write that the campaign’s narrative was driven, in part, by a nostalgia for empire which drew on ‘deep reservoirs of imperial longing in the majority population’ (p1805). They go on to draw attention to the fact that this nostalgiaerases the corrosive legacies of the racisms of empire and colonialism (Virdee and McGeever 2087).

‘Left behind’ thesis

It is necessaryto consider some of the key demographic patterns which emerged from the EU referendum vote and helped give rise to the ‘left behind’ thesis. Data from several studies (Ashcroft 2016, Goodwin and Heath 2016a, Swales 2016) has identified a link between income, education and the Brexit vote. Those with a household income of less than £20,000 were reported as being twenty-three percentage points more likely to vote Leave than those with an income of over £60,000 (Goodwin and Heath 2016a). It is further important to note that Swales (2016) - in a synthesis of data from British Social Attitudes, NatCen Panel research and the BES Internet Panel - found that those who identified as working class were nineteen percentage points more likely to vote Leave than those who identifed as middle class. This depiction of poorer citizens being more likely to vote Leave is mirrored again in the statistics in relation to education. The Lord Ashcroft poll (2016) – the largest survey of voters conducted on the day of the referendum – revealed that fifty-seven per cent of those with a university degree voted Remain. In contrast, among those whose formal education ended at secondary school or earlier, a large majority voted to Leave (Ashcroft 2016). Statistics thus appear to suggest a correlation between poverty and education level and the referendum vote. It is, however*,* important to recognise the limitations of the statistics upon which these assumptions are founded. The work of Goodwin and Heath (2016a), for example, is based on data from the BES Internet campaign. Whilst this study draws on a sample of over 31,000 respondents, it was carried out before the referendum and thus measured intended rather than actual voting.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the ‘left behind’ in relation to the vote for Brexit*.* A number of writers (see for example Clarke et al 2017, Ford and Goodwin 2017, Goodwin and Heath 2016, Shipman 2017) have sought to show that Leave voters were comprised overwhelmingly of individuals who were economically disadvantaged, possessed low levels of education and held a strong English identity. This group are further characterised as illiberal, nostalgic for the past and angry and resentful about migration and being ‘left behind’ by globalising political economies and economic restructuring (Jennings et al 2016). Brexit has thus been seen as created by socio-political alienation in ‘left behind’ deindustrialised areas which are viewed as ‘backwaters’ (Becker et al 2017). Goodhart’s (2017) work describes this group as ‘Somewheres’, depicting alargely immobile group whose social boundaries extend little beyond where they live and who have been ‘left behind’ as a result of uneven economic and cultural changes since the 1960s. This rhetoric surrounding the ‘left behind’ serves to depict the white working class as geographically fixed (M. Collins 2004, Day 2006, McKenzie 2015, Moullin 2017, Rogaly and Taylor 2011) and inward-looking - and thereby unwilling and unable to negotiate life in multicultural Britain (Beider 2014, M. Collins 2004, Tyler 2015). Contested narratives about Britain’s ‘left behind’ are important to this thesis. The argument’s description ofthis ostensible group resonates withGallatin as this is situated in a region with a strong manufacturing tradition which has suffered high levels of unemployment alongside unstable and low-paid employmentfollowing deindustrialisation. Drawing on my research conducted in Gallatin enables this thesis to critically explore to what extent the ‘left behind’ thesis can help to account for how residents interacted with the Brexit vote.

Leave voters among the elite and middle classes were, however, vital to the final Brexit outcome (Antonucci et al 2017, Bhambra 2017, Virdee and McGeever 2018), with almost three in five votes for Leave coming from those in social classes A, B and C1 (Dorling 2016). In contrast, only twenty-four per cent were from the lowest two social classes. Bhambra (2017) argues that the failure of many commentators to acknowledge that support for Brexit was found across all sections of the white British population evidences a more general avoidance of recognising the role of race in structuring the world. This view is supported by Sayer (2017) who, alongside Bhambra (2017), has shown that the Brexit campaign has masqueraded as a revolt of the poor. Actions of the white majority have been labelled as specific to the white working class and thus viewed as based on class rather than racist. As Benson (2019) writes, the ‘left behind’ narrative, which sees inequalities based on class racialised as white, presents dispossession and marginalisation as a justification for racism and xenophobia. This results in the narrative giving white working-classracism a degree of legitimacy (Benson 2019, Bhambra 2017). Bhattacharyya (2017) argues that there has occurred a ‘wilful whitening of class identities for racist ends’ (p20), highlighting that hijacking the language of class sidelines discussions of the racism which pervades all sections of the white population.

A key problem with explanations of Brexit based primarily on economic grievances is a failure to account for ethnic minority groups remaining concentrated in positions of poverty as well as being disproportionately affected by austerity (Holloway 2016). Members of these groups overwhelmingly voted to Remain – with seventy-three per cent of black voters and over two-thirds of Asian voters doing so, compared to a minority (forty-seven per cent) of white voters (Ashcroft 2016). Whilst it is important to recognise the detrimental impacts of deindustrialisation and austerity on the white working class, we cannot ignore the existence of disproportionate ethnic minority deprivation (Holloway 2016). Isakjee and Lorne (2019) thus suggest that there exists, among the white British population, a sense of loss that was exploitedby the Brexit campaign and which yokes together elite imperial concerns about Britain’s declining status as a global power with the material degradations experienced by those who have been negatively impacted by the neoliberal economy. This points to the importance of considering the interplay of race and class, as attempts to account forthe Brexit vote indicate that it is extremely difficult to disentangle the two.

In light of this discussion of the weaknesses of the ‘left behind’ narrative, it is important to consider the recent work of McKenzie (2017a and 2017b) who conducted ethnographic research with Leave voters in working-class communities in East London and ex-mining towns in Nottinghamshire, exploring their political and social viewpoints. Through discussion of her participants’ accounts and narratives*,* McKenzie (2017a and 2017b) demonstrates the need to foreground the anger and apathy which exists in working-class political narratives as a result of being ‘left out’ for a number of decades. This reveals that an important part of discourses in working-class communities concerns a sense of ‘not existing’. Building on the work of McKenzie (2017a and 2017b) this thesis demonstrates the need to reframe discussions about residents in communities such as Gallatin as ‘left out’. Unlike the term ‘left behind’, this avoids blaming individuals for their marginalisation and exclusion. Conceptualising members of the working classas ‘left out’ therebyfacilitates a recognition of the wider structural causes of theworking classes losing ground to the rest of society - be that economically, politically or socially.

This review of the literature relating to the EU referendum has built on the preceding discussions of whiteness and class by considering the role of these in the vote for Brexit. Following the referendum, discourses which conceptualise the ‘left behind’ as comprised of white working-class communities have become prominent, seeing this group characterised as victims of austerity who have simultaneously been neglected in favour of ethnic minorities (Isakjee and Lorne 2019). This review of the emergent literature surrounding Brexit has indicated the need to produce an in-depth account of attitudes among members of the supposedly ‘left behind’ white working class. With the notableexception of McKenzie (2017a and 2017b) and Rhodes et al (2019), little qualitative research has been undertaken in the wake of the Brexit vote seeking to explore the views of residents in England’s deprived urban localities. Working closely with individuals from a working-class community enables this thesis to interrogate stigmatising arguments surrounding Brexit and the white working class. The final section of the literature review is concerned withplace and belonging. In this I seek to demonstratethat paying close attention to place and attachments to locality is pertinent to understanding the interplay between Brexit and ideas surrounding race and class.

**Political geographies of Brexit: place and belonging**

Discontent, McKay (2019) argues, has increasingly incorporated a spatial element following the EU referendum. Place and urban geography are thushighly relevant to discussions of the ‘left behind’ thesis andBrexit. There exists a tendency to view the globally dominant spaces as home to highly geographically mobile citizens in juxtaposition with the alleged insular identifications, conservative traditions and obsolete skill sets of those in ‘left behind’ areas (Wyly 2015). This section will demonstrate the importance of urban geography, place and local dimensions of belonging to conversations surrounding Brexit. It will begin by considering literature on the importance of local belonging within working-class communities, discussing how literature on neighbourhood nostalgia serves to complicate this. This will be followed by a discussion of racialised reputational geographies, considering the role of territorial stigma and urban geography through a review of literature on racialised understandings of space. I will finally critically appraise work on everyday multiculture and conviviality in urban spaces, highlighting the role of this in the Remain vote.

Localised belonging

Several recent studies have highlighted the importance of local dimensions of belonging to working-class communities. Husband et al’s (2016) research, for example, found white and BAME residents to hold deep attachments to their local area. This work focused on multi-ethnic interaction and coexistence in an inner-city area of Bradford, adopting an urban sociology framework to explore the transnational basis of lived identities and the structural realities of living in the area. Husband et al (2016) produce a detailed picture of everyday urban multiculture and multi-ethnic interaction in this community. The results of the research, published in the 2016 book ‘Lived diversities: space, place and identities in the multi-ethnic city’, serve to challenge the stereotypical denigration of inner city life, instead providing a nuanced account of contemporary multi-ethnic coexistence in which place-based attachments play an important role. This indicates the continued importance of local belonging to members of working-class communities – indeed there is a good amount of literature exploring place and attachment (see for example Hall 2012, Vincent et al 2018, Wessendorf 2014). The data explored in this thesis adds to these discussions by exploring the relevance of this in the post-referendum context.

Discourses of neighbourhood nostalgia complicate understandings of belonging and attachment, highlighting the existence of ambivalent emotions in the context of neighbourhood change, decline andloss. The presence of nostalgia highlights that attachment is based on the present as well as the past. Nostalgia, Bennett (2018) writes, refers to the act of looking back in timefor something which no longer exists – thereby implying a rift between the past and the present. An important piece of work to consider is that of Watson and Wells (2005) who conducted research with shopkeepers in a multicultural London neighbourhood. The area had experienced marked social and economic decline over the preceding decade, alongside receiving a growing number of asylum seekers. Back (1996) identified similar rhetoric in his London-based ethnography, showing that the cultural and racial difference of new tenants was used to explain the area’s contemporary problems. Here the arrival of Vietnamese migrants was linked to the neighbourhood’s decline (Back 1996). These studies reveal that nostalgia can be used to construct exclusionary definitions of belonging as ‘we’ are distinguished as the privileged group who can remember the past, whereas the recently arrived outsiders constitute the symbolically excluded category of ‘them’ (Blokland 2003, Elias and Scotson 1994).

Other writers have, however, challenged depictions of nostalgia as working primarilyas an exclusionary device. Ramsden (2016), for example, draws on oral history interviews exploring social life in a small town in Northern England. This study found that narratives of neighbourhood decline were not exclusive to long-term working-class residents. These narratives in fact worked to provide a common ground between different groups of local people, leading Ramsden (2016) to conclude that nostalgic discourses can help to preserve a sense of place which is shared by a diverse range of residents. Watt (2006) similarly challenges aspects of existing literature on neighbourhood nostalgia. His qualitative research, which explored questions of identity in relation to place in Camden, found a prominent theme among long-term white residents to be deteriorating social conditions in the area. Deviating from much existing literature, Watt (2006) importantly found that discourses concerning neighbourhood loss and change were not confined to older residents. This stands in contrast to Ravetz (2001) who highlights the perceived golden-age view of estates and writes that this tends to be concentrated among older residents. Both Watt’s (2006) and Ramsden’s (2016) research highlight the often overlooked role that sharednarratives of loss and nostalgia can play in fostering a sense of belonging amongst disparate groups of residents. Exploring local belonging and how this can incorporate loss and feelings of nostalgia is, I argue in this thesis*,* important as Brexit – despite dealing with big issues – saw people voting emotionally based on their localised experiences which were informed by affective and emotional geographies of loss and belonging.

Racialised reputational geographies

Considering racialised reputational geographies connects to Brexit politics as the ‘left behind’ argument deals with stigmatised geographies. Work on territorial stigma furthers understandings of how belonging at the local level is experienced. The concept connects the thinking of Goffman (1963) on stigma based on race, nation or religion with that of Bourdieu on symbolic violence and group-making in order to explore the role of space in discrediting people.Territorial stigma was developed from Wacquant’s (2008) encounters with the realities of spatial taint in his late-twentieth-century fieldwork comparing lived experiences in Chicago’s ghettos and the declining housing estates of outer Paris. He argues that areas of EU exclusion have emerged due to mass unemployment and the casualisation of work, identifying territorial stigmatisationas a key element of advanced marginality (Wacquant 2008). Wacquant (2008) describes territorial stigmatisation as a ‘blemish of place’, emphasising that this is neither a static condition nor a neutral process (Wacquant, Slater and Pereira 2014). Wacquant (2016) further draws attention to the fact that the relegation of certain urban spaces and the populations who reside in them is a power-laden, collective and relational process. External organisations and people thus play a key role in producing territorial stigma through the deliberate creation and perpetuation of negative representations (Wacquant 2008).

The notion of ‘reputational geographies’ is helpful to consider as this draws attention to the contested nature of territorialstigma and ideas concerning space and place (Karner and Parker 2011) which is highly appropriate to discussions surrounding Brexit of stigmatised ‘left behind’ geographies. The work of Parker and Karner (2010) has had a significant influence on this topic, using the term to capture the symbolic capital which is attached to an area and thereby exploring:

*‘The symbolic and material boundaries drawn around places as indicators of social status, sites of memories and repositories of affect that can have profound socio-economic as well as emotional consequences for city residents’* (p1451).

The concept enables us to appreciate the subjective – and at times contested – nature of place, highlighting the different and competingways that people interact with this. Parker and Karner (2010) draw on their research conducted in Birmingham’s multicultural and severely deprivedAlum Rock area in their discussion of reputational geographies. This study, based on forty semi-structured interviews with residents of Alum Rock, found that many local people refused to allow external negative representations of their area affect their interaction withthe place. Parker and Karner (2010) discuss the fact that a number of residents challenged perceptions of Alum Rock as a ‘no go’ area for white people. They instead urged outsiders to visit and explore the area, with one resident imploring: “Come to the area and see. Chat to the people.” (Parker and Karner 2010, p1641). Whilst literature on territorial stigmatisation demonstrates that this is a harmful form of collective representation which is attached to a place (Wacquant, Slater and Pereira 2014), by simultaneously drawing on the concept of reputational geographies in my research I am able to produce a fuller account of place through an appreciation of its relational and contested nature.

Massey’s work has been influential in furthering understandings of space and place. Massey (2005 and 1994) conceptualises these as always relational and actively created through our material practices, arguing that spaces are processes which are continually reproduced. In considering the work of Noble and Poynting (2010) and Puwar (2004) earlier in the literature review, I suggested that spaces contain pre-existing conditions on which interactions take place (Wise and Velayutham 2014) and are therefore not neutral. This results in certain groups experiencing a sense of exclusion when interacting with some spaces, creating a feeling of being out of place (Puwar 2004). Reputational geographies and socially constructed representations of spaces(Massey 2005 and 1994) can thereby play roles in the racialisation process (Rogaly and Taylor 2011). This is evidenced in Rhodes’ (2012) study with white residents in Burnley. Rhodes (2012) found evidence of the racialisation of space whereby areasbecome synonymous with certain populations which are concentrated there. Such views were present inthe accounts of all of the white residents who participated in the study. The results of Rhodes’ (2012) research call into question Sullivan’s (2006) argument that white people often fail to see the link between race and place due to a view of space being racially neutral. The participants in Rhodes’ (2012) study recognised a relationship between certain places and certain ethnic and racial groups. This empirical work further suggests that, in contrast to Massey (2005 and 1994), racialised labels which become attached to certain areas can be highly durableand thus hard to disrupt. In chapter four I will consider the ways in which Gallatin’s residents draw on a comparative framework to perceive other parts of Sheffield in a racialised manner, evidencing that racialised representationsof places can be highly static and entrenched. My research further engages with reputational geographies by exploring residents’ understanding of how their area is compared unfavourably to other areas of the city – thereby engaging with classed understandings of space. This discussion is relevant to Brexit politics which saw the stigmatisation of ‘left behind’ geographies.

Everyday multiculture and conviviality

Debates surrounding everyday multiculture are relevant to the concerns of the thesis due to the perception of a link between successful urban multiculture in diverse areas and a strong Remain vote – recall Hackney for example*.* Much recent research has explored the connection between geography, place and informal inter-ethnic interaction (Vincent et al 2018). Work on everyday multiculture and convivialityexplores changes in migrant flows and settlement alongside the role of geography: this serves to challenge the political focus on supposed ethnic segregation (Neal et al 2013) which gained traction following the 2001 riots involving Asian, Pakistani and white communities in a number of Northern towns (Bloch et al 2013, Hudson et al 2009, Jones 2014, Neal et al 2013). Crucially, the Cantle report (2001) into the causes of the disturbances claimed to identify a trend towards ‘parallel lives’ which saw British Muslims blamed for their alleged ‘self-segregation’. Research on multiculture instead draws attention to the lived experiences of inter-ethnic interaction and co-presence which form a central part of many people’s lives in today’s social environment which is increasingly characterised as one of ‘superdiversity’ (Vertovec 2007). Within the timely approaches to experiences of livedmulticulture, the concept of conviviality has come to play an increasingly important role. Gilroy (2004) first proposed the term to denote contemporary practices of everyday multiculture, terming conviviality ‘the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculture an ordinary feature of urban life in Britain’ (p xi). Wise and Noble (2016) conceptualise conviviality as shared life, focusing on the effort and negotiation involved in this. A sense of ‘rubbing along’ can include friction and conflict, and conviviality is therefore not restricted to a view of ‘happy togetherness’.

A focus on conviviality can thus help to provide a more accurate and nuanced account of experiences of lived multiculture by elucidating the co-existence of conflict and our ability to manage this; demonstrating the role of connection in terms of how we live with difference (Wise and Noble 2016). Neal et al (2013) suggest that conviviality may be the best way of thinking about the reconfiguration of multiculture away from essentialised characterisations of cultures as homogenous entities with clear boundarieswhich istypically contained in policy approaches (Allen 2007, Bloch et al 2013, Watson 2006). Moreover, approaches to everyday multiculture and conviviality, whilst not ignoring tension and discord, attempt to draw attention to the coexistence of small, spontaneous and often amicable forms of multicultural social interaction that can be created in the multiplicity of settings which are encountered during everyday life (Neal et al 2013). Work on conviviality has, however, been criticised as presenting a naïvely positive picture of inter cultural relations. Valentine and Sadgrove (2014), for example, critique Wilson’s (2011) work on everyday bus travel in Birmingham on this basis. Whilst Wilson (2011) argued that interaction on buses has a tangible impact on passengers’ world views and the way they relate to others beyond this space, but without actually talking to people about these instances, this is a highly tentative assumption at best.As Valentine and Sadgrove (2014) note, Wilson’s (2011) purely ethnographic approach neglects individual experiences and thus loses sight of the significance of the subject. This can lead to a tendency to view cities as potential ‘nests of kindness’ (Thrift 2005) which overlooks the fact that there exist limits to conviviality (Neal et al 2013, Valentine and Sadgrove 2014). Valentine (2008), for example, warns of a ‘worrying romanticisation of urban encounter’ (p325), noting that spatial proximity can in fact serve to generate defensiveness and the development of bounded communities and identities.

In this finalsection of the literature review I have considered work on place and belonging, making a case for the need to better foreground the role of spatiality in sociological work on Brexit. It is instructive to reflect on the fact that the EU referendum represented an important moment in bringing debates surrounding belonging to the forefront of the national psyche. Physical space is bound up with notions of who does and does not belong in it (Husband et al 2016, McKenzie 2015), with racialised and classednotions ofinclusion and exclusion being afforded particular prominencebythe rise of populism across Europe. Indeed, Hall (1993) perceptively stated nearly three decades ago that ‘the capacity to live with difference is … the coming question of the 21st Century’ (p361). The spatial nature of discontent which the Brexit vote revealed (McKay 2019) makes foregrounding the role of geography and place highly relevant to discussions of the Brexit vote, the ‘left behind’ and social cohesion. The EU referendum resulthas been linked to debates surrounding the role of urban intercultural mixing in generating positive experiences of everyday multiculture, as more diverse areas tended to more strongly back Remain. This thesis helps to fill an important gap in the current literature, as identified by Burrell and Hopkins (2019), through its spatially anchored analysis of the Brexit vote which foregrounds the intersections of place, race and class.

**Conclusions**

This literature review has provided the theoretical and conceptual foundationsfor studying Brexit through the lens of whiteness, class, place and belonging*.* In discussing literature on these themes I have argued that there is a need to bring together these concerns*.* Specifically, the thesis will incorporate a focus on race, class and place, filling a significant gap in knowledge by considering the relationship betweenthese and the ways in which studying Brexit in a more multi-dimensional nature can simultaneously serve to challenge and complicate understandings. It is important to reiterate that, with the notableexception of McKenzie (2017a and 2017b) and Rhodes et al (2019), little qualitative research has been undertaken which seeks to explore the views of residents in England’s deprived urban localities in the aftermath of the Brexit vote. This is an absence in existing work which I will develop in my thesis. My research saw me work closely with individuals from a working-class community and thereby enables this thesis to critically reflect on the stigmatising arguments surrounding the white working class as ‘left behind’ which proliferated in the wake of the EU referendum vote. One of the challenges I contended with during the research and writing up of my thesis was managing an integrated approach which avoided privileging one perspective over another. This was made harder given the entrenched and divided nature of the debates which I have discussed in this chapter. Furthermore, the sheer amount of work in the related fields made it challenging to bring this all together to provide a set of lenses through which to understand Brexit and social relations. My research thus necessitated integrating several major literatures and dealing with a range of complex, competing arguments.

The literature explored in this chapter suggests that the Brexit vote highlighted the need to better explore the role of geography and place in terms of the referendum and discussions of England’s alleged ‘left behind’. This thesis builds on and helps to fill an important gap in the current literature (Burrell and Hopkins 2019) through its spatially anchored analysis of the Brexit vote, foregrounding the intersections of place, race and class in order to better inform an understanding of key concerns in working-class communities. Chapters four to six will thematically discuss the findings of the research in depth, confirming and extending, and at times contradicting, the literature reviewed in this chapter, alongside helping to fill gaps in existing knowledge which have been cited throughout this review. Prior to a discussion of the project’s data, the next chapterwill discuss my methodological approach in depth*.*

**Chapter 3. Methodology**

This chapter focuses on the research design and methodological approach of the study, outlining the methods used to conduct the research. It seeks to demonstrate why these were chosen as the most appropriate in terms of the focus and aims of the research. A brief reminder of the study’s research questions is useful here. These explored:

the raced and classed nature of local belonging,

how exploring the ways in which residents variously relatedto the EU referendum can aid understandings of the category of whiteness,

how local belonging is impacted by initiatives surrounding cohesion and integration.

The chapter will begin by setting out the broad methodological framings of the research before going on to discuss the research setting, explaining why Sheffield and specificallyGallatin was chosen as the site of the research. I then detail who participated in the study and how I went about recruiting them. The chapter moves on to describe the three data collection methods used – semi-structured interviews, photo-elicitation interviews and participant observation. The chapter then looks at how the data generated by these methods was analysed. This is followed by a critical discussion of my positionality in relation to that of my participants, as well as a consideration of the ethical dilemmas I encountered duringthe course of the research and how these were negotiated and managed before, during and after fieldwork. The chapter concludes with some reflections on the place-based nature of the study, citing lessons which have been learnt whilst undertaking the research which may be of use to future projects.

**Methodological framings**

It is necessary to provide an account of the rationale behind my decision to utilise a place-based case study approach. As outlined in the first two chapters, statistics have revealed sharp divergences in voting in the EU referendum at the local level which points to the need for analyses to take a more micro-level approach which explores the relationship between the diversity of places, their class profiles and the Brexit outcome. I started from a qualitative ontological standpoint informed by constructivism, viewing society as created by the interactions of social actors with the world around them (Hesse-Biber 2010). My view of knowledge was thereby strongly influenced by an interpretivist epistemological outlook, conceptualising knowledge as existing in the form of meanings, understandings and interpretations. Qualitative methods enable a deeper engagement with social phenomena(Bryman 2012, Mason 2018), thereby aiding my engagement with the subjectiveconcerns of the research. The methods utilised and discussed in this chapter - twenty-seven semi-structured interviews, extended participant observation undertaken primarily in a local community centre, and auto-driven photo-elicitation techniques – were chosen based on their appropriateness for generating data which would enable the development of answers to the project’s research questions.

Brexit has, to date, seldom been explored through a localised place-based lens, as much work has come from either a theoretical orientation (see for example Bhambra 2018, Calhoun 2018, Hearn 2018) or been based on quantitative research (see for example Clarke et al 2017, Goodwin and Heath 2016). My study instead follows the approach of McKenzie (2017a and 2017b), discussed in the literature review, taking a place-based case study approach. Case study work enables the generation of rich, in-depth and detailed data (George and Bennett 2004, Feagin et al 1991). I follow the community studies tradition of researching one place, such as Whyte’s (1955) ethnographic study of Cornerville in Boston and Gans’ (1962) study of Italian Americans living in the East End of Boston in the 1950s. There are also a number of contemporary studies like this, such as McKenzie’s (2015) work on contemporary working-class life in England and Neal et al’s (2016) work on living multiculture in Hackney. At the outset of my doctoral studies I had planned to utilise a comparative multi-site approach, studying Gallatin and a more affluent part of Sheffield. However, discussions with my supervisors prompted me to rethink due to concerns that I would not have sufficient time to fullyembed myself in each site and collect an adequate amount of data. I thus decided to focus on one area to enable me to attain a thorough and detailed account of place-based belonging and attitudes surrounding Brexit in a predominantly working-class community. There are unique elements in any neighbourhood and therefore Gallatin is not claimed to be representative of all others - although key elements are likely to be present.

**Location of the research**

Sheffield

I would like to now set out the rationale for conducting the research in Sheffield and why Gallatin was chosen as the site of the research*.* Sheffield - a major city in Northern England and one of the largest city-regions in the country - closely reflected the nationwide EU referendum results, with fifty-one per cent voting to Leave (BBC News 2016a). Sheffield was the only one of the North’s five major cities to return a Leave majority, despite Sheffield City Council’s backing of the pro-EU campaign (Pattie 2016). Alongside the nature of Sheffield’s relationship with the EU referendum, the city’s recent history further lends itself to a discussion of the ‘left behind’. Areas like Sheffield suffered economically and socially as a result of deindustrialisation in the latter part of the twentieth century, struggling to adapt to economic change following the decline of steel and coal production. Prior to this, the region had enjoyed international renown for its steel industry. Features exploring the impact of industrial decline in the Sheffield Morning Telegraph in 1983 found that communities in the city had been ‘overwhelmed’ and ‘demoralised’ by the scale and speed of job losses (Fletcher 2010). Within Gallatin a large proportion of households had relied on the income of men working in the city’s steelworks. In relation to Nayak’s (2019) call for the need to explore and understand what the experiences are of those in England’s original industrial revolution spaces, I reasoned that Sheffield would be a good location to critically examine the ‘left behind’ thesis in the context of views and experiences of residents living in Britain’s communities which have been marginalised as a result of economic restructuring.

The diverse nature of Sheffield’s population represented a further factor in my decision to base the research in the city. Nearly twenty per cent of Sheffield’s contemporary population are from minority ethnic groups (Sheffield City Council 2013). Sheffield first witnessed inward migration from commonwealth countries such as Pakistan, Yemen and the West Indies in the 1950s. Most of these unskilled labourers moved into established working-class districts around the steelworks (Hey 2010, Taylor et al 1996). The 1980s then saw Sheffield receive considerable numbers of political refugees fleeing Somalia (Hey 2010). Twenty-first century Sheffield is a city with growing inward migration (Sheffield City Partnership 2017), and has recently seen an increase in its population of economic migrants from EU ascension states. Sheffield’s demographic profile therebyenabled me to explore questions surrounding cohesion and resentment created by increased diversity and cross-cultural interaction.

There are further characteristicsof Sheffield which featured in my decision to conduct the research in the city. Alongside its Labour-voting political disposition, Sheffield has long-established associations with causes of social justice - for example becoming the UK’s first ‘City of Sanctuary’ for asylum seekers and refugees in 2007. This represented a gesture which sought to inspire a spirit of ‘welcome and hospitality towards asylum seekers and refugees’ (Darling 2010, p125). Darling (2010) argues that the City of Sanctuary movement further highlights a relational imaginary by foregrounding the presence of political connections and responsibilities. Sheffield also has a long-standing, yet distinctive, approach to questions surrounding socialcohesion. This makes the city markedly different from others in Yorkshire, demonstrated by the fact that no major disturbances took place in the 1980s, 2001 or 2011 when they occurred in many other cities and towns in England. The establishment of Cohesion Sheffield in 2017 has seen the city further prioritise work promoting cohesion. Cohesion Sheffield was set up to implement the Citywide Cohesion Strategic Framework, written jointly by the Sheffield Cohesion Advisory Group and Sheffield City Council*.* Cohesion Sheffield’s long-term vision is to make Sheffield somewhere everyone feels welcomed and valued, and home to communities which are treated with dignity and respect. Cohesion Sheffield (2018) seeks to assist organisations in developing and implementing their own action plans for a cohesive city through guidance and support. Sheffield as a city has thus devoted considerable attention and energy to the question of how different groups of people can most effectivelylive together.

Despite these civic credentials, Sheffield is a highly economically segregated city. The Sheffield Fairness Commission (2015) reported that while over thirty per cent of the population live in areas that lie within the twenty per cent most deprived in the country, other parts of the city fall within the least deprived twenty per cent (p11). This produces a stark east-west divide (Sheffield Fairness Commission 2015), with the spatial nature of inequality being very different from the ‘pepper pot’ pattern of wealth found in many other major cities. The seeming inconsistencies and contradictions present in Sheffield - between the efforts to promote cohesion and integration discussed above and the presence of unequivocal inequality - are aspects of the city which I have long had a personal interest in and sought to engage with academically through my doctoral research. As outlined in the introduction chapter, practical considerations were also significant in my decision to conduct the research in Sheffield. The fact that I grew up in the city and have continued to live there for the majority of my adult life meant that there was less need for a period of familiarisation with the place before beginning the research.

Gallatin

As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) write, identifying a suitable case study site which allows for the research’s core concerns to be addressed can be challenging. I spent a good deal of time and thought deciding on the most appropriate location within the city to conduct the research. As well as drawing on my local knowledge of Sheffield, I met with Sheffield City Council’s Community Services Manager in order to discuss the dynamics of various potential neighbourhoods within the city. Gallatin was then selected because it was an area of the city that appeared to correspond with a ‘left behind’ geography. I define the Gallatin area consistently with how I clarified the focus of the research to my participants – as the administratively defined ‘Gallatin’ ward which is constituted by a small number of geographically and socially linked neighbourhoods.The area’s name has been pseudonymised in an attempt to protect the identity of the research’s participants, as I discuss later. Something which I have found particularly difficult has been the challenge of providing an appropriate level of detail about Gallatin to give a clear and rich sense of the place whilst retaining enough geographicalfog in order to avoid compromising anonymity. This required a significant amount of reflection as I drafted my thesis.

Housing renewal had a major impact on Sheffield and Gallatin following the Second World War. Whole neighbourhood populations were decanted to other parts of the city and old substandard housing was demolished as new estates of council housing and flats, such as those in Gallatin, replaced back-to-backs and terraced properties. Gallatin was viewed highly positively by the majority of its early residents, with both the homes themselves and their location further away from the industrial part of the city constituting major assets. For example, DeeDee, an employee of Gallatin Community Organisation (GCO) and a local resident who grew up in Gallatin and had family roots in the area, told me that: “a lot of them had come from old slum clearances into [...] these new council houses, they were really proud about where they lived”. However, Gallatin witnessed significant decline during the latter part of the twentieth century, as I discuss in greater detail in chapter six. Many residents suffered at the hands of deindustrialisation and economic restructuring due to their reliance on once secure manual jobs, principally those in Sheffield’s steel industry. A widespread lack of educational qualifications among Gallatin residents led to high rates of unemployment as stable traditional working-class jobs all but disappeared by the close of the twentieth century.

Gallatin is arguably an example of ‘left behind’ white working-class geographies in terms of the socio-economic arguments about deindustrialisation which have played a key role in attempts to explain the vote for Brexit. Whilst the BBC obtained ward-level data released by returning officers for about a tenth of areas in England, Sheffield was not one of these meaning that no local-level data exists for how different parts of the city voted. When choosing where in Sheffield to base my research, I thus relied on my local knowledge of the city and anecdotal evidence regarding how different areas had voted. My conversations with local people and stakeholders suggested that Gallatin had delivered a Leave majority in the EU referendum. I thus reasoned that the locale would be a good place to critically explore discourses surrounding Brexit as such a location would enable me to critically engage with the ‘left behind’ thesis. The scaleof inequality in Sheffield, outlined above*,* goes some way to explaining the reporteddivided nature of voting on Brexit in the city. As Pattie (2016) writes, Brexit was likely a less popular option in the middle-class areas of Sheffield where a high proportion of the population holds degrees, compared to more working-class parts of the city such as Gallatin. A note of caution must, however, be introduced here as due to the existence of no local data, people are drawing conclusions based on their own assumptions about Leave and Remain voters.

Gallatin represents one of the most deprived parts of Sheffield, with a median household income of less than £20,000 (Experian Mosaic 2015). Furthermore, according to the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation, much of Gallatin is amongst the 10 per cent most deprived neighbourhoods in England (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019). It is important to further reflect on the feel of the area. Some aspects of the locale clearly embody ‘left behind’ geographies. For example, my field notes made in January 2019 reflect that ‘Butte House’ – a building used by a number of different local community groups – ‘has an old and past-its-use-by-date feel about it’ due to a lack of adequate investment in its upkeep for a number of years. Significant efforts have, however, been made to regenerate parts ofthe locale in the past couple of decades, with improvements being made to the existing housing stock alongside the construction of new homes. There has been significant development of numerous green spaces in the locality. Image one, which I took in October 2018, depicts a pond in a park*.* This displays the tranquil, green and appealing nature of parts of Gallatin – something which is often overlooked by those who do not know the area, as I explore in chapter four’s discussion of place stigma. Despite significant investment, vandalism remains a prominent issue and a significant number of residents discussed this with me. For example, during a walk around the same park with a community group in June 2019, some of the children present (who were not from Gallatin but were staying with a relative in the locale for the school holidays)complained that much of the equipment in the playground was broken and covered in spit. As the statistics outlined above starkly portray*,* Gallatin remains a very deprived area (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019) and this comes through clearly when walking round certainparts of the locale.

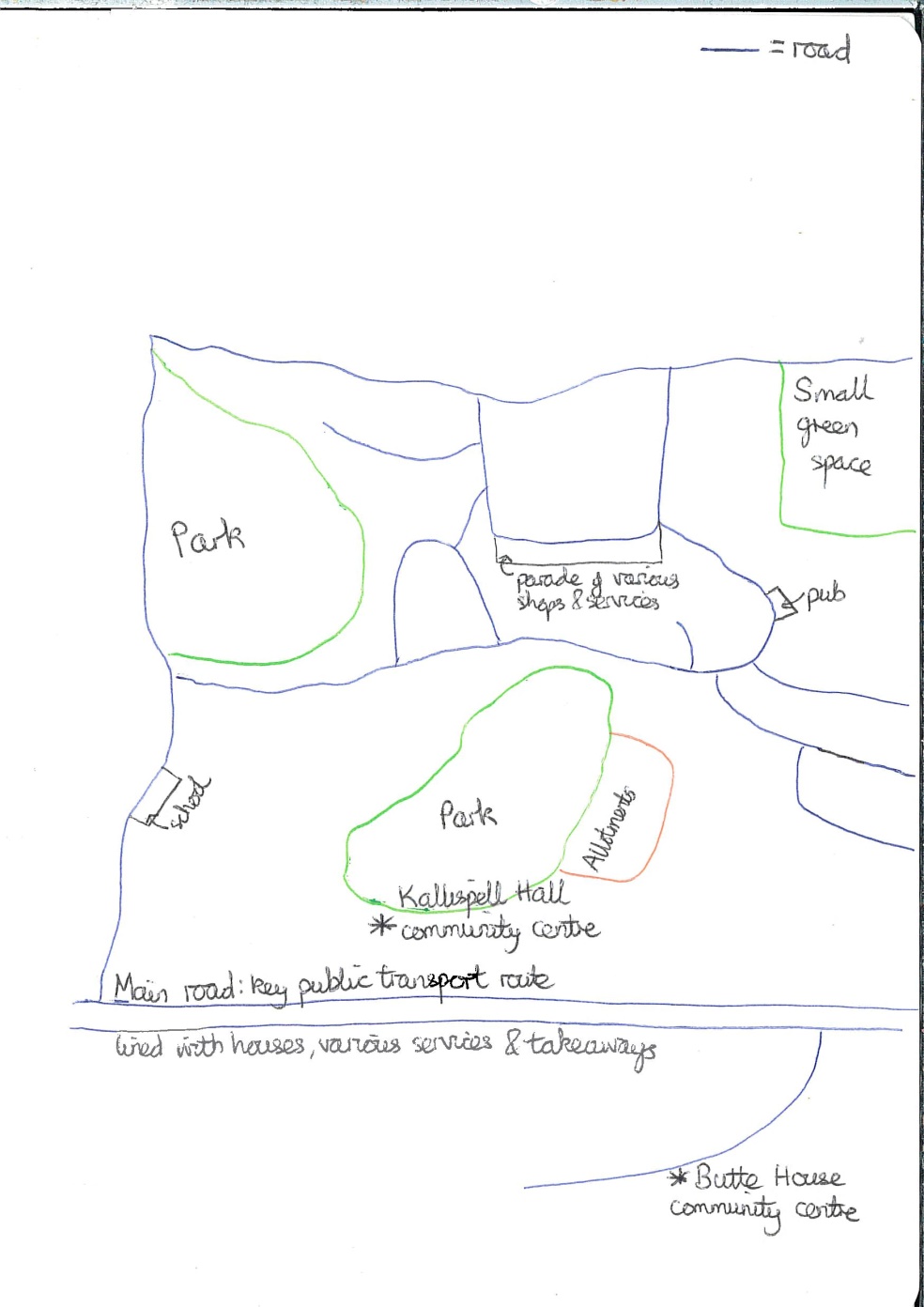


*Image one:* Autumn sun in Gallatin’s green spaces

Gallatin – like much of Sheffield - has an increasingly diverse demographic profile in terms of ethnicity and, to a lesser extent, class. Its convenient location within the city and low property prices have made it increasingly popular with students and young professionals. Furthermore, Census data reveals a more than 120 per cent change in Gallatin’s BME population between 2001 and 2011, with over a quarter of the area’s inhabitants coming from BME groups in 2011 (Sheffield City Council 2013). Figure one details the most common ethnic groups in Gallatin. This shows that white non-British people constitute the second most common ethnic group as, significantly, the area is home to increasing numbers of Eastern Europeans. This shows how ethnically mixed the area actually is – it is even higher than the Sheffield average if all groups other than white British are aggregated. Figure two details educational attainment among Gallatin’s population and highlights that over a third of residents hold no qualifications. Whilst Gallatin is a dynamic and changing locality, the area retains a substantial white working-class presence. I reasoned that Gallatin would make an appropriate location to explore views on belonging and attachment in the aftermath of the vote for Brexit due to the significant changes alongside clear continuities in the area.



Gallatin’s housing tenure is skewed towards the local authority rented sector, with this accounting for over fifty per cent of properties. Gallatin also has a high proportion of flats, semi-detached and terraced accommodation compared to the rest of the city which serves to limit choices for families. For example, Cara – a mixed heritage mother in her thirties – told me that: “the choice of housing is tricky, ‘cos we’d quite like to stay in this area but for houses with a little bit more extra room and maybe a garage there’s not so many.” The limited forms of housing stock which Cara refers to are likely an outcome of Gallatin’s establishment as a council estate*.* In order to give a richerfeel of the area and provide an overview of some of the key sites within the locality, I have produced a non-representational map of the geography of the project.This visual representation is important as geography and the relationship between spaces in Gallatin was a recurring theme of the interviews. As shown in figure three, Gallatin has a significant number of green spaces of various sizes. It is also home to shops scattered throughout the area, schools and various other amenities (including a number of community spaces owned by the voluntary community sector and a handful of GPs, pharmacies and dentists) as well as having good transport links with other parts of Sheffield and the city centre.



*Figure three:* Gallatin social map

**The participants**

I collected demographic data from participants when conducting interviews, asking each interviewee to fill out an information sheet (see the appendix for a copy of the sheet used). Based on this, figure four provides an at-a-glance account of who I spoke to. All the names are pseudonyms.

Including both male and female participants from a range of ages, occupations and levels of education was important in relation to my focus on the EU referendum as the vote for Brexit has been widely attributed to older and less well-educated sections of the population (Ashcroft 2016, Swales 2016). In terms of the twenty-one local residents who took part in the semi-structured interviews, twelve were females whilst nine were males – thus representing a fairly equal gender split. As shown in figure four, these residents had varying levels of formal education and engagement in paid work. As I discussed in the introduction chapter, my sample was skewed towards older residents, many of whom were retired. This is likely due in part to the fact that many participants were drawn from GCO activities and events which occur during traditional working hours, meaning that sections of the working-age population who are in employment were excluded from the project’s main recruitment channel. This issue was partially offset by my additional use of the snowball technique for recruiting participants. This helped to put me in contact with members of the Gallatin community who did not attend GCO activities. Five local residents, drawn from my original sample of interviewees, took part in the further photo-elicitation part of the study. As figure four indicates, I was largely successful in achieving my aim of including a diverse range of individuals in terms of gender and personal background. My inclusion of a number of BAME individuals also helped me to engage with the increasing ethnic diversity in the area, This thereby enabled the project to identify important common attitudes in predominantly working-class neighbourhoods which cut through the noise of variation (Patton 2002).



The project began with a focus on the white British-born population due to its engagement with debates about the ‘left behind’ and the construction of this as a white working-class phenomenon, as I discussed in chapters one and two. However, whilst undertaking data collection I identified the need to reflect the area and have a more multi-ethnic set of voices in the study, resulting in me recruiting black and ethnic minority and non-British residents. As shown in figure four above, I interviewed a Polish resident, a mixed heritage resident and a black Caribbean resident. Engaging with these individuals helped to ensure that voices from members of different ethnic and cultural groups - which may potentially contrast with the dominant experience of life in Gallatin - were included and recognised as significant. It also enabled the project to explore the ways in which local belonging and community can transcend difference. For example, as I discuss in chapter four, I found that the BAMEparticipants generallyarticulated a strong sense of localbelonging in much the same way as my white British participants.

Six local official figures took part in semi-structured interviews (see figure five below). These were purposefully selected based on the relevance of their work to the specifics and aims of the project. The importance of GCO to the lives of manylocal people meant that I felt it necessary to interview three members of staff in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the organisation’s outlook, aims and work. I spoke to the organisation’s CEO of the past fourteen years, Julie – who had a long work-based relationship with the locality. I also spoke to DeeDee – GCO’s community development officer – who had been with GCO for seventeen years in various different roles. Finally*,* I interviewed GCO’s development manager, Caitlin. She had been employed by GCO for the past two decades and worked in Gallatin all her life. As well as performing important roles withGCO, Caitlin and DeeDee were local residents who had grown up in Gallatin. This meant that their narratives contained a highly valuable dual perspective of living and working in the locale.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Ethnicity** | **Employment** | **Gallatin resident?** | **Engagement with the EU referendum** |
| Malcolm | White Irish | VHH head of neighbourhoods | No | Remain voter |
| Caitlin | White British | GCO development manager | Yes | Remain voter |
| Carl | White British | Retired | No | Remain voter |
| Julie | White British | CEO of GCO | No | Remain voter |
| Helena | White British | Local councillor for Gallatin | Yes | Remain voter |
| DeeDee | White British | GCO community development officer | Yes | Remain voter |

*Figure five:* Local official participants

I interviewed one of the three elected local councillors for Gallatin in order to gain an understanding of the views of those in local government who hold positions of relative authority. The local councillor I interviewed – Helena – had held this role for over thirty years and was also a local resident meaning that, again, her narrative contained an insight into the perspectives of both local practitioners and residents. I also interviewed Malcolm, the head of neighbourhoods for Valued Homes Housing (VHH). VHH are an important social housing organisation in the area, therefore, engaging with Malcolm enabled me to learn more about how different local practitionersview Gallatin and how they interact with the locale and its residents. This was especially interesting in relation to the discussion of housing allocations as this emerged as a contentious issue among local residents – as I discuss in chapter five. Finally*,* the study’s focus on the impact of initiatives surrounding cohesion led to my engagement with the work of Cohesion Sheffield. I interviewed Carl, one of the integral members of Sheffield’s Cohesion Advisory Group, in order to gain a better overview of the work being carried out in the city surrounding social cohesion. It is interesting to note that all of the local officials who I interviewed were white British as well as being strong Remain supporters who expressed a significant degree of sorrow and regretabout the outcome of the EU referendum.

**Recruitment**

The main way that local residents were recruited for the project’s semi-structured interviews was through my role as a volunteer with GCO. I undertook some participant observation during this time, enabling information and familiarity beyond recruitment – helping me to get to know the place and people better. GCO is a community-based charity which was set up around the turn of the century with the aim of working with local people to regenerate the neighbourhoods in the Gallatin ward. The organisation’s core work is based around community development. This involves working with residents to address community issues, alongside helping local people to develop autonomy and solutions to challenges. Some of the services and activities on offer include training and development, help to find work, health activities, support for families, and activities for older people, children and young people. GCO has a building in Gallatin in which the majority of the staffhave offices; however, a lot of their community engagement work takes place in other premises scatteredacross Gallatin. I secured the full support of the organisation to work with them as a volunteer alongside recruiting participants for my research. I approached Caitlin about this after volunteering informally with some of DeeDee’s groups in summer 2018. I volunteered with GCO from summer 2018 up to early 2020, when the coronavirus pandemic halted the organisation’s face-to-face activities. My work with GCO importantly aided the process of embedding in Gallatin, enabling me to become more familiar with the area, establish social networks with its residents and become attuned to their key concerns (Adler and Adler 1987, Mason 2018). My volunteering role was prompted by both these practical motivations and by my personal aspiration of ‘putting something back’ into this highly deprived community (Blake 2007, Zajano and Edelsberg 1993).

I invested a lot of time and energy in attending numerous community events and activities with GCO during my data collection period, both helping out atand participating in these. One important avenue of recruitment was a six week personal development course facilitated by GCO. Through participating in this, I was able to become a full member of the group. I made consistent efforts to generate rapport, making friendly gestures such as baking cookies for our final session, and subsequently interviewed four of the local residents attending the course. For example, an extract from my field notes made in November 2018 reflects that:

*‘I was feeling positive after the session due to its content and impact on me, alongside the group members’ rapport with each other, and approached Jacqueline to set up an interview next week.’*

This indicates the important role that GCO events and my own efforts to engage with local people had on the course of the research. Whilst the majority of my local resident participants were individuals who I had approached at events and groups which I attended through GCO - thereby underscoring the importance of the time and effort which I investedin this as a researcher, chatting with local people and getting to know them *-* I also utilised the snowball technique (Becker 1963) by asking my interviewees if they knew of anyone else living in Gallatin who may be willing to take part. This yielded a small number of additional participants.

Recruitment was more difficult and time-consuming than had been anticipated. After asking groups of GCO service users if anyone would be interested in being interviewed for my research, I was met with an awkward silence on a number of occasions, especially during the early stages of my fieldwork. A few months into data collection the decision was thus taken to incorporate a participant observation element into the research, collecting ethnographic field notes based on my interactions with Gallatin residents at events and groups I volunteered at. Many local residents were happy to discuss their views with me in a more informal manner (see the ‘Data collection methods’ section of the chapter for a full discussion of the evolution of the project’s methodological design). This demonstrates the importance of reflexivity and adaptability in order to find ways of engaging with harder to reach populations – such as sections of the working class – to ensure that their voices can be properly heard. In a bid to boost recruitment the decision was also made to issue individuals who took part in interviews with a £5 Love2shop voucher. Whilst these motivated a few additional residents to take part, the majority of participants did not appear to be primarily motivated by the prospect of financial reward – in fact many had forgotten about the voucher when I gave it to them at the end of the interview, and one participant refused to take it. Thus, my continued efforts to engage with local people and build trust before asking to interview them remained important.

Recruitment for the photo-elicitation interviews and stakeholder interviews was somewhat easier as the Gallatin residents who participated in the visual aspect of the research had already taken part in a semi-structured interview, whilst the official interviewees had all participated in social research before and were thus well versed in what this involves*.* I asked five local residents to take part in the photo-elicitation part of the project. This sample was selected based on the rapport I had built with these individuals, my sustained contact with them through my GCO volunteering activities, my expectation that they would be willing to take part in this additional stage of the research project*,* and my belief – based on our discussion in their initial interview – that they would produce insightful photos which would generate relevant andrich discussions. All five agreed to participate. I was already in contact with five of the six local officials who participated due to efforts made in the early stages of my study to build networks with relevant local practitioners. During the data collection phase of the research I contacted them all via email – along with one of the local councillors for Gallatin whom I had not had previous communication with. In these emails I provided an outline of the research and a copy of the participant information sheet and asked if they would be willing to contribute in the form of a semi-structured interview.

**Data collection methods**

The project utilised a qualitative multi-method research design, incorporating semi-structured interviews, photo-elicitation interviews and participant observation. The data collection period spanned from October 2018 to August 2019, at which point I had conducted all my interviews and felt confident that significant patterns and important themes had emerged from the data collected.

Interviews

Interviews are arguably the most frequently used method of data collection in qualitative research (Bryman 2012, Collins et al 2005, Denzin 2001, Rapley 2001). The qualitative research interview is defined as a conversation with a specific purpose, which is attained through the researcher’s gentle guidance of their conversational partner (Berg 2007, Kvale 1996, Rubin and Rubin 2012). Rapely (2007) offers the following description of interviews:

*‘The interview is a story that describes how two people, often relative strangers, sit down and talk about a specific topic. One of those strangers - an interviewer - introduces a specific topic, then asks a question, the other speaker - an interviewee - gives something hearable as an answer’ (p15).*

This explanation helps to demonstrate the co-constructed nature of the knowledge which is generated through interviewing techniques. Interviews are valued amongst qualitative researchersfor the rich and descriptive data they typically produce due to the relationship which is established between the interviewer and the interviewee during the course of the discussion (Burgess 1980). Whilst in the above quote Rapely (2007) characterises interview partners as ‘relative strangers’, it is important to note that I was familiar – to varying degrees - with a significant proportion of my participantsprior to interviewing them. A number of researchers (Robinson et al 2007, Taylor 2011) have discussed the benefits of having regular contact with participants prior to interviewing, arguing that this ensures that individuals have less fear of disclosure*.* My research experience builds on this literature, indicating that regular contact can be beneficial by enabling the development of trust. Reflections in my fieldwork diary from April 2019 following my interview with Emma portray this as I write that ‘I really enjoyed interviewing Emma today and felt that the conversation was helped by the fact that we have known each other for around six months now’. I generally found that interviews with participants whom I had already established relationships with, such as Emma, tended to cover material in greater depth and engender more meaningful conversations. This points to the importance of trust-building in sensitive research.

My interviews were semi-structured, utilising an interview guide (see the final revised version of this in the appendix) containing probes and key topics to cover. Anadvantage of using this approach is that it allows for a defined focus to be pursued, thereby facilitating the collection of more specific forms of data. However, I was flexible in terms of deviating from this and picking up other interesting lines of enquiryas andwhen they aroseduring interviews. After a few openingquestions concerning participants’ personal and residentialhistories, the first part of the interview guide used for the local residents focused on exploring perceptions of belonging and cohesion in Gallatin. The second part of the interview was specifically focused on the EU referendum and Brexit. At the outset of the research I was more conscious about covering every probe on my interview guide and was wary of sharing my own views due to a fear of influencing participants.As my confidence in the interviewer role grew I was, however, inclined to adopt a more conversational tone, for example sharing some of my own experiences and feeling less tied to the structure of my interview guide. I recognised the need to be adaptable and tailor interviews to whom I was speaking with – for example*,* at times assuming a more informal demeanour*.* This helped to put participants at ease and generate rapport as participants opened up more, thereby aiding the generation of more authentic and meaningful data. In some of my later interviews, my use of my interview guide was extremely minimal. Thus, whilst it may be useful to look at the local resident interview guide in the appendix, it is worth bearing in mind that this functioned largely as an aide-memoire. I also revised the interview guide throughout the course of the research to reflect what I was finding. For example, I removed questions about Cohesion Sheffield after the first few interviews due to the fact that no one I had interviewed knew what this was.

All interviews were conducted by myself and lasted an average of around forty-five minutes. Interviews took the form of one-to-one discussions between me and the participant on all but one occasion (in which I conducted a dual interview with Emily and Rebecca at their request)*.* Selecting the appropriate locationto conduct my local resident interviews was not an easy decision. As noted by Denzin (1970), the site affects the interview’s content as it influences the power relations between the interviewer and interviewee, thereby affecting the broader tone of the interaction. It was important to me to ensure that interviews were conducted in spaces participants were familiar with and comfortable in,thus helping to put them at ease. The majority took place in community buildings – such as Kalispell Hall and a local library. I tried to arrange interviewsimmediately before or after group sessions in order to make them most convenient for local people. A small number of interviews also took place in residents’ homes. I generally enjoyed the experience of interviewing residents, and it was my understanding that a number of participants enjoyed the opportunity to talk to someone who was interested in hearing their views. Reflections made in my research diary after my first interview with Geoff in October 2018 clearly demonstrate this as I note that ‘I was really happy with how this first interview went, and got positive feedback from Geoff afterwards too who said he had enjoyed it’.

The project’ssemi-structured interviews with six local officials enabled me to better engage with the third research question: exploring the role of initiatives surrounding cohesion and integration in Gallatin residents’ sense of belonging and attachment to place. My interviews with these officials took place in their workplaces (with the exception of one which was conducted in their home office). I produced separate interview guides for each of the officials I spoke to, which were tailored to their role and thus spoke to the rationale for their inclusion in the project. However, much like with my local resident interviews, I rarely stuck rigidly to my original guide and instead allowed the conversation to flow more naturally. Conducting interviews with this additional layer of participants crucially helped to contextualise the main body of data from my local resident interviews. Interviewing these local officials was largely a different experience to those with many local residents. The majority of the stakeholders involved were well versed in the demands of undertaking research interviews, tending to give detailed responses to my questions*.* As with my local resident interviews, entries in my fieldwork diary taken after these interviews tended to reflect that I had enjoyed the interviewing experience.

Participant Observation

Uponreceiving ethical approval for my research, I was keen to commence interviews and thus begin collecting data. However, I encountered the difficulty of ‘reluctant respondents’ (Becker and Greer 1957, Scott et al 2012) in which potential participants are unwilling to take part. As noted earlier in the chapter, it appeared that many of the local people I interacted with found the prospect of being interviewed unappealing and intimidating. The process of undertaking the research thus did not follow my initial plan as I soon recognised that the context of the study *–* concerned with a significant number of people who have no prior experience ofinvolvement in research interviews – posed specific challenges. Reflecting on the fact that many residents had been much more willing to discuss the topics covered in my research with me in an informal setting, a couple of months into fieldwork I made the decision to incorporate complementary elements of ethnographic techniques. I conceptualise this aspect of the study as participant observation which was ethnographically oriented*.* For instance, this was place based (largely in community centres and buildings across Gallatin) and involved taking detailed field notes at community groups and events, alongside periods of simplyhanging out. For example, staying for a chat over a cup of tea after formal sessions were finished was something I did regularly, thereby providing more opportunities to build trust and familiarity by informally engaging with local people. My approach was informed by the rich tradition of immersive fieldwork inside the communities in question (see for example Cornwell 1984, McKenzie 2015, Skeggs 1997, Willis 1977, Young and Willmott 1962), which thereby fitted well with my case study approach.

Ethnographically informed approaches arguably allow for researchers to best comprehend the world views and ways of life of people in the context of their everyday lived experiences (Brewer 2000, Burgess 1997, Cook and Crang 1995, Hammersley 1992, O’Reilly 2009). Emerson et al (1995) reflect on ethnographic approaches thus:

*‘Field researchers seek to get close to others in order to understand their way of life. To preserve and convey that closeness, they must describe situations and events of interest in detail’ (p14).*

This suggests the need for researchers to both be present in relevant situations with relevant people and to be astute in observing and recording these interactions.My volunteer role with GCO provided the opportunity to gather participant observation data based on my interactions with local people accessing these groups. My approach was overt, ensuring that my presence was known and understood by those who utilised the group spaces (Adler and Adler 1987, Bryman 2012, Silverman 2013) by making explicit mydual role as a researcher and a volunteer. I took notes based on my interactions either whilst these were occurring or soon afterwards, alongside recording my general reflections in my research diary. My extended participant observation involved over one hundred hours undertaken primarily in local community centres. Whilst I found the participant observation element of my study highly valuable, it is important to note that my research was based primarily on interviews and photo-elicitation*.* I undertook participant observation-style activities with a view to gain trust and my orientation in the research site, rather than as systematic observation and recording of field notes for data generation.

Photo-elicitation interviews

The place-based nature of my study meant that I wanted to offer creative and accessible ways to engage participants in telling their stories about where they lived and how they felt about where they lived. I spoke to a number of senior colleagues who had experience using photo-elicitation techniques, thereby helping me to plan how best they could be incorporated into my project whilst also stimulating me to think through ways of overcoming any practical difficulties involved in using these*.* Through empowering participants to take photos, I sought to gain unique insights into ‘what is important for them as individuals living in particular localities’ (Pink 2007, p369), enabling a direct engagement with the places that hold meanings for them (Bennett 2014). Auto-driven photo-elicitation is premised on participants being better able to reflect their world, thereby helping to bridge the gap between the social worlds of the researcher and the researched (Samuels 2007). Using pictures taken by participants thus allowed for the privileging of local knowledge (Dodman 2003) as self-directed photography places the subject of the subsequent discussion firmly in their hands (Moore, et al. 2008). Through this I was able to somewhat reverse the usual power relations involved in research, thereby enabling me to gain a unique insight into the respondents’ life-worlds. Moreover, photo-elicitation is an accessible method, as taking photographs is an activity that many of us do regularly, unlike some other methods such as social mapping(McCarthy 2013)*.* Similar to Robinson (2011), I also found that incorporating an element of photography helped to generate interest and engagement in my research.

I decided that photo-elicitation interviews would work most effectively by inviting a small number of participants from my standard interviews, whom I was thus already familiar with, to take part. Geoff, Fiona, Val, Rebecca and Emily participated in the photo-elicitation part of the study. I gave each a briefing sheet (see appendix) which asked them to photograph parts of their local area which they especially liked or disliked. These rather broad instructions were developed around my research question concerning to what extent residents’ sense of local belonging is raced and classed. I hoped that the photographs taken would help to show if, and to what extent, ideas aboutrace and class figured when Gallatin residents thought about belonging in a visual way*.* I conducted follow-up interviews with Geoff, Fiona and Val after they had taken their photos (all of which took place in Kalispell Hall). In these I asked them to show me their photographs and discuss these with me – remaining mindful of the need to keep my questions relativelybroad (Bennett 2012, Wagner 1979), such as probing what the place meant to them and why they chose to photograph it. These deliberately vague and open-ended questions thereby allowed respondents to formulate their own feelings about places in Gallatin. Rebecca and Emily opted to send me their photos, along with a description of them, remotely. We informally discussed their images next time I saw them. The different forms the photo-elicitation aspect of my research tookhighlight the often unpredictable nature of social research and thus the need to be adaptable to best accommodate participants.

Photo-elicitation is credited with uncovering different insights from standard interviews due to the bringing together of both images and words (Harper 2002). As noted by Young and Barratt (2001), the discussions stimulated by images can often elicit more information than the photograph itself. This is a benefit which Moore et al (2008) found in their investigation of perceptions on environmental conditions in cities, reflecting that it was:

*‘Evident that the photographs enabled participants to clearly articulate their feelings about their local area whilst assigning meanings to specific places, issues, buildings and streets; a powerful tool for a research method’ (p56).*

It is in this way that the method canhelp to produce representations of place and forms of data which may otherwise be unobtainable to the researcher. Alongside functioning as an important form of elicitation I also analysed my data set of fifty-one photographs. Participants’ photographs, and their discussions of them, often built upon important themes from their previoussemi-structured interviews. These highlighted, for example, the value of Gallatin’s many green spaces and parks – such as image two which was taken by Fiona and depicts the nature present in her local area which she was fond of. The images taken for the research, participants’ reasonsfor taking them and the stories behind them which were probed during our subsequent discussions therefore provided a rich source of both visual and written data on how residents articulate belonging in Gallatin.



*Image two:* nature in Gallatin

**Data analysis**

Interpreting andanalysing qualitative data is particularly challenging - with Miles (1979) describing it as an ‘attractive nuisance’ - due to the rich and voluminous nature of the data which is produced(Patton 2002). I approached data analysis as an ongoing and fluid part of the research process, with there being no clear separation between data collection and analysis (Gibbs 2007, Rubin and Rubin 2012). The two therefore occurred in tandem, with early findings being used to inform the delivery of subsequent stages of the field research. I analysed the data using thematic analysis, enabling me to transform my qualitative information into codes (Boyatzis 1998) by identifying and comparing key themesin the data. I opted to code and analyse my data manually*.* My approach was guided by Boyatzis’ (1998) writing on the three phases involved in thematic analysis –recognising something as important, coding this and then interpreting its meaning within the wider context. With this in mind,I found it helpful to keep memos about my emergent thoughts in relation to interpretation and analysis in my research diary. For example, in January 2019 I reflected on the apparent lack of engagement with Brexit in Gallatin in my research diary:

*‘Something which has emerged as an early finding from both interviews and informal discussions is a general reluctance to talk about Brexit – people have been far more interested and keen to discuss their local area. This may be because Brexit feels remote from the immediate concerns of their lives. A belief that they cannot influence the process of leaving the EU may play a role as well. I also think that a perception that they do not understand Brexit puts some people off engaging in discussions about it.’.*

Returning to these reflections later on in the research processoften helped to prompt further analytic reflections, helping me make connections between common themes across the data.

The project’s interviews were audio recorded as this ensured that the words of participants were captured accurately, alongside enabling me to reflect on my interviewing technique (Seidman 2013) as I transcribed and read through these. My experience supportsGibbs’ (2007) argument that doing your own transcription enables you to begin data analysis. I transcribed all the interviews and found this process invaluable as it led me to immerse myself in the data*.* Transcribing and getting to know the data better prompted me to begin thinking analytically, thereby generating early insights (Patton 2002)*.* Following Seidman (2013), I returned to my transcripts ‘prepared to let the interview breathe and speak for itself’ (p120), being conscious of the need to give the data space to tell its own story (Patton 2002) as I commenced coding. Once I had transcribed each interview, I read back through it, adding notes and highlighting connections with other transcripts and the wider literature. These original notes directed the refinement of my thematic codes (Braun and Clarke 2006, Ryan and Bernard 2003). This highlights the fact that coding formsan important part of analytic work and represents the beginning of interpretation (Seidman 2013). I began to see that many of my interviewees and my observations on the transcripts were repeating themselves, and at this point emergent themes were identified.

The data from my photo-elicitation interviews was transcribed and analysed in much the same way as my semi-structured interviews. I also analysed my data set of the fifty-one photographs taken by participants for the project. This took place during the latter stages of analysis, meaning that I was able to apply my refined coding list to the images. My approach to analysis of the project’s data gathered through participant observation was, again, guided by the need to let the data speak for itself. This enabled me to develop codes inductively as I reflected on my field notes, alongside the key themes which were simultaneously emerging from the interview transcripts. Once I had begun this process of interpreting both my field notes and interview transcripts, I applied my initial set of codes to the data in order to test how well they fitted and helped to make sense of the data. This led to further refinement of my code list before I applied it to the data again. Important codes to emerge from the analysis included ‘neighbourhood stigma’, *‘*austerity and cuts’, ‘geographic mobility’ and ‘political disillusionment’.The emergent themes which are discussed in the data analysis chapters are those which appeared most frequently across the data, as well as those I deemed important in relation to established literature.

I faced a number of challenges when analysing the project’s data. Integrating an analysis of interviews (from both the standard and photo-based formats) and field notes was a lengthy and at times difficult task as it was not always easy to seamlessly reconcile the two. This resulted in a significant amount of time spent shifting my attention between both data sets as I developed and refined my codes to ensure that these fitted both. The fact that I utilised more than one data collection method thereby necessitated greater time and attention being paid to the process of coding. One of the other notable challenges I faced when analysing my data was attempting to separate what was linked to Brexit and what existed in discourses prior to the EU referendum. Disentangling the important themes which emerged in terms of this required me to regularly revisit the existing literaturethroughout the process of data analysis.

**Positionality and reflections on researcher effect**

It is important to consider my positionality and the role of reflexivity in terms of my relationships with participants. Brewer (2000) dates concerns with reflexivity back to Garfinkel (1967) who drew attention to the factthat researchers are inside the social world and will therefore inevitably reflect some of it. Research exchanges do not occur in a vacuum. Rather, they are subject to the inherent power dynamics which are present in all social interactions (Elwood and Martin 2000). Both the interviewer and the interviewee bring preconceptions to the research (Berg 2007) which impinge on the dynamics of the conversation. The multidimensional nature of identities meant that I was simultaneously marked as both an insider and an outsider in relation to the project’s participants. My status as a long-term residentof Sheffield enabled me to draw on familiarity with Gallatin and the wider area, thereby assisting in terms of access and my understanding of the issues important to local people. Moreover, my knowledge of the city and accent worked to place me as being local and thus relatable to Gallatin residents*.* As has been argued by a number of researchers (Finch 1984, Hollway and Jefferson 2000, Lamont 2016, Tewksbury and Gagne 1997), common ground between the interviewer and interviewee can lead to better informed listening and more successful interviews. It is thus important to reflect on the fact that I am a white researcher studying the situated nature of whiteness, engaging with mainly white voices and themes of racism, community and belonging. It was my experience that this emboldened a number of individuals to share with me their honest and candid views on contentious and potentially sensitive topics surrounding race and immigration (some of the difficulties raised by the uncensored nature of these discussions are considered below). In contrast, when working with the small number of BAME participants in the project, I felt my whiteness more strongly in terms of setting me apart as being different (Byrne 2006). Having said this, it was not my perception that this inhibited conversations in terms of what participants said and shared with me.

Whilst being an insider in some respects, I was simultaneously marked as an outsider due to my middle-class affiliation with the city’s Russell Group university. When interacting with the male half of my sample, I was also marked as different due to my gender. I found drawing on the aspects of my identity which I shared with participants helpful in terms of overcoming these differences. The majority of participants were also significantly older than myself. The average age of my local resident interviewees was fifty-five years old, whilst I was in my early twenties when conducting the fieldwork. Incontending withthis it was helpful to emphasise the fact that I was keen to learn from the experiences of participants – thereby utilising traditional power relations in terms of age which emphasise the authority of older people and an expectation that younger people will defer to their knowledge.

I also found myself experiencing both insider and outsider dynamics with the local officials in the research. As many of these were from Sheffield like myself, this helped to aid the generation of rapport and empathy. Likewise, four of the six participants were also female. Having said this, these individuals were all established in the respective careers and therefore this was something which was different from myself. Emphasising that I wanted to learn from their expertise was important in helping to overcome this.

Whilst it was my general experience that aspects of my identity which I shared with participants helped me to ‘fit in’ at the various activities I volunteered at and thus aided the establishment of verstehen (Weber 1962), sharing common identity markers was not enough alone to build rapport with local residents. Throughout the project I was conscious of the need to manage my dual insider and outsider status by developing understandingwith local residents. My participation in numerous community activities *–* facilitated by my role as a GCO volunteer *–* was invaluable in terms of establishing empathetic and meaningful relationships. For example, I took part in many crafts projects at Kalispell Hall, in activities such as ‘chairobics’ and curling at Butte House, alongside playing an active role at a number of community festivals GCO was involved with around Bonfire Night and Christmas. My participation in these helped to minimise the ways in which I was different from Gallatin residents as I became a full member of these groups, earning the respect of local people. For example, during my participation in ‘chair bowling’ during an over-fifties activity group at Butte House, other service users affectionately jokedthat I had now fully become a part of the group – despite being markedly under fifty! Simultaneously participating and interacting with local people was thus invaluable in terms of developing rapport which, I believe, helped to stimulate richer and more authentic discussions. Whilst my active efforts to engage in community activities and interact with local residents were extremely important, I am not sure that my acceptance into the rhythms of community life in Gallatin would have been quite so easy had I not had an accent which placed me as a local person alongside a strong attachment to Sheffield to draw upon*.* This discussion highlights the fact that the interviewer is an important variable in the research process, with their position, conduct and performance influencing the course of the study (Rice 2010).

Leaving the field

Whilst there is often no obvious end point in research which contains an ethnographic element (Bryman 2012, Michailova et al 2014), in August 2019 I felt that it was time to bring data collection to a close. I observed at this point that little new was being revealed in my conversations with local people (Altheide 1980). Moreover, the timescales which I had set for my PhD saw me aim to finish data collection at the end of the second year of my doctoral studies. Recent literature has highlighted that, within ethnographically informed work, exiting the field often occurs as a process – rather than a single act – as the researcher gradually withdraws from the site of the research (Michailova et al 2014, Pilkington 2016). I remained in the field after completing data collection at the end of summer 2019, meaning that I retained contact with a number of the research’s participants, alongside other local residents. Previous work has shown that meaningful friendships often emerge during the research process, especially in ethnographic studies, and that this can benefit the work, as well as the experiences of both the participants and researchers beyond the field itself (Coffey 1999, Taylor 2011). Indeed, a number of my participants told me that taking part in the research was an experience that they had enjoyed(see Byrne 2006). I believe that this was because of the relatively uniqueexperience their participation gave themof talking to someone who was explicitly interested in hearing what they had to say. A small number of my participants also appeared to be relatively socially isolated, and thus the opportunity to spend an hour talking to someonewas welcome.

I was keen to maintain the meaningful relationships which I had established with a number of participants during the course of data collection. Ethnographically informed work often ‘lacks closure’ (Van Maanen 2010, p244) due to these relationships. If I had cut all ties with the locality and its residents upon finishing my fieldwork, this would have both undermined the rapport I had built and reinforced the problematic tendency for research to appear as a one-way relationship in which only the researcher benefits. Indeed*,* I had planned to hold an informal drop-in session at Kalispell Hall for those who had taken part in the research, displaying some of the photographs taken for the project and headlining my key findings. Unfortunately this was unable to take place due to coronavirus and resultingsocial distancing measures. I was also motivated to remain involved with GCO as a volunteer due to my recognition that the work of GCO is invaluable to manyresidents in the highly deprived Gallatin community, thereby helping me fulfil my aim of ‘giving back’ to the community(Blake 2007, Zajano and Edelsberg 1993). However, I was at the same time acutely aware of the potential problems associated with building and maintaining friendships and relationships within the fieldwork setting, as this can often lead to confusion, and feelings of betrayal and conflict when writing up research findings (Browne 2003, Coffey 1999, Taylor 2011).

**Ethical considerations**

The past few decades have seen increasing attention being paid by social scientists to research ethics (Hoong Sin 2005). A key outcome of this has been a move away from treating ethics as ‘a kind of “bolt-on” which is only considered […] at certain points’ (Humphries and Martin 2000, p69). Consistent with more recent thinking, my approach has beencharacterised by a conceptualisation of ethical considerationsas an ongoing part of research (Hoong Sin 2005, Miller and Bell 2000). Individuals who expressed an interest in the project were given a detailed information sheet to read. This contained a description of the research and what their participation would entail, alongside detailing how the data would be used and who to contact for further information. I also provided individuals with the opportunity to ask me any questions they had about the study. Consent for participation in the project’s interviews was wholly voluntary and based on positive action made by individuals who agreed to take part by signing a consent form, meaning that theirparticipation was informed, explicit and unambiguous. Two consent forms were used in the study – one for the standardsemi-structured interviews and one for the photo-elicitation part of the project. The consent forms used for the semi-structured interviews with local residents and stakeholders detailed how the data would be used and sought approval for secondary use of the project’s written data, alongside asking for the participants’ permission for the interview to be audio recorded. The supplementary photo-elicitation form also included a negotiation surrounding consent for all or a selection of the photos taken by participants to be reproduced. Copies of the information sheets and consent forms used in the research can be found in the appendix. I made further efforts to remind potential participants that taking part in the project was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the research at any time. It is worth noting that no one requested to do so.

The participant observation element of my study raised a more complex set of ethical questions, particularly in relation to consent (Atkinson 2009, Lipson 1994). This necessitated a reflexive approach to the application of ethical guidelines (Hoong Sin 2005). There exists an increased awareness that ethics within ethnographic work needs to be negotiated and treated on a case-by-case basis, with broad standards of ethical practice - such as those outlined by academic institutions or funding bodies - providing useful initial guidelines for entry into the field (Parker 2007). Informed consent and complete transparency were extremely difficult to achieve in the participant observation part of my study due to the emergent and processual nature of this (Atkinson 2009). Despite making it clear to group membersat the outset of my voluntary role with GCO that I would be collecting data for my PhD research whilst attending community activitiesand events, some groups I attended had a high turnover of members. This made it challenging for me to have conversations with each individual about my research. I also felt it would be unreasonableand highly time-consuming for me to ask everyone present to sign a consent form. I ensured that I fully disclosed the nature of my study to individuals I had conversations with on subjects which concerned my research, thereby giving residents the opportunity of either not speaking to me about this or asking that I did not record their thoughts (however, no one objected). The need to put the interests of potentialparticipants at the centre of this negotiated approach to ethics surrounding the data generatedthrough participant observation was crucial, ensuring that I did not inadvertently collect data from anyone against their wishes.

One of the important ethical concerns of the research surrounded anonymity and confidentiality. As discussed at the outset of the chapter, the decision was taken to anonymise the research locale. Whilst this regrettablyresulted in the partial decontextualisation of the data (Baez 2002, Nespor 2000), it was nevertheless important in terms of attempting to assure anonymity to the research’s participants. I have also sought to somewhat offset this decontextualisation by naming the city in which the research locale was located and the importance of this being in urban Northern England. Due to the potentially sensitive nature of the topics covered in the study, it was similarly decided that all participants should be assigned pseudonyms in an attempt to protect their identity. Whilst a number of my participants told me that they were happy for me to use their real name, I decided to assign pseudonyms to all participants as naming some might reveal the identities of people they talked about, thereby potentially compromising their anonymity (Kelly 2009).

Whilst providing anonymity for participants is generally viewed as desirable and is something that most researchers strive for (Atkinson 2009, Barbour 2014, Tilley and Woodthorpe 2011), the nature of qualitative research makes this difficult to achieve due to the level of depth and detail typically produced by such methods (Saunders et al 2015, Van den Hoonaard 2003). It has thus been written that qualitative researchers can offer no total assurance of anonymity to their participants (Corbin and Morse 2003, Van den Hoonaard 2003). Whilst I did not make guarantees to potential participants, I made it clear that concerted efforts would be made to ensure that the identities of individuals who took part in the research could not be traced. The richness of data attained through qualitative research methods means that the use of pseudonyms does not always hide a participant’s identity. Therefore, potentially identifiable personal characteristics which I deemed important – yet did not impact significantly on the content and interpretation of the data – were also altered. This signals the complex set of ethical issues surrounding the amount of detail qualitative researchers write up. There often has to be something of a trade-off between the depth of information disclosed and the right of participants to anonymity. It also, again, highlights the considered efforts I made throughout the process of planning, carrying out, writing up and disseminating the findings of my study to protect the welfare, dignity and rights of participants through my approach to ethical questionswhich placed their interests at the centre*.*

I have argued earlier in this chapterthat the unspoken fact that I shared a white English and Northern identity with (the majority of) my participants contributed towards some individuals speaking frankly with me and sharing racist and xenophobic views they held. The fact that a number of the individuals felt able to share these attests to the degree of rapport I established with participants during the course of the research. For example, during a discussion of the difficulties he had faced securing housing, Geoff – a retired white Gallatin resident - voiced his belief that a Somali family whom he thought had been given unfair priority for accommodation “would have been better off in a tent at the side of the park boating lake. They’d have been happier washing their clothes in the lake”. The expression of opinions like those of Geoff inevitablyraised the question of how I should manage and deal with such comments. It is my belief that it would have been inappropriate for me as a researcher to make concerted efforts to alter or influence the views of participants as my primary role was to gain an understanding of their perspectives and opinions.Moreover, directly challenging participants may have made them defensive, leading to a breakdown of trust and curtailment of their willingness to speak openly with me. Rather I attempted to engage with racism and xenophobia by prompting participants to “tell me more about why you think that”, thereby seeking to create a non-judgemental space to talk about these views.In addition to this, following Pilkington (2016) who writes about the importance of responding in an appropriate wayto challenging responses in the context of work with EDL activists, I also asked questions which gently problematised such views and sought to prompt respondents to reflect further. This low-levelquestioning is important because, asBack and Solomos (1993) note, non-response to racist comments which are communicated to researchers during fieldwork potentially legitimises these ideas through silence.

Whilstlistening to the racist and xenophobic comments made by some participants was difficult and uncomfortable, it was nevertheless necessary that these were voiced as they formed an important element of the focus of my research – working in the sensitive and politically charged field surrounding Brexit. It is also relevant to reflect on my personal position in relation to Brexit and how I managed this during the fieldwork. Whilst most individuals in the UK have an opinion on Britain’s membership of the EU, it is clear that some people have much stronger views on this than others. I found the fact that I do not possess particularlystrong views on Brexit, and personally recognise legitimate arguments to be made for both Leaving and Remaining, to be helpful when conductingresearch on this topic. My personal position in relation to Brexit - characterised byuncertainty and indecision - made it somewhat easier to attain a degree of neutrality as I structured and guided discussions about the EU referendum and Brexitwith participants, some of whom held relatively strong and entrenched views. Much like Pilkington’s (2016) aforementionedresearch, I did not offer up my personal position as a starting point*,* but answered fully and truthfully when I was questioned about my own views on occasions. My field notes made at a community group in February 2019 evidence this, indicating that I was able to tread a middle ground to some extent*,* thus avoiding any potential conflict:

*‘I sat next to and spoke to a man in a wheelchair whom I’d not met before. The topic of my research came up, and after briefly explaining what it is about the man asked me whether I was for or against Brexit. After replying that I was against but did not hold hugely strong views I asked him the same question. My answer appeared to satisfy him and he went on to tell me that he and those around him had been Leave voters.’*

As indicated by this extract, I was able to avoid strong personal opinions influencing my interactions and relationships with participants, thereby helping to overcome some of the issues associated with working in a politically charged field. I thus sought to forge a pragmatic strategy for working in a volatile research setting.

**Conclusion**

The methods I used which have been discussed in this chapter were alignedwithmy place-based methodological approach. A thorough and detailed exploration of local belonging and Brexitwas facilitated by the rich data which I was able to gather by using my three research methods *–* all of which complemented each other well. The use of photo-elicitation methods importantly further teased out some of the themes from my standard interviews, with both the photographs themselves and participants’ discussions of these prompting deeper and uniquereflections on the experience of belonging in Gallatin. The supplementaryincorporation of ethnographically informed participant observation was similarly valuable in terms of the place-based nature of the study as my time spent volunteering with GCO in Gallatin provided a rich source of fieldwork reflections about life in the locale and the views of residents. Moreover*,* my focus on one locale enabled me to thoroughly embed myself within the Gallatin community, establishing ties with both the locality itself and a number of residents, thereby allowing me to produce a detailed account of place-based belonging and attitudes surrounding Brexit. Whilst it is important to acknowledge the at times emotionally difficult nature of undertaking research in a politically sensitive field, I made consistentefforts to ‘shut off’ from my research at the end of the day. This was important in order to ensure that I did not become fatigued or too embroiled in things I heard during the research which I was uncomfortable with. As I have indicated, I also faced challenges which were raised by the centrality of race and whiteness to the project. Being reflexive about my own practice as a researcher, and the progression of the study in relation to these issues, was invaluable in terms of ensuring that the project progressed smoothly. My work has shown that utilising sensitivity and reflexivity are crucial for researchers in these fields.

This chapter has detailed the ways in which the research was carried out and a description of the project’s methods of data collection. The discussion of ethical questions and dilemmas which occurred during the course of the research has demonstrated the importance of a negotiated approach to consent which was necessitated in the ethnographically informed aspect of the research. This has wider resonance as it highlights that one-size-fits-all approaches to ethics cannot account for the numerous and often unforeseen ways that research projects unfold. The evolution of my research methods during the data collection period demonstrates the importance of reflexivity in terms of finding ways to engage members of the working class in social research*.* This has relevance for future research with marginalised groups. The reluctance of many people to be interviewed represents, I would argue, further justification for seeking to engage with the white working class; otherwise, their voices will continue to largely fail to be heard in academic research and wider discussions. Despite the challenges I faced, I was able to finish data collection after ten months as I felt that the data I had collected was rich, extensive and robust enough to enable me to formulate answers to my research questions. I also believed that I was reaching the point of saturation whereby new participants reiterated themes I was already familiar with from earlier participants. Finally*,* it is worth reiterating that the meaningful relationships I established with local people were crucial in terms of generating detailed and full data *–* an important lesson which could be applied to future research.

The following three chapters explore the keyfindings which emerged from the research. The next chapter discusses belonging and place-based attachment in Gallatin, considering how looking at these can help to unpack the meaning of the ‘left behind’ whilst simultaneously seeking to complicate popular depictions of working-class communities.

**Chapter 4. *“There’s this really strong community that we feel part of”:* Belonging and place-based attachment**

**Introduction**

The focus of this first empirical analysis chapter is the relative importance of different geographical tiers of belonging to Gallatin’s residents. I will consider how looking at place-based belonging and localism can help to unpack the meaning of the ‘left behind’ which has been used as a deviceto explain the Brexit vote. It is necessary to first briefly reflect on the meanings underlying the rather nebulous term (Bennett 2014 and 2012) ‘belonging’. Belonging is, primarily, an emotional attachment (Yuval-Davis 2011) which constitutes a ‘foundational human need’ (Hirsch 2018, p22). Place-based ideas of belonging are bound up with notions of inclusion and exclusion, (Husband et al 2016, McKenzie 2015, Yuval-Davis 2011) with these ideas often being racialised and classed as I discussed in chapter two. This chapter will consider different geographical tiers of belonging, specifically those at the local, city and national level. Whilst I argue for the key role played by local attachments, discussion of the data evidences complexities as there emerged contradictory and at times competing understandings of belonging among participants.

The chapter will begin with a discussion of the relative importance of different geographical and emotional dimensions of belonging to Gallatin’s residents. I argue that neighbourhood attachment acts as a valuable resource in terms of generating mutually beneficial social relationships which thereby go beyond a more abstract sense of identification. I will go on to explore the place-based stigma which residents perceive is attached to Gallatin, seeking to show that this often serves to reinforce local attachment. This will be followed by a discussion of reactions to the significant demographic changes which Gallatin has undergone in the past couple of decades – demonstrating that the area is more diverse than ostensibly ‘left behind’ neighbourhoods are depicted (see Goodhart 2016 for example). A particularly important theme here is the characterisation by a number of participants of Gallatin’s different groups as ‘rubbing along’ relatively well, thereby serving to challenge wider depictions of the white working class as resistant to change and diversity(Beider 2015, Tyler 2015). The story of Gallatin is not, however, as simple as one of change and multicultural conviviality. The chapter will go on to consider residents’ racialised understandings of space – concerning both their own neighbourhood and other parts of Sheffield - suggesting that Gallatin simultaneously functions as a site of retrenchment and belonging in the face of migrants and social change. The chapter will conclude with a consideration of how the existence of significant geographic mobility further reveals the inaccuracies contained within the ‘left behind’ thesis.

**Tiers of belonging**

Through discussion of the data collected in Gallatin I seek to show that belonging felt and experienced at the local level operated as a powerful resource for many residents, with local attachments often superseding those at the city, regional and national level and evidencing the value contained in working-class life and culture. It is, however, important not to overplay the role of local attachments as both the EU referendum and subsequent election results have indicated the relevance of patriotism and nationalism in working-class areas, foregrounding Englishness. The Lord Ashcroft poll (2016) conducted immediately after the referendum, for example, found that two-thirds of those who considered themselves more English than British voted to Leave. I similarly found thatLeave supporters were generally more likely to identify as English as I asked interviewees directly about their national identification. The topic of national identity was discussed in depth during a conversation with local residents at a community group. During this, Leena (a retired white woman who was a particularly strong Leave supporter) stated that on forms where British is the only option, she crosses this out and writes English. This indicates Leena’s strong association with Englishness which sees her simultaneously seek to distance herself from Britishness. In contrast, participants in the research who had voted to Remain were less likely to identify as English. Jacqueline is a Remain voter from Gallatin who took part in the research. She is white, in her forties and studying for a PhD*.* Her national identification was clearly British, stating that “I don’t think about England, I just feel British first”. These comments suggest that, while some participantsmatched the general trend of residents in deprived working-class neighbourhoods like Gallatin holding a very strong English *–* as opposed to British– identity (Goodhart 2016), identifications at the national level are complex and should not be oversimplified based on assumptions about spatiality and class.

It is worth briefly returning to notions of Englishness here. As discussed in chapter two, Leddy-Owen (2014), writing about the distinction between Britishness and Englishness, argues that the former is more of a ‘civic’ identity, whilst the latter is closer to an ethnic national identity which is closely bound up with notions of ancestry and whiteness. This draws attention to the ways in which identifications with England – more so than Britain - are at times seen as reflecting insular and monocultural notions of belonging. Furthermore, it has been shown in survey data that the key drivers of Englishness are Euroscepticism and concerns about immigration (Jeffery et al 2016). Indeed, Henderson et al (2016) posited a link between English nationalism and Euroscepticism immediately prior to the EU referendum. The authors perceptively noted that ‘to ‘speak for England’ is ... to call England into being’ (p198). It was the call to Englishness and the need to defend this which helped to rally a number of voters to the Leave cause (Virdee and McGeever 2018). Leena, for example, told me that concerns about immigration in relation to concerns about her own country and culture had been a major factor behind her decision to vote Leave.

Whilst these reflections on national belonging are important, belonging at the city level emerged as a more tangible form of attachment. This provided a sense of belonging which went beyond being an emotional sense of identification. Anna is a middle-aged white woman who moved to Sheffield around five years ago. After I prompted her to reflect on her sense of belonging, she told me that “Sheffield has made me feel I belong, definitely”, thereby indicating that she has developed a positive sense of attachment to Sheffield since moving to the city. Emma was another relative newcomer to Sheffield, living in the city for around a decade. Emma is a white woman in her thirties who works part-time as a community development worker in Gallatin as well as living in the locale. Much like Anna, she had developed a sense of belonging in Sheffield, stating “I see myself now as being from Sheffield”. A number of the local stakeholders whom I interviewed also reflected on forming positive attachments and a sense of belonging in Sheffield. Caitlin is Gallatin Community Organisation’s (GCO) development manager and also a lifelong resident of Gallatin. She relayed a recent conversation she had with a taxi driver about Sheffield:

*“I said to him, everybody comments about Sheffield being like a giant village, and he said it’s true, he said Sheffield is a very cosmopolitan place, the students who move here often stay […] wherever you go, people, it’s about the people. You’ll stand at a bus stop, they’ll chat. You get in a taxi, people will chat. Wherever you’re walking, events, people will chat”.*

The narratives of local residents and stakeholders suggest that experiences of sociality provide a sense of belonging. They also indicate that attachment at the city level tends to provide a more tangible source of belonging – such as Anna’s comments indicate - than that at the national level as the former moves beyond a more abstract and emotional sense of identification.

Accelerated processes of globalisation led in the past to a growing belief among some writers around the turn of the century (O'Byrne 1997, Urry 2000) that local identities and attachmentshave reduced relevance*.* Whilst the data discussed above indicates that attachments at the national and regional level function as forms of identification which may also provide a sense of belonging*,* it emerged from the research that more localised attachments were of greater importance.The everyday forms which belonging took and the experience of a sense of local community evidence the existence of social capital and bonding as an important resource in Gallatin. Social capital is taken by Putnam (1994) to mean features of social organisation – such as social networks, norms and trust – which facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Local belonging is most frequentlydiscussed in relation to community studies (Bennett 2012). This has relevance to the following discussion as notions of community emerged as an important feature in the lives of Gallatin residents. Literature on community is concerned with how belonging is imagined and felt, emphasising the emotional element of identities which can be both exclusionary andinclusionary. Day (2006) reminds us that communities are symbolic constructions (Cohen 1985) which work to create an illusion of unity among those who are deemed to belong in them, thereby underscoring the socially constructed nature of belonging. Nevertheless, belonging in Gallatin was experienced in perceptible ways by local residents through practices and the everyday embodied materialities and interactions, as the rest of this section will explore. They evidence the positive meanings and experiences contained in working-class life and culture which are largely overlooked due to neo-liberalist discourses which have problematised and vilified working-class cultures.

My data collected in Gallatin reveals discourses of belonging to be grounded in knowing people and being known in the neighbourhood. This mirrors other studies conducted in predominantly working-class locales which were discussed in the literature review chapter (see McKenzie 2015 and 2012 for example). Knowing people, being known in the community and thus experiencing ties and interdependencies are commonly regarded as key elements of belonging (Savage et al 2005). These social networks function as an important source of social capital (Putnam 1994) as the existence of extensive local networks has important practical benefits*.* This theme was particularly evident among more long-term and older Gallatin residents, with comments being made that “I know every person in my street” (Jason, retired white resident) and “I’ve got respect from neighbours” (Maggie, retired white resident). The practical benefits of establishing local social networks were put clearly by Geoff – a retired white resident - as he discussed his reasons for wanting to remain living where he is. He explained that “if my car breaks down I can mostly get someone to tow me back home”, remarking that this would not be the case if he moved elsewhere as “it’d be like starting all over again”. Geoff also spoke about the symbolic forms of inclusion which were facilitated by social networks during a discussion of the photos he took for the research. Image one represents an example of this as Geoff explained that this metalwork was produced by a number of people as part of a local community project and therefore represented a collective endeavour. The artwork is displayed in a community garden in Gallatin. This indicates a sense of belonging which is developed, for Geoff, among residents as a result of social ties.



*Image one:* Community group metalwork

Conversations with members of relatively new households in Gallatin who did not fit the traditional profile of the area due to their class or ethnic background revealed that many of them had nevertheless developed a positive sense of belonging in Gallatin. An important narrative among more middle-class participantswas defying their original intentions to only stay in Gallatin for a short period of time. A shift towards residents who could afford to live in a more ‘desirable’ part of the city instead opting to remain in Gallatin was noted by Caitlin who remarked that “people are actually choosing to stay here and see this as a very quality place”. Emma represents a good example of this. Both her and her partner hold a number of higher education qualifications and therefore do not fit the traditional profile of Gallatin’s residents. Emma described their experience thus:

*“We originally intended to do up the house and sell it on to make some money, and, but then we loved the area so much that we just decided we’d rather stay. And we’ve just stayed in that house ever since!”*

Emma went on to state that her and her partner had “put loads of effort into learning about this area, and making friends, and being a part of the community”, leading her to reflect that “there’s this really strong community that we feel part of”. This evidences newcomers to Gallatin creating positive and beneficial social networks – a theme which was present among other similar participants in the research. Emma went on to talk about the value of these social relationships in the context of her and her partner having a baby: “it’s been invaluable for me with having a baby ‘cos it’s just to know that people are there. Like, it’s just so important ‘cos otherwise it is quite lonely and it’s hard”. Such networks thus serve to act as material and everyday forms of inclusion in the Gallatin community alongside having clear practical benefits as they facilitate the development of bonding social capital through networks of mutual support for some newcomers – suggesting that the temporal factor is not the most important in terms of belonging.

It is instructive to consider the narrativeof Cara – a woman in her thirties of mixed black Caribbean and white heritage who had lived in Gallatin for around a decade - to explore the ways in which a BAME resident experienced moving into Gallatin. After I questioned Cara if she had witnessedtensions between different populations in Gallatin, she responded: “no, I would say I’ve felt very comfortable, being mixed race myself, like I’ve not experienced anything here”. This suggests that Cara’s experience in Gallatin has been positive and therefore not detrimentally affected by her mixed ethnic background. Much like Emma, one of the key features of Gallatin which Cara praised was “the community aspect”. It appears from this discussion that the increased movement of middle-class and ethnic minority households into Gallatin has led to the blurring of traditional lines between insiders and outsiders (Elias and Scotson 1994, Yuval-Davis 2013 and 2011). The narratives of both Emma and Cara evidence members of groups which have not traditionally been present in Gallatin establishing strong local attachments and engaging in positive notions of community. This data shows the importance of a focus on place to access the micro-level discourses of belonging, as opposed to the generality of ‘left behind’ labelling.

It was clear from conversations with long-term residents that many of them held strong attachments to Gallatin in the form of kinship ties and participation in the area’s collective memory. Caitlin – a white late middle-aged GCO employee and lifelong Gallatin resident – reflected on this during her interview: “I’ve got extended family still living in the Gallatin area […] I’m still in contact with some people who I went to school with locally who still live in the area”. This evidences Caitlin’s deep kinship and social ties in the locale – important forms of social capital - alongside the role of collective memory in establishing claims to belonging. Val, a retired white woman, similarly spoke during her interview about places in the locale which she had long-term connections with, for example remarking during her interview with me in a local community centrethat “right near where we are now is my school I went to when I were four years old”. Thus for some residents their long-held personal connection with people and places from Gallatin’*s* pastengendered a sense of belonging and enabled them to demonstrate their attachment to the area. These findings accord with those of Bailey et al (2012) who draw on data from the 2005 Citizenship Surveyto explore neighbourhood*-*levelattachment. Their analysis revealed that age and length of residence had the strongest impact on attachment to the neighbourhood, arguing that attachment develops over time through a process of progressive embedding.

It is important to consider the minority of participants who failed to identify a sense of community and belonging in Gallatin. It is important to briefly restate that my sample was primarily residents linked to community centres and GCO’s activities, or snowballed interviews from this group. These participants may be expected to have stronger feelings of community and belonging. Nevertheless, interestingly, a weak sense of belonging was expressed by a small number of residents involved in the research who tended to be relatively new to the area. This accords with Elias and Scotson’s (1994) influential work which posits length of residence as a key factor underpinning the acquisition of an ‘insider’ identity. Ola – a white Polish woman in her thirties – was one such participant who was fairly new to Gallatin and failed to identify the sense of community which was so striking amongst the majority of participants. She returned to a discussion of her struggle to identify a sense of community in Gallatin numerous times. It may be the fact that Ola is Polish coupled with her relative newness to the area (she had been living in Gallatin for around eighteen months), meaning that she had not had sufficient time to establish social networks, which were the causes of her perceived exclusion. My conversations with other relatively new residents, however, indicate that a resident’s active involvement in the community, and thus the development of social capital and bonding (Putnam 1994), play an important role in becoming a member of the Gallatin community. The discussion of Ola’s experiences nevertheless indicates the transitionary and partial nature of social capital and community in Gallatin. This also points to the fact that whiteness alone cannot be used to explain discourses of belonging in Gallatin.

Considering the salience of participants’ localised focus is instructive in terms of informing our understanding of the EU referendum in areas like Gallatin which produced a low voter turnout. Emma reflected on this during her interview:

*“One thing I’ve found here is […] they tend to be very this area focused [...] they think “I’m from Gallatin, that’s who I am, born and bred”, to then think “I’m British, I’m European” is such as massive jump that to understand it all, and to find importance in it [is very difficult].”*

It appeared that debates surrounding Brexit were seen by many residents as largely detached from their lives and concerns, and thus of little immediate importance to them. Indeed, the struggle I had engaging many local people in discussions about Brexit attests to this lack of interest in the EU referendum and Britain’s departure from the EU. Many local people found their local community – rather than the largely imagined national community (Anderson 1991) – to be a far more tangible and therefore valuable source of belonging and attachment. Their local community was something which many participants wanted to discuss more than Brexit due to the immediate importance of it to their lives. Indeed this was an important and striking finding from the research. The intergenerational differences between younger and newer residents (such as Emma and Cara) and older and lifelong residents (such as Caitlin and Val) are further important to consider in relation to the EU referendum. Age has popularly been perceived as playing a pivotal role in the way individuals voted. Statistics from the Lord Ashcroft poll (2016), for example, reveal that seventy-three per cent of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds voted to Remain whilst sixty per cent of those aged sixty-five or over voted to Leave. The more inward-looking forms of belonging – such as collective memory and deeply embedded kinship ties – which were generallypresent among older participants appear to fit wider depictions of older Leave voters being more likely to hold exclusionary models of belonging.

Whilst the EU referendum represented an important moment in bringing debates surrounding belonging and identity to the forefront of the national psyche, I have suggested that it is misplaced to restrict our view to the national level as localised forms of belonging emerged as central to my participants. Whilst the identity of being ‘English’ or ‘British’ was more commonly claimed*,* the practical benefits of belonging in the local community came through clearly. Locally created and sustained social capital and bonding in the forms of supportive social relationships operated as a powerful resource. I have suggested that the development of social capital and attachment to Gallatin is a fairly inclusionary process as active efforts undertaken to develop social networks served to largely ameliorate the impact of ethnic and class differences. Whilst discourses surrounding community and social capital emerged as transitionary and conditional when the data as a whole is considered, at the same time it would be misplaced to assert that discrimination and prejudice does not exist in Gallatin – indeed data discussed in the next chapter shows that this is present. Having noted this, the pervasive nature of local attachment was striking. Whilst Bailey et al’s (2012) study concluded that place attachment declines with increased neighbourhood deprivation, I have suggested that local place attachment is a powerful and valuable resource for members of disadvantagedcommunities like Gallatin*.* The data explored in this section in relation to attachment to Gallatin has helped to provide a more positive account of working-class life than that contained in the ‘left behind’ thesis. I have shown the value contained in experiences of social ties and community at the local level. I will now explore the ways that place-basedstigma, which residents perceived was attached to Gallatin, worked to strengthen local attachments.

**Place stigma**

This section will explore the widespread recognition amongst participants that many people in the wider Sheffield region view Gallatin very negatively. In this section I draw extensively on the notion of ‘outsiders’. By this I am referring to residents of different parts of Sheffield, and to some extent the wider South Yorkshire community, who my participants referenced as prejudging Gallatin with little experience of the locale. This relates to Brexit discussions of ‘left behind’ communities as conversations about the views of ‘outsiders’ demonstrated how some local residents felt that Gallatin is a stigmatised space in relation to other parts of the city. The discussion in this section affirms the role of place in shaping lived experiences(Parker and Karner 2010,Rogaly and Taylor 2011). I use Wacquant’s (2008) work on territorial stigma to aid interpretation of the data. I will develop an understanding of place stigma by also drawing on the notion of reputational geographies. Utilising these two concepts servesto distinguish my analysis by highlighting the role of urban geography alongside sociological processes of stigmatisation in the lives of Gallatin residents. Through this discussion I will argue that a perception of place-based stigma attached to Gallatin serves to strengthen local dimensions of belonging*.* This is a concept drawn from Wacquant’s work who writes about a ‘blemish of place’, emphasising that this is neither a static condition nor a neutral process (Wacquant, Slater and Pereira 2014).

The stigmatised status of Gallatin was talked about by virtually all local residents and stakeholders who were interviewed for the project. Geoff, a retired white resident who had lived in Gallatin for around fifteen years at the time of the research, noted that when he first moved to the locale his friends had warned him “ooh you don’t want to live on Gallatin […] it’s horrible, it’s nasty”. This resonates strongly with Rogaly and Taylor’s (2011) study of a council estate in Norwich. They found that local residents recognised the fact that their area was labelled a ‘slum’ by wider society and associated with ‘rough’ families. Steve, also a retired white resident, similarly remarked that when he was planning to move into the area around a decade ago, he was told by a friend from elsewhere in the city that Gallatin is “about the worst place you could go in Sheffield”. These two quotes are representative of how the theme of Gallatin’s reputation was covered by the majority of participants, demonstrating a keen awareness that outsiders from other parts of the city tend to hold a very pejorative view of the area.

The remarks of Geoff and Steve further evidence the role that people external to stigmatised areas play in producing place stigma (Butler 2019). The narrative of Malcolm from Valued Homes Housing (VHH) is a good example of this. VHH are a private profit-for-purpose housing association which have hada significant number of properties in Gallatin for around the past decade. Despite his attachment to Gallatin through his role as VHH’s head of neighbourhoods, Malcolm’s outsider (residing in a more affluent part of the city) and professional status was confirmed by comments he made about Gallatin during his interview. Speaking about the area prior to VHH’s presence, Malcolm characterised Gallatin as a “feral kind of neighbourhood” and a “sink estate”. As described by Slater (2018), the term ‘sink estate’ works to degrade council estates by blaming places themselves for the poverty experienced by many of the people living in them. Such a view is reified in the language of politicians from across the political spectrum (Slater 2018) who depict council estates as embodying the flaws of modern Britain (McKenzie 2013, Tyler 2015, Watt 2006, Rogaly and Taylor 2011). This is important in terms of place stigma as these discourses work as a device to obscure the role of political decisions that lead to poverty. The creation and perpetuation of negative representations (Wacquant 2008) was illustrated clearly by Caitlin and DeeDee, both white members of staff at GCO and residents of Gallatin, who offered anecdotes about being contacted by university students in Sheffieldwho had been assigned work in Gallatin for negative reasons - for example to study it as a high crime area. They had contacted GCO as they were fearful of entering Gallatin due to the image of the area presented by the university. This supports Cresswell’s (2004) claim that ‘place is space invested with meaning in the context of power’ (p12) as the discourses produced in relatively powerful institutions, such as universities, work to construct an image of Gallatin which is highly negative. The relegation of urban spaces like Gallatin is, Wacquant (2016) highlights, a power-laden, collective and relational process.

A number of narratives – from both long-term and newer residents - surrounding Gallatin’s negative reputation argued that this is based on a view of how the area was in the past. This was put clearly by Jason, who is a white and retired lifelong resident. He stated that outsiders “think it’s still like in [the] 1930s”. It emerged that the stigma attached to Gallatin was largely derived from a long-held image of the locale as a ‘rough’ white working-class area which is home to high levels of crime. Malcolm from VHH spoke of a Gallatin resident who had “boasted that she was from an “effing rough family””, thus indicating a certain form of cultural capital as a hard and tough community – highlighting that there is some nuance between reputational geographies and stigmatised identities. It is thus important to pay attention to the deeper histories of place (Robertson 2013) and its interactions with external social actors and other spaces in order to gain a fuller understanding of contemporary place stigma. Emma, a resident and community worker in Gallatin, noted that people from outside the locale “think it’s all council houses and like, because people have a horrible stereotype of what someone who lives in a council house might be like”. This is in line with Rhodes’ (2012) study of the manifestation of territorial stigmatisation which found that poor white areas were degraded in much the same way as those which were predominantly home to ethnic minority communities. It appears from my research that discourses of place-based pride were not premised on traditional images of Gallatin as an exclusively white working-class area; rather the perpetuation of these depictions of the area were attributed – with a palpable degree of frustration - to largely ignorant outsiders. This serves to reinforce the resilience of traditional depictions. The brand of othered working-class whiteness which continues to be associated with Gallatin does not, however, stand up to scrutiny as the 2011 census reported that over a quarter of the area’s inhabitants are now from BME groups (Sheffield City Council 2013). The sustained stereotype of Gallatin as a ‘rough’ white working-class area – despite empirical evidence to the contrary - demonstrates the slippages between whiteness and respectability (Rhodes 2012) which leads to some sections of the white population being stigmatised by wider society.

The majority of participants felt that the stigma attached to Gallatin was not warranted and thus unfair. This sentiment was expressed forcefully by both the stakeholders and local residents of different class and ethnic backgrounds who were interviewed. Julie, the CEO of GCO, stated that she felt “really strongly that the stigma that’s attached to this area is so unfair”. Cara, who was from a mixed heritage background, similarly reflected that:

*“I think people judge it very badly. I think people don’t think much of it. I think people think it’s rough, there’s trouble, and that’s not my experience. And it’s not, there’s other areas of the city where much worse things happen”.*

In this extract from her interviewCara draws on the reputational geographies of other parts of the city to support her argument that the stigma attached to Gallatin is not warranted. For a number of residents the existence of external stigma served to reassert their place-based pride and belonging. Emma clearly illustrated this in her narrative:

Emma: “*I tell you, it makes me feel prouder for Gallatin because other people from outside here look down on Gallatin. They, I’m in like a running group and it’s fair to say most people in the running group are from more affluent areas of Sheffield, we must be the only people in the group that are from up here. And it really, it simultaneously irritates me and makes me laugh because […] they’ll say like quite negative things about this area and I’ll have to say “excuse me, I live there, can you not say bad things about the people that live up here because I’m one of them”.*

Hannah: “*Do you think they, do they not expect that you live here, do they not realise it?”*

Emma: “*Yeah. I think that’s it’s, I think people just presume”*

Hannah: “*You don’t fit their stereotype of who lives here?”*

Emma: “*Yeah, yes definitely […] It makes me proud to live up here ‘cos I think, well, no one else gets it but we absolutely love it and we’ll not be going anywhere.”.*

This demonstrates that areas which are labelled negatively by wider society can nevertheless hold positive meanings for the people who live there (Rogaly and Taylor 2011) as Emma draws on her livedexperiences of life in Gallatin to reinforce her sense of belonging, thereby rejecting internalising stigma. These findings reaffirm those of McKenzie (2015, 2017a and 2017b) and Husband et al (2016), discussed in chapter two’s review of the literature, that people’s attachment to place is often strengthened when their area is mocked as residents take pleasure in knowing that outsiders’ views are incorrect. Image two, for example, was taken by Rebecca and depicts wildflowers in a green space near her home*.* When discussing this photo, Rebecca remarked that people who do not know Gallatin likely would not expect to see such natural beauty in the area. These narratives invoke a split between ‘us’ who live here and thus recognise the value of Gallatin, versus ‘them’ who are external to the locale and continue to stigmatise it despite their lack of personal knowledge about the area. The place-based pride which a number of participants spoke about is thus juxtaposed with the contempt, linked with fear, that outsiders hold the area in, highlighting the importance of local attachment when faced with external stigmatisation (McKenzie 2017a and 2017b).

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*Image two:* Wildflowers

The widespread defences of Gallatin that were made suggest that local people reject internalising the stigma which is attached to their neighbourhood. This is contrary to the literature on territorial stigma which has generally asserted that people who live in stigmatised areas perpetuate stigma by taking it on as a survival strategy (Slater 2018). Drawing on the notion of reputational geographies is helpful here as this alerts us to the contested nature of ideas concerning space (Karner and Parker 2011). Parker and Karner’s (2010) research in Birmingham’s severely deprivedAlum Rock, for example, found that many residents refused to let external representations affect their interaction withthe area. Batty and Flint (2013) similarly suggest that local attachments in deprived communities are more complex and ambiguous than dominantdebates would indicate. They cite a disconnection between research emphasising relative deprivation and stigmatisation and the actual lens through which many working-class individuals conceptualise their circumstances. The narratives explored by Batty and Flint (2013) reveal that many people simply took their circumstances for granted. This was evidenced in my interview with DeeDee – a white employee of GCO who has lived in Gallatin for much of her life – who recalled that when she started hearingdiscourses about Gallatin being an area of deprivation after she begun community development work, she was shocked, reflecting that “I didn’t feel deprived, I didn’t realise I lived in a deprived community”. This reveals that, much like the narratives explored by Batty and Flint (2013), DeeDee took hers and her community’s situation for granted, perceiving it as ordinary rather than identifying with discourses of adversity and relative deprivation*.*

In closing this section it is important to reflect on what this discussion means in terms of identities and resentments. It has been demonstrated here that, as Queirós and Pereira (2018) correctly argue, place stigma remains an important characteristic of contemporary societies. Whilst it would be misplaced to dispute Wacquant’s (2008) claim that external stigma has a tangible impact on those targeted (see Permentier et al 2008 for an example of this in the Dutch context), it is important to recognise the widespread rejection of internalising this stigma (Queirós and Pereira 2018). The data discussed in this section has thereby drawn into question Wacquant’s (2016) argument that place stigma removes from residents the ability to claim their neighbourhood as their own. Parker and Karner’s (2010) work usefully reminds us of the ambivalence of place. Pete – a relatively affluent thirty-nine-year-old white man who had lived in Gallatin for around a decade - was the only participant who admitted to subtly altering the ways in which he thought and conducted himself due to place stigma: “I still let that outsider reputation affect, just slightly, how I feel about things”. He did, however, note that he thought Gallatin’s reputation was no longer deserved, thereby drawing attention to the historical aspect of the neighbourhood’s stigmatisation. The majority of Gallatin residents who participated in the research challenged negative external depictions of life in their neighbourhood, speaking about their sense of community and local attachment. A smaller number spoke about Gallatin’s positive authentic working-class identity, emphasising its history as home to Sheffield’s steel workers. DeeDee, for example, noted that Gallatin was comprised of “hardworking, proud people who just stick together […] I’m proud of how everybody overcomes adversity where I’m from ‘cos we’re strong, strong, strong people”. This contrasts sharply with the demeaning poverty porn discourses discussed in chapter two’s review of the literature (Tyler 2013). Overcoming hardship through the strength of the community forms a key part of this identity and serves to invert negative representations of the area and its inhabitants.

In this section I have argued that many Gallatin residents experienced a heightened sense of local attachment as a response to the place stigma which they perceived was attached to their neighbourhood. This discussion evidences the gap between reputational geographies (Karner and Parker 2010) and the lived experience, alongside highlighting emotional place attachments at the local level. The example of Gallatin shows that dominant narratives of place are enduring and resistant to change. The data explored here has evidenced a strong sense of local attachment among residents, highlighting that this is founded, in part, upon resentment towards stigma which is felt to be unfairly attached to their area. This can aid our understanding of the ways in which Gallatin residents interacted with the EU referendum as a rejection of stigma mirrors a refusal to continue accepting the status quo (Goodwin and Heath 2016, Seidler 2018, Shipman 2017). This signals the fallacy of assuming that residents of neighbourhoods such as Gallatin are passive social actors who are ‘left behind’ (McKenzie 2017a and 2017b) as this fails to appreciate the active agency involved in the rejection of internalising stigma. The Brexit disposition in ostensibly‘left behind’ areas is further complicated by that fact that, while Gallatin’s inhabitants were defensive about their area in terms of refuting the stigma which they perceived was attached to it, new households who deviated from the area’s traditional norm were often viewed as unproblematic in relation to discussions of belonging and attachment. Thus, whilst many residents were defensive about their locale, this did not manifest itself in a prejudiced and exclusionary way. Indeed, residents of different class and ethnic backgrounds defended Gallatin and experienced attachment to the locale in much the same way. The theme of difference will be further explored in the next section in which recent demographic changes in Gallatin will be discussed, considering the existence of conviviality in the area.

**Demographic changes and conviviality**

Despite participants recognising that the area continues to be widely perceived as a white working-class locale, there has been a significant diversification of Gallatin’s population over the past two decades. Whilst this was discussed in the methodology chapter, it is important to reiterate that the area witnessed a more than 120 per cent change in its BME population between 2001 and 2011, with over a quarter of Gallatin’s inhabitants coming from BME groups in 2011 (Sheffield City Council 2013) – indeed the numbers are likely now higher. Gallatin is thus more diverse than ‘left behind’ areas are popularly imagined to be. It emerged from multiple conversations with Malcolm, VHH’s head of neighbourhoods, that VHH have actively sought to attain a greater ethnic mix in their properties. Malcolm stated that:

*“The enrichment and the regeneration of Gallatin and the social and community regeneration isn’t just about bricks and mortar, it’s about the mix and diversity of the people who live in that place”.*

This evidences VHH’s commitmentto moving away from a predominantly white working-class population in the residency of their properties, towards one which is more heterogeneous. Gallatin also has an increasingly varied class profile, evidenced by references made to a larger student presence in rented propertiesand growth in the number of professionals living in the area. This section will draw on the concept of conviviality (discussed in the literature review) - taken to mean the capacity to live together and the practices of productively managing cultural difference which are at the heart of this (Gilroy 2004, Wise and Noble 2016) - to help make sense of the complicated, and at times contradictory, depictions of belonging in Gallatin which emerged from the research. Conviviality includes racism and strain but pays attention to how these get disrupted and challenged, even if only temporarily. This discussion is relevant to our understanding of Brexit as this has polarised debates surrounding immigration and diversity, with the Leave vote being associated with populist nationalism which incorporates an anti-migrant stance and concern about diversity (Clarke et al 2017, Goodhart 2016, Goodwin and Milazzo 2017).

A number of participants spoke about the value of increased diversity in Gallatin. Jacqueline – a white middle-aged woman who has been present in the area for over a decade– stated that: “now it’s [Gallatin] much more integrated and diverse. It has made it so much better”. Jacqueline suggests here that diversity and integration are positively related to one another. This is counter to much discourse which views diversity as an impediment to integration. Positivity surrounding diversity was also clearly evidenced in the narrativeof Doreen - a long-term white resident who is now retired. Stating that parts of Gallatin are “very diverse”, she went on to argue that “people just get on with it, there aren’t any tensions […] it’s been a diverse community for many years and it’s all the better because of it”. Doreen’s comments resonate with the outlook of a number of other residents who emphasised the value of having diverse populations dispersed throughout the community. An image thus emerged of Gallatin which contradicts popular depictions of the white working class as resistant to change and hostile to multiculturalism and immigration (Beider 2014, M. Collins 2004, Tyler 2015) – discourses which have become especially prolific in the wake of the Brexit vote. Emma’s reflections in relation to the receptivenessof residents to new populations were especially interesting. Through her work delivering community development projects to local people she reflected that:

*“To be honest I was a bit surprised because I thought people would be a bit, you know, all these new different ethnicities coming in and stuff, but actually I think people have been quite open to it.”*

Emma’s narrative reveals that, before gaining first-hand knowledge and experience through living and working in Gallatin, she had assumed that people in traditionally white working-class locales were resistant to immigration and diversity. However, contrary to this pervasive popular narrative, Emma noted that in Gallatin “people rub along pretty well actually, like, it all feels like a family really”. Her use of the metaphor of ‘family’ powerfully encapsulates the strong and inclusivesense of community in Gallatin experienced by some residents.

Gallatin’s increasingly diverse population profile is representative of the fact that many twenty-first century cities act as sites of connection between different groups (Valentine 2008). Amin (2002) has highlighted the importance of ‘micro-publics of everyday social contact and encounter’ (p959) in generating meaningful contact across difference. Through the ethnographic element of my research I was able to gain a sense of spatiality by observing spaces in which convivial interactions took place. One such example was the weekly arts and crafts group which I attended. There were a number of occasions in which new members who were from visible ethnic minority backgrounds joined the group. It was noticeable that*,* as recorded in my field notes,these individuals appeared to be perceived as unremarkable as they were interacted with in the same way as other attendees – the majority of whom were white British. Observation like this can only reveal so much – which is why my interview with Tilly, discussed below, is so useful. The commonplace nature of interaction between members of different groups was also evidenced at the larger community festivals I attended (such as Bonfire Night celebrations and a number of Christmas events). These saw members of Gallatin’s different groups interact in a way that suggested this was a normal part of life in the locale. Tilly, a black Caribbean resident who I interviewed for the research, spoke at length about the role of community spaces and events as a way of bringing different people together*:*

*“We do have community events where people have come together through that, so we do see more and more. And like for instance we have the, the food bank which is a pantry, not a food bank but it’s a shop, like a co-op. And through that there’s people from all walks of life who come here and they all know each other now and they’ll sit waiting to do their shop and they start talking to each other. So that alone, this community centre and the library does bring people together in that sense. And I’ve known, my neighbour, for instance, she’s from Liverpool and she started coming down here with her children to the library. She’s developed friendships with other mothers from the area, from different walks of life also. So it does, these things do. And also the community events that we put on are, or Gallatin Community Organisation put on, that brings people together. So it does help.”.*

My observations and conversations with residents thusindicated the role of local community groups and events in facilitating convivial interactions among residents*.*

Statistical analyses of the Brexit vote have shown that the proportion of Leave voters tended to be relativelyhigh in areas which had witnessed a sudden upsurge in immigration, such as Lincolnshire and Birmingham (Goodwin and Heath 2016). In contrast, areas in which minority groups were a more long-standing presence did not tend to receive large Leave majorities (Goodwin and Heath 2016). It thus appears that the less sudden, more gradual nature of change in Gallatin may be an important factor in understanding the failure of many participants to vote in the EU referendum as the Leave campaign’s rhetoric surrounding sudden and unprecedentedimmigration did not resonate with them. Doreen, for example, argued that immigration had not been an important issue to the electorate in Gallatin due to the normalisation of diversity in the area.Whilst Doreen herself had voted to Remain, she stated that Leave voters in Gallatin:

*“probably were taken in by some of the Brexit boasts about things like the NHS. I think, I think immigration was an issue, but I don’t think it was a big issue in this area – we’d already seen immigration […] we valued it”.*

This importantly runs contrary to popular depictions of ‘left behind’ working-class areas in Northern England voting Leave based primarily on resentment surrounding migration. Other campaign issues, such as increased funding for the NHS, were cited more frequently during the course of the research as reasons for voting Leave. Indeed, Helena – a white resident and councillor for Gallatin – noted that today “people have just learned to live together”. Helena’s and Doreen’s comments suggest that, somewhat in contrast to the area’s Leave majority, contemporary Gallatin is a site of change and multicultural conviviality, thereby again challenging depictions of it as a monocultural part of the city.

Whilst Gallatin was a Leave-majority area, I am arguing that the normalisation of diversity led to the Leave campaign’s emphasis on immigration failing to resonate strongly with some residents. This can help to explain a lack of engagementwith the EU referendum amongst a significant proportion of residents. Though racialised concerns were important to a number of participants (these are discussed in depthin chapter five), for others questionssurrounding migration and diversity were not important enough issues to persuade them to vote. It is, however*,* important to note that there is a crucial difference between not voting – which was a common stance among my participants – and voting Remain. Whilst concerns over migration, new populations and diversity did not appear to be the main driver of voting Leave in Gallatin, the value given to neighbourhood diversity did not translate into a connection with national debates about remaining in the EU as a signifier of such diversity and acceptance of free movement. The Brexit vote thereby reflects the ambivalences of Gallatin as there was a significant amount of residents who did not vote alongside those who did.

Probing deeper into the narratives of a number of participants revealed, however, that appearingdifferent can be problematic in Gallatin. These discourses concerning ‘sticking out’ indicate the existence of a normative identity in the locale. Jacqueline, for example, talked at length about her initial experience of being ostracised due to her “posh accent” which was taken as a signifier of her being middle class:

*“I was a marked person, but because I spoke differently, I was “woah what’s she doing here?” […] I used to be called “the posh lady”, I used to have a name, they’d say “ooh that’s posh lady”, and they’d be really suspicious of me”.*

Whilst Jacqueline went on to note that the same people who had once marked her as different were now friendlywith her, it had taken a number of years for her to feel that she had been properly accepted into the local community. Julie – GCO’s CEO - also spoke about how she had observed individuals who deviate from the norm in Gallatin being singled out. It is worth quoting at length the vignette she offered based on events in Gallatin a number of years ago:

*“One of the people I recruited […] looked really different. She was a punk rocker, she had pink hair, facial piercings, and she was tattooed – before tattoos were popular. So she stood out. She was fantastic at community development work, and she was lovely, absolutely lovely. And she started off in a private rented house and then she got a council house in Gallatin. And she stuck out like a sore thumb. And she was also in a property that the local drug dealer had decided he wanted his people in there. And they hounded her out. It was horrific, she had a little boy as well, a five year old, single parent. She was seeing somebody, her boyfriend got beaten up – they put him in hospital. And she saw it happening and there was nothing she could do, she sent for police and by time they got there it was too late. And they set fire to her shed […] the rumour that they set off was that she was a police informant. And she wasn’t, there was no way, I mean she wasn’t! But they did that to justify their actions to other people. And my view is it’s because she a) she’s in a house that they decided they wanted, and b) she was easy to target because she stuck out like a sore thumb.”*

These two anecdotes reveal established residents being wary of newcomers whose difference is clearly marked.

Ethnic and cultural background was also mentioned as a potential barrier to fitting in*.* DeeDee’s comments revealed the normative and entitled nature of white British culture as she reflected on how valuable it is for minorities to adhere todominant values and practices in order to best be accepted into the community:

*“I spoke to a friend of mine, she’s from a Pakistani background, her parents were first generation immigrants, she were born here. And she said her Mum and Dad, when they came over really embraced British culture. They went to pub and lot, her Dad went to pub with everybody ‘cos that’s what everybody, he didn’t drink but he went and everybody kinda just got on with it”.*

This example indicates compulsion to assimilate into the dominant entitled normative culture as a condition of belonging; however this is only a highly conditional acceptance. Empirical evidence from Rhodes (2012b), whose research was similarly undertaken in Northern England, likewise indicated that when ethnic minorities and migrants display the area’s widely held attributes and characteristics – in DeeDee’s example, going to the pub - they are better included into the identity and daily life of the community, thereby highlighting a conditional and selective form of belonging and inclusion (Back et al 2012, Hage 1998). Whilst many Gallatin residents appeared open and receptive to the presence of minority and migrant groups, it is important to note the often implicit existence of an entitled white British identity against which other groups and individuals were defined (Hickman et al 2012). This suggests that, for some people, Gallatin is a site of retrenchment in which residents turn inward for traditional forms of belonging in the context of migration and social change.

The data has indicated that Gallatin is a site of multicultural conviviality and change which is more diverse than supposedly ‘left behind’ spaces are imagined as being. My ethnographic field notes in particularevidenced the role of community groups and events in bringing different groups together and thereby enabling interactions. I have argued that the now commonplace nature of diversityin Gallatin, as a result of diverse migration settlement over the past couple of decades, meant that the Leave campaign’s focus on issues surrounding migration did not resonate with many Gallatin residents – some of whom strongly backed Remain, some of whom voted Leave for reasons besides migration as I explore in chapter six, and some of whom did note vote. This highlights the ambivalent and contradictory nature of Gallatin – which stands in stark contrast to one-dimensional depictions of ‘left behind’ areas. Having said this, the comments which have been discussed about negative experiences of ‘sticking out’ evidence that Gallatin is simultaneously a site of retrenchment in which some residents who are resistant to change turn inward for a sense of belonging. This theme will be discussed in chapter five in which I will explore racialised discourses surrounding access to resources. Whilst a general picture developed of Gallatin being an open and tolerant community, it is important to recognise the simultaneous existence of an often implicit white working-class norm. Comments made by participants indicated that deviations from this were highly visible. This resonates with literature exploring whiteness. The normative status of whiteness – and by extension its invisibility – means that white people are commonly viewed as non-raced whilst non-white bodies become hypervisible through their difference(Puwar 2004, Wildman and Davis 1997). This discussion evidences the fact that there exist limits to conviviality (Neal et al 2013, Valentine and Sadgrove 2014) based on the pre-existing socialconditions on which interactions are built (Wise and Velayutham 2014). There is thus a need to avoid naïvely romanticising the capacity of everyday convivial urban relations to generate harmony (Valentine 2008) as Gallatin residents’ narratives revealed complicated and at times contradictory reflections on belonging*.* It is interesting to note that, in relation to my third research question concerning the role of cohesion and integration policy agendas in residents’ sense of belonging, these initiatives were not mentioned in relation to this sort of work in my discussions with GCO and VHH members of staff. In the next section I will examine the racialised understandings of space held by participants, revealing the ways in which these discourses worked to position Gallatin.

**Racialised understandings of space**

I will now reflect on the ways in which views of space and place emerged as bound up with notions of racialised belongingfor a number of participants, examining how Gallatin was positioned in relation to other parts of Sheffield. The analysis and discussion will draw on Massey’s (2005) reading of space and place as always relational and socially constructed, thereby avoiding viewing these categories as predetermined. I will also use work on reputational geographies to aid the analysis (Parker and Karner 2010). The section will consider discourses about Gallatin’s white reputation, which were introducedin the section on place stigma. Discussion of the endurance of this depiction of the area suggests that Gallatin simultaneously functions as a site of retrenchment and belonging in the context of migration and social change. I further argue that residents’ comparative understandings of space served to reaffirm their attachment to Gallatin. The section will also consider how racialised conceptions of space extend work on whiteness, as well as discussing the ways in which this analysis can aid our understandings of the EU referendum.

Whilst discussion in this chapter so far has shown that many residents rejected the notion that contemporary Gallatin was a homogeneously white locale, instead praising the multicultural nature of the area, participants in the research were aware of the endurance of long-held reputations about its white ethnic majority and class profile. Rather than viewing Gallatin as non-raced, a number of participants recognised whiteness as popularly being a key defining characteristic of their area – demonstrating a cognisance of the role of whiteness in structuring ideas about space and place. This is evidenced by the comments of Rebecca and Emily (neighbours in Gallatin who are both middle-aged white women), who I interviewed together:

Rebecca*: “Traditionally it’s been a really white area […] It used to be a no-go area [for non-white people] didn’t it?”*

Emily*: “It did, definitely. But it’s definitely not that now”.*

This evidences the fact that many residents refuted Gallatin’s reputational geography based on an enduring white stereotype; instead drawing attention to changes in the area’s contemporary demographic profile. Claims surrounding the invisibility of whiteness (Bonnett 1997, Byrne 2006, Dyer 1997, Frankenburg 1993, Phoenix 1997) are disrupted by the findings of the research in relation to racialised understandings of space as the excerpt also serves to challenge the assertion of Sullivan (2006) that white people often fail to see the link between race and place. Far from the view of space being racially neutral posited by Sullivan (2006), Rebecca recognised that Gallatin was once a “no-go area” for non-white people. There emerged a widespread recognition among the local residents and stakeholders involved in the research that Gallatin was historically a very white space, and largely retains this reputation. The data thus reveals that, whilst often not needing to be named, whiteness is something which white residents are aware of.

It is worth quoting at length an anecdote from Malcolm, VHH’s head of neighbourhoods, which demonstrates that whiteness plays an important role in the area’s reputational geography. It simultaneously indicates the potential issues involved in sticking out and deviating from the norm, which were noted in the previous section:

*“There were some housing we [VHH] converted to four bedrooms, so we made houses larger. And as you can imagine larger family houses might appeal to extended families, and a lot of extended families are from an ethnic minority background. So the local authority wrote to a family to say that they were being nominated for a four bedroom house in Gallatin, and a viewing was arranged with someone in my team for the Tuesday or the Wednesday. Well on the Saturday that family went to visit to look at the outside of the property, and they parked up to look at what this house was like, and I’m sure to look in the windows and things like that, and some people came from neighbouring properties and made a point of saying to them “oh you won’t like it round here”, making a pointed indication that, you know, you’re different from me, you know, you’re black or your skin, or you speak with a different language or a different accent, and just make all those kind of, perhaps quite subtle, intimidating kind of tones, inferences should I say. And the gentleman of the household rang one of my team on the Monday morning and he told us this story, and we were shocked and we said “well we still want you to attend the viewing tomorrow”, he said “no, we’re frightened”. And that Monday evening I was at a meeting and I saw a local police inspector, who’s no longer working in the area, and I told him how furious I was about hearing of this incident and he said “oh well that’s Gallatin”.”*

The police inspector’s dismissal of Malcolm’s concerns was likely based on Gallatin’s reputation as a problematic white working-class area which is home to elements of criminality. The fact that those in positions of authority continue to hold such views about Gallatin serves to reaffirm popular perceptions of the area as chiefly white and therefore not suitable for ethnic minorities and migrants. The intimidating actions Malcolm mentions being undertaken demonstrate that, for some white people, whiteness carries with it a sense of entitlement to occupy space. As demonstrated in the previous section, the majority of residents I spoke to appeared to rub along well; however it is important to not ignore this defensive and more inward-lookingsection of the local population. It thus appears that Gallatin is both a site of positively receivedethnic change alongside retrenchment surrounding whiteness, belonging and identity.

Whilst Massey (1994) has written that spaces are processes which are socially made, comments made byparticipants highlighted the static natureof Gallatin’s reputation as a white space*.* This theme was discussed by Julie, the CEO of GCO:

*“I still think there’s that perception that it’s a white working-class area, and for some people that’s uncomfortable […] I know people [from ethnic minority backgrounds] who have said to me that they were really scared of moving in, and actually they found it was okay”.*

Thus while some (potential) new residents from groups which traditionally have not resided in Gallatin experience intimidation as Malcolm discussed, Julie highlighted how others have a positive experience of life in Gallatin - developing a sense of local attachment which was discussed in the ‘Tiers of Belonging’section. Ola, a white Polish resident in her thirties who I introduced earlier, also spoke about the continued reputation of Gallatin as a white space as she told me of her experiences of renting out a room in her house:

*“There was one like a black gentlemen that came to look at the room, and he wasn’t sure he wanted it because of the area, because he was worried that if he moves in he might be targeted in some ways”.*

Ola’s anecdote reaffirms that Gallatin continues to be associated with whiteness in the local popular imagination, thereby serving to dissuade some non-white people from living in the area (Husband et al 2016). This confirms other studies which show long-standing external stigma and perceptions of a neighbourhood persist long after material changes have occurred within it (Nayak 2019). It is important in this context to reinforce the point that multicultural conviviality is about tension and ambivalence as well as connection, sameness and recognition. My findings also corroborate the results of Rhodes’ (2012) study, discussed in the literature review, which evidenced areas becoming synonymous with certain populations perceived to be concentrated there. The comments made by Ola provide a good example of this by highlighting the popularly perceived link between Gallatin and whiteness. My findingsevidence the sustained authority which certain ideas – namely popular characterisations of Gallatin as a white space – can hold as places are made and remade through the tensions brought about by change and continuity (Massey 1994).

Following on from this discussion of the racialised positioning of Gallatin, it is important to reflect on participants’ racialised understandings of the reputational geographies ofother areas of Sheffield. A number ofanecdotes emerged about feeling out of place in parts of the city with higher concentrations of minority groups. Val’s interview provides a particularly good example of this. Val is a retired white woman who has lived in Gallatin for the majority of her life. She reflected that “we do have areas of Sheffield where there’s just different cultures, you know, and you feel as though you don’t wanna go down there”. In line with the results of Husband et al’s (2016) interviews on diversity and our relationship to space, these comments reveal the existence of racialised ideas about which areas to avoid. The extract also sees Val distance herself as a whitewomanfrom parts of the city which she perceives she is out of place in, thereby revealing the limits of belonging and attachment at the city level. Val went on to recall thinking “oh god I wanna get home from here, I don’t wanna be here” when in areas of Sheffield racialised as non-white. Val’s experience of feeling racialised within other parts of the city works to position Gallatin as safe and home, reaffirming her sense of belonging in the area as a white person. This demonstrates the ways in which belonging can be a highly racialised experience. Comments made by Val and other participants highlight an understanding that all areas of the city are racialised in different ways. This underscores the role of whiteness - which I discuss in depth in the next chapter.

The research revealed Gallatin residents’ use of a comparative framework to position their neighbourhood through personal experiences and comparisons with other neighbourhoods (Husband et al 2016). Comments made by Rebecca and Emily echo those of Val, with the women speaking candidly with meabout their experiences:

Rebecca*: “I mean we’ve felt intimidated there [referring to another neighbourhood in Sheffield] before with some of those Somali boys”*

Emily*: “Well we’ve been intimidated. We used to do an exercise club there on an evening, and coming out they actually blocked the car in didn’t they?”*

Rebecca*: “Yeah, and they’re just looking for trouble, like you know “what you doing here, you whities”.”*

In this recollection Rebecca and Emily are clearly marked as outsiders based on their skin colour, leading to them being verbally abused as “whities” and physically intimidated.The excerpts from the interviews ofVal, Rebecca and Emily reiterate the role of racialised belonging at the neighbourhood level as their comments work to distance them from other more multicultural areas in Sheffield, thereby strengthening attachment to Gallatin – which, whilst being multicultural, retains a strong white presence*.* The sense of safety and familiarity contained in reflections aboutGallatin arereaffirmed by the contrast drawn between the area and other parts of the city which are experienced as intimidating spaces.

It is important to consider this discussion of racialised views of space in relation to narratives about the ‘left behind’.Some of the data in this section has supported the premise of the ‘left behind’ thesis which views working-class communities as inward-looking and sites of retrenchment in the context of social change. Val’s comments about wanting to quickly return to Gallatin after being in parts of the citywith a substantial ethnic minority population indicate that, for some residents, Gallatin continues to be reassuringly associated with whiteness. However, as I argued in the previous section, the views of Gallatin residents are multifaceted. Many residents recognised and praised the fact that the contemporary demographic make-up of the locale is not as white as popularly imagined – a theme which was discussed at length in the previous section of the chapter. Furthermore, the research has evidenced that many people in Gallatin are not inward-looking in a way which leads to the development of exclusive and restrictive forms of belonging. As I have demonstrated in this chapter so far, local attachment largely was not based on pride about the reputational whiteness of the locale as a significant number of participants welcomed increased diversity in Gallatin.

Nevertheless, some of the narratives explored in this section aid understandings of the Leave majority in Gallatin. Fears surrounding areas which are racialised as non-white mirror concerns about the increasedpresence of migrants and ethnic minorities which formed an important part of the national Brexit narrative. The Leave campaign arguablyfound a receptive audience for its portrayal of migrants as economic and security threats (Virdee and McGeever 2018) based onsome white people’spre-existing emotions of fear and intimidation surrounding concentrations of minority populations. Such concerns were stirred up by the Leave campaign, engendering hostility towards migration and concern about diversity (Meleady et al 2017). To conclude, in this section I have evidenced the existence of reputational geographies andthe active creation and demarcation of space (Massey 2005) through the association of certain places with specific racialised groups, which can lead to the creation of bounded and exclusionary notions of racialised place-based belonging. I have argued that residents’ comparative understandings of space served to reaffirm their attachment to Gallatin. The theme of geographic mobility will be explored in the final section of this chapter, revealing the fallacy of narratives about Britain’s geographically fixed ‘left behind’ (M. Collins 2004, Day 2006, Moullin 2017, Tyler 2015) – and thereby once again adding further nuance to understandings of working-class life*.*

**Troubling the ‘left behind’ narrative – geographic mobility**

In the literature review chapter I discussed the fact that discourses concerning the ‘left behind’ pathologise the white working class as a geographically fixedand inward-looking group. The data which I have discussed here calls this into question as the narratives of local residents involved in the project evidenced the existence of significant geographic mobility and connectivity beyond Gallatin. In this section I return tothe theme of different tiers of belonging experienced by Gallatin’s residents, evidencing that, in some cases, geographic mobility strengthens local attachments. It is important to begin by noting that the proportion of participants who had lived in Gallatin for their entire lives was in fact very small. This was true of both younger and older residents who took part in the research*.* Fiona is a white middle-aged resident who represents a good example of someone who, at first glance, appeared to be a life-long resident of Gallatin due to the fact that she was deeply embedded in the neighbourhood through social relationships and knowledge of the area. However, throughinterviewing her I learnt that, despite living in Gallatin for the majority of her life, she had lived elsewhere in Sheffield as a teenager and moved abroad for a short period of time as an adult. The fact that a number of residents I spoke to had, like Fiona, grown up in Gallatin then moved away for a short period of time before returning reveals the fallacy contained in the ‘left behind’ narrative in terms of its depiction of working-class stasis (Moullin 2017).

My discussions with Geoff similarly served to counterdepictions of members of the white working class as geographically immobile. When I first met Geoff – a retired white man - at a community arts and crafts group I initially assumed that he had lived in Gallatin all his life as, like Fiona, he had extensive social relationships in the area. However, upon getting to know him and speaking to him as part of my research I learnt that Geoff had in fact lived in Gallatin for just over decade, prior to this spending a significant amount of his life in a different part of Sheffield. Furthermore, Geoff stated during his interview that he had “worked all over Britain, worked quite a few places abroad” as he spoke about working near London as well as in Europe. Geoff’s narrative demonstrates the theme of employment-driven geographic mobility. Whilst residential movement based on work is something which is typically associated with the middle classes (Savage et al 2005), the data from my research revealed this to also be a reality for a number of working-class residents. Furthermore, whilst Geoff had voted to Leave in the EU referendum, his motivation for doing so was far more complex than a narrow-minded reaction to immigration and globalisation. Geoff reasoned that:

*“I didn’t want to go into Europe 40 years ago. You know I didn’t want to go, I couldn’t see the benefits of it. And what I didn’t like about it is when we joined Europe we seemed to be pussyfooting about it. It’s like going down to sea and just dipping your toe in sea and coming away. You’ve not been in sea, and I think that’s what we did with Europe. We should have gone decimal, we should have gone into Euros, we should have had everything. We should have been either in Europe or not in Europe. And I think all these years we’ve just played about being in Europe”.*

This extract, when read in conjunction with Geoff’s experiences of significant geographic mobility, depicts a very different picture of working-class life to that contained in the ‘left behind’ narrative. The example of Geoff highlights geographic mobility and nuanced arguments surrounding leaving the EU.

It is important to recognise the ways in which geographic mobility served to reinforce attachment to Gallatin for some participants. A good example of this comes from the narrative of Val. Val, a white woman who is now retired, described herself as being “born and bred” in Gallatin. However, my interview with her revealed that she had moved away to a “really nice posh area” of Sheffield for a short period of time through marriage*.* Val made some interestingreflections about her experiences in this more affluent part of the city. She told me that:

*“They don’t speak to you. Come in and lock the door, nobody spoke to you. You didn’t feel as though, you know, the area was really nice but the people were not same […] Feel like a stranger, and kind of like nobody knows you. Whereas back here [in Gallatin] everybody, I can walk round “hello” – everybody talks.”*

The importance and value of the social relationships and friendshipswhich exist for Val in Gallatin and thereby foster a strong sense of belonging is clear in this extract.Her reflections also implicitly invoke the role of class-based differences, suggesting that middle-class areas tend to have weaker senses of community (M. Collins 2004, Day 2006). The attachment which Val felt to Gallatin led to her strong desire to return, stating “I thought “I want to come back to my roots”. I came back to my roots, yeah”. Residential movement thus appears to have affirmed Val’s attachment as her experience of life in another locale emphasised the value of Gallatin. Whilst it is important to note that my research only capturedresidents who returned to Gallatin, individuals like Val and Fiona who came back to the area drew upon their local sense of belonging as a motivation for doing so.

My knowledge of existing literature – which tends to portray the white working-class as geographically fixed, unlike depictions of the ethnic minority working class - meant that the experience of significant geographic mobility amongst my participantswas largelyunexpected. The narratives I have explored here link to the concern of the first section of this chapter with different geographic tiers of belonging. A good example of this is Geoff, who had experienced ties to a number of locations across his lifetime. In the context of a discussion of the various places he had lived*,* Geoff stated that, “no matter where I am, my feet want to be in England. And when I’m in England, my feet need to be in Sheffield”. This powerful quote evidences Geoff’s attachment at both the national and citylevel. Other participants’ experiences of geographic mobility, such as Val and Fiona, worked to embed their sense of local belonging which was expressed through a desire to return to Gallatin. These different narratives highlight the complexity of experiences and outlooks in working-class neighbourhoods, thus indicating the fallacy of reducing depictions of such communities to one-dimensional stereotypes such as ‘left behind’. My findings therefore suggest that it is misplaced to view the white working class as geographically fixed and parochial (Beider 2014, Tyler 2015) as such a characterisation risks broad-brush stereotyping (Day 2006) which misrepresents the contemporary reality of many working-class lives. This thereby draws into question the ability of the ‘left behind’ narrative to explain the Brexit vote due to the inaccuracies contained in it in terms of its depiction of the working class as geographically immobile as well as ‘parochial and intolerant’ (Ford and Goodwin, 2014, p279). The data discussed in this section serves to complicate our understanding of contemporary working-class life and its relationship to the Brexit vote, with Geoff’s reasoning for voting Leave indicating a far more complex picture than is popularly assumed.

**Conclusion**

In closing this chapter, it is important to reflect on what these findings add to our understanding of working-class lives. The sense of local attachment and belonging which many of the study’s participants displayed challenges dominant misrepresentations of the white working class as ‘left behind’ (Lawler 2012, Skeggs 2004 and 1997) which have played a crucial role in explanations of the Brexit vote. Many Gallatin residents talked about the value derived from attachment to their local community in the form of social relationships, place-based belonging and a clear sense of community. I have thereby shown that there is much more to say about working-class life than popular depictions of this group as culturally lacking suggest. The chapter has revealed other fallacies contained in the ‘left behind’ thesis in terms of the supposed geographic immobility of the white working class by evidencing wider working-class motilities. Through countering depictions of working-class stasis (Moullin 2017), the data presented here has disrupted popular stereotypes, instead portraying a more complex picture of working-class lives which elucidates some of the positive meanings and experiences contained in this.In conclusion, the chapter has demonstrated that it is important to avoid reducing our understanding of working-class communities to one-dimensional descriptions characterised by lack and deficiency – ideas which the ‘left behind’ thesis problematically relies on. This ignores the rich and varied nature of working-class life and culture, as well as the complexities and inconsistencies which exist within this. Whilst it is important not to simplify the ‘left behind’ arguments, the complex picture which my data has revealed challenges this position.

The chapter’s discussion of the racialised and bounded nature of participants’ ideas about space complicates understandings of the category of whiteness. The data reveals that whiteness - whilst often not needing to be named - is something which many white people are aware of as participants recognised Gallatin’s reputation as a white locale and the fact that this produced increasedvisibility amongst those who deviate from this norm (Puwar 2004, Wildman and Davis 1997). This suggests the continued importance of entwined ideas surrounding whiteness, privilege and entitlement. I have further argued that Gallatin residents found belonging at the neighbourhood level an important and valuable resource*.* Whilst a sense of national belonging tended to function more as a remote and less immediate source of identification, local attachments had tangible functional benefits and operated as forms of socialcapital. The findings discussed in this chapter surrounding the existence of neighbourhood attachment indicate that, despite the prevalence of argumentsto the contrary, attachment to locality continues to be important (Day 2006, Rogaly and Taylor 2011, Savage et al 2005)*.* Whilst McKenzie (2015) has written that ‘being part of a community, the sense of belonging […]is often lost in contemporary Britain’ (p199), this did not appear to be the case in my research. Many Gallatin residents clearly articulated a sense of local belonging and what it meant to be part of their community. The data presented in this chapter has evidenced that belonging in Gallatin is a powerful theme which can transcend traditional boundaries based on race and class. Deliberate efforts to create social relationships and foster a sense of local attachment emerged as important elements of inclusion. Furthermore, through bringing together Wacquant’s (2008) concept of territorial stigma and work on reputational geographies (Parker and Karner 2010), the chapter has elucidated the contested and relational nature of ideas surrounding place which worked to reiteratethe importance of local attachment.

This chapter has demonstrated how looking at place can help to interrogate the meaning of the ‘left behind’. The data discussed has shown that supposedly ‘left behind’ places are not as white as they are imagined and presented. The analysis of reactions to demographic changes in Gallatin evidenced the oft-overlooked fact that it is the working classes who tend to be at the forefront of living diversity (Beider 2015, M. Collins 2004). I have sought to avoid either vilifying or lionising the white working class (Thomas et al 2017) by portraying the multifaceted nature of attitudes towards race, diversity and belonging. This chapter has identified the ambiguities of Gallatin – exploring how the area is simultaneously experienced as a white space, a space of multicultural conviviality, a space where diversity is welcomed, and a space in which diversity is welcomed but only conditionally. I have argued that Gallatin simultaneously functions as a site of multicultural conviviality and change alongside operating as a site of retrenchment and inward-looking forms of belonging for some residents in the context of immigration and social change, creating complex forms of belonging and expressions of community. It is crucial to recognise the ways in which this complicates the popular stereotypical depictions of ‘left behind’ Brexit voters which have proliferated. As I discuss in greater depth in chapter six, a significant number of Gallatin’s residents whom I spoke to had not voted in the EU referendum. In the next chapter I will further explore the contradictions and tensions which exist in Gallatin between it functioning as a site of positive urban multiculture and the important role played in the area by racialised discourses of unfairness in the narratives of a considerable number of residents.

**Chapter 5. *“We’re racist towards ourselves”:* whiteness and (un)fairness**

**Introduction**

This chapter elucidates a number of the contradictions, ambiguities and inconsistencies present in Gallatin – a discussion which I began to develop in chapter four in the context of the complexity of discourses surrounding belonging and inclusion*.* The racialised discourses of unfairness which will be considered in this chapter evidence Gallatin as a site of retrenchment in the context of migration and social change. This therefore adds complexity, nuance, tension and ambiguity to the previous chapter’s findings in terms of the area as a site of multicultural conviviality. The data demonstrates the ways in which conviviality accommodates tension and conflict - what Back (1996) has termed the ‘metropolitan paradox’ as seemingly contradictory discourses, positions and experiences simultaneously exist. I will discuss the prevalence of discourses of unfairness, exploring how these are based on ideas of difference and threat whilst foregrounding the interplay of race and class in my analysis. The core focus of the chapter is on how perceptions of unfair treatment based on markers of racialised difference produce exclusionary, racist and xenophobic discourses*.* I suggest that there is a need to consider the role of ideas about whiteness in order to aid our understanding of contemporary resentment, leading me to critically engage with the work of whiteness studies. The theorisation of whiteness as a discourse of power and a position of structural advantage and privilege (Frankenberg 1993, McIntosh 1997, Ware 1992, Ware and Back 2002), explored in chapter two, will be applied to demonstrate the ways in which perceived threats to the traditional status quo are met with anxiety and anger*.* Contemporary discourses of white resentment will be discussed in depth, considering the role that these attitudes played in the 2016 EU referendum and subsequent debates surrounding belonging in Gallatin.

It is important in this introduction to the chapter to set out the key terms which will be drawn upon. The subsequent discussion will demonstrate the ways in which ‘unfairness’ acts as a racialised construct which is linked to perceptions and ontological sense-making, rather than being a reality. The concept of ‘unfairness’ was found to operate as an important device used to articulate a sense of injustice and entitlement to resources. Participants’ constructions of unfairness draw heavily on discourses of resentment. This theme was discussed in the literature review chapter in which I considered the studies of Rhodes (2010) and Dench et al (2006) concerning racialised discourses of white resentment. Such discourses were articulated chiefly by my white participants in relation to access to resources, with housing representing a core concern. The chapter will develop the notion of a ‘racial threat’, arguing that this plays an important role in participants’ sense of resentment. Drawing on theories from critical whiteness studies, it will be argued that the entitlement to social resources which has traditionally been contained in whiteness was felt by some research participants to be increasingly threatened. The notion of a zero-sum game will also be explored, arguing that minority groups’ apparent gains in terms of access to sought-after resources such as housing, jobs and healthcare are seen to be necessarily balanced out by losses for the white British population. I show how the experience of these concepts plays into a sense of resentment. As Mann and Fenton (2017) propose, resentment among the white working class has its roots in neo-liberal capitalism which produced structural changes to the class structure. The data discussed in the chapter gives a sense of how residents in Gallatin experience real and perceived shifts in the class structure and the wider position of the white working class.

In this chapter I have chosen to focus on narratives of a small number of participants. Tyler (2020) has written about the strengths of using this representational strategy when writing about qualitative sociology, arguing that this allows for a more complete and meaningfuldiscussion of individuals’ accounts. The chapter explores the ways in which perceptions of unfair treatment based on markers of difference produce racialised and exclusionary narratives about who belongs. I will further consider these perceptions in the EU referendum vote in Gallatin.The chapter will begin by looking at the role of racialised notions of unfairness which draw on ideas about whiteness to produce a sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’.The example of perceptions of unfairness in terms of housing allocation in particular will be expanded upon in the next section as this emerged from the data as an important issue to a significant number of local people. This will lead to a discussion of complaints about the perceived existence of ‘reverse racism’ and discriminationagainst white Britons. The chapter will finally offer some reflections on how this data evidences the racialised fracturing of the working class. It will be argued that the notion of a zero-sum game leads to divisions in the working class which are to some extent both a cause and symptom of xenophobic and racist views, with different groups viewing each other with hostility based on their apparent engagement in a racialised struggle for scarce social resources.

**Racialised notions of unfairness**

The themes covered in this section explore a racialised sense of unfairness surrounding access to social goods, with the findings demonstrating the ways in which ideas about fairness are closely connected to xenophobic discourses. Indeed, some participants’ narratives revealed an awareness of the fact that their comments may be viewed as problematic. For example, after asserting that immigrantswho speak a different language are viewed by the government as more entitled to social resources than white Britons, Geoff – a retired white resident who was introduced in the previous chapter - stated “I’m being honest, I’m not being nasty”. This defensive statement indicates Geoff’s knowledge that some people may take issuewith his racialisedviews as he utilises the claim of being “honest” to back up his somewhat challenging claims. Importantly, claims seen to be based on the ‘truth’ are harder to dispute. A number of previous studies (see for example Beider 2015 and 2011, Dench et al 2006, Thomas and Sanderson 2013, Wells and Watson 2005) have identified the existence of this racialised narrative of unfairness towards the white working class (see the literature review chapter for a discussion of key works on this). My findings therefore resonate with some studies, but extend these by considering the post-referendum context and examining how resentment informed the perspectives of my white participants. Unfairness discourses worked to homogenise anyone who was not white British as resentment was directed towards a largely undifferentiated group, containing migrants from different countries including the EU alongside members of the British BAME population.

A significant number of the white British local people involved in the research expressed a belief that ‘people like us’ are not treated fairly in comparison with ethnic minority and migrant groups. Such views, whilst being fairly pervasive, were particularly likely to be articulated by white participants who were older and had lived in Gallatin for many years. This sentiment was especially strong in the narrative of Val – a white pensioner who has lived in Gallatin for the majority of her life. After I prompted her to reflect on whether she thought that migrants and white British citizens get treated the same by the council and the government, she began somewhat hesitatingly by replying:

*“When you look at some things I kinda like think “mmm, you know, are they getting away with a lot of stuff and all?” You know, I’m not so sure, I’m not sure of what’s really, really happening”.*

However*,* the intensity of her accusations about the unequal treatment of different groups quickly increased as she went on to talk about how those who had been “born and bred” in Gallatin were not treated as they should be, stating that the government would “sooner penalise us rather than them [migrants and members of minority groups]”. There exists a powerful sense of exclusion and unfairness in this narrative, which serves to mark out clear boundaries between long-term - and by extension generally white British - residents and new populations whose difference is clearly marked by their minority status andthe privileges which they are perceived as unjustly receiving. The ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomies invoked by perceptions of unfairness in terms of the treatment of different groups represent an important articulation of the ways in which whiteness works to mark the limits of belonging. The ‘us’ operates to exclude residents categorised as not white.

It is interesting to note that Val went on to connect feelingsofresentment and unfairness tothe politics of austerity and repeated cuts made to public spending in Britain over the last decade. She reflected about this during her interview:

*“The government cutting down on such as us that’s been born and bred here and lived here and worked here all us life, and they, I feel that they penalise us sometimes, ‘cos we can’t get things because they’re too busy giving it to something else, that we don’t even know what it’s all about. That’s the problem.”*

Although evidence suggests members of minority groups have been disproportionately affected by austerity (Cabinet Office 2018, Holloway 2016),Val’s narrative importantly indicates her lived experience of the impact of cuts. This reveals that Val is aware of the impact of wider political and policy contexts as she recognises the ways austerity policies play out in local people’s lives. As with the other participants quoted earlier, she picks up on the importance of employment alongside inferring that length of residency is also an important signifier of entitlement. The fact that Val explicitly links government and council spending cuts to unfairness experienced by white Britons indicates that the current political climate has exacerbated divisions between different groups as it has stimulated increased competition over a diminishing pool of public funds and resources. These racialised narratives surrounding who is regarded as legitimate and can therefore access the welfare state were, argues Bhambra (2019a), highlighted through the Brexit debates.

The ways in which differences are used to construct divisions between groups is clearly illustrated in the anecdote offered by Fiona – a white middle-aged resident who grew up in Gallatin and has lived in the area for the majority of her life. Fiona offered the following reflections to illustrate the unfair support and assistancewhich she perceived ethnic minorities and immigrants as receiving:

*“I went to go and get my driving licence renewed, bearing in mind me and my husband had worked all these years, and we saw all these ethnic groups which had come into the country being given free driving licences and we were like - and free food vouchers - and we were like “woah, hold on, why are they getting free vouchers and we’re struggling?”, yeah, and we can’t have ‘em. You know, and that causes a lot of discrimination, violence and nastiness and it shouldn’t happen.”*

Fiona’s narrative is particularly interesting as it opens with a statement claiming her and her husband’s entitlement due to their long-term employment in the UK. This implies that length of residence and contribution to the country are important conditions of racialised belonging and entitlement. There exists an underlying assumption here that migrants and ethnic minorities do not contribute through working and paying taxes. There is a clear sense of injustice in the extract as Fiona laments that it is “ethnic groups” who are offered help in the form of “free vouchers” – despite herself and those close to her “struggling”. Personal experience of deprivation, coupled with her long-term employment, appears to Fiona as significant evidence of her deservingness of state help in the form of “free driving licences” and “free food vouchers”. It is instructive to note thatFiona’s use of a personal vignette makes her reflections about unfairness harder to discredit due to their professed basis in lived experiences. Whilst the idea of freebies offered to minority groups is inaccurate andmythical*,* Fiona has taken these ideason as lived experiences, thereby creating a clearly articulated and keenly felt sense of unfairness. The fact that Fiona does not receive these supposedly free social goodsis a key source of resentment for her and she identifies this as creating animosity between different groups. Wells and Watson’s (2005) research with London shopkeepers – discussed in the literature review - similarly identified a politics of resentment based on a perception of an imbalance of resources between different groups. The bitterness and resentment identified in this study and apparent among my participants was channelled towards both the authorities and, importantly, other groups positioned as ‘them’.

Nicola is a retired white woman who moved to Gallatin from another part of Sheffield just under a decade ago. Her reflections on the theme of unfairness towards white Britons are especially revealingas the rest of her interview was characterised by positivity about the presence of different populations*.* Indeed, Nicola tended to be more critical of white Britons in terms of creating social problems, stating for example:

*“The only aggression I’ve ever seen on the bus – and I’ve seen two or three really bad instances – and they’ve been white. They’ve been white young girls […] the Indian population are so lovely. You know, they’re so gentle”.*

The fact that Nicola nevertheless spoke about a perception of the unfair treatment of white Britons like herself serves as evidence of the pervasive nature of such discourses. Like Fiona, Nicola offered an anecdote of her personal experience of the interests of migrant and ethnic minority groups being placed ahead of those of white Britons:

Nicola: *“I’ve always worked, from being fifteen. And I think you know sometimes families that might come in just have put nothing into this country [… When I] got a flat and left work I applied for rent rebate and it was hard work. And I wept in that place, ‘cos I felt I was the only white person there, and everybody. You know and the guy [a member of staff in the office concerning rent rebates] even said, it’s, “I’m so sorry” he says, but you know. And that, I felt that. That was the only time I thought “well I’ve worked all my, I’ve had three years off to have my boys”. And I, eventually gave it [the rent rebate] me. But, you know, I suppose, you know, people, they come from bad situations don’t they from other countries and, you know, and they’ve got nothing.”*

Hannah: *“Yeah that’s true, lots of them do don’t they.”*

Nicola: *“You know I try and be a little bit, you know, understanding of that, but when you’re actually faced with trying to get something for yourself it hits you.”.*

There is a complicated set of positions present in this excerpt which contains reflections on fairness and deservingness, alongside empathy. Much like Fiona, Nicola opens her narrative with a statement about her long-term employment. Indeed, the theme of employment is so central to demonstrating her deservingness that she returns to it later on. The role of whiteness is alsoexplicit in her narrative as she talks about being “the only white person there”.The perception of unfairness in the treatment of white people like Nicola compared to members of non-white groupsis emphasised by the fact that she recalls a member of staff apologising to her. This serves to support her perspective by highlighting that those in positions of authority also viewed the situation as unfair. Despite the clear sense of injustice which she felt she had experienced, Nicola does express some sympathy for migrants who are fleeing bad situations – thereby indicating her general receptiveness towards the presence of different groups. It is telling, however, that she ends the anecdote by noting the difficulty of maintaining an understanding outlook after believing that she had personally experienced unfair treatment. These discourses concerning perceived unfair treatment serve to heighten boundaries between different groups by creating an atmosphere of resentment and suspicion.

Whilst the unfairness narrative represented a fairly widespread perspective among white British resident participants, it is important to recognise the few voices in the research who offered a different opinion. Chief among these were Emily and Rebecca – middle-aged white residents who were introduced in the previous chapter. During their joint interview both women praised the move towards a greater ethnic mix in Gallatin’s housing:

Emily: *“They’ve built more mixed housing and, I think that’s a good idea as well.”*

Rebecca: *“I do, I do, and even all those flats up there, that’s a very good mix. You know the big flats, they’re like a mix of every background, you’ve got every sort of ethnicity types of people going there, and it seems to work.”.*

This extract indicates that the women do not view the increased presence of minority groups housed in Gallatin as evidence ofthem being unfairly prioritised – rather they viewed it is a positive move towards a more heterogeneous community. This was a sentiment shared by Emma, a local white resident and community development worker in her thirties. She reflected on the importance, in her view, of having a diverse range of people from different backgrounds present, whilst criticising people who fail to connect pleasures such as being able to try foreign foodswith the reality of diversity: “we expect to have all of the variation but without the actual people, well it won’t work like that. And I think it is important to have a mixture”. Emma went on to state that she believes migrants are judged harshly when they move to Britain. It is instructive to reflect on the fact that these counter-voices tended to come from participants who were younger than most of my local resident participants*.* Emily, Rebecca and Emma also all voted to Remain in the EU referendum – thereby supporting the notion of a link between age and the Brexit vote which has formed an important element of both popularand academic discourses. This suggests that individuals in my sample who did not hold racialised concerns about perceived unfairness tended to be both younger and less likely to endorse the divisive rhetoric of the Leave campaign surrounding threats posed by immigration and diversity.

Drawing on work from critical whiteness studies, it is argued here that the theme of white resentment evident in complaints surrounding unfairness stems largely from recent trends in policy and practice. There is an increasing focus on the criterion of need *(*in terms of housing and other forms of assistance*)* which can often result in certain resources going to BAME and migrant groups. The data presented in this chapter shows that these interventions are interpreted by some members of the white working-class population as racially threatening due to a perception of BAME groups and migrants being prioritised. Whilst it is important to note that the white working class have never been privileged in class terms, they were once more assured of access to homes and decent employment. DeeDee, an employee of Gallatin Community Organisation (GCO) and a Gallatin resident, reflected on the perception that minority groups are unfairly prioritised. She spoke during her interview about some long-term Gallatin residents in the community groups she runs making comments about newcomers “getting owt for nowt”. This supports the finding from my interviews and ethnographic researchwith local people that many white, particularly long-term, residents resent what they perceive as ethnic minority and migrant groups being treated more favourably than themselves.

The preceding discussion offers clear evidence of a sense of white resentment based on a belief that ‘they’ are treated differently to ‘us’ (Beider 2015 and 2011, Dench et al 2006, Thomas and Sanderson 2013, Wells and Watson 2005). Assistance targeted at specific populations was met with anger and dismay by a number of white residents. For example,Helena, a local councillor for Gallatin, spoke about the negative reaction of the wider Gallatin population when a community space was proposed for one specific culturalgroup. She stated that this resulted in her receiving a “cold shoulder […] until now really. But that’s par for the course”. It emerges from this that anger at provisions for groups which are marked as different is commonplace. It appears from this anecdote that race works as an important logic for understanding resentment – this is not just about the allocation of resources but the hierarchical marking of particular populations as undeserving and not entitled. This raises the question of whether creating separate space for different groups is an appropriate approach to fostering social cohesion as Helena’s anecdote suggests that this can in fact hinder inclusion by making difference more visible and contributing to resentment.These findings support the conclusions of Hochschild (2016) who set out to understand the world view of Tea Party supporters in Louisiana. This led her to identify a ‘deep story’ in which white Americans are waiting in line but then see minorities cutting in front of them. Their anger at these ‘line-cutters’ is increased by the fact that they are supported by the Obama government in progressing along the line faster than you. This sense of declining social standing at the expense of other groups has been evident in the narratives discussed in this section which have shown disadvantage being viewed and understood through a racialised lens.

It isimportant to link the racialised sense of unfairness explored in this section to the class position of my participants. Members of the white working class once enjoyed ‘privileges’ in terms of access to housing and stable well-paid work. These have, however, been eroded in the past few decades. This has been a fundamental change which has underpinned group notions of unfairness and threat. The danger with not emphasising these shifts is that analyses end up focusing on the ‘backward’ views of members of the white working class without understanding them as a response to structural changes. The narratives explored in this chapter nevertheless highlight that the way in which social groups respond to structural changes can, of course, be highly problematical. Comments made by many participants in the research evidenced the pervasive deprivation in contemporaryGallatin (a theme which is discussed at length in chapter six). Val, for example, reflected that over the course of her lifetime she had witnessed it get “a lot harder” for people in the area to make ends meet, with Mark (an unemployed white male in his forties who has been a lifelong resident of Gallatin) similarly noting that “it’s like a constant struggle for people, I think these days I struggle to pay the bills”. Being part of a group who are economically insecure results in an increased likelihood of experiencing direct competition with similarly economically insecure minority groups for access to scarce social resources (Dench et al 2006, Garner 2010, Hewitt 2005). The racialisation of these immediate and tangible concerns (Garner 2010)has been largely responsible for the labelling of racism as ‘the problem of the ignorant working class’ (Lentin 2008, p500). However, Beider (2011) and others (Kenny 2012, Sviensson 2009, Thomas and Sanderson 2013) correctly cite the need to view these racialised working-class narratives of unfairness sympathetically within the wider context of socio-economic and structural changes which include competition for limited resources, neighbourhood loss and political disconnect. Whilst race is undeniably present in shaping class relations, the work ofBhambra (2016, 2017, 2019b) – discussed at length in the literature review chapter - largely overlooks the impact of wider structural shifts on white working-class experiences (which also incorporate reduced economic and social security, manifested in heightened tensions and distinctions within the white working class itself between the ostensibly deserving and undeserving) due to her persistent, and somewhat restricted, focus on the centrality of race to explaining Brexit*.*

In closing this section, it is important to consider the ways in which these discourses surrounding whiteness and unfairness contributed to how residents in Gallatin related to the EU referendum. I have demonstrated how racialised narratives were employed by some residents to make sense of the social injustice and inequality experienced in their lives. These narratives breed resentment and racism which is based on the sense of entitlement which whiteness – often experienced in terms of formal and full citizenship status - has traditionally contained to access social goods (Ware 2008). As Virdee and McGeever (2018) write, the Leave campaign’s portrayal of migrants as economic and cultural threats and a drain on Britain’s welfare state helped to construct a narrative in which the white working class are the losers of globalisation. This discourse clearly draws on the sense of threat to white entitlement contained in racialised discourses of unfairness. Emejulu (2016) has similarly shown that a key argument of the Leave campaign was that the working class (who are unquestionably positioned white) were suffering under the burden of mass immigration. Within this discourse, white people are seen to be victims as the white working class are portrayed as being held hostage in their own country by migrants (Emejulu 2016), with anger and resentment being aimed at migrants themselves alongside the established government elite. There thus appears to be an important link between the national EU referendum debates on immigration and grievances at the local level surrounding unfairness, articulated as anxieties surrounding access to social goods which reflect wider cultural and political discourses of race and identity. This, again, highlights the inconsistencies present in Gallatin as the previous chapter discussion chapter showed that migration was not an important issue for everyone.

These results have shown that members of minority groups were perceived by many research participants to be gaining an unfair advantage in terms of access to social goods, and were thus viewed with a good deal of suspicion which bred resentment. This serves to perpetuate the pitting of the interests of the white working class against those of migrants and ethnic minority members of the working class (Lipsitz 1998, Sviensson 2009). Within the discourses I have explored in this section, there existed a pervasive homogenisation of non-white Britons, thereby reinforcing simplified dichotomies between ‘us’ and ‘them’. This points to the need to recognise the shared interests of diverse populations in communities such as Gallatin (Beider 2015 and 2011, Snoussi and Mompelat 2019). In the next part of the chapter I will explore how narratives surrounding racialised notions of unfairness were articulated in relation to conversations abouthousing.

**Unfairness in housing**

The racialised sense of unfairness which has been identified in this chapter was articulated most clearly in relation to housing. It is interesting to reflect on why housing – more so than other social resources like jobs, education and health care - was the primary focus of resentment. It may be the case that the significant regeneration of Gallatin’s housing stock over the past couple of decades had helped to make residential accommodation a highly visible issue. Housing allocation was viewed by a significant number of participants – again, typically those who were white, older and had lived in Gallatin for a longer period of time - as a key aspect of life in which the concerns of racialised groups were placed above those of white Britons. Once again, these discussions were closely connected to xenophobic views regarding immigration and minority groups as anxieties about securing housing became racialised and often blurred the boundaries between legitimate concerns and racism. This demonstrates that the allocation of housing acts as an important lens through which immigration concerns are articulated. In this section I will utilise the notion of a ‘racial threat’ for scarce resources by exploring the ways this was experienced and articulated by residents of Gallatin with regards to access to homes. Drawing on theories from critical whiteness studies, I argue that the entitlement to social housing which whiteness has traditionally carried was felt by some research participants to be increasingly threatened. This leads to failure to secure housing being interpreted within the framework of a ‘racial threat’ which cites ethnic minority and migrant groups as being given priority, whilst largely obscuring the role played by Britain’s social housing shortage. I will explore the narratives of a number of local residents before considering that ofMalcolm from Valued Homes Housing (VHH) in order to better situate the views of Gallatin’s residents.

Geoff, a retired white resident who participated extensively in the research*,* was particularly eloquent on the topic of unfairness in housing allocations as this was an issue which he clearly felt strongly about. He relayed his personal experience of not being able to secure housing in a new development close to his girlfriend as he was told by a friend in the police that:

*“”The council, us, the housing association have all been talking together and they have gone. They’ve gone to immigrants.” […] But there’s families like that in this country, British, and we don’t give it to them”.*

Much like the data discussed in the previous section, this reveals participants drawing on personal experiences to explain and legitimise their views – significantly, knowledge of this kind is harder to challenge. There is a lack of ambiguity contained in Geoff’s belief that the interests of immigrants are placed above his in terms of housing allocation. A perception of the existence of a sense of collusion between different groups and organisations in positions of authority is also present in working to exclude white working-class people like Geoff by giving priority to racialised groups. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of Dench et al’s (2006) study, discussed in the literature review chapter, which probed the concerns of the white working class in an area of significant immigration and increases in diversity, identifying a politics of resentment among the long-termwhite residents based on the apparent priority which new populationsreceived for housing (Dench at et 2006).

Within the context of a shortage of social housing, there exists heightened anxiety about seemingly being no longer near the front of the queue (Garner 2009b). The fact that Geoff was a single person applying for a home may have constituted one of the reasons why he was unsuccessful in trying to secure a house close to his girlfriend where “they were building a little estate”. In Geoff’s view, however, it was the fact that he is a white Briton which served to exclude him from being allocated a house in this new development. His experience was thus interpreted within the framework of a racial threat whereby access to housing constitutes a zero-sum game in which the ability of other groups to secure homes works to the direct detriment of people like Geoff. Geoff’s narrative further demonstrates the basis of some racist discourses in complaints of unfairness. These stem from notions of discrimination which are taken on as lived experiences and thereby distort the boundaries between perceptions and experience. This demonstrates the ways in which racialised notions of unfairness are tied to beliefs and ontological sense-making, rather than being a reality. As Moen (2006) writes, there exist ‘inevitable gaps between reality, experience, and expression’ (pp63-64). Whilst empirical evidence consistently points to the fact that BAME groups and migrants do not get a better deal than white people (see for example Chartered Institute of Housing 2008, Harrison 2003,Lymperopoulou and Finney 2017, Robinson 2007), Geoff’s reflections portray his powerfully held belief that white British families are relegated to the back of the queue in terms of access to housing.

Increased efforts in recent decades to ensure that housing allocation is fair across all ethnic groups have taken place in the context of the decline of social housing since the 1980s alongside the retrenchment of the welfare state through austerity and swingeing cuts to public spending budgets. The relatively privileged access to social housing that white Britons typically enjoyed prior to these shifts (Ginsburg 1988, Henderson and Karn 1987)means that the more recent regressive convergence in the experiences of migrants and black and white members of the working class (Powell and Robinson 2019) are experienced as an abrupt and negative departure from tradition, as the narrative of Val demonstrates. Val’s reflections are particularly helpful to draw on in relation to these wider shifts as her narrative contains a historical element due to her lifelong attachment to Gallatin. It was Val who raised the subject of access to housing during a discussion of unfairness – thereby demonstrating that this is an important matter to her. Val believed that, in contemporary Gallatin, the white British population are discriminated against and thus at a disadvantage when trying to obtain properties:

Val: *“I do think when it comes to our housing that they do that, I think they sometimes give priority over them ‘cos they daren’t do it any different, I think it makes them frightened.”*

Hannah: *“Yeah, yeah. That’s interesting ‘cos quite a few people have said that to me, and they’ve said about new flats and stuff in the area, they’ve said they don’t go to white people.”*

Val: *“That’s true, there’s special areas where it’s just for a certain, and it’s not, and I don’t think it’s right. ‘Cos I’ve got family members waiting for housing and they can’t get it.”*

As with the white participants in Dench et al’s (2006) research, Val mentions that white people are now made to wait years for housing at the same time as minority groups are viewed as enjoying easy and quick access*.* It is worth noting the fact that Val draws on the personal experiences of her relatives to explain and legitimise her views. This kind of knowledge is hard to challenge specifically because of its experiential and subjective grounding. Whilst a likely major cause of the lengthy waiting time experienced by Val’s family is the present crisis in terms of access to social housing in the UK (Powell and Robinson 2019, Slater 2018), for Val it is experienced as a direct outcome of apparent preference being given to BAME and migrant groups. Val thus interprets this as forming part of a racial threat in which the ease that white working-class families once tended to enjoy in terms of obtaining social housing is felt to have disappeared. Again, the logic of Val’s views is premised on a belief that access to residential accommodation operates as a zero-sum game whereby any gains for minority groups result in losses for white Britons. This serves to obscure the shared class position of these groups.

It is necessary now to examine policy approaches to provision and to addressing cohesion. Considering the narrative of VHH - an important social housing provider in Gallatin - adds an additional layer to the discussion of unfairness, helping to situate the preceding discussion of local residents’ views. Malcolm was invited to take part in the research due to the important role he plays in terms of looking after VHH’s properties in Gallatin (as I discuss in chapter three). The organisation has been responsible for making Gallatin a more diverse community in terms of actively welcoming ethnic minority tenants into their properties. Malcolm confirmed that he knew of many white residents who feel that their interests and concerns were not adequately attended to. This indicates a widespread awareness of the intensity of discourses of unfairness. When questioned about this, Malcolm became defensive and cited the holistic work VHH had undertaken to improve the area for everyone. He expressed anger and frustration that one particular resident “still criticises it because nothing will improve and the only people we’re rehousing are BME”. This resident clearly felt threatened by the ability of some BAME households to secure properties with VHH. This resonates with the work of Pilkington (2016), specifically concerned with English Defence League (EDL) activism and anti-Muslim discourses, which has demonstrated the ways in which many activists felt that their views and the views of their community had been silenced. The narratives of those in Gallatin importantly show that this sense of disenfranchisement, which I have explored here in terms of access to housing, is not limited to far-right activists but is instead an important discourse among sections of the white working class.

Malcolm went on to acknowledge that increased diversity in Gallatin had produced resentment amongst some “traditional working-class households who […] think they have more right to be there than anyone else”. These comments capture a clear sense of white entitlement to occupy space. Malcom talked about the bitterness expressed by some residents based on the belief that this has come under threat:

*“I [Malcolm] said “we’ve built a hundred and odd houses, some of which are on the end of your street”, and she said “aw those are only for brown people”, were the words she used. And I said “well, for a start, those people you’re referring to need a home more than, as much as anybody else””.*

This exchange further demonstrates the concerns of some white working-class residents that their interests have been subordinated to those of other groups. Malcolm’s response is also extremely interesting as there is a crucial distinction between “more than” and “as much as” which gets to the heart of differing conceptions of housing allocation and fairness. He appears to - initially at least - confirm the belief of a number of white British residents that minority populations are viewed as more deserving than themselves, before quickly altering his position to indicate that all groups are equally deserving of being given a home. Within the context of demand for housing increasingly unable to be met, there inevitably needs to be a development of mechanisms to help ration the scarce supply of housing (Henderson and Karn 1987). Indeed, these mechanisms have always existed because some properties and localities have been more popular than others. Malcolm’s reflections give a sense of the difficulties experienced by housing practitioners in determining who is prioritised in these mechanisms. Other comments made by Malcolm during the interview (such as his reference, discussed in the previous chapter, to Gallatin as a “feral kind of neighbourhood” when it was overwhelmingly home to the members of the white working-class prior to VHH’s presencein the locale) indicated that he held a degree of contempt for some members of the white working class based on moralistic judgements, thereby failing to engage with discourses surrounding unequal social resource distribution. This discussion is relevant to my third research question. It suggests that policy developments and approaches do play a role in local people’s lives, although many residents do not realise that their experiences are a product of these.

Before closing this section I would like to reflect on how this discussion relates to our understanding of the Brexit vote. There exists a long and troubled relationship between race and housing, with popular and political debates surrounding the impacts of migration largely continuing to coalesce in the field of housing (Powell and Robinson 2019). Indeed, the perception that new immigrants are unfairly advantaged in the allocation of social housing is, writes Robinson (2010), a commonly cited injustice of contemporary migration to Britain. Blaming societal issues – such as the present housing crisis (Powell and Robinson 2019, Robinson 2010, Slater 2018) - on minority groups (Khalili 2016) helps to engender a hostile environment in which different groups are couched in terms of the racialised competition they pose for the diminishing pool of affordable homes, social funds and secure jobs. This atmosphere of rivalry and hostility – demonstrated in this section through the example of housing - played out during the Brexit campaign. Calls to ‘take back control’ invoked a time in the past, which is both partially imagined and partly grounded in reality, when access to social housing and other features of a more generous welfare state were more readily availableto members of the white working class. The narratives explored in this chapter indicate that for a number of the research participants this became nostalgically linked to a perception of a time in which they did not have to compete with ethnic minorities. This supports Bhambra’s (2017) argument that improvements in the position of ethnic minorities have merely reduced the white working class’ relative advantage, and that in voting for Brexit, members of the white British population sought to return to a time in the past in which they enjoyed easier access to social goods.

In this section I have built on Dench et al’s (2006) findings to demonstrate the importance of white resentment based on discourses of unfairness in housing allocation in the post-referendum context, showing that these tap into wider politics of race and entitlement and identity. I have foregrounded the intersection of race and class byevidencing the ways in which a number of members of the white working class in Gallatin who have experienced increased difficulties in securing housing interpret this as forming part of a racial threat for resources. Some members of the white working class are thus viewed by themselves and wider society (see Goodhart 2017, for example) as engaged in a racialised struggle for resources with both BAME Britons and migrant groups (Dench et al 2006, Garner 2009b). This competition over resources is symptomatic of wider racialisations and racism in society surrounding culture and hierarchies. An important finding of the research has been the need to engage with discourses of unfairness. It is crucial to begin by listening to people’s concerns, seeking to understand where they come from, rather than rejecting them as uninformed and xenophobic. To do so is to attempt an understanding of peoples’ anxieties in the hope of mediating dangerous social divisions which have come to the fore particularly following the Brexit vote (see Hochschild 2017 for an example of this in the U.S. context). As put by Scottish rapper and social commentator McGarvey (2017) in his recent book exploring working-class life in Britain, ‘not everyone with concerns about immigration should be dismissed as racist’ (p120). In the next section of the chapter I will consider the notion of ‘reverse racism’ – a theme which played an important role in discourses surrounding whiteness and unfairness.

**Racism as ‘reverse racism’**

An important theme among residents who were resentful about perceived unfairness was a belief that whiteness is a key site of contemporarydiscrimination. Many complaints concerning a racialised sense of unfairness stemmed from this notion of the existence of ‘reverse racism’ in which white Britons are the newly disadvantaged group. Reverse racism was used as a device by participants in much the same way as unfairness – articulating a sense of entitlement, injustice and resentment (van Dijk 2016). Discourses surrounding reverse racism were similarly linked to perceptions and ontological sense-making, rather than being based on objective reality. Notions of reverse racism importantly furtherdrew explicitlyon the idea of ‘political correctness’ – taken to mean the avoidance of forms of expression or action which may insult groups of people who are socially disadvantaged and marginalised - as a cause of discrimination against white Britons. Claims surrounding reverse racism and political correctness form part of long-established arguments which are racialised devices used to disguise the prejudice and discrimination which continues to form an important part of the lives of members of minority groups. Such discourses conceive of whiteness as an objective category against which the interests of ethnic minorities and migrants - which are viewed as supported by the government (Hochschild 2016) - are pitted, working to create a perception of reverse racism. These views must be understood in the context of the guarantee that whiteness – specifically Englishwhiteness - has historically contained of belonging and entitlement (Ware 2008). This section will explore participants’ claims of reverse racism in terms of access to social goods and anxieties aboutculture and values. I will then consider how this aids our understanding of the Brexit vote.

The theme of reverse racism was prominent in Geoff’s narrative. The extract used in the title of the chapter – “we’re racist towards ourselves” – is taken from my interview with him. Geoff made this claim whilst reflecting onthe unfairness which he perceived to exist in the allocation of housing, arguing that immigrants were not made to join the housing queue in the same way that white people were. He described at length an anecdote about a housing association going above and beyond in order to try and please new arrivals to the country. As noted throughout this chapter, Geoff draws on apparentlived experiences in order to back up his claims, thereby making his knowledge harder to challenge. Geoff bemoaned the fact that, in his opinion, white British people are not treated in the same way as the immigrant family in his vignette were. This demonstrates a sense of whiteness working as a site of discrimination (Pilkington 2016). Indeed, a recent survey found fifty-five per cent of white Americans agree that white people face discrimination (Gonyea 2017). Bonilla Silva’s (2006) work on the contemporary operation of racism considers this notion of reverse racism, highlighting the tendency for some white Americans to attribute their failure to get a job or be admitted to college to reverse discrimination. This trope, argues Bonilla Silva (2006), enables white people to vent their frustrations by blaming minorities for their misfortune. This process is clear in the narrative of Geoff, discussed at length in the previous section, as he blamed immigrants for his inability to secure housing in the area he wanted.

The theme of reverse racism came up in a conversation with Maggie and Leena – both white pensioners who were strong Leave supporters and had lived in and around Gallatin for the majority of their lives – during an over-fifties activity session. The women both complained that you cannot say anything in contemporary society without risking offending somebody*.* Their perception that many people fear being seen to be racist was blamed for discrimination against white Britons (van Dijk 2016) as Maggie and Leena argued that the authorities are scared of upsetting minority groups. This was clearly articulated by Val who stated in my interview with her that: “I feel as though they [the government] daren’t say no to them [minority groups] but they’d say no to us”. This demonstrates the ways in which reverse racism is viewed as subordinating the concerns of members of the white working class. Geoff, again, was forthright in his reflections about Britain’s ‘politically correct’ culture:

*“Because you can’t talk the language, because you’re a, you know, different colour to us they daren’t not give them these things because all of a sudden the big racist card comes out”.*

It is, in Geoff’s opinion, due to a fear of offending groups who are minoritised based on their skin colour and language that white Britons like himself are not treated as they ought to be. Pilkington (2016) drew similar conclusions from her ethnographic research with EDL supporters, revealing that many far-right activists sought to challenge the perceived privileging of the needs of ‘others’ over ‘ours’, overlapping with the positions of Geoff and Val. She found that many activists accused the government of prioritising minority groups based on a fear that they would be labelled as racist if they did not. The data presented in this chapter has evidenced the ways in which concerns about reverse discrimination gain expression in the form of racialised discourses of unfairness.

Concerns were also expressed about beliefs, culture and values, alongside the anxieties about access to social goodswhich have been the primary focus of this chapter*.* A number of white working-class residents involved in the research clearly felt threatened based on their belief that migrant populations were not made to live by “our rules”, expressing anger at what they viewed as double standards. In a conversation with Maggie and Leena, they complained that ethnic minorities have been treated too well by the government and not made to integrate into British norms and values. They blamed this on the fact that many people are frightened of upsetting these groups and thereby being branded racist. Maggie and Leena went on to complain that this had led the government to give too much power to minority populations. This indicates a belief that there exists a dominant – and by extension white - British culture which minority groups ought to assimilate into (Garner 2009a). This discourse calls to mind DeeDee’s (a white resident and GCO employee) comments, discussed in chapter four, in which she praised Pakistani families who bought into British culture as they “went to pub with everybody”. These comments suggest that the notion of a shared culture and values is an important issue for residents.

Fiona – a white middle-aged resident - was also outspoken on this topic during my interview with her. She complained that “I don’t think it’s acceptable to come to our country and then still want to do their own beliefs and their own thing and then take over this country”. These concerns about beliefs and values are implicitlylinked to religion and cultural behaviours. Fiona’s thinking represents an expression of the ‘when in Rome’ argument as she sees it as necessary for new populations to adhere to and assimilate into thedominant culture and norms(Garner 2009a). Fiona’s xenophobic rhetoricabout her fear of Britain being taken over by minority groups furtherdemonstrates the existence of anxieties about the integrity of the nation based on a concern that migrants will fragment dominant British culture through an infusion of their practices and values (Byrne 2007, Sandelind 2018). These anxieties thereby go beyond discourses about reverse racism and unfairness. Flint (2009) addresses these issues in his discussion of the role of information packs provided to recent migrants as a means of codifying required British values. He argues that elements of these information packs are based on a spatial imagining of national communities and the cultural assumptions underpinning this. This creates conditional forms of belonging in which newcomers must demonstrate their commitment to British values. The comments of Leena, Maggie and Fiona evidence theseconditional forms of belonging based on the need for newcomers to adhere to dominant norms and customs in relation to local as well as national forms of belonging. These participants’ views reveal how ideas of national belonging inform belonging at the local level, thereby evidencing that housing is to some extent a symptom of these discourses.

These fears surrounding the negative effects of migration were reflected in the final Brexit vote as analysis of data from the BES by Goodwin and Milazzo (2017) has revealed that those who viewed migrants as a threat to British culture were more likely to vote Leave. Indeed, Kaufmann (2018) has written that resentment based on a belief that white identity is under threat from non-white immigration serves to fuel right-wing populism – such as that expressed by sections of the Leave vote. Conversations with Gallatin residents like Maggie and Leena who backed Leave suggests that the Brexit vote formed part of a reaction to the decline of the traditional entitlement which white Britons have enjoyed over other racialgroups (Bhambra 2019b and 2016) in terms of access to social goods and the dominance of cultural beliefs and values. After questioning Maggie and Leena about their reasonsfor voting Leave, they both responded that immigration had been a major factor. Theyspoke abouttheir belief that the government have not looked after white English people due to a focus on pleasing minority groups. This evidences racialised concerns for one’s own positionfuelling racist discourses surrounding migration and difference, thereby helping to produce the Brexit vote. What may start out as ‘reasonable concerns’ (Hewitt 2005, p17) about access to scarce resources become racialised, often as a result of political manipulation in which white working-class resentment is misdirected towards ethnic minorities and immigrants (DiAngelo 2018). Engaging with discourses of racialised white resentment is thus crucial to understanding sections of the Leave vote, as Bhambra (2016) argues.

These results extend previous empiricalresearch (Dench et al 2006, Pilkington 2016, Rhodes 2010, Thomas and Sanderson 2013) which has demonstrated members of the white British population viewing themselves as the new victims of discrimination. By simultaneously paying attention to the interplay of whiteness, race, classand resentment, I have shown that it is possible to better understand contemporary anger at perceived reverse racism by situating this within the traditional guarantee that whiteness has contained of both belonging and access to certain social resources (Ware 2008). Many participants presented a racist sense-making of how government policies and approaches disadvantaged them. These anxieties about occupying second-class citizen status must be understoodin terms of the erosion of the assurance members of the white working class once had about accessing social goods such as housing and decent jobs. The solution frequently cited by the research participants was the need for fairness and equity in terms of how different groups are treated. This, however, represents an erasure of the ways in which whiteness has historically and contemporarily subordinated and disadvantaged other groups in order to maintain its own dominant position (Bhambra 2016, Dyer 1997, Frankenberg 1997, McIntosh 1997). A colour-blind approach to opportunities and belonging problematically ignores the long-lasting effects of racism and racial discrimination and the numerous and considerable barriers which still exist for black and ethnic minority groups (Bonilla-Silva 2006, DiAngelo 2018) despite the relative decline of white advantage (Bhambra 2019b, 2016). Recognition is needed of the fact that working-class populations, of all ethnic backgrounds, have experienced an erosion of their social contract with the state. A focus on difference meant that a number of participants failed to recognise the ways in which their situation was largelyshared by members of other ethnic groups.

The analysis throughout this chapter has demonstrated the link between genuine concerns about access to resources, exclusion, racialised discourses of unfairness and wider racist and xenophobic rhetoric. Similar to the findings of Tyler (2020) in her research with white working-class residents’ relationships with their Muslim neighbours, I found a complex picture and discourses which contained elements of both intercultural conviviality (as I discussed in the previous chapter) and racism, thereby bringing us back to Back’s (1996) concept of the metropolitan paradox when considering together the data discussed in chapters four and five. An important conclusion to draw from this is the need to provide the opportunity for people to have difficult yet honest conversations about issues surrounding race, migration and fairness (Beider 2011). As DeeDee, GCO’s community development officer, put it: “I think that’s part of problem that we’ve got at the moment, we don’t talk about it […] because they’re frightened of being racist”. The ‘Who is Your Neighbour’ project, which was set up in 2010 in communities in South Yorkshire seen as vulnerable to racist ideologies, is a good example of work premised on the importance of creating dialogue. Carl – one of the city-levelstakeholders I interviewed – played a central role in establishing the project and spoke about its success in terms of its aim to:

*“facilitate conversations so people become more curious […] the outcome would be that people get more interested, more curious, get more interested in meeting ‘other’ [groups]”.*

This represents an important policy approach at the local level, thus having relevance to my third research question. Through engaging people in safe-space conversations surrounding race, culture, identity and migration, the initiative helpedindividuals get to know different groups, thereby enablingcommunities to become more resistant to racist and divisive ideologies, identifying what they have in common. Approaches like this serve to counter an avoidance of talking about race, migration and class. The problematic suppression of individuals’ opinions serves to breed increased suspicion, division and discontent. Debate and dialogue are thus important in order to begin engaging with resentment and anger (McGarvey 2017) based on racialised notions of unfairness. The tendency of work such as that of Bhambra (2019b, 2017) to dismiss these white working-class complaints, due to putting race as a central concern in itself and for understanding class relations, serves to compound this group’s marginalisation.

Racialised fracturing

Before closing this chapter I want to briefly reflect on how the data I have presented evidences the racialised fracturing of the working class in post-referendum England in the context of deindustrialisation and the decline of working-class political organisations. This builds on Virdee’s (2014) work, discussed in the literature review chapter. Whilst Virdee (2014) offers a powerful and comprehensive account of the ways in which race has been central to the way class works in Britain, his is a primarily historical perspective. The whitening of the working class in popular discourses in the twenty-first century (Bhambra 2017b, Bhattacharyya 2017), prominent in debates about Brexit and the ‘left behind, has led to class-based commonalities between different groups being consistently overlooked. The results of my research in Gallatin have shown that a result of disadvantage being viewed and understood through a racialised lens is competition between relatively powerless groups for increasingly scarce resources. An emphasis on race therebyonly ‘exaggerates the difference between [majority and minority] ethnic groups and masks what they hold in common’ (Bottero 2009, p7).

Geoff’s comments, which have been discussed at length in this chapter, portray the racialised fracturing of the working class. The class-based commonalities between Geoff, migrants and BAME members of the working class – notably the relative powerlessness experienced as rental tenants in terms of choice of locality - are consistently overlooked in Geoff’s narrative as his comments reveal a disproportionate focus on racial and ethnic differences, consistently citing these as the cause ofhis inability to secure a home near to his girlfriend. In his words, the properties had “gone to immigrants”. This extends the conclusions of Dench et al (2006) as the authors fail to consider the racialised fracturing of the working class in their discussion of white resentment – the authors also significantly do not consider black and ethnic minority groups as having a class identity. There was, however, some limited evidence of participants attempting to recognise shared positions. Recall the commentsof Nicola about her struggle to get a rent rebate and perceiving that the presence of minority groups compounded thesedifficulties. At the end of her anecdote Nicola reflected: “I try and be a little bit, you know, understanding”, thereby evidencing some indications of empathy and a recognition of shared positions ofprecarity*.* However, the majority of the narratives explored in this section are somewhat at odds with chapter four’s discussion of a pervasive sense of belonging and inclusion in Gallatin. Discourses surrounding racialised competition for scarce resources work to entrench more exclusive and conditional forms of belonging, alongside engendering increased suspicion of and hostility towards other groups.

A perception of access to social resources operating as a zero-sum game constitutes an important thread throughout the narratives discussed in this chapter. Competition with newcomers to Gallatin, whose rights are believed to be seen as greater than their own by the authorities and housing associations, serves to displace some white British residents’ ideas concerning their access to and ownership of public resources (Dench et al 2006). This produces a sense of threat to assumptions surrounding whiteness. BAME and migrant groups are framed as accruing resources such as housing unfairly in a zero-sum game in which gains for ‘them’ incur losses for ‘us’. Whilst clearly encapsulating a sense of unfairness towards white people, comments made by participants such as Geoff also indicate that positive treatment of migrant and ethnic minority groups works to the direct detriment of the white British population. These are important themes which extend previous research. My work indicates that, whilst working-class people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds have more in common than the dominant discourses allow them to recognise, a perception of increased competition and antagonism between relatively powerless groups for scarceresourcesresults in the fracturing of the working class along racial and ethnic lines. Discourses of racialised threat thereby detract from both the shared commonalities between working-class groups and wider political changes such as the retrenchment of the welfare state, the residualisation of social housing and austerity. An important conclusion is thus the need for a recognition of the common interests of members of the working class from different ethnic backgrounds alongside migrant communities (Beider 2015 and 2011, Snoussi and Mompelat 2019). This would help to create shared narratives, thereby moving communities beyond animosity.

**Conclusion**

Before closing this chapter, it is important to reflect on the history of white working class resentment, which predates the Brexit debates and the EU referendum outcome. As I noted in the literature review chapter, a number of qualitative studies (see Gest 2016, Hewitt 2005, Smith 2012) have acknowledged the role of debates about New Labour, multiculturalism and austerity, for example, in creating a sense of white working-class resentment due to a perceived shift in social standing and a loss of political voice and clout. Similarly, neoliberalism and the processes of deindustrialisation and economic restructuring have played an important role in fragmenting working class political organisations. This simultaneously alerts us to the fact that discourses surrounding Brexit have existed for a significant period of time, and that much of what was covered in the EU referendum debates was not new or particularly unique.

Whilst in chapter four I suggested that immigration was not an important motivating factor in the Brexit vote for many Gallatin residents, this chapter has shown that concerns about changing populations and competition for access to social goods were important to some residents. The research revealed a range of voices and some evidence not so much the metropolitan paradox (Back 1996) as fairly entrenched negative views on race. This again reiterates the range of views present in working-class locales and the need for analyses to attend to these complexities. This chapter has explored discourses of racialised unfairness which emerged from the research. I focused on a small number of participants whose narratives best exemplified these themes. I have argued that resentment arising from difficulties accessing social goods is best conceptualised as forming part of a perceived racial threat for scarce resources. My data and its analysis have advanced existing literature through discussion of the racialised fracturing of the working classes in post-referendum England. The chapter has furthercontributed tounderstandings of racist and xenophobic sentiment in contemporary Britain by demonstrating the ways in which oftenlegitimate concerns regarding access to scarce social resourcesbecome racialised and experienced as a threat to white access and entitlement. These discourses are informed by wider racisms. Perceptions of unfairness significantly are not backed up by objective evidence as studies have consistently shown that white Britons are not disadvantaged in comparison to other groups (see for example Harrison 2003, Lymperopoulou and Finney 2017 and Robinson 2007 in relation to race and housing). However, emphasising the role of whiteness has enabled the chapter to better situate resentment within the historic guarantee which members of the white working class have enjoyed vis-à-vis entitlement and access to resources (Ware 2008). A significant amount of previous research on resentment has notably largely failed to adequately explore the role of ideas concerning whiteness.

Through the analysis in this chapter, I have built on the call of Beider (2015) for a more nuanced, and thus complete, discussion of whiteness and working-class identities, foregrounding the interplay of race and class. The finding that a significant number of the white working class feel marginalised and discriminated against confirms that, whilst such views are based largely on perceptions, the benefits of whiteness are not bestowed equally (Gillborn 2010). This calls into question how far members of the white working-class can draw on the cultural capital and privilege which is typically associated with whiteness. It also highlights an important critique of whiteness studies – namely the fact that limited attention has been paid to class overall due to a disproportionate and distorted focus on the working classes. Indeed the construction of the white working class has occupied the space for both the defence of this group and the anti-racist critique of the construction. In chapter six I will evidence the need to consider the relationality of different classes of white people. Before closing this chapter, it is important to reflect on what these findings mean in relation to my third research question. This sought to explore to what extent residents’ sense of belonging and attachment to place are influenced by initiatives surrounding cohesion and integration. The data presented in this chapter has shown that government policies are perceived as being of little importance to Gallatin residents’ lives, as tangible concerns surrounding access to housing were viewed as being far more immediate and thus of greater importance. As I will discuss in the concluding chapter of the thesis, there is a need to be honest about the fact that what I thought may be important at the outset of the research did not emerge as being so.

Discourses regarding unfairness and resentment suggest the existence of wider postcolonial cultural and political racism (Bhambra 2016, Gilroy 2006) which incorporates resentment about changing local populations and national identities. Some of my white participants’ interpretation of access to social resources in terms of a zero-sum game aided the development of racialised notions of threat which stimulated broader racist and xenophobic tendencies. The existence of a wider racism is further indicated by the conflation of different minority groups. Significantly, the focus of resentment largely failed to be disaggregated, incorporating the BAME British population alongside black and white migrants. This highlights the complexities and contradictions present in Gallatin – a theme which I discussed in chapter four. Whilst conversations surrounding belonging indicated that Gallatin is a site of multicultural conviviality and change, the discussions covered in this chapter about unfairness and access to resources portray the area as a site of retrenchment and resentment towards migration and social change. This indicates the fragility of situated conviviality. The multifaceted nature of attitudes and outlooks in Gallatin represents an important finding of the research. This challenges assumptions contained in the ‘left behind’ thesis which portray such communities in a stereotypical manner, neglecting the nuances and contradictions contained in them. These discussions bring the analysis back to conviviality as not being about ‘merry multiculture’ but the liminality of slipping between openness and inward-looking hostility and defensiveness – something which is captured in Back’s (1996) metropolitan paradox and helps to characterise the Gallatin community. This chapter and the previous one have also helped to demonstrate the differences between the data in terms of motivations of voting Leave, with this chapter demonstrating that race, migration and change were significant issues to some residents involved in the research.

The data presented in this chapter shows that apparent advances in the position of minority groups are interpreted by some members of the white working class as racially threatening and signifying the severing of the social contract between the state and themselves. Whilst it is important to note that this group have never been privileged in class terms, they were once more assured of access to homes and decent employment. This points to the role of age and generation as the majority of participants whose narratives I have discussed in this chapter were old enough to remember the time before these assurances were eroded. This links to the Brexit vote and the importance of age in this as my data indicates the existence of generational differences, with older and more long-term residents expressing resentment at the apparent betrayal of the social contract between the state and the white working class. Seeing racialised minority groupsaccessing social resources – whilst increasing numbers of the white British population have simultaneously experienced the deterioration of their economic position – is thus experienced as an inversion of the ‘natural order’ (Hewitt 2005, Rhodes 2010). These reflections indicate the complexities of the Leave vote.

**Chapter 6. *“It’s like a constant struggle for people”:* marginalisation and exclusion**

**Introduction**

This chapter seeks to analyse the drivers of a sense of marginalisation and exclusion that emerged as an important theme from the data, focusing on how and why participants’ accounts also included a sense of loss. There exists something of a paradox between the theme of loss which is discussed in this chapter and the presence of strong articulations of community which have been discussed elsewhere in the thesis. This is a tension which is considered in this chapter and serves to further highlight the complexities and ambivalences contained in working-class communities. Discourses concerning marginalisation and exclusion are highly relevant to discussions of Brexit for, as Burrell and Hopkins (2019) note, the vote raised the question of who possesses a ‘voice’. An important finding of my research is the decision of a significant number of Gallatin residents in my study to not vote in the EU referendum. This indicates the core themes discussed in this final empirical chapter as participants’ lack of political participation was bound up with their experience of marginalisation, such as that based on class and poverty. I will demonstrate that considering wider structural shifts is crucial to aiding an understanding of the concerns in working-class communities and the complexity of how residents interacted with the EU referendum and the vote for Brexit in Gallatin. Erroneously ignoring the role of external factors in shaping the contemporary reality of working-class lives has helped lead to problematically simplistic, as well as racially exclusive, imaginings of the ‘left behind’ (Rhodes et al 2019). It is important to, however, briefly note the shift that occurred surrounding the 2019 general election (which took place shortly after my data collection period). This witnessed, to a certain extent, the repositioning of the white working class in terms of the engagement of politicians with this group. The campaigns displayed significant effort being put into winning over working-class communities as Conservative politicians made appeals to address the predominant concerns present in these locales. Maragret Thatcher had used similar tactics previously too. As I discuss in this chapter, these centre on entrenched notions of marginalisation and exclusion as a result of change and loss.

The data and findings presented in this chapter add to understandings of the impact of long-term and short-term structural forces and changes on working-class communities. This facilitates a critical engagement with the ‘left behind’ thesis and its purported relevance to the Brexit vote. My research findings support those of Rhodes et al’s (2019) study which sought to reframe the dominant ‘left behind’ narrative through a critical exploration of class, race and place in Oldham, exploring similar issues in a different location (however, also one which is part of ‘the North’). Rhodes et al (2019) show that the ‘left behind’ assertion oversimplifies the complexity of views held by members of the white working class by reducing working-class politics to anti-immigrant discourses and racial resentment. It will be argued in this chapter that by framing the white working class as ‘left behind’, we risk attributing supposed socio-cultural incompetence to a group whose circumstances have been crucially influenced by a range of structural shifts which have exacerbated divisions and inequalities between classes over the last forty years (McKenzie 2017b).

The chapter will begin by considering discourses of neighbourhood loss, significant among Gallatin’s long-term residents, looking at the role of forces and trends external to the locale (chiefly deindustrialisation) in this. This will be followed by a section on how experiences of poverty and deprivation further a sense of marginalisation and exclusion. It is instructive here to briefly reiterate some of the statistics relating to deprivation in Gallatin which were outlined in the methodology chapter. As detailed in chapters one and three, according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019), much of Gallatin is amongst the 10 per cent most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. The area’s median household income is below £20,000 a year (Experian Mosaic 2015) whilst statistics from Sheffield City Council show that 15.5% of households earn less than £10,000. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019) also ranks Gallatin among the ten per cent most deprived local neighbourhoods in the country in terms of employment deprivation and educational skills and training. Over 40 per cent of the ward’s residents are economically inactive, according to Sheffield City Council. Whilst poverty in Gallatin – based on various measures – has been a persistent issue, my data indicates that difficulties have become more intense over the last decade due to austerity measures which have seen repeated cuts made to public spending and provision. The chapter will then move on to considering experiences of class-based marginalisation, exploring how class shaped a sense of being left out of the uneven post-industrial regeneration of Sheffield and actively excluded by deindustrialisation processes alongside the decline of working-class political organisations. The sense of exclusion present in Gallatin residents’ narratives will be explored further in the final part of the chapter in relation to the theme of political marginalisation. I found that many residents had not voted in the EU referendum, demonstrating a pervasive sense of marginalisation and disillusionment with politics. This reinforces the importance of critiquing the argument that the white working classes were responsible for the Brexit vote. My analysis that follows disrupts and complicates much of the assumptions about the white working class.

**Neighbourhood loss**

Alongside the senses of belonging expressed by participants and explored in chapter four were expressions of loss and concerns about social change. The concept of nostalgia was introduced in the literature review chapter in relation to the role it plays in discourses of belonging. The existence of nostalgia is dependent upon a perception of change and a departure from the past. Informed by literature on neighbourhood nostalgia, in this section I explore discourses focusing on neighbourhood loss, examining the changes in Gallatin which have produced this. As is generally found in research on nostalgia (Blokland 2004, Savage 2008), these narratives came almost exclusively from participants who had been long-term residents, thereby indicating that longer length of residence facilitates stronger claims to belonging. Interestingly, such discourses came from both white and non-white participants in my study. This suggests that the theme of neighbourhood loss is more complex than can be explained by racialised forms of belonging as investment in the local community through the development of social capital and becoming one of ‘us’ (as discussed in chapter four) also play an important role in understanding these discourses.

Amongst a number of the stakeholders and older residents who took part in the research, a general narrative emerged of the impact of changes which had taken place in Gallatin over time. This traced the early history of the area as a slum clearance development. Participants’ memories about this era capture the golden age of the estate view (Ravetz 2001) as they spoke of this period in a sentimental and affectionate manner. DeeDee and Caitlin – both long-term white residents and Gallatin Community Organisation (GCO) employees - noted that the houses and general area had seemed like relative luxury as many families had moved there from Sheffield’s slums. Caitlin, for example, reflected about families’ experiences of:

*“Moving up from neighbourhoods around the steel works to this brand new estate […] which was like this up on a hill, fresh air, there were still lots of farms and green fields, brand new housing, bathrooms inside”.*

DeeDee went on to talk about the fact that “it was poor but people worked – they were working-class people who grafted really hard and took pride in their houses”, thereby capturing popular images of traditional working-class families as hard-working and house-proud (Hoggart 1992, Walkerdine 1997). Moreover, DeeDee recalled that Gallatin in years gone by had a “massive social scene; there were lots of working men’s clubs, there were lots of clubs, pubs”, thus evoking an image of a strong and active community. The narratives of participants like Caitlin and DeeDee of early Gallatin emphasise memories and the role of these in local people’s descriptions of identity and change.

This narrative went on to plot the area’s decline – a narrative that is dominant in Sheffield more generally through the city’s identity as the steel city with a proud working-class history which is racialised and gendered. Deindustrialisation was commonly cited as the main cause of the locale’s downward spiral in the latter part of the twentieth century. Issues related to the closure of industries such as the steelworks were compounded by the fact that many workers in Gallatin did not have the right skill set for the new jobs which replaced them. Caitlin reflected that “people were losing their jobs, being made redundant, and then obviously the skill set for those workers didn’t fit with what was coming forward” – such as employment in call centres which required IT and communication skills. DeeDee noted that during this period she “watched the whole community become lost” as the systemic impact of unemployment led to a loss of purpose for many men whose traditional role had been as the family’s breadwinner. These discourses indicate the role of structural forces outside the control of Gallatin residents in producing changes within their locale. These changes, which are characterised by a sense of loss, underscore attachment to place as such discourses incorporated the affectionate memories noted above about Gallatin’s past prior to deindustrialisation.

In contradiction to the strong sense of community discussed in chapter four, a core theme in discussions of negative change among some of Gallatin’s more long-term and often older residents was a loss of community (Pinkster 2016). There are therefore inconsistencies between these discourses of urban decline which contain nostalgia for the neighbourly relations of the past (Blokland 2003) and the previously discussed descriptions of Gallatin’s strong community aspect. Reflecting on this paradox in terms of the coexistence of these seemingly incongruous narratives, it was mostly – although not exclusively – more long-term residents who recognised a loss of community whilst newer residents tended to be far more likely to cite the existence of a strong community in Gallatin today. Therefore, it was generally different types of participants who voiced these divergent views, indicating the importance of life course and generation as well as individual experiences and biographies in terms of how local community is experienced.

Tilly represents a good example of a long-term resident who identified a loss of community in the area during the course of her lifetime. Tilly is a middle-aged black Caribbean woman who grew up in Gallatin and remained in the locality for the majority of her life – moving away for a short period of time as an adult before returning. She lamented to me during her interview that “all the new people that’re coming, they do keep themselves to themselves”. This narrative is premised on her experience of Gallatin as a place where residents knew and spoke to each other in the past (Ramsden 2016). Tilly went on to cite the increased student presence in Gallatin as a major contributing factor to this shift due to the transience of this group. She noted her recognition in more recent years that:

*“All the houses had been bought by well-to-do people as it were and rented them out to students. So there’s no community like that anymore, there’s no, I don’t know how to put it, it’s just students. And it’s coming and going, coming and going”.*

The excerpt clearly captures Tilly’s sense of a loss of community in Gallatin and links to wider issues surrounding the impact of the growth of universities on local communities. This is something which is critical to the local economy but has far-reaching consequences which are not all positive. As I identified in chapter four, contrary to common assumptions about supposedly ‘left behind’ areas, contemporary Gallatin has a relatively diverse demographic make-up as a result of increased mobility into and out of the area. Tilly’s reflections suggest that discourses surrounding loss and change are connected to memories about immobility which are implicitly linked to the establishment of stable neighbourly relations and a sense of community. Similar discourses emerged in Pinkster’s (2016) study of change in a working-class neighbourhood in Amsterdam. These residents complained - much the same as Tilly - that new and more affluent residents fail to invest in the established community (Pinkster 2016). Wessendorf’s (2013) research in Hackney also identified a degree of resentment directed towards hipsters who, like students in Gallatin, were viewed as not mixing with the established community. It is important to reiterate the fact that Tilly is a black Caribbean woman, meaning that the loss of community discourse was by no means exclusive to white residents. This diverges from much work on neighbourhood nostalgia (see for example Back 1996 and Wells and Watson 2005) which has found sentiments about a loss of community to come predominantly from the white British population and to centre on ethnic and cultural changes in an area.

Fiona, a middle-aged white woman who I have discussed in the previous two chapters, is another long-term resident who reminisced about life in Gallatin and the strong sense of community in days gone by, telling me that:

*“Before you could trust everybody and everybody looked out for each other, you could knock on your neighbour’s door and ask for a bag of sugar or a teabag, but nowadays they look down at you if do that”.*

Being able to ask for help from neighbours is a common trope in research which has dealt with discourses of neighbourhood change and nostalgia. This extract demonstrates Fiona capturing a sense of decline in her narrative of Gallatin. She felt that the strong sense of community she remembered from the past had all but disappeared from the area today as, in her view, residents no longer look out for each other. Both Fiona’s and Tilly’s narratives evoke a clear sense of loss which is based primarily on the apparent demise of community spirit as a result of changes in the locale. There are clear inconsistencies between this narrative and those discussed in chapter four as I have evidenced participants’ framing of the present as community spirited whilst simultaneously lamenting the demise of community spirit. Both of these narratives are able to survive as they are primarily told by different groups of people – signifying the complexity of views which exist in working-class communities.

Interestingly, despite the discussions in the previous chapter and the significant changes in Gallatin’s demographic profile over the past two decades, only a handful of residents invoked the locale’s diversified ethnic and cultural make-up as a cause of a sense of loss. When concerns about perceived negative changes based on this did emerge, they often focused on the presence of different languages. An example of this discourse comes from Brian, who is a late-middle-aged unemployed white male who has lived in Gallatin for around two decades. He bemoaned the fact that “if you get on a bus, I’ve not got on a bus for years me, and you get all these people – Chinese, Hindu and talking all languages – what the hell has gone off here?”. The accuracy of Brian’s claims about who is on public transport is questionable as he admits that it has been a long time since he travelled on a bus. Nevertheless, his comments signify longing for a homogenous white past in which everyone speaks English. Brian may be invoking the similar comments made by prominent politicians and public figures. Nigel Farage, for example, has made high-profile interventions about the use of foreign languages on public transport (Gilroy 2012).

Discourses like those of Brian were voiced exclusively by a small minority of older, white long-term residents. The rarity of such comments means that the data presented here displays different patterns from the studies of Back (1996) and Wells and Watson (2005) – discussed in the literature review – which found changes in the racial and ethnic profile of an area to be the key drivers of nostalgic rhetoric. My data has instead indicated that narratives surrounding loss and change cannot be fully explained by racialised understandings of belonging – as the example of Tilly’s narrative shows. As with the Camden residents involved in Watt’s (2006) qualitative research, the impact of economic restructuring and the related decline of public welfare services in Gallatin emerged as far greater and widespread concerns than those based on demographic change, immigration and identity. As I argued in chapter four, many people in Gallatin rub along well with the different groups now present in the locale, meaning that concerns about diversity, which are prevalent in current media and political discourse, fail to resonate with a significant number of residents. It is, however, important not to overstate the extent of positive convivial relations in Gallatin as chapter five highlighted the existence of racialised discourses of unfairness. This again signals the complexities and ambiguities present in working-class communities like Gallatin which emerged as a key finding of the research.

Considering the role of collective memory helps to establish a link between individual affective tendencies, the Brexit vote and the localised discourses characterised by change and loss discussed in this section. de Saint-Laurent et al (2017) have drawn attention to the role of collective memory as a political tool. They cite Nigel Farage’s infamous cry for white British voters to ‘take [their] country back’ as an example of the ways in which the successful Brexit campaign appealed to a glorified vision of the nation supposedly pre-immigration as homogeneously white and both economically and socially prosperous (de Saint-Laurent et al 2017, Demir 2017, Seidler 2018, Virdee and McGeever 2018). Such discourses work to distinguish ‘us’ who can remember an apparently better past from ‘them’ who are relative newcomers and therefore do not possess this knowledge (Blokland 2003, Elias and Scotson 1994). There exists a link between Gallatin residents’ narratives of neighbourhood loss and the racialised nostalgia surrounding the nation which played a key role in the Brexit debates (Bhambra 2017, de Saint-Laurent 2017). This reiterates the role of age and generation in the vote. The discourses of loss and change discussed in this section were generally not voiced by the research’s younger participants. It therefore appears that relatively older individuals, amongst whom broader nostalgic discourses were of greater significance, were more likely to find relevance and importance in the narratives of the Leave campaign – although for a number of local residents I spoke to this was not so much so that they were exercised enough to actually vote Leave. Through politicians’ racialised appeals for a return to a past which is imagined as superior to the present (Bhambra 2017), long-term and generally older residents are reminded of the perceived golden age (Ravetz 2001) of their locale. The next section will further reflect on the role of wider structural shifts such as deindustrialisation and austerity as I consider poverty and deprivation in Gallatin.

**Poverty and deprivation**

This section of the chapter is specifically concerned with the policy aspect of the research. As outlined in the methodology chapter and at the outset of this chapter, Gallatin is an area of significant deprivation. This section will discuss the role of issues surrounding poverty and deprivation which emerged from the research, highlighting the increased difficulties experienced in the past decade as a result of austerity measures. Social class emerges as important in the context of the austerity policies of successive Conservative governments as those in low socio-economic positions are the most likely to have been disadvantaged by these measures (Alston 2018, Emejulu 2016) - meaning that austerity works to exacerbate pre-existing insecurities (Cooper and Whyte 2017). The results presented here critically engage with interpretations of whiteness as traditionally functioning as a site of advantage and privilege (Frankenberg 1993, McIntosh 1997, Ware 1992, Ware and Back 2002). I have explored the role of poverty experienced by members of the working class, including ethnicity in my analysis. In exploring deprivation in Gallatin, the section highlights the ways in which the Gallatin community as a whole has been largely left out of processes of uneven economic development. It is also interesting to note that, as I have written elsewhere in the thesis, a number of those involved in community building in Gallatin are residents too – such as DeeDee, Caitlin and Helena who had all lived in the locale for a number of decades. This, I would argue, indicates the internal strength of the community.

A number of the local stakeholders who were interviewed for the research spoke about the long-standing issue of deprivation in Gallatin. Helena – one of the area’s local councillors and a white long-term resident – remarked that “we just can’t crack this, well, poverty issue”. She noted the persistence of deprivation despite targeted work done by GCO in the area to increase employment and enhance skills training. Returning to deindustrialisation is crucial to understanding the factors behind the high levels of poverty in the locale. Julie, the CEO of GCO, talked about this at length after I asked her about deindustrialisation’s impact on the area:

*“Deindustrialisation was the direct cause of Gallatin becoming a disadvantaged area. The estate was actually built to serve the steel and engineering industries and for people who were moved out of the slum areas of Sheffield. So when you started to see the steel and engineering industries shrinking or collapsing then it had a direct impact on this area, because people were earning decent money in unskilled jobs. So they didn’t need to worry about education because they were walking into good jobs. They didn’t have the skills for the new jobs which were coming on stream, which very much relied on having a decent education and at least having some skills around IT or English, you know the written English.”*

Julie’s reflections evidence the fact that underlying the area’s poverty are the linked problems of unemployment and lack of qualifications, which both became issues following deindustrialisation and the loss of secure manual jobsin the 1980s. As noted in the previous section and underscoredby Julie’s comments, wider changes within the UK’s employment sector in the latter part of the twentieth century had a highly damaging impact on Gallatin’s manual workers who were largely unprepared for the shift to service sector work. An understanding of this is crucial when considering contemporary deprivation in the area.

A significant number of those involved in the research spoke about economic concerns for themselves and those around them, thereby signalling the struggle to make ends meet which is experienced by manypeople in contemporary Gallatin. DeeDee – GCO’s community development officer and a white long-term resident - spoke about the pressures experienced by parents in terms of earning money alongside raising their children:

*“I see mums in Gallatin literally leaving in a morning going to a job, coming back at tea, like at lunchtime, going back out again at like between lunch and teatime, coming back, going home, feeding kids, going back out again at night […] work[ing] three jobs a day. How can somebody possibly do that?”*

This indicates the difficulties which areencountered in terms of having to hold down a number of jobs in order to earn enough money, all of which puts intense pressures on time. DeeDee’s comments reveal the impacts of the key features of Britain’s contemporary labour market, which is characterised by low and minimum-wage work, rising in-work poverty, precarity and zero-hours contracts. An understanding of the coagulation of these trends helps to explain the difficult circumstances faced by mothers in Gallatin as they juggle a number of precarious and low-paid jobs in order to feed their families. These changes in the labour market also signify the loss of stable and reliable work. As Fletcher (2010) writes - and as indicated in DeeDee’s narrative - deindustrialisation has generated new forms of employment-centred poverty which has seen rising levels of deprivation among both non-white and white groups.

Whilst limited personal fundshave long been issues in the area, the data revealed that making ends meet is becoming increasingly difficult for many residents. Mark (a white, middle-aged unemployed male who had lived in Gallatin his entire life) talked about this at length:

*“When people go on the dole and money’s not there like it used to be, you don’t get as much money as they used, a lot, a lot, not a lot of money on dole. But thing is things like gas, electricity goes up. Food, cost of food goes up … So it’s like a constant struggle for people. I think these days I struggle to pay the bills ‘cos you can either pay your gas, electricity, your rent and stuff like that, then you’re like struggling to buy food. Or you pay, pay, buy the food first then they’re struggling to pay, so you’re kinda like, it’s like a catch twenty-two.”*

Much the same as DeeDee, Mark’s comments indicate the financial pressures which many people in Gallatin are living under. He notes his first-hand experience of these issues becoming more intense due to welfare payments decreasing whilst the cost of living goes up. Mark’s reflections reaffirm the fact that increasing numbers of people are finding themselves having to make tough choices, for example between heating and eating (O’Connell and Hamilton 2017).

It is important to consider the role of austerity policies in exacerbating Gallatin’s long-standing issue of deprivation, a discussion which reveals being racially categorised as white affords no clear advantage in these challenging circumstances (Cooper and Whyte 2017)*.* A number of participants in the research made references to the impact of austerity-enforced government and local council spending cuts on themselves and their locale. The resulting inadequate upkeep of communal space is a theme which Fiona – a white middle-aged and long-term Gallatin resident - spoke about at length during my photo-elicitation interview with her. She noted, for example, that trees had grown too high and nowrepresented a danger to homes, vandalism damage had not been repaired, litter was not being picked up, and the general upkeep of properties was not being met: “it’s certain things like years ago they [the council] would upkeep that every so many years, and then now it’s like going to zero, which it’s obviously down to costs”.Present in Fiona’s narrative was a sense of loss as she depicts the negative shiftwhich has taken place away from when the council was more efficient and active in the local community. The council’s overall government funding was cut by twenty-seven million pounds in 2018/19 (Sheffield City Council 2018), with the cumulative total of savings and financial pressures over the past decade reported to have totalled four hundred and eighty million pounds by 2020/21 (Sheffield Newsroom 2019). Fiona’s perceptions are thus grounded in the material reality of a dramatically reduced public spending budget.

A number of the images Fiona took for the research demonstrated her view of the inadequacy of the council in Gallatin, based largely on the impacts of funding cuts to their operations. Fiona explained these photographs in terms of her frustration at the lack of council upkeep*,* citing this as one of the key things she dislikes about living in Gallatin. This was a theme which she spoke about at length in both her standard interview and her photo-elicitation interview, contrasting the current situation with the more active and efficient council presence of years gone by. Image one is of an acorn tree next to Fiona’s back garden. The tree – which she told me belongs to the council – has been untended for so long that it now pushes on her fence and is in danger of knocking it down. Image two, depicting broken park furnishings, represents a further example of the council failing to fulfil their responsibility for general maintenance. This demonstrates the ways in which experiences of austerity manifest in people’s everyday experiences at the local level, such as through an increased lack of maintenance to properties and public spaces (Pinkster 2016). This discussion also helps to evidence the disproportionate impact of austerity on already disadvantaged communities (Alston 2018, Emejulu 2016) by highlighting the perceptible effects that spending cuts have had in Gallatin. The white racial categorisation of many of Gallatin’s residents, such as Fiona, offered them little protection from the detrimental impact of austerity on their community. These examples contribute to feeling ‘left out’ and thus play an important role in my wider argument which is based on a sense of being abandoned and forgotten about.



*Image one:* overgrown acorn tree

*Image two:* lack of park upkeep

A concern directly linked to the politics of austerity which was cited by a considerable number of both stakeholder and local resident participants was increased reliance on food banks. As outlined in the literature review, food banks are more likely to open in areas which have been hit by austerity measures (O’Connell and Hamilton 2017). Given Gallatin’s socio-economic profile, and thus the impact of austerity on the area, it is of little surprise that food banks are increasingly relied upon. Through the course of my research I attended a number of different food banks as these took place at community centres I attended as part of my volunteering work with GCO. I drew a small number of participants from these food banks, such as Ola. Attending food banks in Gallatin alerted me to the volume of people needing to access these. Val – a retired white resident - reflected on the valuable resource which food banks have become during her interview:

*“Having food banks and stuff like this for people that just don’t have enough money to live on. It shouldn’t be like that. […] I think it’s humiliating for some of them, there should be a lot more help out there and helping them, you know. I think it’s great what they do, you know, but we shouldn’t be going hungry anymore”.*

Val’s comments evidence her anger and dismay at the spread of poverty and her concern surrounding the numbers of people in Gallatin needing to rely on food banks. She went on to explicitly link recent government policies with increased reliance on food banks, noting that “they’re bringing all these like universal credits in and things like that, they’re not helping the people at all. They’re making it worse for them”. This demonstrates the detrimental impact of the interplay of a number of different policies, with the roll-out of universal credit embodying the amalgamation of benefit reforms and the promotion of austerity (Alston 2018). As I noted in the previous chapter in relation to Val’s comments on government cuts, Val is clearly aware of the impact of the wider political and policy context. Dependence on food banks in Gallatin as a result of increased poverty due to a range of government policies simultaneously complicates the association of whiteness with privilege by starkly depicting the extent of poverty experienced by all groups in the area.

As I have indicated in this section, narratives about poverty and deprivation constituted an important thread amongst participants of different generations and ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This reveals that exclusion based on poverty is an experience shared amongst all working-class groups. For example, Ola – a white Polish resident in her thirties – spoke about her experience of deprivation and needing to access a local food bank:

*“It’s only recently that I’ve lost my job and I was like between jobs, I didn’t have a job for like two months. So obviously I like missed my bills and mortgage and stuff, so I got in a bit of difficulty. So this place [the food bank] it’s great because I didn’t like, I have all these bills to pay and I didn’t have the money. So obviously if I didn’t have money for bills I didn’t have money for food. So this place it’s really good if you’re going, ‘cos I thought I was never gonna be in this situation, and you just never know what’s gonna happen in your life. So it’s great that places like food banks exist, ‘cos, you know, what would you do otherwise?”*

Ola’s experience portrays the ways in which individuals with more formal education (Ola holds a level two NVQ in business and administration alongside A levels) and skill sets relevant to Britain’s contemporary labour market are nevertheless vulnerable to poverty. In Ola’s case it was being in-between jobs and thereby lacking income for a short period of time which led to these difficulties. This signals the cross-generational and cross-cultural nature of experiences of poverty, revealing the ways in which all members of the working classes are impacted negatively by uneven economic development.

The findings discussed in this section are similar to those of Rhodes et al’s (2019) study in Oldham which I introduced at the beginning of the chapter. The authors found austerity to be viewed as a more pressing political concern than immigration and Brexit (Rhodes et al 2019). This resonates with the argument I made in chapter four that migration was not the sole cause of the area’s overall Leave vote, although it was a clear factor. Rhodes et al (2019) further found that – amongst their participants of different ethnic backgrounds – Brexit was a source of concern based on the ways it would economically impact on Oldham. A number of my participants from a range of ethnic backgrounds similarly expressed worries about how Brexit would affect local economic conditions which are already severely compromised following a decade of austerity. Reflections from my field notes taken in June 2019 at a weekly arts and crafts group reveal the ways in which concerns about Brexit are closely connected to experiences of deprivation:

*Ellie and Rose [both retired white residents] mentioned that they had heard that the NHS may be privatised after Brexit. They were concerned that this would mean that they would no longer be able to use this service if they had to start paying for it, as both women noted that money is already tight for them and they thus feared that they would not be able to pay for this extra cost. Being able to afford prescriptions for medication was a major concern to the women. Ellie, for example, noted that she would probably have to stop taking two of the sets of tablets she currently takes in order to afford to continue getting the most important one.*

This conversation thus highlighted both the struggle to make ends meet which is experienced by some of Gallatin’s inhabitants and the existence of fears surrounding the outcomes of Brexit. The latter point is inextricably bound to the former as it is residents’ financial vulnerability which makes increased costs created by Britain’s departure from the EU a worry. This also indicates how the impact of Brexit may be viewed negatively - even in Brexit-voting areas.

This section has further highlighted the ways in which changes and forces in wider society have impacted on residents in Gallatin through making deprivation, and more extreme poverty, a lived reality for an increasing number of people. Characterising predominantly working-class communities in post-industrial spaces like Gallatin as increasingly left out and marginalised is more accurate than the patronising depictions, which have gained particular traction following the Brexit vote, of the ostensibly white working class as ‘left behind’ and unable to keep pace with economic change. This is something which Carl – one of the city-level stakeholders I interviewed – reflected on:

*“When I was trying to make sense of the Brexit vote, people started talking about people who are ‘left behind’ and I started using that terminology for a while. But I’ve stopped now […] because it implies that oh, they missed the bus. You know, there was a bus journey and they didn’t get it, they got left behind. Well, did they get up late, were they not organised? But actually I think now is it’s more accurate not to talk about the ‘left behind’ but the ‘excluded’.”*

Here Carl reflects on the inherent issues with the ‘left behind’ terminology which serves to blame the poor for their deprivation. The term proposed by Carl – ‘excluded’ – is very similar to my argument for a repositioned focus on the ‘left out’. As I have shown through my discussion of the impacts of deindustrialisation and austerity, considering wider changes and systemic issues is crucial to understanding the contemporary position and narratives of the working classes.

Whilst noting that deprivation is an experience which cuts across ethnic and generational differences in Gallatin, much of this section’s discussion has focused on the poverty experienced by white British residents due to the fact that members of this group constituted the majority of my participants. I have shown that the white working class in Gallatin have been left out of uneven processes of economic development in much the same way that minority members of the working classes have. This adds to work on whiteness by calling into question notions of claims to a white racial identity affording protection from deprivation. In the following section I will discuss the marked shift in recent decades away from depictions of the white working class which conjure up notions of pride and respect (Jones 2011, Snoussi and Mompelat 2019, Tyler 2013) through a consideration of classed experiences of marginalisation.

**Class and marginalisation**

In this section I will consider experiences of class-based marginalisation. I focus on the narratives of my white participants and their discourses concerning classed exclusion. The data demonstrates that much existing literature on whiteness pays inadequate attention to class overall and thereby ignores the fact that class is highly relational. My analysis indicates that there exists a vested middle-class interest in devaluing working-class identities as this enables the middle classes to view themselves more positively. The work of Tyler (2013) has evidenced the intensification of stigma surrounding the working classes through ‘poverty porn’ which works to ostracise and exclude working-class people from mainstream society. Lawler (2012) has further highlighted the ways in which members of the white working class are positioned as losers in multicultural Britain due to their supposedly backward-looking mentality and bitterness about increased diversity. The media and politicians have, states Tyler (2015), used this sense of abandonment as an explanation of white working-class resentment and expressions of racism directed towards ethnic minorities and immigrants. This narrative is important in relation to the Brexit debates which have seen the white working class cast as cut adrift from social change in Britain. In this section I will begin by considering explicit references made by participants to the importance of class before exploring how class shaped a sense of being left out of uneven post-industrial regeneration. I will then discuss the implications of this new knowledge for understandings of whiteness. I finally reflect on the importance of considering classed exclusion and marginalisation to comprehending the Brexit vote in Gallatin.

A number of my discussions with local residents indicated a shift away from depictions of the white working class evoking pride and respect (Jones 2011, Snoussi and Mompelat 2019, Tyler 2013). This supports Wacquant’s (2019) work which has highlighted the convergence of long-term government policy changes, recent media panics and the emergence of ‘poverty reality’ television programmes in creating caricatures of the poor as ‘scroungers’ who are to blame for their deprivation. The marginalisation of working-class people, based on a degree of contempt, was articulated clearly by Emily – a white middle-aged resident who moved to Gallatin from elsewhere in Sheffield in the last decade. Following a working-class upbringing in the city, Emily gained a degree as a mature student which enabled her to pursue a middle-class career. During her life she had lived in a number of neighbourhoods in Sheffield and spoke about her experience of the different treatment she received from people based on where she was living at the time. My questioning about what people who are not from Gallatin think about the area prompted Emily to make the following reflections:

*“It’s funny because where I used to live when I were young [speaking of a working class area of the city], err you’d say what your name were and then you’d give your address and people would go “oh” [in a derogatory manner], and when I lived in a student house for a bit in S11 [one of Sheffield’s most affluent postal districts] people would go “oh!” [in an impressed manner]. And I used to play with that a little bit ‘cos you know like I am actually the same person! And it definitely, the nicest thing you’d get is people going “oh I know someone who used to live there, it’s alright there” and they’ll sort of apologetically say it, it’s alright really! [laughs] That’s the best you get!”*

Emily thus holds knowledge – based on personal experiences - of marginalisation based on interpretations of your class position and the ways in which judgements about where you live affect other peoples’ interactions with you. The resulting exclusion of working-class people is evidenced by Emily’s claim that “they wouldn’t like any of us in Fulwood” (one of Sheffield’s most affluent neighbourhoods) due to her local accent identifying her class position. These reflections demonstrate a sense of class labels being both powerful and hard to get away from, thereby supporting Sveinsson’s (2009) claim that ‘Britain remains dominated by class divisions’ (p4).

As noted by McKenzie (2017b), the working classes have been actively excluded and ‘left out’ of wider culture and society over the past few decades through structural shifts and processes such as gentrification. A particular issue which arose from conversations with a number of my participants was the redevelopment of Sheffield city centre, with discussions centring on the movement of the markets. This has been a contentious local matter, with the old market tending to serve the working classes whilst the new market has a far more middle-class clientele. The location of the new market – at the opposite end of the city centre and thus a considerable walk from the old site – is harder for some people to get to because of the limitations of bus routes. My discussions with Geoff – a retired white resident - revealed his resentment at the fact that he feels there are no longer any working-class spaces in the city centre, with him reminiscing:

*“I used to like it years ago, I used to go to markets end of town, and that were working class, that were me. If I went down Moor that were like upper class […] It were like going to two different cities, and it were brilliant. But all of a sudden all the money’s been invested in the bottom of the Moor, and even now all the shops are getting done up, and that part of town will be brilliant. But they’ve neglected this end of town”.*

This excerpt from Geoff’s interview transcript evidences a sense of unfairness at the diversion of investment to areas of town which tend to serve the middle classes - at the expense of more working-class spaces which have been neglected and are now in a state of dereliction and disrepair. Geoff’s comments reveal a sense of being left out (McKenzie 2017b) and excluded from the uneven post-industrial regeneration of the city.

My conversations with Maggie – a retired white working-class resident of Gallatin - also revealed a sense of loss concerning Sheffield city centre’s markets. It is worth noting the role of markets in multicultural working-class life, which authors such as Rhys-Taylor (2013) and Watson and Wells (2005) have written about. This represents another form of loss which my participants articulated which is distinct from golden days nostalgia. Maggie remembered there being many more stalls at the old market site and thus complained that it should not have been shut down. Both Geoff and Maggie generally avoided shopping at the new markets. By examining participants’ relational sense of belonging at the local level in the city, I have extended the work of Puwar (2004) and Noble and Poynting (2010) to reveal class-based spatial exclusion based on uneven urban regeneration which results in self-segregation. Geoff and Maggie’s perception of being excluded from the uneven development of the city is an aspect of my research which extends the work of McKenzie (2017b) by highlighting the role of urban regeneration in producing a sense of being left out. Indeed, the research of Rhodes et al (2019) in Oldham found similar narratives about uneven processes of urban regeneration as participants bemoaned the fact that efforts focused on the city centre. A focus on the ‘left behind’ obscures the concerns voiced by Geoff and Maggie about uneven regeneration.

My findings surrounding discussion of the markets signal the need for a greater recognition of the unequal and contested nature of claims to whiteness. The exclusion experienced and articulated by some participants as a result of their class position draws attention to the limitations of critical whiteness studies in accounting for white working-class experiences. As noted by Webster (2008), there exists a hierarchy of whiteness in which some people are viewed as less white and are therefore less able to draw on the benefits associated with a white identity. In this section I have shown how the class position of working-class participants served to largely exclude them from the trappings of white privilege (Beider 2015) through their experience of class-based marginalisation and exclusion. This highlights the fact that it is limiting to view whiteness solely in terms of racial domination (Wray 2008) as whiteness cannot always be claimed equally by all white people (Garner 2007, Haylett 2001). Within this context it is highly telling that the white working class are the remaining group in British society that it is widely deemed acceptable to speak about using derisive and discriminatory language (M. Collins 2004, Hanley 2007, Jones 2011). As noted by DeeDee, GCO’s community development worker, residents of areas such as Gallatin have been demonised in the past decade as “being scroungers, shirkers” - thereby representing an example of the wider stigmatisation of the white working class which serves to further their exclusion (Jones 2011, Tyler 2013). The data covered in this section importantly foregrounds the relational nature of class. Emily’s experiences of differential treatment based on perceptions of her class position demonstrate the way that negative reactions to those who live in working-class areas are counterposed with far more positive reactions to those living in affluent middle-class areas. The discussion of the markets also highlighted that working-class people like Geoff and Maggie feel excluded due to the more middle-class nature of the new site. Previous work exploring whiteness has largely failed to incorporate a relational examination of class into its analysis.

The popular characterisation of the working class as ‘left behind’ has been rightly criticised by McKenzie (2017b) for being overly simplistic and encouraging a devalued working-class identity to pervade. The ‘left behind’ narrative has a problematic tendency to patronisingly label the working class as socio-culturally incompetent whilst ignoring the deleterious impact of wider shifts on members of this group. The results of the research in Gallatin have further drawn into question the claims of the ‘left behind’ thesis by highlighting the degree of exclusion experienced by members of the white working class. The discussion of exclusion from uneven post-industrial urban regeneration is a good example of the ways in which changes in wider society have worked to produce classed marginalisation. Having said this, it is important to recognise the shift in discourse among the political right following the 2019 election which has seen something of a move away from the demonisation of some of the white working class. Whilst recognising that marginalisation and exclusion was nevertheless a reality for a significant number of my participants, it is also important to avoid patronisingly portraying the white working class as lacking agency – something which some depictions of the ‘left behind’ are guilty of. As discussed in chapter four, discourses of pride also played an important role in my conversations with residents. Local pride is a theme which DeeDee spoke about at length during her interview: “I’m proud of where I come from, ‘cos I’m proud of [the] people that I live with”. This highlights agency among members of the working class in rejecting internalising the stigma which much of wider society – such as government policies, ‘poverty porn’ television programmes and the ‘left behind’ characterisation - attaches to them and their neighbourhood by instead focusing on the aspects of their local community which they draw strength and pride from.

Before closing this section it is important to reflect on the role of age and generation in relation to the narratives discussed here concerning exclusion and being left out of urban regeneration. Geoff and Maggie are both of retirement age, meaning that they have witnessed more of the changes which have taken place across a number of decades. Significantly, they also both voted to Leave. Shilliam (2018) argues that the collapse of the white working class as a group labelled as deserving is closely bound to the Brexit result. Whilst it may be the case that a coagulation of concerns surrounding marginalisation and exclusion motivated some Gallatin residents to back Leave, neither Geoff nor Maggie explicitly cited this as a reason for them supporting Leave. As I discuss in depth in the next section, a considerable number of my local resident participants chose not to vote, thereby reifying and entrenching their sense of marginalisation.Whilst we cannot rely on class alone to explain the Brexit vote (Bhambra 2017), it is nevertheless necessary to consider the role of experiences of classed exclusion and marginalisation to aid our understanding of the dynamics surrounding the EU referendum.This simultaneously helps to complicate knowledge about whiteness by drawing attention to the nuances of this category. In the next section I will further explore how local residents engaged with the EU referendum and wider political issues, highlighting political marginalisation and a lack of participation as important themes to emerge from the data.

**Political marginalisation and lack of participation**

Political marginalisation and a resulting lack of participation constitute important themes which emerged from the data. A sense of powerlessness appeared to exist in relation to politics which is linked to the preceding discussion of classed marginalisation. This encompasses the ways in which some Gallatin residents felt that they lacked a political voice, leading to a belief that they possessed little power to influence political affairs – thereby furthering a sense of being left out. Importantly, I found that a significant proportion of residents who I spoke to did not vote in the EU referendum. Literature on political participation has shown that election turnout and party support have declined markedly over the last forty years (Whiteley 2009) – thereby suggesting that disillusionment with politics is an important phenomenon beyond Gallatin. Whilst a lack of political understanding emerged as a theme, this was laced with contradictions as significant degrees of knowledge, reflection and awareness were also present in the data. This section will consider these various nuances in its discussion of political marginalisation and the relationship of this to the Brexit vote.

To be politically disengaged has been defined by Uberoi and Johnston (2019) as occurring when we ‘do not know, value or participate in the democratic process’ (p4). In line with this definition, a significant proportion of participants spoke about abstention from voting. This took various forms, with some stating that they had never voted (“I’m not one for voting to be honest”, Val: white retired resident); others that they had stopped voting more recently (“years ago when my nan and grandad were alive I knew what to vote and could understand it”, Fiona: white middle-aged resident); and finally others who usually voted but had not in the EU referendum. Participants who fell into these non-voter categories tended to have less formal education qualifications - as shown in the demographic data I collected whilst conducting interviews which is displayed in chapter three - and would typically be described as working class. Two main reasons were cited for not voting in the EU referendum - a professed lack of understanding and a belief that what you vote does not make any difference.

The first perspective was typified by Dave – an unemployed white male in his fifties – who stated that: “I think it’s a waste of time voting [in the EU referendum], really, ‘cos I don’t understand what it’s about”. It is important to note that Dave told me that he usually voted in general elections due to a better understanding of what is at stake. Tilly, a middle-aged black Caribbean woman who was cited earlier and who had grown up in the locale and lived in Gallatin for the majority of her life, also spoke at length about the fact that she did not understand Brexit after I raised this topic during my interview with her:

*“I didn’t vote and I don’t understand any of it [Brexit], to be fair. And I try not to understand it. I mean it’s going for years now and they’re still talking about it on TV. But I still don’t know what’s happening and why or. Do you know what I mean? […] I’ve never been into politics ‘cos I never understand half of what they’re saying. But I definitely don’t understand Brexit”.*

Tilly’s narrative highlights the fact that a professed lack of understanding was an important theme amongst both white and black members of the working class. These comments from a diverse range of participants indicate a form of self-degradation and modesty (Charlesworth 2000) due to the fact that many residents failed to grasp what Brexit was about (as, of course, did much of the wider British population) and were thus largely disengaged. Indeed, Tilly said that she tried not to understand it. Thus Tilly also shows that political participation is about an agentic refusal to engage as well as a lack of understanding. Whilst this lack of engagement with the EU referendum vote is likely not specific to Gallatin, it nevertheless emerged as an important theme in my data.

Whilst conducting my research in Gallatin at a time when negotiations and debates about Britain’s departure from the EU were in the news continuously, I was struck by the general lack of interest surrounding Brexit among local people. Indeed, Brexit has almost entirely been popularly depicted as a wholesale reversal of voter apathy (see Goodhart 2017 and Goodwin and Heath 2016 for example), but my research highlights that there was still a lot of apathy among certain demographics who were subsequently ‘blamed’ for the Leave vote. Whilst turnouts were high, a third of the electorate still did not go to the polls. These have almost become a forgotten third in themselves. It is also telling that no one bothered collecting reliable, detailed voting data partly as the referendum was seen as a foregone conclusion. Many local residents and stakeholder participants attested that there had been a lack of any major buzz in Gallatin in summer 2016 at the time of the vote on Britain’s membership of the EU. Emma (a white local resident and community worker in Gallatin) reflected on this thus:

*“I think there wasn’t that sort of “I’m a proud Remainer” or “I’m a proud Leaver” prior to the referendum, it was just everyone’s making their decision, let’s just vote and see what happens […] the craft group, bless them, I tend to find are quite a good barometer in general of what people are interested in and they never once spoke about it. So I think, I kind of took that as a maybe they’re not interested kind of thing. It’s not something I’d bring up and say ooh let’s talk about this, particularly. But whereas another group that I went to [in different part of the city] the other week were like “we can talk about anything but not Brexit, don’t talk about Brexit”, I thought “that’s fine”, she’s like “we’ve had many arguments”. So they’ve obviously really discussed it when she’s saying we’ve had to ban it ‘cos of the arguments.”*

Here Emma draws attention to the noticeable lack of interest in Gallatin about Brexit both surrounding and after the EU referendum vote. This extract from her interview transcript also sees Emma draw a marked contrast between Gallatin and other areas, signalling her recognition of significant political disengagement and lack of participation in the locale. Pete, a white middle-aged local resident, voiced similar views when I asked him if there was much interest in Gallatin surrounding Brexit at the time of the vote, telling me that “we weren’t seeing loads of posters up round here, we’d see posters when we were driving through other areas, but there wasn’t a massive campaign”. Pete’s and Emma’s reflections indicate that the Brexit vote was not perceived as a particularly important issue in Gallatin, especially in comparison to other areas in which there was far more general discussion alongside targeted campaigns. My participants’ understanding of a lack of enthusiasm surrounding the vote is contrary to expectations about working-class areas like Gallatin which have popularly been depicted as key sites of avid engagement with the Leave campaign (Clarke et al 2017, Goodwin and Heath 2016).

It is interesting to reflect on the split in opinion among participants as to whether voter turnout was higher or lower than usual for the EU referendum. Views on this aligned closely with individuals’ personal voting tendencies. Remainers were more likely to report that turnout had been higher than usual: “they were queueing to vote, and polled about five times more than usual” (Helena, white local councillor and resident). In contrast, those who did not vote or had backed Leave tended to say that turnout at the polls had been poor: “I went past polling place and there weren’t that many there” (Brian, white middle-aged resident). Unfortunately there are no statistics available for Sheffield’s turnout in the 2016 EU referendum at the ward level. However, reports from the city’s returning officer for the 2018 and 2019 local elections reveal that the Gallatin ward typically has a very low turnout. In both these elections the turnout was just over twenty per cent, compared to around fifty per cent in more affluent parts of the city (Mothersole 2019 and 2018). It is important, however, to restate that Gallatin was nevertheless a good case study area for my research as it represents, to a certain extent, an example of an ostensibly ‘left behind’ Brexit voting area. Whether or not the turnout in Gallatin was higher or lower than usual for the EU referendum is impossible to ascertain, but it appears likely, based on my interviews with local people, that there was no significant increase in participation. This is interesting and conflicts with national-level commentary about those voting who had never previously voted (see for example Swales 2016).

Returning to the second main reason which emerged for not voting in the EU referendum – a belief that your vote does not make any difference – it appeared to be the case that a significant proportion of Gallatin residents perceived political issues to be outside their control. Again, this view was generally – although not exclusively - expressed by participants who were working class and held fewer educational qualifications. This fatalistic outlook was captured clearly in Val’s (retired white resident) narrative:

*“[I’m] not interested [in voting] to be honest, because they’ll [politicians] only do what they want to do […] I’m just not one for voting because I just think to myself, you vote, and if you miss out you’ve still gotta do […] what they tell you to do.”*

The notion that voting is a futile exercise is explicitly contained within Val’s narrative as she portrays politicians as not interested in the views of people like her – this appeared to be the case for Val as she did not appear to be actively rejecting voting as a tool of social change. These comments indicate a fatalistic outlook about contemporary politics in which Val feels marginalised and believes that she lacks a political voice. These findings are very similar to those of McKenzie’s (2017b) research with residents of ex-mining towns in the East Midlands. Her participants’ discourses centred on feelings of abandonment by mainstream politics. I have similarly evidenced a pervasive feeling of being left out and marginalised from politics which is both a symptom and cause of a lack of participation.

It is instructive here to consider the work of McKay (2019) which sought to capture the effects of economic context on discontent, using British Election Study data to investigate the factors which lead people to believe their community is ignored by the political process. The study found that areas with a low average income are associated with an increased likelihood of discontent with community representation. The importance of discourses about politicians not caring and not listening to local people was an important theme in my research, as evidenced in Jacqueline’s narrative. Jacqueline – a white middle-aged resident – has a more middle-class background than many residents in the area and is currently studying for a PhD. When I asked her if people in Gallatin feel that their voices are listened to by those in power, she replied:

*“Not at all. And I can give you my own personal example. My son goes to nursery and we catch the bus, there’s a bus stop across the road from it. And there’s people that drug deal, in the middle of the daylight, with three and four year olds. And we’ve reported it to the local councillor and we’ve not had any reply. Not even “yeah we’ve read your email”, nothing. And I know there’s other people that have reported bikes and the perception is that nothing is done. We’re not bothered, possibly because, and that goes back to economic value, we don’t have any economic value. Whereas if we were a, if we lived in a really big house and we had, maybe like my friend lives at the other side of Sheffield, there things seem to get done all the time!”*

There are a number of important themes which Jacqueline picks up on here. The notion of being marginalised is based on a perception of local councillors not engaging with the concerns of residents in Gallatin. This is contrasted with how the concerns of residents in more affluent parts of the city are acted upon by the council, with Jacqueline suggesting that a perceived lack of economic value in Gallatin results in residents’ concerns being marginalised. Jacqueline’s narrative, coupled with her class position, supports McKay’s (2019) argument that area-level factors take precedence over personal circumstances in stimulating political discontent. The importance of area-level factors also links back to the earlier discussion of poverty and deprivation as concerns surrounding a lack of council upkeep fuelled a notion of being seen as unimportant.

A clear sense of people in positions of power not caring about the concerns of Gallatin residents emerged as an important theme across the data. Fiona (white middle-aged resident), for example, reflected that:

“*They [politicians] need to get in the real world, they need to come on, live probably for a month on two hundred pound a week and try and pay their TV licence and their tax, their bills, and their food”.*

The perceived gulf between the lives of politicians and people in Gallatin is captured clearly in these comments, which simultaneously evidence the financial struggle which many residents face. Val similarly reflected that politicians “don’t care about the little people that’s struggling”, thereby indicating a gap between the concerns and priorities of politicians and those of Gallatin residents. Bound up in these discourses is a loss of trust and faith in politicians – something which was mentioned by many participants from a range of class backgrounds. Fiona, for example, went on to cite there being “no trust and believing [in politicians] anymore”. This was due to her repeated experience of promises made during election campaigns failing to be delivered. She told me that this was one of the main reasons why she had not voted in recent years, citing the failure of politicians to follow through on their pledges to invest in schools and the NHS leading to a feeling of being “duped”. Indeed, a recent Ipsos MORI (2016) poll found only twenty-one per cent of Britons agreed that politicians tell the truth. As McKenzie (2017b) has argued, members of the white working class largely failed to relate to pro-Remain discourses due to their sense of estrangement from Westminster politics. Contrary to popular assumptions, many of my participants importantly also failed to relate to the pro-Leave campaign – such as Val and Fiona who both did not vote in the EU referendum. It thus appears that the disillusionment with politics which my research identified can lead to less political participation which in turn furthers marginalisation. Indeed there is a strong link between marginalisation and voter apathy, as looking at recent general election turnouts shows. In 2019, for instance, the majority of the thirty lowest turnouts were in working-class (or at least post-industrial) areas such as Yorkshire and Humberside, the North East and the West Midlands - some of which were barely fifty per cent (McInnes 2020).

A significant number of participants also complained about their local councillors. Common grievances centred on their lack of visibility and how hard it is to get in touch with them. This was a view expressed clearly by Fiona:

*“Before we used to see people and we had people there, whereas now when you go in they make you feel like, feel quite out of place, you know, you’re more of a number not a person. And that’s happening a lot, even in the banks, in jobs, and that’s not a good thing to be”.*

As discussed earlier in the chapter, a number of the photos taken by Fiona for the research depicted the lack of local authority presence in contemporary Gallatin. These concerns link to the wider difficulty which emerged surrounding making your voice heard. Jacqueline, for example, questioned: “I mean where are they? Where are these councillors? I know they have surgeries […] but where are they really?” These comments encapsulate concerns about marginality in later modernity. A strong theme to emerge from my data was the perception that those in positions of power and authority are problematically detached from the lives, struggles and priorities of ordinary people in Gallatin. These concerns deviate importantly from the popular narrative surrounding white working-class racism and Brexit. Comments made by local residents instead highlighted the existence of a broader agenda surrounding socio-economic concerns, marginalisation and exclusion. The recent work of McKenzie (2017b) and Rhodes et al (2019) have likewise challenged prevailing depictions of the white working class, finding that dominant discourses did not tend to focus on race and migration. As I argued in chapter four, for many Gallatin residents there exist more pressing and immediate concerns than migration which they hoped a Leave vote would change. Having said this, migration was important for some residents who took part in the research; as the previous chapter’s focus on resentment and unfairness discussed. Also, a significant number of the local resident participants in my research voted to Remain.

As Rhodes et al (2019) neatly summarise, the ‘left behind’ narrative legitimates “a particularly dangerous form of nationalism undergirded by appeals to whiteness […] [which] grossly simplifies the complexity of views held by White working class people” (p3). This multiplicity of views has been a key theme throughout the data discussed in chapters four to six. This suggests a pressing need to reassess the ‘left behind’ thesis as a number of the themes discussed run contrary to popular depictions of an angry white working-class electorate, demonstrating instead the existence of a feeling of being marginalised and left out. As observed by DeeDee (white GCO employee and local resident), those in Gallatin who voted Leave:

*“felt disconnected and out of control, you know people that just felt […] they’ve not got any autonomy over their lives […] so they latched onto UKIP, latched onto 350 million pound on side of a bus” .*

In the context of DeeDee’s comments it is necessary to consider the relevance of whiteness as a factor explaining loss and the Brexit vote. One interpretation of voting for Brexit which is relevant to DeeDee’s comments is that this represented an attempt to reassert and reclaim the advantages of whiteness – something which is linked to re-emergent populist English nationalism. This portrays the vote for Brexit amongst members of the Gallatin electorate who did vote as largely a consequence of dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the status quo (McKenzie 2017b). My data revealed that the perception of exclusion and disconnection from politics was a theme across the political spectrum. This indicates the existence of a pervasive sense of marginalisation within late modernity among many Gallatin residents, encompassing feelings of loss, exclusion and anxiety about change over time. This is relevant to discussions of whiteness as populist nationalism offers the promise of racialised forms of inclusion which are predicated on whiteness and the lure of no longer feeling left out and disadvantaged.

# Whilst much of the discussion in this section has focused on the narratives of Gallatin’s white working-class residents in relation to feelings of abandonment, it should be borne in mind that I found disconnection with politics to be common amongst people of different ethnic backgrounds (see Rhodes et al 2019). Recall, for example, the comments of Tilly – a black Caribbean resident – about her complete lack of engagement with the EU referendum. This section has indicated that Brexit was at least in part a statement of discontent from some members of the white working class who felt themselves to be left out (McKenzie 2017b) of mainstream politics, economic development and cultural shifts. I have argued for the use of the term ‘left out’ in place of ‘left behind’ in order to better appreciate the ways in which changes in wider society have impacted negatively on many working-class people. This helps to shift attention surrounding the causes of disadvantage away from narratives which apportion blame to individuals and instead focus on the role of structural changes. A finding from my research which it is important not to overlook is the fact that a significant proportion of the residents who I spoke to did not vote. This develops McKenzie’s (2017a and 2017b) work which focuses on working-class Leave voters as my engagement with different members of the Gallatin community revealed that many residents did not participate in the EU referendum. This adds to an understanding of the working classes as increasingly left out by highlighting the ways in which this marginalisation results in a lack of political participation. My findings suggest that it is of increasing importance that meaningful efforts are made to engage with marginalised groups. Failing to do so has the potential to produce increased disillusionment by causing a retreat from political participation and, in some cases, a shift to political extremes, which in turn furthers marginalisation. This represents an important finding of the research which was discussed in the previous chapter. Listening to and acting on the concerns of people in communities such as Gallatin would go some way towards helping to combat the pervasive feeling of lacking a political voice which emerged from my data.

**Conclusion**

This chapter’s focus on discourses surrounding loss, change and exclusion among Gallatin’s residents has attempted to connect the importance of place with the Brexit vote. This has been done by exploring the role played by concerns specific to the experience of living in Gallatin in terms of how residents variously related to the Brexit vote. As argued at the outset of the thesis and in the literature review, conducting research at the local level is crucial to understanding Brexit due to the micro-geographies of the EU referendum vote. This chapter has sought to highlight the importance of considering the detrimental impact of wider structural forces on the working classes. This has added to sociological knowledge about the contemporary position of England’s working classes as the data has evidenced that members of disadvantaged communities have experienced the detrimental effects of changes which are largely outside their control. The damaging impact of these has highlighted that the whiteness of many members of the working class affords them little or no advantage. Similar to discussions in the previous chapter, this crucially draws into question the extent to which the contemporary white working class can draw on the privilege which is often attached to white identities. A focus on the role of external forces suggests that, rather than blaming members of the working class for their marginalisation and deprivation, we ought to pay attention to and seek to address the issues which have led to their vulnerable position in contemporary Britain. The narratives discussed in this chapter further suggest those in more privileged class positions should not be too hasty in dismissing the grievances of the white working class due to their whiteness, but should instead seek to understand how their class position mediates their racial categorisation and thereby impacts on their lived experiences.

Whilst much of the analysis in this chapter has focused on white British members of the working class (due, primarily, to the fact that individuals from this background represented the majority of my participants), it is important to recognise the ethnic diversity of the working class. I have attempted to show that the BAME and migrant working-class voices in my research tended to be very similar to those of my white working-class participants. This suggests that more research is needed as my thesis highlights gaps that need filling in terms of research with BAME groups through the lens of class. Indeed, social class represents an important thread throughout the various concerns voiced by residents. For example, deindustrialisation and austerity have both had a disproportionate impact on disadvantaged communities (Alston 2018, Emejulu 2016) like Gallatin. The analysis of my data has also highlighted the need to pay closer attention to class overall as my analysis highlights that there exists a vested middle-class interest in devaluing working-class identities. The data has further made an important contribution to knowledge by elucidating the role of political marginalisation in terms of how residents variously related to the Brexit vote. The popular depiction of the Leave majority being the result of a white working-class protest vote (Goodwin and Heath 2016, Shipman 2017) has been disputed by my finding that many residents failed to vote on Britain’s membership of the EU. This represents a key contribution of my research, evidencing the pervasive nature of exclusion and political apathy.

The findings of my research have implications for the ways in which the white working class are conceptualised and treated ­– both within academia and wider society – as the data presented here exposes the highly problematic nature of the patronising ‘left behind’ thesis which has also been used to invoke anti-migrant discourses. I have instead argued for the need to emphasise the multiple dimensions for both the Leave vote and not voting by evidencing the importance of acknowledging complexity and the role of multiple themes in order to explain Brexit. The ‘left behind’ framing of the white working class is attributed to supposed socio-cultural incompetence by ignoring the wider structural changes which have produced increased vulnerability amongst this group (McKenzie 2017a). It is far more accurate to conceptualise the white working class as increasingly ‘left out’. This is linked to economic processes and geography – such as the disproportionate impact of austerity on already disadvantaged communities. It is, however, important to appreciate that fragmentation exists within the white working class. Whilst finding similarities with McKenzie’s (2017a and 2017b) work in terms of our framing of the working classes as increasingly left out, my findings have enhanced knowledge by engaging with both voters and non-voters. This has highlighted the ways in which marginalisation can result in a retreat from voting.

In closing this final data analysis chapter, it is important to note that there exist both ambivalences and similarities between a number of the themes covered in this chapter and the previous two data analysis chapters.For example, whilst attachment and community emerged as important discourses amongst Gallatin residents in relation to local belonging (as discussed in chapter four), this chapter’s consideration of neighbourhood loss has evidenced the ways in which some residents view their local community through the lens of post-colonial decline – thereby implying that the Gallatin community is not as strong as it once was and invoking a sense of exclusion and loss. This signals the existence of what Back (1996) has termed the ‘metropolitan paradox’ in enabling seemingly contradictory discourses to simultaneously exist. In contrast, there are clear similarities between the data discussed in this chapter and chapter four as both evidence the ways in which immigration is by no means the sole or primary concern for many Gallatin residents. Taken together, much like the findings of McKenzie (2017b) and Rhodes et al (2019), the data presented across the empirical chapters indicates the complexity contained within working-class communities such as Gallatin and the need to better recognise and attend to this. This highlights how parts of the ‘left behind’ narrative oversimplify the concept of the white working class itself as well as the complexity of views held by members of this group by reducing working-class politics to anti-immigrant discourses and racial resentment (Rhodes et al 2019).

**Chapter 7. *“I don’t want the world, I want to be able to live in it”:* Conclusion**

It is the aim of this chapter to draw out and discuss the key conclusions of the research. The study set out to explore how residents in a predominantly working-class urban locality in Northern England articulate belonging in relation to the Brexit vote and the nation’s post-referendum future*.* I wanted to look at how the Brexit vote can be understood through the lens of whiteness, race, class, locality and place-based belonging. This final chapter in the thesis seeks to highlight and reviewthe key findings from the research. It will begin by demonstrating how the study’s research questions have been addressed, before discussing the key empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions made by the thesis. Directions for future study and implications for policy and practice will also be suggested, thereby demonstrating the potential contribution of the research to wider bodies of knowledge.

**Responding to the project’s research questions**

It is necessary in this concluding chapter of the thesis to return to the project’s three research questions, considering how the results of thestudyhelp to answer these. **The first research question aimed to ascertain to what extent residents’ sense of local belonging is raced and classed.** I have sought to avoid either vilifying or lionising members of the working class (Thomas et al 2017) by portraying the multifaceted – and at times inconsistent and contradictory – nature of attitudes towards belonging, race and diversity present in the Gallatin community. There emerged significant evidence, from both the residents and stakeholders involved in the project, that there continuestoexist a perception that there is a strong white working-class identity in Gallatin. This is a localised phenomenon which has its foundations in the area’s historic white working-class composition and is partly maintained by its continued reputation as a socially and economically disadvantaged white locale. The data discussed in chapter four suggested that, in their daily lives, many of the participants recognised the increasing ethnic diversity of Gallatin and experienced a sense of inclusion. Indeed, Tilly, a black Caribbean resident, told me that one of the things she particularly liked about living in Gallatin is “definitely the community”. In chapter five, however, I revealed the ways in which some white residents held racialised concerns which frequently spilled into overt racism. This signals the existence of what Back (1996) has termed the ‘metropolitan paradox’ in enabling seemingly contradictory discourses to simultaneously exist in the same place.The fact that Gallatin has, in recent decades, moved away from being a fairly homogeneously white locale had given rise to tensions and a sense of racialised resentment among some residents – as I showed in chapter five in a discussion of perspectives on access to housing.

There was a classed element to belonging in Gallatin. It was, for example, discussed in chapter four howJacqueline (a white resident in her forties) told me that she was initially labelled “posh lady” by her neighbours, thereby evidencing her sense of being an outsider due to her perceivedclass position. The stakeholders interviewed for the project made similar comments about the working-class norm in the area. Gallatin Community Organisation’s (GCO) CEO, Julie, for example told me:

*“I still think predominantly it’s working-class people who live here. And I think a lot of the people who are moving in, even though they’ve got decent jobs, have got working-class backgrounds”.*

The demographic information sheet which participants were asked to complete indicated that a number of my local resident participants, such as Jacqueline, were, by most definitions, middle class (it is important here to note that participants who identified as working class defined Gallatin as being a working-class community). A significant proportion of these individuals told me that they had attained a positive sense of local belonging since moving into the locale. It appears, overall, that Gallatin residents’ ideas surrounding local belonging were raced and classed, albeit to a lesser extent than the popular image of ‘left behind’ communities who are xenophobic andresistant to change and diversity(Beider 2015, Tyler 2015) would suggest. The data indicated that, within the context of Gallatin as a changing and increasingly diverse area, individuals who make efforts to play an active role in the local community were likely to attain acceptance and inclusion. This supports Rhodes’ (2012) earlier research, similarly conducted in Northern England, which found that black and ethnic minority residents who engaged in familiar practices were better included in the identity and daily life of the community – such as going to the pub, as discussed by DeeDee in chapter four during a reflection on forms of conditional belonging.

**Research question two sought to explorein what ways understanding residents’ support or lack of support for leaving the EUcan enhance theoretical and conceptual understandings of the category of whiteness.** The data calls into question the extent to which white members of the contemporary working class in Britain could draw on the privilege and entitlement which is often attached to white identities. The exclusion and marginalisation of this group evidences that, as put neatly by Wray (2008), ‘white andwhiteness speak to much more than color and race’ (p139). This thesis has shown that whiteness cannot fully be understood without simultaneously considering the intersectional role of class. It is important to avoid discussions surrounding whiteness being reduced to the creation of static andtwo-dimensional lists of the benefits which this identity typically accrues (see McIntosh 1997 for a well-intentioned example of this)asideas about whiteness manifest in a far more dynamic*,* contingent and intersectionalmanner. Discussions surrounding whiteness in relation to Brexit politics are further complicated by the ostensible whiteness of many EU migrants who were nevertheless the targets of anti-immigrant rhetoric. My data also builds on the work of Virdee (2014) by demonstrating the continued racialised fracturing of the working class in post-referendum England. The whitening of the working class in twenty-first century discourse (Bhambra 2017b, Bhattacharyya 2017) – visible in popular ‘left behind’ narratives about Brexit in which it is the working class as a specifically white entity that are cited as a main cause of the Leave vote – means that class-based commonalities between different ethnic groups are consistently overlooked. Chapter five demonstrated that a result of this is competition and hostility between similarly powerless groups for scarce resources. I showed that limited resources are usually portrayed as resulting in racially and ethnically based competition, which denies the commonly faced challenges of scarcity of resources across all ethnic and racial groups. Thus complicating white privilege highlights the ways in which identities and social locations are entangled and shared rather than set against each other.

**The project’s final research question concerned to what extent Gallatin residents’ sense of belonging and attachment to place was influenced by initiatives surrounding cohesion and integration.** The research found government policies to be significantly absent from the narratives of participants. The data indicated that national and local policy agendas surrounding cohesion and integration have had little impact on people at the local level. The majority of residents, upon my questioning them, had little orno knowledge of governmental approaches to cohesion and integration and therefore could not reflect onhow these had impacted them and their community. For example, when I asked Geoff (a retired white resident who has been discussed across the empirical chapters) about the impact of approaches to the configuration and interaction of diverse populations such as Cohesion Sheffield he replied “what is it?”. This echoes the findings of Beider’s (2011) research with members of the white working class, undertaken with a view to critically analysing the concept of community cohesion, which found that many residents did not know what community cohesion was. It is possible, however, that the discourses of unfairness and resentment identified among some Gallatin residents in chapter five were informed by the at times racialised, divisive discourses emerging from these dominant policy agendas. It is also possible that initiatives which supported the sense of community which many participants talked about were born out of the community cohesion agenda.

Perhapsmore surprising is the fact that the influence of national policy agendas, such as community cohesion and integration, was also largely absent among the local official figures involved in the research. It emerged that local approaches tended to be independent of government initiatives. For example, when I questioned Julie if government approaches to cohesion and integration impacted the work of GCO, she replied, “not really, we just carry on doing what we do, and our view is that if we can find a way of engaging with people we will engage with them regardless”. For Julie, this indicates that national debates are often perceived as too detachedfrom localrealities. Reflecting on this, some of my expectations at the outset of the research of what would emerge as important – such as my anticipation that policy agendas would emerge as playing a key role - were misplaced. Indeed, austerity emerged as more significant to the everyday life and understandings of Gallatin’s residents. The fact that cohesion and integration appeared as more marginal in the Gallatin residents narratives underscores the necessity of undertaking social research as it enables the generation of new, and often unexpected, knowledge. It also shows that, despite Gallatin becoming more ethnically diverse, migration was not a dominant concern that was articulated by participants.

**Empirical contributions**

Engaging with place

Following place-based studies (see for example Back 1996, Beider 2015, Neal et al 2013, Rhodes et al 2019), I have used place as a focus for understanding the complexities, multiplicity and fluidities of participants’ narratives. My research has demonstrated the role of place in sociological research by foregrounding how localised experiences impacted how members of England’s working-class communities engaged with the EU referendum. Chapter four explored ways in which attachment to the Gallatin community functioned as a powerful resource, providing practical benefits in terms of the development of social capital and networks of mutual support. In the context of the decline of public services, these local networks were increasingly important (Snoussi and Mompelat 2019). The project’s focus on place further enabled a deeper engagement with the themes of loss and marginalisation, discussed in the final data analysis chapter, by elucidating the relationship between geographic location and classed exclusion. This focus also enabled the research to identify the existence of significant geographic mobility among Gallatin residents. This was discussed at length in chapter four, with the data serving to critique dominant depictions of the working class as geographically immobile (M. Collins 2004, Day 2006, McKenzie 2015, Moullin 2017, Rogaly and Taylor 2011) – and thereby supposedly ‘left behind’. The narratives explored in chapter four instead highlight the complexity of notions of belonging in working-class communities as the participants’ ideas surrounding local belonging were raced and classed, albeit to a lesser extent than the popular image of insular and parochial ‘left behind’ communities would indicate. Residents who participated in the research also expressed multiple attachments at the national, city and local levels based on their experiences of living in and travelling to different areas. This further supports the wider argument of this thesis about the often overlooked complexity of working-class life in terms of attachments to wider geographies.

Inconsidering the finding of strong local place-based attachment, it is helpful to draw on Michael Collins’ (2004) argument that thisis a prelude to expressions of nationalism. This serves to link chapter four’s discussion of local belonging to the EU referendum. Aspects of the Leave campaign were clearly predicated on a nationalistic vision which privileged the interests of white Britons and was closely linked to national identifications (Bhambra 2017). Similar to the contention of Virdee and McGeever (2018), I found that residents who had voted to Leave in the EU referendum tended to identify belonging through the notion of Englishness, thereby confirming Henderson et al’s (2016) claim that ‘England matters’ in relation to Euroscepticism and the Brexit vote. It is worth noting that nationalism is can be more openly framed in devolved nations – although this is not to claim anti-migration and racism are not present here too. However, the different Brexit results in Scotland and parts of Wales do reflect more complex nationalism. The existence of exclusive local pride in Gallatin maps onto a nationalistic vote to Leave the EU premised on protecting one’s own community – whether this is at the national in terms of England, or at the more localised level. As noted by Young and Willmott (1957), strong social ties act as a vehicle for engagement with the wider community, thereby evidencing how a sense of belonging links the individual with the social (Bennett 2012). This enables the generation of a strong local identity which is defended in much the same way as national identity and claims to belonging. Recall, for example, the vignette offered by Malcolm in chapter five about the racial intimidation shown by some long-term Gallatin residents towards non-white newcomers to the area. The results of the research thereby evidence the ways in which national narratives about the defenceof British and English identities play out at the local level in terms of raced and classed ideas of belonging, and the role of this in the Brexit vote.

The thesis has demonstrated the ways in which exploring place can help to interrogatethe economic and socio-cultural ‘left behind’ narratives. The data as a whole points to the complexity of working-class lives and outlooks, signalling the need to better recognise and attend to this in academic work and popular discussions. The data discussed has, for example, shown that supposedly ‘left behind’ places are not as white as they are imagined and presented, thereby drawing attention to how the working classes tend to be at the forefront of living diversity (Beider 2015, M. Collins 2004). This serves to problematisethe dominant depiction of the white working class as insular and parochial(Lawler 2012, Skeggs 2004 and 1997) which has played a role in many attemptedexplanations of the Brexit vote. This extendsthe work of Skeggs (2004 and 1997) - which focuses on critiquing images of the working class as culturally deficient - by providing a positive account which shows that there is much more to say about working-class lives and communities than current depictions,centring on notions of deficit and being ‘left behind’ portray. An example of the complexity contained in contemporary working-class experiences to emerge from the data is the discussion of the stigma which participants perceived to be attached to their community. The participants’ accounts show that, contrary to expectations, stigma and shame are not straightforwardly internalised. Many people in Gallatin exercised agency in asserting worth by actively refusing to internalise the stigma imposed byexternal social actors, instead inverting this to positively reaffirm their sense of attachment and community with localpeople. This is an important response which plays a significant role in reinscribing local belonging and place-based pride.This demonstrates the ways in which the research’s focus on place helped to generate new findings.

‘Left out’

The work of McKenzie, which is invaluable in terms of providing an empathetic account of the concerns of marginalised and stigmatised working-class communities, has been drawn upon considerablyin the thesis. Like McKenzie, my data has evidenced that the popular characterisation of members of the working class as ‘left behind’ is overly simplistic and problematically promotes a devalued working-class identity. To be ‘left behind’ is a passive construction which implies that residents of former industrial heartlands have failed to keep pace with the progression of economic and social change. I have developed the notion of the working classes being ‘left out’ – a concept which I have built upon from McKenzie’s work. This helps to shift focus onto the macrostructural forces associated with the uneven geographical development of neoliberal capitalism which have inflicted considerable damage on Britain’s post-industrial areas. The thesis has highlighted the ways in which this is inherently different to being ‘left behind’ by emphasising the role of wider shifts in society in producing marginalisation*.* My research also extends McKenzie’s (2012 and 2015) ethnographic work conducted in Nottingham’s St Ann’s area prior to Brexit as I have engaged with both voters and non-voters. My findings have explored these dynamics in the post-referendum context, as well as exploring what led up to the vote. Chapter six demonstrated how, as well as making the nationalistic aspects of the Leave campaign appealing, the experience of being left out and marginalised can result in a retreat from political processes. In chapter six I wrote extensively about political engagement in relation to the referendum – and the relative lack of this in Gallatin. Moreover, my research has engaged directly with whiteness, complicating the notion of white privilege by showing the ways in which limited resources are portrayed as resulting in racially and ethnically based competition, thus denying the commonly faced challenges across all ethnic and racial groups.

An important finding from the research is the extent of political disengagement, with a number of the interviews highlighting political withdrawal and non-participation. There was a classed sense of socio-political disillusionment and disconnection. Of the twenty-one local residents who were interviewed for the research, seven had not voted in the EU referendum. This further critiques the ‘left behind’ narrative - which cites working-class voters as a key cause of the Leave vote - by revealing that a significant number of participants did not vote in the referendum. Chapter six’s discussion of the themes of political marginalisation and a sense of powerlessness support and extend the findings of the transatlantic research of Gest (2016) and Hochschild (2016) conducted with disaffected white communities. The racialised concerns discussed in chapter five encompassed a belief thatGallatin’s white working-class residents no longer matter in the social hierarchy, thereby highlighting the failure of whiteness to work as racial privilege in the context of disadvantaged communities like Gallatin. This underscores the fallacy of talking about an undifferentiated experience of white privilege. The data further aids understandings of the EU referendum by showing that experiences of marginalisation and a tangible sense of loss of control connect to the politics of Brexit as my analysis showed that this often signalled a retreat from political engagement.

The findings discussed in the three empirical chapters relate to a sense of powerlessness and further underscore that it is more appropriate to describe communities like Gallatin as ‘left out’ rather than ‘left behind’. Some participants’ discourses encompassed feelings of loss in terms of change over time in relation to the decimation of industry in the city, the damaging impacts of austerity and experiences of poverty. Indeed, as I noted earlier, my expectation that cohesion and integration initiatives would feature as important in everyday life and understandings turned out to be misplaced. It was the effects of austerity policies and resulting exacerbated poverty which emerged as a far more real concern – much like Rhodes et al’s (2019) research demonstrates. Recall, for example, Geoff and Maggie’s perception of being excluded from the uneven development of the city (discussed in chapter six) which highlighted the role of urban regeneration in producing a sense of being left out. The quote used in the chapter’s title encapsulates a classed feeling of exclusion and powerlessness in relation to politics, inequality and poverty*.* The excerpt comes from my interview with Val, who is a retired white life-long resident of Gallatin and has been discussed at length in the previous chapters. In the context of a discussion with herabout the apparent inability of people in positions of power to take the views of ordinary people seriously, she reflected that: “I don’t want the world, I want to be able to live in it, that’s all I want”. This unambiguouslyencapsulates the sense of marginality which arose as an important theme across the data.

In attempting to unpack the complexities of Brexit, it is important to try to understand the very real effects of enduring classed and racialised inequalities, thus avoiding perpetuating reductionist accounts of the working class that devalue and delegitimise concerns in these communities. Recognising the existence of marginalisation and political apathy serves to highlight some ofthe ways in which the working class experience increased vulnerability as a result of being left out of the rest of society. Using the term ‘left out’ – rather than ‘left behind’ – helps to situate anxieties surrounding immigration and diversity in this broader social and political context. By ignoring wider factors, there is a risk of attributing supposed socio-cultural incompetence to a group whose circumstances have been crucially affected by a range of structural shifts, which have exacerbated divisions and inequalities between classes over the last forty years (McKenzie 2017b). Snoussi and Mompelat offer a good blueprint for future research and policy. They state that ‘rather than bashing working-class people for being ‘hard to reach’, there needs to be a better assessment of why and where barriers exist’ (Snoussi and Mompelat 2019, p30). The argument contained in this thesis for reframing the white working class as ‘left out’ helps to avoid the victim-blaming language which the term ‘left behind’ is guilty of, as well as referring to a multicultural working class. My data has shown the contemporary diversity in supposedly monocultural white working-class locales. The ‘left behind’ argument crucially fails to capture the historical complexity of the impacts of global urbanism on different spaces. By focusing on the ways in which members of the Gallatin community are left out, I have attempted to portray the complexity of working-class lives in Gallatin*,* highlighting that working-class people are left out to varying degrees depending on circumstances in relation to place and changes over time. One of the ways in which this manifested itself was in my finding of there being a significant lack of formal political engagement in Gallatin. It is important to stress that my argument about the ‘left out’ seeks to avoid a narrative of white victimhood which denies working-class agency. I showed in chapter four, for example, how many participants actively rejected the place-based stigma which they felt was unfairly imposed on their neighbourhood.

Unfairness and resentment

The focus of chapter five was on notions of unfairness and the finding that a significant proportion of Gallatin’s residents possessed a racialised belief that government policies work to their disadvantage (Thomas and Sanderson 2013). Whilst these discussions were not specifically focused on initiatives surrounding cohesion and integration, the data nevertheless indicated that racialised notions of unfairness and resulting resentment are informed by the impacts of dominant policy agendas. The example of access to housing was explored as this emerged as a key concern in the interview narratives. Drawing on critical studies of whiteness enabled the chapter to situate resentment within the historic guarantee which whiteness has contained of both belonging and entitlement (Ware 2008). In doing so,the thesis has added to understandings of racist and xenophobic sentiment in contemporary Britain through its demonstration of the ways in which often genuine concerns about precarious access to social resources becomeracialised and experienced as a threat to white access and entitlement. These narratives are informed by wider racist discourses which act as ideologicalandsense-makingtools. These are shaped by postcolonial legacies and a broader cultural and political racism (Back 1996*,* Bhambra 2016, Gilroy 2006) which incorporates resentment about changing local populations and national identities, tapping into the politics of race, entitlement and identity.

The Leave campaign was positioned to draw on and resonate with this white resentment and racialised notions of entitlement and hierarchy. For example, the nationalism contained in aspects of the Leave campaign emphasised protectingBritish borders and the needs of members of your own group, communicatedthrough the appeal to ‘take our country back’ (Bhambra 2017). An example of this racialised nationalist discourse is Nigel Farage’s infamous and unashamedly racist (Rogaly 2019, Seidler 2018) ‘Breaking Point’ poster, produced in the run-up to the EU referendum (see image one). The image displayed on the poster problematically conflated the presence of Muslims, refugees and EU migrants in the UK with the negative outcomes of Britain’s membership of the EU. Whilst it is clear that racism is about more than competition over resources, the project’s data has demonstrated that racialised resentment surrounding access to increasingly scarce social goods is nevertheless important to consider. The sense of resentment evident in my data, discussed in chapter five, provided evidence of the role that narratives of unfairness play in discourses of racialised resentment, demonstrating the significance of these and how they both aid and are aided by wider racisms. Whilst there are clear links between this and the vote for Brexit, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that, connected to resentment, political disengagement was a key theme to emerge from the data, as I showed in chapter six. Also, there were participants who clearly recognised shared social locations and connections between different groups of residents – such as Emma and Doreen, as discussed in chapter four. This underscores the fallacy of the popular narrative which portrays the Leave vote as delivered primarily by an angry white working-class electorate. I have shown that ideas surrounding belonging are not as simple, in terms of being drawn solely along class and race lines, as we may be led to believe.



*Image one:* Nigel Farage Brexit poster

In considering the implications of the new knowledge generated by the research in terms of political engagement I would like to now briefly discuss the 2019 general election.

The 2019 general election

Negotiations and debates surrounding Britain’s departure from the EU continued throughout the data collection, analysis and writing-up stagesof my research. The December 2019 general election – largely an outcome of politicians’ sustained disputes over Brexit – took place shortly after I completed my fieldwork. The results of this in relation to Gallatin must be treated with caution as the ward is situated in a socially diverse constituency which includes some areas which are markedly more affluent. Gallatin’s constituency retained its traditional Labour majority, albeit with a considerably lower vote share (declining by nearly five per cent) than in 2017 (BBC News 2019a). This highlights the contradictions and ambivalences which I spoke of earlier in the chapter. Reflecting on the data presented in the thesis, it appears that the study’s findings anticipated these results to an extent. Much like the election results, my data indicated the existence of an increasingly complex picture in terms of political orientation and voting. Whilst I spoke to a number of life-long Labour voters I also encountered individuals who had either decided to stop voting or had been less tied to traditional party loyalties in recent years. The study’s data also importantly revealed that critiques based on political disillusionment were not reserved for one party; rather this was a theme across the political spectrum. This connects to debates aboutLabour’s poor election performance in 2019 and the Conservative’s strategic engagement with the construction of a ‘white working class’.

The 2019 general election represented something of a renewed emphasis in terms of the engagement of politicians – notably those in the Conservative party – with white working-class voters. It is, however, important to note that this has happened in earlier periods of intense anti-migrant politics, with Enoch Powell’s rivers of blood speech being an obvious example of this. The campaigns displayed significant effort being put into winning over members of deprived communities by appealing to their ‘left behind’ concerns – that years of Labour voting had done nothing for them. This connects closely to chapter six’s discussion of loss and marginalisation in Gallatin as it is these concerns which were capitalised on by Conservative politicians who sought to capture votes from members of such communities by recognising a broad sense of exclusion and making overtures to address this. The notion of ‘levelling up’ – an important rhetorical device used by Boris Johnson to appeal to the North - resonates strongly with Val’s quote contained in the title of the conclusion chapter, encapsulating the need for everyone to get a fair deal. Some of the statistics from the election are staggering as a significant number of areas which had long been Labour strongholds returned Conservative majorities – such as Blyth Valley in the North East of England which had never before been held by the Conservatives since the seat was created in 1950 (BBC News 2019b). There have thus been important trends in British politics since the 2016 EU referendum, with the votes of the so-called ‘left behind’ group becoming increasingly important to politicians. This has taken place as part of the wider Conservative gains in ‘red wall’ seats in constituencies across the Midlands and Northern England which historically tended to back Labour. My data has reflected, to some extent, the more complex picture of voting - and indeed not voting - which is emerging in once predominantly white working-class communities.

**Developing the sociology of Brexit**

The data presented across the thesis has indicated the urgentneed to re-engage with extending the Brexit literature field and theories about the ‘left behind’. As outlined in the introduction chapter, over the past decade the ‘left behind’ has been harnessed as a political device to reframe debates about socio-economic inequalities in racial terms (such as the anti-migrant Brexit discourses), with the white working class positioned as ‘uniquely disadvantaged’ (Rhodes et al 2019, p5). This thesis has indicated the need to reassess this account and its reading of England’sworking-class communities. The variety of positions in relation to Brexit which the research found present in Gallatin – encompassing Leave, Remain and indifference - should not be understated. The fact that a third of the local resident sample told me that they had not voted in the 2016 EU referendum is indicative of referendum responses that have been given little attention or investigation. Moreover, participants expressed nuanced arguments surrounding Brexit. For example, when I asked Jason – a retired white male – why he had voted to Remain, he replied that he had “thought of [the] money it’d cost us to get out”. Moreover, Geoff, who had voted to Leave, characterised this as based on his belief that “we should have been either in Europe or not in Europe”, criticising the fact that, in his view, Britain had failed to fully commit to the European project. These narratives disrupt the dominant depiction of members of the white working class as overwhelmingly voting Leave and being motivated by xenophobic tendencies. The small number of BAME participants involved in the research also had diverse positions on Brexit, with some backing Remain whilst others had chosen not to vote. It is important to emphasise the complexity of voting motivations alongside the incidence of not voting, with these key findings importantly developing understandings of Brexit and further problematising the ‘left behind’ thesis.

The empirical material discussed in the thesis captures the limits to Brexit and the dangers of viewing this event in non-situated ways, without historical or locational context or nuance. In a large part, many of the conversations that I had with Gallatin residents would have followed a similar course even if the EU referendum had never occurred. For example, debates concerning fraught access to housing and contested ideas of belonging existed long before June 2016, as did a sense of white working-class resentment – both themes discussed in chapter five. My data has demonstrated that Brexit was not that central to the lives of working-class people in Gallatin. My research findings discussed in chapter six on significant levels of not voting in the Referendum expose the analytical limits and explanatory potential of Brexit in contributing to debates on class, race and place. Indeed, the findings of this research have further drawn into question notions of the Brexit vote being delivered by the white working class, instead revealing the high levels of political disillusionment which are to be found amount members of this group. The data contributes to academic discussions beyond Brexit, underscoring the complexity of debates at the grassroots level and how this did or did not feature in the EU referendum.

The research has sought to provide an additional contribution to existing work on the sociology of Brexit through its simultaneous analysis of race, whiteness and class, exploring the interplay of these in the context of the EU referendum and wider debates about belonging and cohesion. The vote for Brexit saw race, whiteness and class –among other factors - coalesce. However, some work on the referendum has problematically tended to treat these as separate. The data has highlighted the need to pay closer attention to class overall as my analysis of classed marginalisation reveals some of the ways in which working-class identities are devalued. My work has problematised the idea of homogenising the white working class as racist and without agency. Through my analysis I have thus helped to illustrate the often overlooked nuances of whiteness which develop from the ways in which ideas about race interact with those about social class. This indicates that some work on whiteness (see for example Hughey 2012 and 2010) is misplaced in unproblematically portraying all white identities as functioning as a form of racial privilege. My research has contributed to producing a more nuanced theory of whiteness by questioning the extent to which working-class white people can access forms of white privilege. The data presented across the empirical chapters evidences the ways in which some members of the white working classexperience a classed sense of marginalisation in contemporary post-industrial Britain*,* showing that their whiteness affords little protection from deprivation. The data analysed in the thesis has thereby demonstrated that it is important to recognise the ways in which whiteness is mediated by class and class is mediated by race (Garner 2007, Haylett 2001). It is, however, necessary to emphasise that by complexifying and problematising the notion of white privilege, I am not decentring and minimising racism, nor am I setting up hierarchies of marginalisation.

Departing from the twenty-first century ‘cultural turn’ in class analysis (see Savage 2015, for example), I have built on the work of other place-based studies through the grounding of my fieldwork and analysis in Gallatin. The predominant academic focus on the cultural aspects of class means that social scientists may, to some extent, have largely failed to envisage the possibility of an event like Brexit(Emery 2018). My place-basedanalysis has helped to recentre the economic and political nature of class, alongside the materiality of class. For example, chapter six’s focus on loss and marginalisation evidenced that class-based exclusion has real and tangible impacts. Discussion of the poverty and deprivation experienced by significant numbers of Gallatin’s residents helped to elucidate the ways in which class position affects life chances and experiences*.* Alongside the Remain and Leave perspectives I identified, the existence of political disillusionment and marginalisationamong a significant number of the Gallatin residents who took part in the research further evidenced classed exclusion as it highlighted that a number of working-class individuals felt that their concerns were not attended to, which in turn led to a retreat from political engagement. This alsosignals the demise of some forms of collective working class political mobilisation, thereby supporting my argument for a focus on the ways in which working-class people of all ethnicities are ‘left out’ of dominant forms of political, economic and social life. Whilst the data revealed that fractures went beyond those based on class, often drawing on notions of ethnic and cultural difference, the thesis has sought to demonstrate the need to return economic and political concerns to the core analyses of class. Having said this, it is again important to draw attention to the complexities of the data collected. My analysis has evidenced community pride and community activism as well as critiques of urban regeneration. These discussions help to further develop understandings of the Brexit vote by adding further complexity and nuance.

**Methodological reflections and contributions**

My methodological decision to include local residents alongside practitioners in the research allowed me to speak to individuals with different forms of investment in the Gallatin community. In a number of ways the views of local residents aligned closely with those of stakeholders – with this being partly due to the fact that a number of the latter also lived in Gallatin. A pervasive theme across participants was a belief that the stigma which continues to be attached to the locale is no longer deserved and crucially fails to recognise the regeneration work which has taken place in Gallatin over recent decades(see chapter four). Julie - GCO’s CEO - stated forcefully that the negative image which many outsidershold of Gallatin is “really not deserved”. This echoes comments made by Rebecca – a white middle-aged resident – who stated that when you live in Gallatin, you “realise this area with its reputation is not what it used to be”. I was also able to highlight the ways in which the views of local officials and residentsdiverged at times, such as in relation to perceptions of how well different groups get along. For example, whilst DeeDee from GCO told me that “the majority of people in the area have been really accepting and welcoming of new people into their community”, Mark – an unemployed middle-aged white resident – had a different perspective, telling me that when you try and interact with new members of the community “they think you’re interfering and you’re trying to cause trouble”. The research has thereby demonstrated the value of including different typesof participants as this helps to produce a more complete account which incorporates the coexistence ofdifferent perspectives.

Shipman (2014) asserts that social researchers should always invite criticism and be open to scrutiny. With this in mind, reflecting on the research process reveals several weaknessesof the study’s methodological design. There were limitations in terms of my sample. Firstly, as I noted earlier in the introduction chapter, my youngest participant was thirty-two years old which means that the research largely failed to engage with the perspective of younger generations. Having said this, the age of my local resident sample ranged from thirty-two to seventy-seven years old and thereby encompassed a number of different generations. The second key shortcoming of the sample stems from my primary recruitment channels which resulted in most of my participants being drawn from community groups and events – so my sample is unlikely to have included the most marginalised members of the community. This may have resulted in the importance of community activities and the connection with other residents that these facilitate being overstated. It is to be expected that individuals who engage in such activities are likely to derive value from them, and are thereby better placed to identify a sense of community. Tellingly, Ola (discussed in chapter four) – whom I recruited through a local food bank rather than a community group – had significantly different views as she represented one of the lone voices in the projectfailing to identify a sense of community in Gallatin, stating that “it would be nice if there was more community feel”. Whilst these limitations of the sample do not preclude the conclusions of the research, it is nevertheless something which is important to recognise and I was attentive to as I analysed the data. I also recognised the need to go beyond interviews and avoid relying solely on the data generated from these – hence my inclusion of participant observation and photo-elicitation methods.

A further potential criticism of the research is the friendly relationships which developed between myself and a number of participants and the implications of these upon the analysis – a topic which I reflected on in the methodology chapter. Zajano and Edelsberg (1993) question whether it is ever possible to be critical of the organisations or people you are studying if you form relationships with them. Whilst I recognise that neutrality is inherently more difficult when dealing with individuals you have friendly relationships with, I believe that the relationships I established helped me to produce richer data, leading tosome individuals honestly sharing racist and xenophobic views they held. For example, in my interview with Geoff he claimed that Somali families:

*“Disable the kids […] to send them out for charity. And it’s true, you know, it’s true, you know. Like if they’re nice healthy kids no one’s gonna give them a couple of pence.”*

Listening to comments like this from some participants was challenging – especially when they came from individuals I had established good relationships with. I firmly believe that it was outside my role as a researcher to try and change or challenge the views of my participants, and I instead sought to further probe these beliefs. Probing statements is a good way of questioning and asking people to reflect on their views and provide further explanation. Such experiences made me acutely aware of the potential problems associated with establishing relationships and friendships within the fieldwork setting due to the conflicting feelings this can evoke (Browne 2003, Coffey 1999, Taylor 2011). My data as a whole, however, highlighted that racist and xenophobic discourses existed alongside contrastingviews. Throughout the discussion of my findings, I have therefore been able to evidence the complexity of views which exist in working-class communities.

The work of Ohnuki-Tierney (1984) and Labaree (2002) is useful to draw on in this discussion of research relationships as the authors explore the benefits of creating distance between the researcher and participants, arguing that this provides a refreshed perspective from which to progress with writing and analysis. Whilst I retained a presence in Gallatin upon completing data collection, my contact with the area and its residents was significantly reduced - thus providing me with a degree of distance as I engaged in data analysis and writing up. During the analysis process I also acknowledged suggestions from thinkers such as Soyer (2014) who claim that analysis can never be completely objective and that instead what is offered is ‘an interpretation of a subjective experience’ (p492). I found it useful to use my entries in my research diary as a tool within the analysis process, reading these in tandem with the data gathered directly from participants to help me reflect on the impact of my positionality and role in the research process.

The research has also added to understandings of the use of auto-driven photo-elicitation techniques. Departing from the early incorporation of photos by social researchers which rarely empowered participants to take the photos (McCarthy 2013), I invested my participants with a considerable degree of control by asking them to take photographs for the research, premised on the belief that residents are better able to reflect their social world in this way. This is valuable in terms of accessing narratives and experiences in multiple ways. Moreover, utilising participant-produced photographs helped me to bridge the gap between the social world of myself and the Gallatin residents involved in the research (Samuels 2007), privileging local knowledge through the incorporation of photos taken by participants (Dodman 2003). Using photographs was helpful in terms of engaging members of marginalised communities in place-based research, thereby helping me to access individualswho are commonly not used to being asked about their perceptions and experiences by social researchers. Hobsbawm (1984) has written that the working classes have often been viewed and studied ‘from the outside’ by the middle and upper classes with a sense of contempt (p177). This is evident in relation to the ‘left behind’ thesis and discussions surrounding Brexit in which it is members of working-class communities who have been largely left out of conversations concerning them. The use of photographs enabled me to better engage with members of this group in an accessible manner, working closely with them and thereby enriching understandings of place and attachments. I found that the use of photos taken by participants helped to further tease out and build on key themes from my earlier semi-structured interviews, emphasising important findings of the research as participants reflected on these themes in new and original ways through their photos and discussion of these. A good example of this is Gallatin’s green spaces as this was a theme which came up in many of the project’s semi-structured interviews and was captured visually in the photographs of a number of participants. See for example image two which captures the disjuncture between images of ‘left behind’, deprived, post-industrial geographies and how residents view their local area. This theme was significant in terms of place attachment, discussed in chapter four, which helps to problematise the ‘left behind’ and oversimplified ‘problem places’ discourses.



*Image two:* footprints in the park

**Future research agenda and implications for policy and practice**

Whilstthe study met its key aims and objectives, a significant challenge and unsettling problem within socialresearch is that you often create seemingly as many questions as you attempt to answer. A theme which I identified as warranting particular additional exploration was the experiences and positions on Brexit of Gallatin’s more recent ethnic minority populations. It is important that future work moves towards a definition of the working class which does not divide based on ethnic and racial background. As noted by Shaheen and O’Hagan (2017), white working-class people have significantly more in common with BAME working-class people than with white professionals as all working-class lives are impacted by low wages, scarce housing and a lack of state support. For example, I discussed in chapter six that, from my sample of residents in Gallatin, it emerged that poverty and deprivation were experiences shared by many local people regardless of their ethnic or cultural background, with wider forces such as deindustrialisation and austerity having a highly negative impact on the Gallatin community as a whole. A more inclusive definition of the working class could help to facilitate recognition of shared precarity and could be harnessedalongside community pride as a source of solidarity and means for positive and progressive collective action. This would thereby also help to displace narratives of racialised unfairness by highlighting mutual precarities and vulnerability*.* It would therefore be valuable for future research to explore the connections between the experiences of members of the black and white working class and migrants. It would also be interesting to explore how the outcome of Brexit will affect the development of post-EU social relations and interactions between members of different groups. This is something which I am keen to undertake in a postdoctoral study, focusing on black and racialised voices in terms of their experiences of belonging in the Gallatin community.

The results of the research suggest implications for policy and practice. For example, there exists a need to develop ownership and transparency of locally based social cohesion and community-building initiatives and policies. This is necessary due to the gap which I have identified between policy makers and the impact of policy on locality. The thesis has also discussed the prevalence of discourses among some white residents which suggest that minority groups are favoured over the white British population. A key finding to emerge from the data is the need to ensure that those living in marginalised communities feel that their voices and concerns matter and are heard. This was recognised by many of the stakeholders involved in the project as a pervasive discourse which there is a need to more adequately engage with. For example, in relation to a discussion of unfairness and resentment, DeeDee (a GCO employee and Gallatin resident) spoke about the need to:

*“Not pretend it’s not happening, let’s not pretend you don’t feel like that […] I think that’s part of problem that we’ve got at the moment, we don’t talk about it […] because they’re frightened of being racist. Or they’re frightened of being prejudiced or, and actually they just wanna ask, or they just don’t understand […] I feel like it’s kind of my responsibility to give them facts. Not to influence either way, but just to […] introduce people, get people in to talk to them and have that dialogue, or take people places.”*

As emphasised in this extract, there is a need to facilitate more safe-space conversations about contentious topics such as immigration, race and fair access to social resources. The ‘Who is Your Neighbour’ project (outlined in chapter five) is a good example of such work, engaging residents in a number of communities in South Yorkshire in dialogue and thereby engendering resilience to racist and divisive ideologies, however Gallatin in not currently covered by the Who is Your Neighbour project. This project is thus more radical than integration or Prevent strategies as it encourages different communities to come together who normally would not. I would cautiously argue that the work of some academics (see for example Bhambra 2017 and 2016) is guilty of marginalising the concerns of the white working class, which my project engages with, by inferring that these are illegitimate as they are grounded to a certain extent in notions ofentitlement. Whilst it may be true that some of the concerns identified in the research are based on perceptions and ontological sense-making rather than being a reality, these anxieties are nevertheless felt and real*,* articulating a sense ofmarginality and exclusion through a lens of constructed racial prejudice and white privilege.

A number of the stakeholders involved in the project talked about deprivation being at the heartof many of Gallatin’s socialproblems. Julie, for example, stated that:

*“There’s still that underlying issue of people not having enough money to live on. Disproportionate number of people who are still on benefits, who are not in work for various reasons, which clearly has an impact on everything else”.*

This indicates the pernicious nature of povertyand its far-reaching effects. Snoussi and Mompelat (2019), in a recent report for Runnymede and CLASS, note that there is an urgent need to rebuild the social safety net - for example through the introduction of a genuine living wage, reinvesting in public services and by providing universal access to basic services. This is important in the context of the research undertaken in the Gallatin community as I have highlighted the role of racialised narratives of unfairness, which are partially grounded in difficulties accessing resources,in engendering xenophobic and exclusionary discourses. While this is informed by a wider postcolonial cultural and political racism (Bhambra 2016, Gilroy 2006), deprivation and inadequate access to social goods nevertheless played an important role in the difficulties faced by members of the Gallatin community.

**Final thoughts**

Though Gallatin represents only one particular case study, its illustration of the complexity of working-class lives applies more widely. It connects to the findings of related research such as McKenzie (2017a, 2017b, 2015), Rhodes et al (2019) and Beider (2015). Taken as collective findings, they illustrate the complexities of working-class white people’s lives. Far from being disconnected and insular, many Gallatin residents talked about their connectivity and mobility beyond the locale – thus undermining core aspects ofthe ‘left behind’ thesis. Similarly undermining the popular argument that the white working class delivered the Brexit vote, many of my participants did not vote to Leave. Indeed, a third of my local resident sample did not vote in the referendum at all. Participants also indicated the value they derive from their local community in the form of social relationships, place-based attachment and a clear sense of belonging. Having said this, the data also indicates the existence of real andpressing concerns surrounding deprivation, marginalisation and loss which can serve to engender resentment towards migrants and minority populations and increased support for right-wing populist movements, alongside active disengagement from politics.

My project’s focus on place at the local level has enabled a deeper engagement with the question of to what extent residents’ sense of local belonging is raced and classed. Again, this highlighted the social and demographic changes in Gallatin and underscored the importance of avoiding stereotypical depictions of white working-class communities as completely resistant to change. This enabled the thesis to produce a spatially granular account of the Brexit vote, examining the ways in which individuals’ experience of their very localised area impacted how – and indeed whether – they voted. This thesis has also engaged closely with ideas of whiteness, and I have shown that this cannot fully be understood without simultaneously considering the intersectional role of class, underscoring the need to consider both race and class when seeking to understand the Brexit vote. Across the three empirical chapters I have discussed the ways in which the racialised fracturing of the working classes serves to obscure shared precarity across deprived communities from all ethnic backgrounds. The study’s findings have wider relevance and applicability as the data was collected during an arguably unprecedented time in British and English history, which was also a product of a longer phenomenon of socio-economic marginalisation and defensive nationalism. This makes its reference to wider social and politicalissues *–* such as Britain’s departure from the EU, the impact of austerity, concerns about immigration, and the roleof class – important.

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**Appendix**

**Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet**

Participant Information Sheet

1. **Research project title**

The Brexit vote and ideas surrounding belonging among English-born white residents in England

1. **Invitation to participate**

This project is being carried out by Hannah May Fletcher from the Department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield. It is being overseen by Professor Sarah Neal and Dr Joanne Britton who are also from the department.

You are being invited to take part in the research project named above. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

1. **What is the project’s purpose?**

The research is being carried out as part of my PhD in the Department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield. The PhD is intended to last three years, with the research being carried out during year two (October 2018 – July 2019).

I want to look at how you think about belonging. I would like to hear about your views on your local area and how attached you feel to this place. I am also interested in hearing your thoughts about Brexit (for example your anxieties and expectations about leaving the EU) and how it’s been discussed in the media. I would like to explore your views on migration and how this connects to what you think about the EU referendum and your sense of local belonging.

The project will also work with local official figures (such as local councillors, policy makers and community activists). I hope that interviewing these people will help to produce a better understanding of the significance of white working-class experiences of government policies on cohesion and integration. I would also like to explore with local officials how the Gallatin area fits within Sheffield’s city-wide approach to cohesion.

1. **Why have I been chosen?**

I would like to hear your views and perspectives.

It is hoped that around 30 residents and 10 local official figures will be recruited.

1. **Do I have to take part?**

It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part in the project. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You can still withdraw at any time and you do not have to give a reason for this. If you wish to withdraw from the research, please contact me (Hannah May Fletcher) at [hmfletcher1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:hmfletcher1@sheffield.ac.uk)

1. **What will happen if I take part? What do I have to do?**

Local residents will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview. In this I will ask questions for you to respond to. You may take as much time as you wish to answer. You will also be able to talk about anything else which you think is relevant. There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers – I am interested in hearing what you think! It is important to note that these interviews will cover the sensitive topics of ‘race’, ethnicity and political opinion.

You *may* then be asked to take part in a later stage of the research. I will be in touch with you about this is a later date if you are happy for me to potentially do so. If you are invited to take part, this stage of the project is, again, entirely optional. It will involve you taking photos of parts of your local area which you like and dislike (if you take part in this element of the project you will be provided with a briefing sheet containing more detailed information and instructions about this and there will be a separate consent form for you to sign). This will be followed by an interview to discuss these photos. It is important to point out that participating in this will incur no costs to you, as you can either use your mobile phone to take photographs or you will be given a disposable camera.

The local figures who take part in the project will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. These will explore migration and ethnic diversity alongside Brexit and the white working class.

All interviews are anticipated to last around an hour, but could range from 45 minutes up to an hour and a half.

1. **Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?**

With your permission interviews will be audio recorded using a Dictaphone. I would like to record the interviews as this helps to ensure that the conversation is captured accurately. It will also enable me to focus on the conversation, rather than having to try and write down everything you say.

The audio recording of your interview(s) will be transcribed and used only for analysis. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one besides myself will have access to the original recordings.

1. **What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?**

It is important to remember that taking part in the research will result in a loss of your time. However, the interviews will be arranged for a time and locationwhich is convenient for you.

1. **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

While I cannot guarantee that the project will have a direct impact on the Gallatin area, the findings will be circulated with local council members and policy makers with the hope that the research will have a positive impact locally.

1. **Will my taking part in the project be kept confidential?**

Whilst I cannot guarantee confidentiality, thorough efforts will be made to ensure that your identity cannot be traced.

Pseudonyms will be used for your identity and the Gallatin area. This means that the real name of the research area and all participants will not be used in my thesis or any other publications I produce based on the data. Other potentially identifiable characteristics which are deemed important may also be altered to protect your identity. If you agree to me sharing the data you produce with other researchers (e.g. by making it available in a data archive) then your personal details will not be included.

1. **What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?**

According to data protection legislation, I am required to inform you that the legal basis I am applying in order to process your personal data is that ‘processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest’. It is also important to note that the project will be collecting data which is defined in the legislation as more sensitive (information about racial or ethnic origin and political opinions).

1. **What will happen to the data collected, and the results of the research project?**

It is likely that other researchers may find the data collected to be useful in answering future research questions. You will be asked for explicit consent for your data to be shared in this way in the consent form.

All recordings of the interviews will be destroyed when I complete my PhD. The anonymised interview transcripts will be archived at the end of the project for ten years in a data archive.

I will have sole access to the database of the project’s image files. These will not be placed in a data archive and no-one else besides me will be able to reproduce the images. The images will be destroyed five years after the completion of my PhD.

It is anticipated that the results of the research will be published in my thesis in 2020. However, the main findings from the research will be available to participants prior to this in either a written report (aimed at local official figures) or via an optional session outlining the project’s key conclusions which local residents will be invited to.

1. **Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research is being funded by a University of Sheffield Doctoral Academy scholarship.

1. **Who is the data controller?**

The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

1. **Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield’s Ethics Review Procedure, as administered by the Department of Sociological Studies.

1. **What if something goes wrong and I wish to complain about the research?**

It is very unlikely that you would need to, however if you wish to report a complaint about something serious occurring during or following your participation in the project you can contact the researcher (Hannah May Fletcher, [hmfletcher1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:hmfletcher1@sheffield.ac.uk)) or either of my supervisors (Sarah Neal [s.neal@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:s.neal@sheffield.ac.uk) or Joanne Britton [n.j.britton@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:n.j.britton@sheffield.ac.uk)).

If you feel that your complaint has not been adequately dealt with you may contact Kate Morris, the head of the Department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield. She can be contacted at kate.morris@sheffield.ac.uk, Elmfield Building, Northumberland Road, Sheffield, S10 2TU.

1. **Contact for further information**

If you wish to gain any further information about the project please do not hesitate to talk to me, or contact me via email on [hmfletcher1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:hmfletcher1@sheffield.ac.uk)

You are welcome to keep a copy of this information sheet.

**Thank you very much for taking the time to read this, and for your participation in the project.**

**Appendix 2: Participant Photo-Elicitation Briefing Sheet**

Participant Briefing Sheet

***Research project title:* The Brexit vote and ideas surrounding belonging among English-born white residents in England**. Carried out by Hannah May Fletcher as part of a PhD from the Department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield.

*This briefing sheet is for you to keep. It explains what you need to do to take part.*

You are being invited to take part in the photo-elicitation stage of this research project. This involves taking and discussing photos. I would like to learn more about your sense of belonging in your local area.

**Over the next fortnight I would like you to photograph parts of your local area which you especially like or dislike**. The focus is on taking pictures of places so please do try and avoid photographing people. You are encouraged to take as many photographs as you like. I want to look at these images with you to learn more about what is (or isn’t) important to you in your local area. I would like to discuss how these images can reveal more about your local attachments.

Participating will incur no costs to you. You can either take photographs on your mobile phone and send them to me via WhatsApp or email, or I can give you a disposable camera which you must return to me when you have finished taking photos so I can develop the images. We will then arrange a suitable date and time to discuss the photos you have taken. I will print out copies of all your images and you will be asked in this interview to pick around ten photographs you think are the most important. You will then be asked to discuss each of these images in turn, being prompted to explain your motivations for taking them, what they show and the stories behind them.

The photographs you take for the project will be stored electronically on my personal University of Sheffield U: drive, and hard copies will be kept in a safe. I will have sole access to these. The photographs will not be placed in a data archive and no-one else besides me will be able to reproduce them. I will destroy all (electronic and hard) copies of the photographs five years after I complete my PhD.

If you agree to take part you will need to sign a consent form. This includes a negotiation surrounding whether you will grant permission for me to reproduce your photographs in my thesis or any publications and reports based on this data.

If you would like more information about the research please refer to the information sheet which you were given at the beginning of the project (let me know if you need a new copy of this). If you would like to know anything else please do not hesitate to talk to me, or contact me via email on [hmfletcher1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:hmfletcher1@sheffield.ac.uk)

**Thank you very much for taking the time to read this, and for your participation in the project.**

**Appendix 3: Participant Interview Consent Form**

**Participant Consent Form**

**The Brexit vote and ideas surrounding belonging among English-born white residents in England**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Please tick the appropriate boxes*** | | | **Yes** | **No** |
| **Taking Part in the Project** | | |  |  |
| I have read and understood the project information sheet provided. (If you will answer No to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.) | | |  |  |
| I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. | | |  |  |
| I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project will mean being interviewed, and that this will be audio recorded. | | |  |  |
| I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw. | | |  |  |
| **How my information will be used during and after the project** | | |  |  |
| I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project. | | |  |  |
| I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs*.* | | |  |  |
| I understand and agree that other authorised researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. | | |  |  |
| I understand and agree that other authorised researchers may use this data in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. | | |  |  |
| I give permission for data that I provide to be deposited in a Data Archive so it can be used for future research and learning | | |  |  |
| **So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers** | | |  |  |
| I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield. | | |  |  |
|  |  |  | | |  |
| Name of participant [printed]……………….. | Signature…………….. | Date……………….. | | |  |
|  |  |  | | |  |
| Name of Researcher [printed]……………… | Signature…………… | Date………………… | | |  |
|  |  |  | | |  |

**Project contact details for further information:**

The researcher: Hannah May Fletcher, [hmfletcher1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:hmfletcher1@sheffield.ac.uk)

Either of Hannah’s supervisors: Sarah Neal, [s.neal@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:s.neal@sheffield.ac.uk) or Joanne Britton, [n.j.britton@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:n.j.britton@sheffield.ac.uk)

The head of the Department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield: Kate Morris, kate.morris@sheffield.ac.uk

All of the above are based in the Elmfield Building, Department of Sociological Studies, University of Sheffield, Northumberland Road, Sheffield, S10 2TU.

**Appendix 4: Participant Photo-Elicitation Consent Form**

**Photo-Elicitation Participant Consent Form**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Please tick the appropriate boxes*** | **Yes** | **No** |
| **Taking Part in the Project** |  |  |
| I have read and understood the project information sheet and photo-elicitation briefing sheet provided. (If you will answer No to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.) |  |  |
| I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. |  |  |
| I agree to take part in the photo-elicitation part of the project. I understand that taking part will include taking photographs and being interviewed, and that this will be audio recorded. |  |  |
| I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw. |  |  |
| **How my information will be used during and after the project** |  |  |
| I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project. |  |  |
| I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs*.* |  |  |
| I understand and agree that other authorised researchers will have access to the written data from my interview only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. |  |  |
| I understand and agree that other authorised researchers may use the written data from the interviews in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. |  |  |
| I give permission for the written data that I provide in the interview to be deposited in a Data Archive so it can be used for future research and learning |  |  |
| **So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers** |  |  |
| I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield. |  |  |

**The Brexit vote and ideas surrounding belonging among English-born white residents in England**

The photographs you take for the project will be stored securely. Electronic copies of the images will be saved in my personal University of Sheffield U: drive and hard copies will be kept in a safe.

Your photographs will only be reproduced by me – no-one else will have access to these and they will not be deposited in a Data Archive. Your images will be destroyed five years after I complete my PhD.

I would like to use the photographs in my thesis, and any reports, blogs, or publications arising from the project. Please could you sign one of the boxes below to indicate whether or not you are happy for me to reproduce the photographs you produce for the project.

*Please sign either 1 or 2*

**1**

I give my consent for **all**these photographs to be reproduced by the researcher. I give permission for these photographs to be used in the thesis / reports / blogs / any other publications.  I understand that real names will NOT be used with the photographs.

Signed  (participant) ……………………….    Date……………………..……

Signed (researcher)………………………..      Date…………………………

**2**

If you would like to give permission for me to publish some, but not all, of your photographs, please list the numbers of the photographs you will allow me to use:

I give my consent for photograph numbers ….……………………………………………(please specify) to be reproduced in the thesis / reports / blogs / any other publications. I understand that real names will NOT be used with the photographs.

Signed  (participant) …………………………..    Date……………………

Signed (researcher)…………………………….     Date………………….

**Project contact details for further information:**

The researcher: Hannah May Fletcher, [hmfletcher1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:hmfletcher1@sheffield.ac.uk)

Either of Hannah’s supervisors: Sarah Neal, [s.neal@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:s.neal@sheffield.ac.uk) or Joanne Britton, [n.j.britton@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:n.j.britton@sheffield.ac.uk)

The head of the Department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield: Kate Morris, kate.morris@sheffield.ac.uk

All of the above are based in the Elmfield Building, Department of Sociological Studies, University of Sheffield, Northumberland Road, Sheffield, S10 2TU.

**Appendix 5: Interview Demographics Sheet**

* **Name**

…………………………………………………….

* **Gender**

……………………………………………………..

* **Age**

…………………………………………………….

* **Ethnicity**

…………………………………………………….

* **Nationality**

…………………………………………………….

* **Marital status**

Single, never married ………….

Married or civil partnership ……..

Divorced ………………………….

Widowed …………………………

Separated ………………………..

* **Household type**

lone parent  single person (below retirement)

single person (above retirement)  couple with children

couple without children  other (please specify):

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* **Current housing status**

Home owner

Social tenant

Private tenant

Living in relatives' home

Living in friends' home

Hostel/homeless accommodation

Squatting

Sleeping rough

Other [please specify]

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* **Current employment status**

Employed full-time (average total = 25 hours or more)

Employed part-time (average total = 16-24 hours)

Employed short-hours (average total = 1-15 hours)

Employed variable hours

Not in paid work

Self-employed

Informal work

Retired

Other [please specify]

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* **If you are employed, what is your job?**

…………………………………………………….

* **Your highest level of qualification**

……………………………………………………..

* ***If you’re happy for me to potentially contact you in a few months’ time about taking part in a further stage of the project (which will involve taking and discussing photos of your local area) please provide your email address***

……………………………………………………..

**Appendix 6: Local Resident Interview Guide**

As you’ll have read in the project’s information sheet, I’m interviewing you as part of my PhD research.

Today I’d like to discuss your views on your local area. I’m also interested in hearing your thoughts about Brexit. During the interview I’ll ask you a series of questions. I want to stress that there are no right or wrong answers to these – I’m interested in hearing your views. If you don’t want to answer some of these questions that’s fine – just let me know. You can also stop the interview at any point if you want to – again, just let me know. I want to stress that everything you say will be treated confidentially and your identity will remain anonymous.

I’m recording the interview to ensure that what you say is captured accurately.

* To start off with, could you tell me a bit about your personal history?
  + *Such as your work / family / housing tenure*
* Which neighbourhood do you live in and how long have you lived here?
  + Where else have you lived?
* What’s good and bad about living here?
* Do you think it’s getting harder or easier for people around here to make ends meet? *Probe them to think about the impact of economic changes, e.g. deindustrialisation, shift to service sector, growth in part-time and precarious work*
  + Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future?
    - *Specifically linking to their local area*

**BELONGING & COHESION**

* *Linking back to what they said about what’s good and bad here,* Has the area changed over time?
  + Positive / negative? If so, why?
* How, if at all, do you think migration has affected your local area?
  + Has this impacted your view of the area?
  + Do migrants / ethnic minority and white British residents get treated the same?
* What do you think it means to ‘belong’?
  + Are there any specific groups which you don’t think belong here? Why?
  + Are there any specific groups which you think do belong here? Why?
    - *People different / the same?*
    - *Tap into culture, practices, visibility*
* Do you think that being white is important to help you fit in round here?
  + Is it important to fit in Sheffield? In the nation?
* Do you think that people get on well this is neighbourhood?
  + Has this changed over time? If so, why?
  + What brings people together?
  + What practices are divisive?
* Do you think racism is a significant problem here?
  + Do you think racial tensions are more obvious today than in the past?
  + Any spike post-Brexit?
* In your view, can places be diverse and still English?
  + Should we encourage ethnic minoirty groups to integrate into British society? *I.e. trying to manage their cultural differences* 
    - *Probe regarding geographic dispersal*
* How do you think people from outside the area view your neighbourhood?
  + Does this influence how you feel about it?
* What do you think could be done to make this neighbourhood better and more cohesive?
* After talking about how connected you feel to your local area, I wondered if you could think about how this compares with your connection to Sheffield / Yorkshire / England / GB?
  + Is your pride at living in these places more or less important?
  + *Probe if they identify as English or British*

**BREXIT**

* I wondered if you could tell me whether you voted Leave / Remain / didn’t vote?
* Do you think many people in this area voted?
  + *Probe if the turnout was higher than usual*
* What were your reactions to the vote for Brexit? Were you surprised by the result?
  + In Gallatin, Sheffield and the UK
* What information did you use to help you decide how to vote?
  + *E.g. experience of local community, social media, tabloid press, family discussions…*
    - If and how do you think the experience of your local community influenced how you voted?
  + How were you influenced by the Leave campaign?
    - What did you think about its anti-immigrant focus?
  + How were you influenced by the Remain campaign?
    - What did you think about its focus on the economy?
* Do you feel the views and experiences of people like you and your community are listened to by the local council / politicians in government?
  + With regards to Brexit, and in general
* What are your anxieties, hopes and expectations about leaving the EU?
  + Are you concerned about Brexit?
  + What impact do you think our departure from the EU will have?
    - On Gallatin, Sheffield and the UK

I have no further questions. Is there anything else you’d like to bring up or ask before we finish the interview?