Social Haunting or Reclaiming the Past? Education and the Working Class in a Former Mining Community

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the educational experiences of pupils at 'Lillydown Primary', a state school for 3-11 year olds, located in a former mining community in the north of England. It mobilises Avery Gordon's notion of social haunting to illustrate how experiences of school are shaped not only by current socioeconomic circumstances but also by historical class-based relations and performances that remain embedded in certain working-class communities. Whilst the multiple forms of violence inflicted by the neoliberal state on places like Lillydown have caused profound and far-reaching social and economic harm, our data suggests that it is possible, at least in some circumstances, to reckon with and draw on the past to harness the 'goodness' of ghosts. In particular, the paper illustrates how historical relations, which have typically worked as an apparatus for creating and maintaining relations of solidarity, trust and equality underground and in community life more broadly, continue to be transmitted and retraditionalised within the School. These historical transmissions enable staff to develop encouraging relations with their pupils and connect with them in ways that locate contemporary experiences of education in a socio-historical framework that recognises the richness and heritage of working-class culture, as well

as the pain and loss. The echoes and murmurs of the past that remain to haunt are reckoned with and harnessed by staff, we argue, through their shared working-class histories.

Keywords: *critical ethnography, working class, mining communities, education, social haunting.*

Introduction

Much political discourse in the United Kingdom and elsewhere presents education as performing numerous positive functions for the individual, the economy and society more broadly. Typically, it is claimed that increasing the volume and quality of education and training will, among other things, boost economic growth, 'up-skill' the workforce and help social cohesion (Simmons and Smyth, 2018). Successive British governments have also claimed that education is the key to creating a fairer, more equitable society, especially in terms of increasing social mobility, at least for the working classes (Social Mobility Commission, 2017). To be fair, there is some truth in such claims. Many working-class children, young people and adults have, over the years, benefited socially, culturally and materially from participating in various forms of learning – not only in schools, colleges and universities but through trade unions, adult and community education, in early-years settings, or via the multiple dimensions of informal learning (Simmons and Smyth, 2018). We should also remember, however, that education has always been about social control as much as emancipation, especially for the working classes (Lawton, 1975).

There is, however, a rich literature on working-class resistance to educational inequality and injustice (see, for example, Willis, 1997; Corrigan, 1979; Ward, 2015; Thomson, 2002; Smyth, Down and McInerney, 2010). Pupils and

students are not simply passive recipients of oppression. Research shows that working-class attitudes to education and their experiences of learning are complex, uneven, and mediated by dimensions of gender, 'race' and other forms of difference. The influence of space and place are also important, as are processes of individual and collective agency. Either way, Britain has undoubtedly undergone substantial social, economic and cultural change since Paul Willis (1997) was writing about the attitudes and behaviour of his working-class 'Lads' at a secondary school in the English midlands, not least in terms of deindustrialisation and the demise of the traditional youth labour market. The social and cultural legacy of Britain's industrial past nevertheless lives on in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. Whilst there is much talk about the white working classes becoming marginalized, angry and left behind (see Goodhart, 2017), feelings of loss and injustice are felt particularly keenly in once tightly-knitted communities, especially those once dependent on coal, steel or other forms of heavy industry. Twenty years ago, Royce Turner (2000) wrote about demoralised and disempowered former coalmining communities, and the rise of crime, vandalism, drug abuse and other social ills in these places. Bright (2016) argues that many former mining towns continue to experience considerable social and economic dislocation, despite numerous attempts to regenerate the social and economic fabric of such locales.

There has, more generally, been a resurgence of interest in experiences of class, especially working-class experiences of deindustrialisation, and past and present experiences of education, work and social life (see, for example, Bright, 2016; Invinson, 2017; Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012; Ward, 2015).

Deindustrialisation, Sherry Linkon (2018) argues, remains 'toxic' inasmuch as its effects remain active "long after abandoned factory buildings have been torn down and workers have found new jobs" (p.63):

> People and communities are shaped by their histories – by experience, by memory, and by the way the economic and social practices of the past frame the structures, ideas, and values that influence our lives long after those practices have ceased to be productive...even as the active memory of industrial labor may fade, the landscape, social networks, local institutions, as well as attitudes and cultural practices bear the stamp of history (Linkon, 2018, pp.61-62).

This paper adds to the literature on working-class experiences of education. It draws on ethnographic research conducted in Lillydown[1], a former coalmining community, in Oakshire[2] in the north of England. It complicates Avery Gordon's (2008) notion of social haunting to understand how shared experiences of growing up working class – shared ghosts – help form and maintain teacher-pupil relations that, in various ways, reflect traditional industrial and community relations of the past. At times, ghosts of pupils' resistant histories (Bright, 2011a, b) create tensions and conflicts within teacher-pupil relations, particularly when more authoritative regimes and discourses are enacted. In the main, however, this paper shows it is possible to harness ghosts in ways that enhance the educational experiences of young people through developing and maintaining interpersonal relations built on traditional working-class values of trust, equality and respect.

The first section of the paper introduces Gordon's concept of social haunting and considers how it can help us to understand how loss and social injustice continue to affect pupils' lived experiences at Lillydown Primary. The second section provides an overview of the research project upon which this paper is based. The third section presents data from the fieldwork. Whilst this illustrates how a social haunting can be a 'frightening experience' which 'registers the harm inflicted or the loss sustained by a social violence done in the past' (Gordon, 2008, p.xvi), data also shows how teachers can draw on shared historical ways of being and doing to influence pupils' experiences of schooling

in a more positive fashion. It is argued that through their shared histories of 'growing up working class', staff and pupils are able, sometimes unknowingly, to reckon with and harness the 'goodness' of their ghosts in certain ways that create particular teacher-pupil relations. Here, distinctions and intricacies around the various class-based practices of 'speaking the same language' (Maguire, 2005) are explored – language, accent, humour, dress, lived experiences, for example. The paper concludes by arguing that it is necessary to complicate Gordon's notion of social haunting in order to fully understand a haunting. We must, it is argued, move beyond the loss to also recognise and harness the 'goodness' a haunting can transmit, if we are to begin to challenge and refashion relations and experiences of schooling in contemporary capitalist society, with and for the working class.

A Social Haunting: A New Way of Knowing?

This paper argues that we require a new way of knowing and seeing the multiple and affective ways in which historical transmissions shape working-class experiences of education – and Avery Gordon's (2008) notion of social haunting is, we contend, a powerful way of doing this. For Gordon, a social haunting is:

> [A]bout reliving events in all their vividness, originality, and violence so as to overcome their pulsating and lingering effects. Haunting is an encounter in which you touch the ghost or the ghostly matter of things: the ambiguities, the complexities of power and personhood, the violence and the hope, the looming and receding actualities, the shadows of ourselves and our society. When you touch the ghost or the ghostly matter (or when it touches you), a force that combines the injurious and the Utopian, you get something different than you might have expected (Gordon, 2008, pp.134-135).

Gordon acknowledges that Marxism and psychoanalysis provide paradigms that attend well to seeing the unknown but also argues that "a fundamental change in the way we know and make knowledge in our mode of production" is necessary (p.7). She argues that if we are to truly understand the complexities of social life and transform it, we must 'confront the ghostly aspects of it (Gordon, 2008). This, Gordon stresses, requires a change in our method of knowledge production that not only recognises the political and economic forces and structures in society, but 'the affective, the cultural, and the experiential' matters that haunt the present (p.xii). Social haunting is, according to Gordon, the language and the method of seeing and knowing, which enables us to understand the ways in which historical injustices remain affective even when they are 'supposedly over and done with'; or when their oppressive nature and effects remain ignored and/or denied (Gordon, 2011, p.2):

> What's distinctive about haunting is that it is an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely... Haunting raises spectres, and it alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future. These spectres or ghosts appear when the trouble they represent and symptomize is no longer being contained or repressed or blocked from view (Gordon, 2008, p.xvi).

For Gordon, a social haunting always registers the harm and the loss but it is also distinctive for producing a 'something-to-be-done'. If then, according to Gordon, we listen to the ghost, 'talk graciously' to it, and 'learn how it speaks', the ghost is "pregnant with unfulfilled possibility" for change (p.183):

> The ghost registers and it incites, and that is why we have...to grasp the fullness of its life world, its desires and its standpoint. When a ghost appears, it is making contact with you; all its forceful if perplexing enunciations are for you. Offer it a

> hospitable reception we must, but the victorious reckoning with the ghost always requires a partiality to the living. Because ultimately haunting is about how to transform a shadow of a life into an undiminished life whose shadows touch softly in the spirit of a peaceful reconciliation (Gordon, 2008, pp.207-208).

Attention to ghosts emphasises the importance of understanding how class, as a historical transmission, is "deeply embedded [and] affectively lived" through particular performances, structures and relations in education (Walkerdine, 2011, p.258). To understand Lillydown Primary, its community's ghosts must first be known.

Lillydown and its Ghosts

Lillydown Colliery opened in 1896 and was, like Britain's other coalmines, taken into public ownership under the National Coal Board (NCB) after World War Two. Eventually, the colliery became one of the largest, most productive and technologically advanced pits in Britain (Wain, 2014). It was, by far, the largest employer in Lillydown and central to the social, economic and cultural life of the village. By 1984, Lillydown Colliery was one of 174 state-owned coalmines employing 187,000 miners across Great Britain (NCM, 2018). On 6th March 1984, however, the NCB announced twenty mine closures, many of which the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) claimed were economically viable. The NUM, moreover, argued that 70 more pits were on a 'hit list' driven by another agenda – the destruction of the mining industry itself (Trounce, 2015; OTJC, 2018).

The announced pit closures sparked perhaps Britain's most significant and controversial industrial dispute of the twentieth century – the Great Strike of 1984-1985. On one hand, the resounding defeat of Britain's strongest trade union, the NUM, had far-reaching consequences for organised labour and the

working class more generally. The violence and oppression associated with the Strike – the mass deployment of police; the set-piece picket line battles; the violation of civil rights; the sequestration of union assets; the withholding of welfare benefits from striking miners and their families – also meant any mirage of state neutrality was shattered (see, for example, Milne, 2014; Oldham, 2016; OTJC, 2018). The Great Strike also marked the 'beginning of the end' for coal as a major industry in Great Britain – the social and economic consequences of which should not be underestimated, especially for former coalfield communities, which not only lost their staple industry but arguably their very *raison d'être* (Murray, et al. 2005; Turner, 2000).

The state-sanctioned violence, which characterised the Strike can, in many ways, be compared to the historic racialised violence in North and South America to which Gordon's (2008) work attends. Although the Great Strike ended some near thirty-five years ago, and an identifiable coalmining industry no longer exists in the UK, these events, we argue, continue to haunt the present, 'forcing generations to co-exist with their ghosts' (Gordon, 2008). In other words, the "excessive [police] brutality" and "state-sponsored" violence of the Great Strike continues, as Oldham (2016) argues, to deeply affect many of Britain's former mining communities. This is evident not only materially but also socially, culturally and emotionally. Narratives of loss and injustice continue to characterise the former coalfields and it would be fair to say that relationships with government, police and other sources of authority, including schools and teachers, are often difficult (see, for example, Bright, 2016).

Lillydown Colliery survived the immediate aftermath of the Great Strike but shut in 1993 following the second wave of pit closures that effectively finished mining as a major industry. A few privatised mines continued to operate for some years thereafter but all of these are now closed and deep-coalmining no

longer exists in the UK. Meanwhile, there have, over the years, been various attempts to 'regenerate' Britain's former coalfields – although the success of such initiatives have been varied, uneven and contingent upon localised geographic and cultural factors, as well as the broader economic and political environment (Murray et al. 2005). Either way, many former mining communities are now characterised by high levels of poverty, unemployment, crime, and low levels of educational attainment.

Lillydown has an estimated population of 4,672. It is overwhelmingly white British and has had little inward migration, unlike many other of parts of the country. Slightly fewer than 65 percent of adults are recorded as economically active; 37.2 percent of residents have no educational qualifications (15 percent higher than the England and Wales average); 14 percent have achieved higher education qualifications, compared to 42 percent [3]in the United Kingdom (OMBC, 2019; ONS, 2017). Oakshire is the 39th most deprived local authority in England. It is within the top 20 percent of local authorities in England for child poverty (OMBC, 2019).

Such data does not provide the full story, though. Traditionally, coalmining was not only the main source of employment in Lillydown, it was central to its culture, identity and social life. The colliery and its associated institutions – the NUM, the Miners' Welfare Club and Institute, and the Labour Party – provided leisure, pleasure and various forms of formal and informal learning, as well as a sense of solidarity and a spirit of community. It is, nevertheless, important not to romanticise the past. Pit villages could be somewhat parochial and 'closed'. They were often slow to adapt to broader social and cultural change and the prevalent culture could be intolerant of norms, values and behaviour deemed contrary to established expectations (see Dennis et al. 1956). Strangleman (2013) therefore recommends we engage in a more 'radical' or critical nostalgia

when thinking about the past where "knowledge of the past makes a dialectic intervention in debates about the present" (p.28). Linkon (2018) also stresses the need to remember all aspects of working-class life in its lived complexities – the hardships and struggle, and the pride, collectivity and solidarity. This, in turn, Linkon believes, can allow a more 'critical understanding of the present' (p.23).

Undoubtedly, though, the coal industry and the local community provided a sense of continuity and an ontological security that has been ruptured in Britain's former mining communities – though perhaps especially so in geographically isolated places, such as Lillydown. Although many years have passed since the Great Strike and the demise of the mining industry, data suggests tensions and conflicts – the ghostly matters – of Lillydown's history continue to affect pupils' lived experiences. Frances, a teacher at Lillydown Primary, provides some insight into how historical experiences are 'ghosted' into the present:

> They… are living in that aftermath without knowing about it…with the first generation there was a lot of anger. You know that pride had gone, that self-esteem had gone, that industry and your livelihood had gone but the first generation understood that anger. That anger then flips in the second generation into misuse, choosing wrong paths and that. The third generation don't know their history; they just know they are living in this area... They know the brass band comes out occasionally but they don't understand the history… But, we are not talking about the sons or daughters of miners any more are we (Frances, Teacher).

Frances highlights the tensions and complexities, 'the shared injuries of deindustrialisation', that continue to effect subsequent generations long after the industries have closed. For post-strike generations, their history is "not an event

of the past... it remains potent, and it cannot simply be forgotten or ignored" (Linkon, 2018, p.2). Reckoning and harnessing with the echoes and murmurs of the past can, Gordon (2008) suggests, lead you "toward what has been missing, which is sometimes everything" (p.58).

Methodology

This paper presents findings from a critical ethnography conducted in Lillydown Primary, a local authority school with a higher than average proportion of pupils who qualify for free school meals. The vast majority of pupils are from white British backgrounds. It is a one-form entry primary school with 249 pupils on roll, currently classified as 'good' by the state-funded inspectorate, Ofsted. The research critically examined how experiences of education are shaped not only by the current structures and relations of contemporary capitalist society, but also by historical performances, traditions and codes rooted in Lillydown's industrial past.

Ethnography is a popular method for researching educational settings. It is distinctive for its ability to 'get beneath' the complexities of social life through direct and sustained contact in the field. Traditional, 'mainstream' ethnography is largely descriptive and has frequently been critiqued for its lack of development in, and contribution to, theory (Beach, 2016). Critical ethnography, in contrast, attempts to move beyond 'descriptive' knowledge, stressing theoretical and pedagogical developments that ultimately lead to social transformation. Critical Marxist ethnography, in particular, emphasises the need to expose how historical and current socioeconomic and political relations and practices shape society, and how these materialise and are experienced within the everyday world (Beach, 2016). Here, understanding the relationship between social class and history is central. Whilst a Marxist approach recognises that people can shape their own history, it also registers that

individual experiences are rooted in the historical and material relations of production:

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living (Marx, 1852, p.5).

This backdrop is fundamental to understanding how historical and current structures and relations affect pupils' experiences of education, and how the dynamics of class and culture operate in the socio-historically specific locale of Lillydown Primary. Critical Marxist ethnography provides us with a way of seeing and understanding how the 'affective, the cultural, and the experiential' – the ghostly matters – affect pupils' experiences of schooling, and how these interact with wider political and socioeconomic systems (Gordon, 2008, p.xii). At its core lies a notion of praxis – bringing about change out of a concern for social justice.

The first phase of research, conducted between April and June 2016, was essentially explorative and enabled social connections with participants to be formed, and trust to be built. Fifteen days – over 90 hours – were spent in the field during phase one. Phase two took place from June to December 2016. Here, a total 44 days were spent in the field and over 260 hours of participant observation was carried out in and around the school. Sixteen members of staff – six teachers, four teaching assistants (TAs), five higher-level teaching assistants (HLTAs), and the head teacher – were interviewed. Fourteen of the sixteen staff interviewees were women, reflecting the makeup of the school workforce. All those who took part were from either Lillydown or Oakshire, or had close connections to Lillydown through, for example, family or personal

relationships. Two members of the local community were also interviewed – Jess, a young woman who moved to Lillydown from a nearby village in 2011, and Frank an older man who worked at the Colliery for 44 years and has lived in Lillydown since birth. This provided further understanding and insight into the history and culture of Lillydown, and the school's place in the local community. Seventeen of the eighteen interviews were recorded and transcribed one interview was unrecorded, at the participant's request. A dialectical approach – using data based on existing theory, the research questions, and new emerging codes and themes from data – was used to code and analyse data.

Findings

Growing Up Working Class: United by the Past

Being able to 'call upon' shared experiences of working-class life helped staff and pupils negotiate and build encouraging relationships, and open up further educational possibilities. At Lillydown Primary, the majority of staff believed their working-class backgrounds and localised knowledge provided a certain sense of social and cultural affinity with their pupils:

> I *get* our kids and I get where they are coming from...I know that I am the same as these kids. I can't really put it into words; it is just something deep inside that is installed within me and within all the other children (Clara, Teacher).

For Maguire (2005), one of the most powerful ways to engage working-class pupils in schooling is the ability to 'speak the same language'; emitting to pupils a feeling that their teacher is an 'insider' (p.433). Unlike Geoff Bright's research (2011, a, b) where pupils talked about conflict and struggle against teachers who 'come from elsewhere', or Paul Willis' (1997) lads who felt their teachers did not know "the way of the world" (p.39), staff at Lillydown Primary were able to 'call upon' their shared histories to build and maintain encouraging

relations and experiences of schooling. Staff described how their backgrounds and personal histories encouraged pupils to perceive and regard them in particular ways – as "not posh, just normal like everybody else" (Hazel, HLTA).

'Speaking the same language' in working-class communities is, however, not just about vocabulary, accent and dialect. It is also located in the complex interplay between verbal and non-verbal communication – contained within certain attitudes, dispositions and the use of humour, wit and irony. In coalmining communities, 'pit humour' traditionally served as a coping strategy for the arduous and dangerous work miners faced, and was an integral part of social life in places like Lillydown. It often involved 'taking the piss' and being able to engage with such humour was an important part of creating and maintaining relations of solidarity and trust. Data showed how staff engaged with certain forms of working-class humour and how such performances were used, perhaps unconsciously, to diffuse relations of authority and implement rules and educational processes in a relaxed, often playful, way:

> A pupil is walking to assembly with their collar up. The TA is stood at the door waiting for the class to pass through. As the pupil passes by, the TA comments:
> TA: Put yha collar down, Elvis is dead!
> The pupil laughs and smiles at the TA. Whilst continuing to walk to assembly, he puts his collar down.

And,

> Two pupils are chatting whilst the HLTA is going through answers to a maths test. The HLTA turns around and comments to the pupils:
> HLTA: Yha not in ' local [pub] nar lads, callin' [chatting] away wi' each other.

> The HLTA and pupils laugh. The two pupils nudge and smile at each other before apologising and focusing back on their work. The HLTA thanks them and continues.

Finally:

> Pupil tells T it is break time and T replies,
> T: Who are you 'union representative?
> Staff and pupils laugh.
> One pupil shouts, 'yeah we are, it's brek'.
> T laughs and responds: You'll be 'death o' me you lot, go on get out to play.
> (Observation Data)

It became apparent during the ethnography that distinctive forms of traditional working-class humour remained embedded within pupils' identities, despite the processes of deindustrialisation and loss that have had such profound effects in Lillydown and other former coalmining communities. Gordon's notion of a social haunting helps explain how a shared humour – "a semi-industrial humour" – continues to be ghosted into the present:

> It reflects what you would have found in the industry… It's that sort of almost unkind ribbing of each other sort of thing and that's probably 'sense o' humour these kids have got from their industrial background and where the' have come from and they've probably kept that haven't the'. That's probably why the staff in my class have still got it and they get it as well (Joe, Teacher).

Generally, pupils understood and engaged with these humorous exchanges. Humour appeared to diffuse hierarchical structures of authority and help create alternative, arguably more encouraging, relations and experiences of schooling. The class significance of the laff remained, like the lads in Willis' study, to contribute to the maintenance of a particular culture and to 'defeat fear and

overcome hardships and problems' (Willis, 1997, p.29). But, at Lillydown Primary, the laff is less about resisting authority and educational processes (see Willis, 1997; Bright, 2011a, b) and appears to be, largely, a creative response by both staff *and* pupils to manage and resist neoliberal relations and processes of education in contemporary capitalist society. Humour is used collectively to 'attempt to win a space' from larger processes and relations of schooling and capitalist society which often function as mechanisms of control for the working class. Primarily, it worked as an apparatus for creating and maintaining relations of solidarity, trust and equality as it had historically done for miners underground and in mining communities more broadly.

Unfinished Business: The Paranormal Borderlands of the Miners' Strike

Data from the research at Lillydown Primary suggests that staff and pupils' shared histories helped develop and maintain positive social relations. It is, however, also true, as Gordon (2008) suggests, that ghosts are not, by any means, entirely innocent. Ghosts have a collective past but are also complicated over time by individual histories that create powerful boundaries of inclusivity and exclusivity, and work to obscure a haunting. Shared ghosts were complicated by age, experience in the profession, and sometimes through differences in language and appearance, which created tensions within teacher-pupil relations. This is evident in Estelle's recollection of how a previous member of staff was 'othered' due to her particular accent and appearance, even though she lived on the outskirts of Lillydown:

> E: Lillydown is not necessarily welcoming to those who are different. A few years ago we had a teaching assistant who wo the most intelligent person, well intentioned, and had a heart o' gold but she got the most stick and the highest amount of disrespect from these kids ever.
>
> I: Why?
>
> E: She wo different.

> I: Different how?
>
> E: She wo well-spoken and she wo well-dressed. I am very aware of how I dress and that sounds ridiculous, I know it sounds silly, but one teacher wo referred to by parents in ' playground as 'The Model'… the parents hated her and the' judged her from the' off. All her clothes wo designer and her shoes, and she learnt that the' hard way. She wo Oakshire through and through, and an amazing teacher but the' pick up on it – don't make yourself a target.

(Estelle, HLTA)

Being 'well-spoken' and wearing designer clothes marked this former member of staff out as being 'different'. Once again, this supports Maguire who considered the ways in which classed practices can work in schools to separate out and exclude those who sound or look 'other' (Maguire, 2005). It also illustrates how the ghost casts a regulating gaze upon the present. Although staff and pupils shared a collective history, personal social and cultural dynamics complicate how a haunting is reckoned with, and how it can be harnessed. At times, the age and experience of staff also raised spectres of pupils' 'resistant histories' (see Bright, 2011a, b). This was perhaps most evident when certain teachers attempted to enforce educational relations and processes in a more mechanistic, authoritarian fashion:

> Pupils are doing a test. They are sitting in rows and working in silence. The teacher, without warning, asks one pupil to move. The pupil asks why and the teacher replies,
>
> T: Because you are talking and I have asked you to move!
>
> The pupil slouches in their chair, sighs, and again questions the move. The teacher asks them to move again in a sharper, sterner voice. The pupil reluctantly moves. They sit in their new place slumped in the chair, mumbling under their breath, and sighing. After a few minutes, the pupil begins to tap their pencil on the desk. The teacher is watching and after around 20 seconds shouts:
>
> T: Get on with your work and stop tapping your pencil!

> The pupil immediately shouts back – "I am thinking!"
> The teacher does not respond. For around five minutes, the pupil sits 'thinking' before putting their head on the desk.
> T: Get your head up!
> The pupil shouts back immediately and that they are 'thinking' and then refuses to continue the test.
> T: Right, I've had enough of your attitude, go put your name on the board *the pupil huffs as they get up*. If it continues you are going to be moved to another year group.
> The pupil slouches in their seat, reluctantly does a few more questions, and then sits for the last five minutes of the lesson doing nothing.
> (Observation Data)

Such displays of teacher authority, following Gordon's notion of a social haunting, arguably parallel the adversarial relations particularly between the Metropolitan Police and the miners during the 1984-1985 miners' strike. This reflects the work of Bright (2011a, b) who sees pupils' rejection of schooling as a complex performance of historical working-class culture – "namely, a propensity for 'bottom-up' action" (p.502). Like the youths in Bright's study, when met with authoritative discourses and performances, pupils at Lillydown Primary act within a 'socially remembered repertoire of refusal' (Bright, 2011b). Such instances were, however, uncommon and when they did arise, they were, typically, quickly and mutually resolved. Generally, such conflicts were evident with newly qualified members of staff whose relations and approaches towards schooling were perhaps complicated by their experience of navigating the dominant discourses and formal structures and systems of education. In the main though, staff's shared working-class backgrounds and their understanding of Lillydown's particular history worked to strengthen teacher-pupil relations. Rather than being viewed as a 'regime of coppers' (Bright, 2012, p.228), and coming into direct conflict with their pupils, shared

histories help negotiate a degree of respect and build encouraging relations – "the' could all kick off but the' know that we trust 'em" (Zoe, HLTA). Without positive relationships, staff believed that pupils would reject education:

> If you're relying on the curriculum to inspire 'em and engage 'em yha fucked!… you have to have those relationships or we would just fall apart at 'seams (Estelle, HLTA)

Such relations are, in various ways, reminiscent of traditional working-class relations once established in former industrial communities – such as those built around coal. Whilst colliers often did not enjoy being underground, the camaraderie and social relations associated with mining were often greatly valued. In mining villages, friendships, local networks, and a sense of community traditionally held them together in the face of adversity (Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012). It is these relationships which are arguably ghosted into the present and which encouragingly affect pupils' experiences of and approaches towards education:

> [S]o let's think about (names a pupil)… He wants to do his maths today because… he likes me and he wants me be to be happy. He doesn't want to do it because he is motivated by education, by being good at maths, by getting good results in his SATs, by going on to get good results in his GCSEs…or by getting a good job. None of that stuff matters... he is motivated by the fact that he wants (staff) to smile at him and say well done (Joe, Teacher).

Rather than coming into direct conflict with pupils, staffs' shared histories helped negotiate a degree of respect, stability, and agreement with pupils in ways which transcend beyond the adversarial relations of authority and control which so often characterise experiences of schooling for the working class (see, for example, Anyon, 2011; Bowles and Gintis, 2011). Consequently, in the

main, pupils actively engaged with, rather than rejected, education. Perhaps, though, the problem with such engagement is that it appears to be largely a product of the particular interpersonal relations established at Lillydown Primary, rather than formal educational processes associated with the state.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, communities like Lillydown have been profoundly damaged by the injustices and violence of the past and it is important to recognise that such ghosts continue to haunt the present in ways that shape young people's experiences of schooling. It is, however, also necessary to complicate Gordon's notion of a social haunting in order to gain a more holistic and critical insight into educational processes and experiences. The 1984-1985 miners' strike, alongside various other individually embodied ghosts, creates tensions and complexities within teacher-pupil relations. Nevertheless, shared histories, in the main, allowed staff and pupils to reckon with the 'goodness' of the past and create encouraging relations based on equality, trust and respect, and place hope in opening up further possibilities to challenge and transform the processes and experiences of schooling. As Willis argued, "once students find a bridge across institutional and cultural hazards; they can find a world of knowledge, mental development, and expression that can be appropriated and appreciated in autonomous ways" (Willis, 2004, p.164).

It is unrealistic though to expect education or teachers to put everything right, especially in places like Lillydown which have, in many ways, been socially and economically violated with profound and continuing consequences. Yet whilst violence and loss continues to haunt such locales (Bright, 2016; 2018), the data presented in this paper illustrate the complexity of such processes, especially in terms of their re-enactment in educational settings. Much previous research on working-class experiences of education has, perhaps rightly,

focused on the ways in which they are disadvantaged and damaged by the structures and processes of schooling, not least in terms of their relationships with teachers. This paper moves beyond the paranormal injuries of the past and suggests that it is, at least in some circumstances, possible to harness the 'goodness' that a social haunting transmits. It advances understanding of the importance of situating teaching and learning within the historical and cultural context of the locale in which we teach. In turn, this can, we argue, help to open up spaces, which allow pupils and teachers to challenge and transgress capitalist processes of schooling. Re-organising teacher-pupil relations along arguably more horizontal lines is the first point of contact. Critical education, as Freire (1993) argues, begins by solving the teacher-student contradiction. Embracing the past can help young people navigate, engage, and challenge the landscape of deindustrialisation and schooling.

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Notes

[1] Lillydown is a pseudonym for the village where the research took place.
[2] Oakshire is a pseudonym for the town and local authority where the research took place.
[3] This includes a number of various HE qualifications obtained in the UK. For a full list of qualifications see: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/11-01-2018/sfr247-higher-education-student-statistics/qualifications.

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