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Fear and Loathing in Ashington:
Investigating the impact of
deindustrialisation on social capital
and its social and political
consequences

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Abstract

This research explores the effects of deindustrialisation on the levels of social capital and social trust in Ashington, a former mining town in South east Northumberland, and its social and political consequences. It contributes to the growing literature that attempts to explain contemporary political trends through declining levels of social capital and social trust, as well as adding to the existing body of literature on the more general effects of deindustrialisation on community and belonging in post-industrial landscapes. It also feeds into ongoing debates regarding a decline in social capital across western countries more widely. The research uses data from sixteen semi-structured interviews from a range of participants living in Ashington to gain a deeper qualitative understanding of the effects of deindustrialisation on social capital and social trust and how this can be linked to emerging political trends we have seen in deindustrialised communities in recent decades. The study finds a direct link between deindustrialisation and a decline in social capital which has made political organising highly challenging. Reduced social trust and increased levels of crime have in turn contributed to the growing disillusion amongst these communities with our current political system and fed into a rise in right-wing political populism.

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Declaration

This thesis is the result of my own work. Material from the published or unpublished work of others which is used in the thesis is credited to the author in question in the text.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

While interest in social capital as a concept that can be used to explain social trends has been present throughout the 20th century, it has gained widespread popularity since the publication of Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000) outlining the decline of social capital across the US in the second half of the 20th century. This includes debates about the decline of social capital in the UK, what may be causing it and what its social impact is (Letki,2008; Goodhart,2004; Hall,1999). Interest in social capital as a concept to explain political trends is a small but growing field (Giuliano and Wacziarg,2020). This has been driven by both Putnam's study and the increased polarisation of politics in the West and the rise of populism which a growing field of authors have begun to link back to the decline in social capital in and amongst different demographic groups across Western democracies (Bian et al,2022; Guriev and Papaioannou,2022; Boeri et al,2021; Brodeur et al,2021; Giuliano and Wacziarg,2020; Algan et al,2018; Alesian et al,2018; Kuziemko et al,2015).

Likewise, the social effects of deindustrialisation in former mining and other industrial towns in the UK has been fertile ground for sociological investigation. This includes investigations on identity forming in post-industrial landscapes and the effects deindustrialisation has had on community and social cohesion (Hudson and Beynon,2021; Gibbs,2021; Nayak,2006; Hollands,1996;). The political effects of deindustrialisation have found a new interest due to more recent political developments, most explicitly the vote to leave the EU and the strong support amongst working class communities for Brexit, alongside the 2019 general election and collapse of Labour's 'red wall', traditionally strong Labour seats across the North who voted Conservative, many for the first time (Payne,2021; Goodhart,2017).

I seek to contribute to both of these sets of literature by investigating the social and political changes in deindustrialised former coal mining communities through the lens of the changes in social capital as a direct result of this deindustrialisation. I hope to use the concept of social capital to build a better understanding of both the legacy of deindustrialisation in these communities as well as the contemporary political challenges

and trends that have emerged in them in recent years. While the vast majority of the research that links the social capital to political trends is quantitative, I will use a detailed qualitative analysis of a number of interviews with residents from a range of backgrounds in Ashington, a former mining town in South East Northumberland, to build a richer understanding of how deindustrialisation has impacted social capital in the town at both an individual and collective level, and how this is at the root of other social and political changes.

I begin by outlining what social capital is and why it is important, before reviewing the literature on social capital in coal mining communities and the effects of deindustrialisation, as well as the growing research linking social capital to political trends. I then outline the results of the interviews across five sections that investigate the memory of mining communities, attachment and identity, individualism and community, crime, and political changes. I find that deindustrialisation has had a direct and significant effect on social capital which in turn is crucial for understanding modern social and political trends in these communities, from the low levels of participation and organisation, rising levels of anti-social behaviour and crime, lack of political representation, distrust towards our political institutions and politicians to the simmering of far right sympathies fuelled by the growing atomisation and frustrations of life in the shadow of deindustrialisation.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 - What is Social Capital?

2.1.1 - Generalised Reciprocity

To understand the significance of the decline of social capital in former coal mining communities and the effect it may have had on the region's politics we must first outline what social capital is, how it is formed, and why it is important socially, economically, and politically. These first two short chapters will establish an understanding of social capital to give us an idea of why it is important and how it is formed which will give us a platform to understand how mining communities built up and subsequently lost high levels of social capital.

While there is some debate over the specific definition of social capital (Edwards & Foley, 2001) it can be broadly understood as the social networks and relationships that connect people to facilitate collective action towards shared goals. As a result, Social Capital is often seen as a valuable, or indeed necessary, resource in building social trust to create a principle of generalised reciprocity (Putnam, 2000).

Those who consider social capital to be a positive good (Putnam, 1993, 2000; Fukuyama, 2001) often emphasise the role social capital plays in fostering higher levels of social trust that allow us to act as one towards collective goods and overcome 'prisoner dilemma' or 'tragedy of the commons' style scenarios. Putnam makes use of an example laid out by Hume to demonstrate:

'Your corn is ripe today; mine will be so tomorrow. 'Tis profitable for us both, that I should labour with you today, and that you should aid me tomorrow. I have no kindness for you and know you have as little for me. I will not, therefore, take any pains upon your account; and should I labour with you upon my own account, in expectation of a return, I know I should be disappointed, and that I should in vain depend upon your gratitude. Here then I leave you to labour alone; You treat me in the same manner. The seasons change; and both of us lose our harvests for want of

mutual confidence and security.’

Should there be a developed principle of generalised reciprocity between the farmers as a result of higher levels of social capital and trust then they could have worked together towards collective goals that would have been individually beneficial for both parties. Putnam and Fukuyama both draw on the work of Alexis De Tocqueville who noted that American democracy was able to function not based on an ‘idealistic rule of selflessness’ but rather a mutual understanding of ‘self-interest rightly understood’ (Putnam, 2000: p.135).

Putnam in particular has become a champion of this particular ‘Tocquevillian’ understanding of social capital which emphasises the important economic, social, and political benefits of higher levels of social capital and mutual reciprocity which he sees as crucial to the smooth functioning of democracy (Putnam, 1993; Edwards & Foley, 2001). Putnam notes how high levels of trust result in more efficient societies as ‘transaction costs’ are reduced and replaced by the ‘social lubricant’ of generalised reciprocity, resulting in these communities having a measurable economic advantage as time and money is not spent on making sure others uphold their side of social and economic arrangements or on penalising them should they fail to do so (Putnam, 2000: p.288). Similarly, Fukuyama (2001) notes that while coordinated action between a group of people is possible who possess little or no social capital, the lack of trust between the two groups to produce a norm of generalised reciprocity means that any agreement would have the additional transaction costs of needing to be negotiated and enforced, resulting in lost time and money.

Not only are there economic advantages to how social capital can make us more efficient in working towards collective goals, but there are widespread social advantages as well. Belonging to a community with well-defined values and norms for action can create a sense of solidarity and belonging that is both good for our wellbeing and valuable in itself. When considering the generational differences in levels of Social Capital, Putnam investigates in some detail the role WWII played in creating the ‘long civic generation’ that emerged during the war. He found the hardship and intense patriotism that emerged during this period nurtured what sociologist Lloyd Warner called an ‘unconscious wellbeing’ as a

result of 'everyone doing something to help in the common desperate enterprise in a co-operative rather than a private spirit' noting that 'participation in a common cause tended to enhance feelings of comradeship and well-being' (Putnam, 2000: p.270-271). Putnam chronicles an extensive list of advantages that come with high levels of social capital, noting that communities with higher levels of social capital are richer, healthier, better educated and generally happier overall.

Letki (2008) makes similar observations, noting the association between higher levels of social capital and people's sense of community and belonging with their neighbours which in turn fosters high degrees of social cohesion, trust, and a willingness to take an active interest in local matters and the wellbeing of the place they live. Letki also notices the risk low levels of social capital may pose to the quality of life within communities and, like Putnam, the knock on effects this could have on the sense of solidarity shared within neighbourhoods and the ability to act collectively towards sharing shared goals. The potential political consequences of this will be explored throughout this study.

2.1.2 - Building Trust

This section seeks to explore more deeply the concept of social capital, as well as its relationship with the idea of social trust. Social capital leads to higher levels of trust as people come together and learn to form collective identities that then allow for wider social and political organisation to organise collective solutions to common problems across the community. This will help us understand how mining communities were able to build strong levels of social capital and trust, some potential pitfalls of social capital, how it can be measured, and how these communities subsequently lost their high levels of trust during the process of deindustrialisation.

Trust is a crucial but often overlooked ingredient in any healthy society. Fukuyama goes as far to say that 'a nation's well-being, as well as its ability to compete, is conditioned by a single, pervasive cultural characteristic: the level of trust inherent in society.' (Fukuyama, 1995: p.7). But how can we build trust? And perhaps more importantly, how do we build the right kind of trust?

Putnam outlines two different types of trust, distinguishing between thick and thin trust that can emerge within groups across societies. Thick trust is trust that is 'embedded in personal relations that are strong, frequent, and nested in wider networks', and thin trust, is trust in 'the generalised other' that is 'based on a general community norm' and 'shared social networks and expectations of reciprocity', or in other words the tendency to give their fellow citizens the benefit of the doubt even if they do not know them personally. This is also a mutually reinforcing relationship. People who trust their fellow citizens (in the sense of having thin trust) are more likely to volunteer, serve in their community and display other forms of civic virtue. This in turn can foster higher levels of trust leading to higher levels of civic participation and wider and stronger social and community bonds and so on (Putnam 2000: p.137).

The distinctions between these different kinds of trust allow us to better understand different forms of social capital, namely the distinction between bridging and bonding social capital. Bonding social capital is by nature exclusive and inward looking, reinforcing ties amongst those sharing exclusive identities. Bridging Social Capital on the other hand is inclusive by nature. This is the Social Capital that links people to distant acquaintances to broaden their range of social networks, assets, and information, and generally creates a community that is more outward looking and tolerant to wider groups beyond our immediate social networks (Putnam, 2000: p.23).

One concern is that too much bonding social capital and not enough bridging social capital can actually become detrimental to any given society. In his book *The Moral Basis of a backwards society* (1958) Banfield describes a town in Southern Italy utterly devoid of bridging social capital and thin trust. This community is completely incapable of acting collectively towards the common good as a result of intense family bonds and nepotism who place their own narrow interests above the interests of the town as a whole. As a result, the townspeople remained poor, isolated, and unhappy and incapable of meaningful political action as a result of a crippling inability to work together as a collective due to a lack of trust. Banfield calls this situation one of 'amoral familism', where kinship bonds remain so strong that they are unable to develop meaningful relationships across the wider community. This is also a concern for Fukuyama, who notes that cultures that emphasise intense family loyalty such as those in Italy have struggled to develop economically at the same pace as

other western nations due to a lack of trust outside of the nuclear family (Fukuyama 1995, p.56).

There is also a class analysis to this. Bourdieu (1986) uses the examples of 'Old Boys Networks' that develop amongst the elite class in society, in elite schools and institutions that maintain existing social hierarchies along class lines. These networks create Social Capital amongst those in elite institutions for their own benefit creating a system of class based nepotism to maintain their privilege and stifle social mobility and undermine meritocracy. In his more recent work Putnam (2016) has revived this class based analysis of Social Capital by dissecting the divide in levels of Social Capital between the 'Haves' and 'Have-nots'. This class based criticism of social capital that has been recognised in the more recent work of Putnam (2016) and others (Murray, 2012; Deenan 2019) will be explored in more detail later.

Nevertheless, bonding social capital is important for giving people a personal sense of belonging in a tight group of people with whom they personally associate on a regular basis. Nor does bonding social capital have to come at the detriment of bridging social capital. Both exist to some degree in every community and are not mutually exclusive. In the influential sociological study *Family and Kinship in East London* (1957), the authors find that while the family kinship ties that were incredibly tight and well developed could theoretically come at the expense of a wider attachment to others, it was in fact these ties which formed the basis for the wider community connections resulting in a tight knit community made up of those with strong close bonds to their own kinship groups as well as being well connected in a wider community network (Young and Willmott, 1957: p.104). Fukuyama also finds that throughout the 20th century the US proved successful in walking the tightrope between strong family values, which, like Young and Willmott (1957), he argues is the primary source of community and social capital, while promoting a flourishing tradition of associational life which resulted in high degrees of social capital and trust amongst and within communities (Fukuyama, 1995: p.309).

How can we measure social capital in any given community? Putnam notes that while it is tempting to think of involvement in community organisations and public life to be the peak of civic engagement, and this is no doubt important, it is actually the informal ties

found amongst friends and acquaintances that so often provide crucial social support, as well as sustain social networks, that in turn help build and maintain higher levels of thin trust that consequently builds bridging social capital rather than only bonding social capital. This is a distinction also picked up by Letki (2008) who notes that while social capital that develops in more formal settings such as voluntary associations are important, in particular in their role as 'schools of democracy' (a role that will be examined in more detail later) they are not as effective in building up levels of trust and reciprocity as more informal social networks. Perhaps more concerningly is the way organisations such as voluntary associations can be selective in their membership policies and initiations which lead to a rigid form of bonding social capital rather than bridging social capital which can contribute to the formation of exclusive group identities and reinforce existing social divisions which will be expanded upon later (Li, Pickles, and Savage: 2003).

This raises questions of what to look for when judging both how much social capital a given community may have but also how healthily distributed it is. While membership to organisations such as voluntary associations is certainly important in its own right, not least for the role they play in maintaining a healthy local democracy, we must also be able to identify an atmosphere of informal sociability and thin trust. As noted by Letki, while settings of informal sociability may not prove an obvious immediate function beyond the gathering itself, they serve to promote communications, interest in others, empathy, trust and understanding which fosters a sense of commitment and care which in turn nurtures the emergence of trust and reciprocity (Letki, 2008).

Another key indicator of the levels of trust in any given community is focusing on its levels of crime. A bountiful amount of research finds that higher levels of social capital and trust are correlated with lower levels of crime as communities can play a key role in organising collective neighbourhood responses to crime that has indeed found to be more effective than police presence or incarceration. Communities can prevent crime by providing social control and networks of support and information that can both deter crime and help identify criminals, networks that, as we will see, mining communities once had in abundance. Higher degrees of social capital create higher levels of trust and therefore lower levels of crime with obvious economic and social benefits (Akçomak and Bas ter Weel, 2012; Dilulio, 1996; Sampson, 1999). This is linked to the concept of collective efficacy, the

effectiveness and willingness of the community to control the behaviour of individuals and groups to maintain order and security in the interests of the common good (Sampson, 1997), an ability intricately linked to the levels of trust and solidarity present in the community (Browning, 2004).

We have briefly outlined the concepts of social capital and trust, why they are important, how they are accumulated and how they are measured. The next chapter will paint a picture of how employment in coal mines and the community and social life that was built up around this created high levels of social capital and trust which allowed mineworkers and their families to work together towards collective economic and political goals.

2.2 - Social Capital in Coal Mining Communities

2.2.1 - How Did Coal Mining Communities Build Social Capital?

This investigation focuses on the changes in social capital in post-industrial mining communities in Northumberland following the collapse of the mining industry and its relationship to changing political attitudes and trends in the region as a result. Considering how any given community can rise above a state of tribal kinship loyalty to develop a distinct common culture and the social structures and norms that comes with it can be overwhelming. Fukuyama notes that 'Not only do norms from such sources not come about through decentralised bargaining; they are transmitted from one generation to the next through a process of socialisation that involves much more habit than reason' (Fukuyama, 2001: p.16). We must therefore consider how this process of socialisation takes place in mining communities like Ashington, where these 'habits' emerged from, which will subsequently lead us to investigate why they may have been lost following the closure of the mining industry.

Ashington, like so many mining towns across the Northern Coalfields, was built for and around the pit. Or, as local historian Mike Kirkup puts it in his social history of the town 'In the beginning was the Word, and the word was *Coal*' (Kirkup, 1993: p.6). Technological and economic advances during the industrial revolution provided the basis for coal to be discovered and excavated, thus moulding both the landscape and lifestyle of the people who came to live in the pit villages set up to do so (Ibid). This led to the development of a vast array of mines and therefore mining communities across the great Northern Coalfields sharing a distinct culture that emerged from the pit work and social arrangements underpinning it. These communities in their 'ideal type' were 'physically isolated and occupationally homogeneous' with strict norms establishing gender roles and tight knit and interlocking neighbourhood relations that resulted in dense social networks that reinforced traditions of mutual aid (Waddington et al,2001: p.71). Jackson (2019, p.173) notes that 'the communalism that so defined the pit villages of Northumberland and Durham grew from the simple fact that miners relied on each other for their safety at work, and the people who lived in these places shared a common purpose', adding that 'exposure to common dangers and trials helped to develop a strong sense of solidarity among pit men' (p.211). Hudson and Beynon find similar results in their book *The Shadow of the Mine* (2021), detailing the rise

and decline of the coal industry in Durham and South Wales. Reflecting on life when the mining industry had closed, a number of sources made clear that although the work could be unpleasant and dangerous they still yearned for their time working in the pits because of the sense of solidarity that it cultivated (partly in fact as a result of the unpleasantness and dangers), with one testimony explaining that “underground you wouldn’t see a man struggle, you wouldn’t have to ask anybody to give you a hand, they should automatically see you struggling, and they come and give you a hand.”, and another saying “I miss it now, that’s what you don’t understand ... down there is a different way of life, it’s not a job, it’s a way of life and I mean literally life” (Hudson and Beynon, 2021: p.185). This offers an answer to Fukuyama about how social capital could spontaneously develop in coal mining communities. Fukuyama argues that it is clear that social capital is developed spontaneously through playing prisoner's dilemma-iterated games, like those outlined in the previous chapters (Fukuyama, 2001: p.16). Men working down the pit recognised the benefits of co-operation and supporting one another towards collective goals at work, but also, as we will see, how this spilled out into the ability to work collectively in the wider community to build the foundation for flourishing levels of social capital and trust.

The dangers, discomforts, and dignity from working down the mines gave pit villages a solid foundation to build highly collectivised communities with strong levels of civic engagement and social capital. Mining was more than a job in these communities, it was a vocation and a ‘distinctive code of conduct’ based around comradeship and supporting one another as a collective over the individual. Despite often involving backbreaking and genuinely life threatening work most men look back fondly on their time in the mines with a sense of loss. These jobs provided a sense of belonging, comradeship and dignity that has not since been replaced (Hudson and Beynon, 2021: p.195). Tommy Turnbull vividly describes the togetherness of the ‘marras’ down the pit and how they would look after one another, remarking that what mattered in these towns and villages was ‘not how big or small you were, how long you’d been down the pit or what your religion was if you had one. The fact that you were a pitmen and they were a pitmen, was all that mattered. And I’m not talking about your best pal or the fellas you worked with, I mean everybody.’ (Robinson, 2001: p.89). This quote offers an evocative sense of the thin trust that emerged amongst the

coal miners as a distinct people who were willing to support one another above their own narrow self-interests.

Studies have noted the emotional responses to the dangers associated with work down the pit and the effects they could have on a community's cohesion and sense of place and belonging. Grimshaw and Mates (2022) find a link between the dangers of working in the mining industry and the development of a stronger sense of place. In a study exposing children to the heritage of mining communities of which they come from, they found that 'In particular, they developed a keen appreciation of the dangers of being a miner and the sacrifices miners made to provide for their families' (Grimshaw and Mates, 2022: p.173). They found that when children learnt about the dangers of going down the mines it instilled a sense of pride in their past, forging stronger ties to their place and communities. Gibbs (2021) also picks up on this in his work on mining communities and deindustrialisation in the Scottish Coalfields, noting how pit disasters served as a reminder of the dangers in the mine as well as an example of the solidarity within the community as the pitmen came together to support one another (Gibbs, 2021: p.105).

Similarly to Grimshaw & Mates (2022), Jackson, drawing on the work of GM Trevelyan's writing on the emotional expressiveness of those living under the constant threat of danger and disaster, finds that the dangers of the pit work resulted in a feeling of a 'shared sense among the miners that they were doing exciting, dangerous work', and that 'exposure to common dangers and trials helped to develop a strong sense of solidarity among pitmen' (Jackson, 2021: p.211; See also Gibbs, 2021: p.105). Hoggart too notices this, writing that folk songs in working class communities would often revolve around the themes of love, home, and friendship, and would often take on a sentimental and nostalgic tone (Hoggart: 1957: p.141). The biography of Tommy Turnbull illustrates the emotional responses to disaster vividly within these tight knit place based communities, writing that 'When someone breaks his back or loses his legs down the pit people are upset about it. But when someone gets killed the whole pit is affected by it. It's regarded as a death in the family and there's always anger mixed in with the sorrow because every death is seen as unnecessary'. (Robinson, 1996: p.214).

In a study of Northumberland Miners Banners Edwards (1997) notes the link between the dangerous nature of work within mines and the importance of what the banners represented. In a world where mining disasters were the norm, communities were often left to rally round one another following tragedies down the pit. The emphasis that these disasters would influence communities is important, reinforcing the strong collective nature of mining communities. Edwards writes that 'entire communities have been caught up in pit disasters, demonstrations, evictions and strikes. And perhaps because of this involvement, miners' banners have become important expressions of community identity and solidarity.' (Edwards,1997: p.13) The banners on display at the Durham Miners Gala still evoke an emotional response amongst the crowd today and have found a new lease of life as an emotional expression of loss at an industry and way of life as communities attempt to come to terms with deindustrialisation (Tomaney,2020). These banners were just one of the community rituals used to reinforce collective community engagement and celebrate these communities' industrial identities (Wray and Stephenson, 2005: p.193).

Crucially, these strong bonds forged between men down the pit extended into the social life of the pit village which was segregated strictly along sex divisions underpinned by the traditional 'breadwinner' family unit where men would go to work and take home a wage for their wives who in turn would be responsible for all domestic duties and child raising. This allowed men to spend the majority of their lives, save for eating and sleeping, outside of the house, where women would live their lives almost exclusively within the house (Dennis et al, 1956: p.180). The sociability of this communal life amongst the pitmen was reinforced by a certain degree of 'epicureanism' that prevailed within mining communities that came as a result of the desire to relax after working in tough conditions and the predominance of death, illness and disaster that encouraged spending over saving (Hoggart, 1957: p.116; Benson, 1980: p.172).

It was not just the men who enjoyed high degrees of sociability. Colls notes that woman too had rich and diverse networks of communication embedded into their communities: 'Outdoor parties, bus trips, chapel teas, child care, park outings, the daily borrowing and sharing according to a strict housework rota (the female division of labour), as well as the street minding that went on all day, every day, just seemed to happen, as if out of nothing. In fact it came out of deep female networks.' (Colls, 2004: p.299). Colls argues

that what could be perceived as simply gossip by their male counterparts were in fact complex and sophisticated channels of communication that provided a rich network of information that formed a crucial part of what is recognised as community; 'Women were streetwise. They kept clear the channels of communication. They knew who was who and where they lived, and they drew on all this as common knowledge' (Colls, 2004: p.298). This is an example of the informal sociability from which thin trust can grow, promoting interest in others, empathy, trust and understanding, and ultimately a deeper shared social identity from which social capital and trust can emerge.

In their influential study of a Yorkshire mining town *Coal is Our Life*, Dennis et al argue that: 'Historically the miners were the first workers to engage in that kind of work and community which determine in large measure the shape of relations in the modern urban family' (Dennis et al, 1956: p.180). This organisation of social life with a strong division of labour allowed for high levels of both formal and informal social interaction amongst men in social settings such as pubs, bookies, or allotments for example which in turn reinforce the collective spirit and levels of trust. Importantly, this informal sociability created the thin trust and bridging social capital that are so important for fostering norms of generalised reciprocity and the ability for the wider community to trust one another and work towards collective goals. These scenes are illustrated colourfully by Dennis et Al (1956) as well as in books such as Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) or Young and Willmott's *Family and Kinship in East London* (1957) which vividly describe the strong place-based sociability of working class communities of the post war decades. This romanticised view of tight knit working class communities have been challenged and criticised by authors who emphasise the diversity and fragmentation of working class communities and argue that the traditional, tight knit community is something of a 'retrospective reconstruction' (Bourke, 1993: p.1). Others have warned against the 'smokestack nostalgia' associated with our memory of industrial communities that is too eager to ignore the reality of the brutal working and living conditions and material deprivation that came with them (Strangleman, 2013). Gilbert, another critic, does concede however that 'Many mining settlements have conformed to popular images of places with tightly knit social relations, strongly developed local associational and political cultures and a strong sense of local identity. Of these characteristics it is this sense of identity or of imagined local community which is perhaps

most significant. It is hard to think of 'community' in this context as no more than a nostalgic, retrospective imagining.' (Gilbert, 1995: p.50). Colls too argues that 'It is hard to believe that in Bourke's working-class London, or in her industrial cities, relationships were so ad hoc, or so fleeting, or so anonymous, that they were unable to produce cultures common enough 'as to constitute a shared identity' (Colls, 2004: p.294). Colls draws on the work of Durkheim, observing that 'Durkheim did not intend culture to preclude difference, but he did intend it to preclude non-recognition of what is commonly understood to be particular about living in one place as opposed to living in another place.' (ibid).

Hudson and Beynon outline how the social life of miners built around the mine provided the foundations for both religious worship and social organisation. Miners organised meeting halls, libraries, cooperative stores and working men's clubs amongst other social goods that was in South Wales described as 'the greatest network of social institutions created by working people anywhere in the world' (Hudson and Beynon, 2021: p.18). Colls notes that these initiatives were reinforced by coal owners taking little interest in what happened down the mines, due to the ruling class's 'distaste for the pit mingled with ignorance about its workings', leaving mining communities to organise amongst themselves (Colls,1987: p.125). This brings into question how the role of the state in providing centralised aid may have in fact contributed to the decline of the social bonds in these communities which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

The creation and organisation of initiatives like working men's clubs funded by subs from miners as well as grassroots insurance funds, permanent relief funds, friendly societies to support injured miners and their families, alongside the trade unions themselves, is a precursor to the modern welfare state and a remarkable example of the strength of the norms of generalised reciprocity that Putnam writes about that could only be achieved in areas of high social capital and trust. Indeed Colls notes that on a visit to Walbottle Colliery the miner and sociologist Ernst Duckershoff was so impressed with the ability of the miners to organise 'collectively and decently' that two men could not have a fight without it being subject to the full rules and proper procedures (Colls,2004: p.300). These initiatives were forged through a shared understanding of the risks posed to miners in a physically dangerous and financially insecure world and the comradeship that emerged as a result (Benson,1980: pp.172-190).

Not only did these social structures provide financial relief in times of need, but ‘an umbrella of support, a space in which people could develop their individual talents and personalities in a civil society’ (Hudson and Beynon, 2021: p.186). Green argues that central to the mission of the working class friendly societies, trade unions and methodist church networks was the aim not only to provide mutual aid, but an attachment to certain ideals and the promotion of good character (Green, 1993: p.38), and a commitment to a variety of values and obligations that we owe one another including good character, duty, self-sacrifice, solidarity, and self-discipline amongst others. Green argues that the role these institutions played in embedding these ‘civic virtues’ was a blind spot of the Thatcherite moral revolution (Ibid: p.viii).

All of this resulted in what could be described as a Tight culture. Tight cultures are those which have strict social norms and little tolerance for deviant behaviour which allows them to maintain high degrees of order and social coordination. Gelfand (2019) argues that tight cultures emerge in response to ecological and man-made threats a given community or nation has historically encountered. A higher degree of threat will result in a tighter community given the advantages that strong norms and social coordination offer in response to these threats. In the face of material deprivation in particular in times of economic hardship as well as a result of the dangers and disasters associated with work down the pit, coal-mining communities grew into tight communities where strict social norms, gender roles and substantial networks of mutual support and communication helped them cope. Strangleman (2001) in his study of networks in mining communities outlines how young men entering a career in the pit were quickly taught the values of self-discipline as this is what the dangerous work down the pit required. This then spilled into social relations outside of the pits themselves. Men going down the pit were not only taught the ropes of the job, but wider expectations and norms which made their survival in the profession possible (Strangleman, 2001: p.258).

This was often done in the confines of the vast network of formal and informal institutions that members of the wider community were part of. Colls observes that in each working class community ‘Alongside Labour, there was a constellation of other institutions -primarily the nonconformist and Methodist chapels and Sunday Schools, the Co-operative Wholesale Society and Co-operative Union, and the national friendly societies, and after

them, the allotment societies, the brass bands, voluntary bodies, sporting clubs, youth organisations and the like - which drew their members from the streets but which also projected their activities out on to a wider, civic world. Every working-class neighbourhood was thick with these institutions' (Colls, 2004: p.302). These organisations are not dissimilar to what Edmund Burke called 'little platoons', local and particular associations that provide people with social identities and a sense of belonging where collective identities can be forged and nurtured (Woods, 1999: p.128).

It is also worth mentioning the role that the emergence of a distinct 'class consciousness' played in building collective identities and community organising. William Sewell argues that the emergence of a working class consciousness in England was marked by a 'breakdown of political alliances between workers and bourgeois following successful struggles against regimes dominated by landed aristocracies', during which 'workers had every reason to feel that having carried the major burden of the battle against what they saw as a common aristocratic enemy, they were abandoned by the bourgeoisie (or the middle class, to use English terminology), who took all the spoils of victory for themselves'. What followed was a new sense of collectivism amongst a wide range of workers which drew on the discourse of trade and community solidarity (Sewell,1976:p.25). Thompson argued class experience is determined by the productive relations that one is born into, and is experienced in cultural terms, 'embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms' (Thompson,1963:pp.9-10). Thompson understands class experience as a broader category than the marxist idea of class struggle. Sewell writes that for Thompson 'his notion of class experience is vastly broader. It includes the whole range of workers' subjective responses to their exploitation -- not only in movements of struggle, but in their families and communities, in their leisure-time activities, in their religious practices and beliefs, in their workshops and weaving-sheds, and so on.' (Sewell,1976:p.8).

Colls notes that by the end of the 19th century miners were 'a vast, growing and organised force, respected as epic foes and class-conscious far beyond any corps of English labour', and that this consciousness was a process of shared collective experience at work and beyond (Colls, 1976:p.77). Thompson also makes this emphasis on shared working class experience in the formation of class consciousness. For Thompson, class itself is something which results from common experience, and indeed an awareness of that experience and

their collective interests being different from another group with their own experiences and interests usually opposed to one another (Thompson,1963:p.9). Colls argues elsewhere that this increased class consciousness meant that pitmen evolved to be receptive to trade unionism, which alongside the emerging methodist temperament created a disciplined workforce capable of organising amongst each other (McCandless,1988:p.376). The comradeship that emerged from working down the pit was not only as a result of the shared experience of the physical threats of dangerous work in the mines, but one rooted in a common class interest - the shared material struggle for industrial representation and the battle for fair wages, terms and conditions. The social infrastructure built up within mining towns was organised and paid for by miners themselves - as noted earlier that coal mine owners would often leave it up to miners themselves to organise from the bottom up (Colls,1987: p.125). The welfare and leisure provisions organised in a grassroots fashion amongst the workers was made possible by the strong class consciousness that had emerged in coal mining towns, with even the language of 'Working Mens' clubs and 'Miners Welfares' having a distinctly class conscious tone. This echoes Thompson's point that class experience goes beyond the workplace, but into the homes and social lives of miners and their families as well.

It also included a vast range of community rituals and traditions, perhaps most notably leek shows, pigeon races, whippet races and the Miners' Picnic. Haidt draws on the work of Durkheim by noting that rituals have the ability to bring us together to form a 'hive mind', or collective identity that has proven beneficial for communities from an evolutionary point of view to collectively tackle shared problems to ensure its survival. By forming a collective group through which norms and values can spread, communities are more likely to ensure their long term survival by helping them divide labour, work together and solve prisoner-dilemma style scenarios to develop a norm of generalised reciprocity (Haidt, 2012: p.301).

This facilitated a process described by Roberts (1993) as an 'anticipatory socialisation' as knowledge of the industry was learnt and experienced through cultural networks and practices. Strangleman observes that 'Coalfields represent classic examples of occupational communities where work comes to dominate place. But, in a more diffuse sense, such places can also be viewed as industrial districts wherein there is a strong

anticipatory socialisation into work identity within the community and where, further, there is a reciprocal spilling over of the workplace norms and values into non-work settings' (Strangleman, 2001: p.264). This neatly encapsulates the idea that the norms and values learnt down the pit spilled over into the wider community through both everyday life and through more formal institutions, creating a code of behaviour and expectations amongst the men that set the tone for their engagement in the wider community. This is in keeping with Fukuyama's observation that norms are 'transmitted from one generation to the next through a process of socialisation that involves much more habit than reason' (Fukuyama, 2001: p.16).

While evolving a tight culture may have been crucial in supporting communities through difficult times, it also created a claustrophobic and sometimes stifling atmosphere with intense pressure to conform and little social mobility, as well as an intolerance of outsiders both geographically and in terms of social class. Education and self-improvement were often met with suspicion or regarded as unnatural (Hoggart, 1956: p.68-70), vividly portrayed through the play turned film *Billy Elliot* about a boy growing up in a Durham pit village who is forced to hide his passion for ballet for fear of the social stigma attached to it. This conformity was policed by the informal networks of information as mentioned earlier (Colls, 2004: p.299) which in tight-knit, homogeneous place-based communities resulted in the widespread practise of 'gossiping' and a knowledge of everybody else's business. This is the risk of having tightly bound high trust communities. While this chapter has demonstrated that mining communities were able to develop healthy levels of thin trust and bridging social capital that facilitated principles of generalised reciprocity and the ability to work together towards a common good, it also created a degree of bonding social capital which inevitably cultivated to some degree a sense of insularity and suspicion of outsiders and non-conformist behaviour. Female perspectives in particular may not look kindly on a world of such lofty expectations for conformity where women would enjoy even less freedom than their male counterparts. The expectations of women in this male breadwinner model style community to look after the home and raise the children gave little room for individual autonomy of self-expression. Bennet et al (1956) is littered with testimonies from women being submitted into a reluctant acceptance of their role by the socio-economic

reality of their circumstances, sadly resulting in living, by their own judgement, unfulfilled and frustrated lives.

Nevertheless, the strong norms and robust networks in mining communities that were born from tight knit communities welded together by a shared experience of dangerous work and material deprivation resulted in high levels of social capital and trust, allowing miners to engage in fruitful enterprises of generalised reciprocity and find collective solutions to their problems while fostering a sense of belonging and togetherness that gave pit men and their families an assured sense of place and identity. The next chapter will focus on the effects deindustrialisation had on these communities on how it resulted in a reduced level of trust and social capital, before going on to investigate the results of this, in particular the political implications today.

2.2.2 - Deindustrialisation

In the introduction to the second edition of *Coal is Our Life* written in 1969 the authors write:

‘For the miners today, the death of their industry means that the heart is torn from their communities. There is no overall planning of new industries or of training or of education for leisure; there is no more than marginal provision for economic security. We did not paint the mining community in any couleur de rose, but this community without the mine and mineworkers is in danger of becoming merely an aggregate of socially isolated and culturally condemned human beings’. (Henriques, 1969: p.9).

This statement has been proven prophetic, as through the process of deindustrialisation the mining industry was dismantled and left unreplaced leaving communities to slowly die and their social capital to crumble. What is left are communities with ‘the heart torn from them’ that have lost their confidence and suffer from what has been described as a ‘collective depression’ (Wray and Stephenson, 2005: p.181).

Dissatisfaction with new forms of work following the closure of the mines was common. Hudson and Beynon (2021) recount testimonies from a number of former miners who after leaving the mining industry went on to working mundane factory and service jobs,

being left unfulfilled by what they perceived as the purposelessness of their work and lack of the comradeship that they enjoyed down the pit. One source said 'What a boring, boring job!...The pit had closed down and I'm working in a factory putting soups into pots, sachets of tomato sauce into a flaming box. It was so degrading it was hard to believe, I couldn't put it into words' (Hudson and Beynon: 2021: p.179; see also (Strangleman, 2001: p.260). Evans (2023) argues that the collapse of industrial work which fostered an atmosphere of solidarity and comradeship have been replaced by new, more fluid forms of labour that inherently foster high degrees of individualism over collectivism in what he perceives as a marked increase in the 'petty bourgeois' class under the neo-liberal economic paradigm, whose lives are marked by high degrees of self-employment and social and geographic mobility.

Not only did the new forms of work available to pit men once their jobs down the mines disappeared lack the comradeship that dangerous and important work down the pit was so effective at building, but it also meant that the process of anticipatory socialisation that taught young men not only the ropes of pit work but provided an identity which spilt over into the wider community too was gone, and with it the means to pass down the social norms and behaviours that they would be expected to conduct themselves within the family and community (Roberts, 1993; Bennet et al, 1956). Writing in the nineties, Hollands presents evidence that deindustrialisation has resulted in the traditional sites of identity forming for young adults disappearing, creating a crisis of identity amongst young men in the North East. Without the socialisation they would have enjoyed in the traditional industrial setting, they are left to form identities elsewhere, in particular through the phenomenon of 'going out' (Hollands, 1996: p.43). Hollands notes that as the spheres of work and traditional communities decline as a source of stable identity forming, then the local community becomes less important for young people and they subsequently become less interested in regularly socialising in their local areas (Ibid: p.53). The emphasis on 'going out' in the formation of these new identities is significant in itself, given the association between coal mining and consumption that was covered in the previous chapter. Cherrington writes that many older club-going members would lament the way young people would no longer be 'taught how to drink properly' (Cherrington ,2012: p.60), and in the absence of the 'anticipatory socialisation' they would have received under the guiding hand of their older colleagues in the mining industry are left to simply borrow and interpret

selective historical image traits and rituals for themselves (Hollands, 1996: p.57). Indeed in his pioneering work on football hooliganism *Amongst the Thugs*, Bulford (1991) finds that rather than deprivation leading the hooligans towards violence, many were in fact in well-paid stable occupations; it was the loss of a traditional working class landscape that provided a more noble form of masculinity that emerged from the rituals of work and place that fuelled the distorted, warped, and violent outbursts of masculine collective identity that was at the centre of hooliganism under the shadow of deindustrialisation.

Nayak makes similar findings when investigating the 'uncertain transitions' of young men into adulthood, as the certainty and structures of life in traditional industrial communities broke down and the 'feminisation' of the regional labour market took hold (Nayak, 2006: p.817). Nayak also finds that identities that were once formed around production are now being formed through consumption, as new forms of employment in the service sector economy fail to fill the gap of fulfilling meaningful work done down the pit or in other industrial sectors (Ibid: p.820) or provide the anticipatory socialisation necessary to provide robust identities, social norms and expectations amongst men entering adulthood.

The effect this has had on the family is particularly stark. As Beynon and Hudson point out, 'the social and economic fabric of the old coal districts revolved around the family unit with its characteristic sexual division of labour' (Hudson and Beynon, 2021: p.198). The need for women to join the workforce for economic reasons, as well as for important social reasons, created not only a crisis of masculinity, but fundamentally disrupted the strict gender divides that provided the fabric of the social life of mining communities. Jackson argues that: "A patriarchal system based on a heroic coalmining breadwinner and his diligent help-meet back at home may have once been an efficient division of Labour, but it was soon caught by a pincer movement of economic and social liberalism, which undermined large scale coal production and the strict gender roles that the whole system relied on." (Jackson, 2019: p.215). This was not just an economic system but a social one as well, that for all its faults provided high degrees of social capital and trust across the community for both men and women as outlined in the previous chapter. The family provided the basis for both rootedness in the community amongst generations as well as the foundation for the wider webs of social participation (Hudson and Beynon, 2021: p.246: See also Young and Willmott, 1957). Goodhart also notes how the family was itself, like the social infrastructure in mining

communities, a crucial institution of support for families in particular during tough times, providing free childcare, advice and support for families raising children as well as a wider web of influence as they grow up. While liberalising reforms have resulted in increased freedoms and agency for parents, in particular mothers, they have potentially undermined an important social institution (Goodhart, 2017: p.194).

The transition away from industrial forms of Labour in the North East did not just cause a wave of personal identity crises amongst young men in particular, but a breakdown of the social norms that underpinned the high levels of social capital and trust in the region. Hudson and Beynon touch upon the decline in trust and collapse of previously accepted norms of behaviour that followed the closing of the pits in Durham and South Wales. This culminated in the symbolic change that has happened with regards to locking the door. Previously everybody would have their door open as a result of the extraordinary levels of communalism and trust that ran through mining communities. One testimony is as follows: “When the colliery was open, before the decline of the community, I remember when you didn’t have to lock your door. You didn’t have to lock your door at night because you were all family. If you wanted something of mine, and I had it, I would give it to you. All you had to do was ask ... But today it’s not like that. You’ve got to lock your doors now. Now you don’t know your neighbours ... You don’t know their backgrounds; they haven’t actually been brought up in this community.” (Hudson and Beynon, 2021: p.252). They find these to be common sentiments across a number of former coal mining towns. Many bemoaned the rise of petty theft and vandalism and longed for the days where miners working down the pit acted as a ‘benign police force’ and their children ‘were safe playing on the street’ (Ibid: p.253), along with the vague, lingering complaint that ‘things just aren’t the same here anymore’ (ibid). These comments are supported by research that, as outlined earlier, concludes higher levels of social capital is correlated with lower levels of crime as communities can play an important role in organising collective neighbourhood responses to crime that is more effective than police presence or incarceration (Akçomak and Bas ter Weel, 2012; Dilulio, 1996; Sampson, 1999).

With the loss of jobs also came the loss of the social institutions which formed the ‘umbrellas of support’ for mining communities. Previously, both formal and informal institutions like miners lodges, pubs, libraries, and churches amongst others would be the

centre of social and civic life but, like traditional community events like leek shows and miners picnics, they soon began to disappear. Hudson and Beynon point out that 'in the 1850's a new chapel would open each week in the South Wales Valleys, but they closed at the same rate in the 1980's and 1990's' (Hudson and Beynon, 2021: p.187). Similar trends were found for co-ops, miners welfare organisations, miners institutions and welfare halls, which were commonly 'removed from the social realm, commodified and incorporated into the shoddy end of commerce', often becoming bingo halls, squash courts or furniture showrooms and the like (ibid; see also Gibbs, 2021: p.100). Significantly these are the settings that enable the informal sociability that Letki (2008: p.103) argues are so important for the development of trust and 'emergence of the attitudes of reciprocity and consideration' as well as where traditions and rituals played out to reaffirm the individual's commitment and sense of belonging to the wider community.

For some, the decline of these social institutions was welcomed. Many saw the existence of such institutions as monuments to a patriarchal, outdated world, as well as strongholds of racist and sexist ideologies that act as a dead weight on communities unable to move on from their industrial roots (Wallis, 2000; Keenan 2008). But for others, the effects of deindustrialisation has resulted in what has been called a state of 'contemporary anomie' amongst the 'previously solidarity communities left bereft of meaning by the loss of work' (Wray and Stephenson, 2005: p.177). This is a concept which has its roots in Durkheimian sociology, where anomie is broadly understood as a state of 'normlessness' that recurs as a result of rapid change and breakdown of the social fabric norms of a given community, often characterised by a period of rapid economic change. For Durkheim, individuals in close knit communities have their behaviour regulated by a shared system of values, beliefs, and sentiments which in turn form a powerful sense of social solidarity and collective identity. Rapid economic and social change has the power to liberate the individual of the 'constraints of tradition and dogma', but also dissolves their collective sense of identity and shared values and norms, leaving them, rather than liberated, with a sense of 'social fragmentation, competitive individualism, normlessness, uncertainty, and anxiety (Johnson & Duberley, 2011: p. 564).

Gilbert (1995) writes:

‘Concerns about crime, about the changing structure of the family, and about the erosion of local identities and distinctiveness in an increasingly complex and globalised cultural environment, have combined to create a growing sense of loss of place in society. An important element of this contemporary anomie has been the destruction of fixed relations between locality and work.’ (Gilbert, 1995: p.49).

This rupture between work, residence and community is also picked up by Gibbs (2021) who finds that:

‘Intensified deindustrialisation disembedded the economy from communities, defamiliarizing towns and villages and weakening historic attachments to associations at a national level.’ (Gibbs, 2021: p.97).

Throughout this chapter I have outlined how the effects of deindustrialisation shattered the traditional forms of collective work in mining communities to the detriment of their comradeship and sense of identity and belonging. The result is atomised communities lacking the social infrastructure to build strong levels of social capital and trust that they previously had in abundance. In the following chapters I will discuss in more detail how the effects of deindustrialisation has affected the levels of social capital in former coal mining communities and the political consequences this has had.

2.2.3 - Declining Social Capital

Putnam’s influential work looking at declining levels of social capital is a valuable resource but is limited in scope to the United States. While some of the factors that have resulted in a decline in social capital will be universal to the vast majority of the western world, for example the rise of new forms of private entertainment such as TV and the Internet, there have been profound economic and social changes that have had different effects on different communities across the UK and beyond. The focus of this work is to what extent the collapse of the mining industry and its culture rooted in work and place has resulted in the decline of social capital in these communities.

Much of the UK debate on social capital and trust has pivoted around the issue of immigration, in particular David Goodhart’s influential essay *Too Diverse?* (2004), who

argued that social trust is being undermined in modern Britain as a result of the individualism and multiculturalism common to developed countries that are eroding common culture and collective norms and identities. Goodhart calls this the 'progressive dilemma', taken from Conservative politician David Willets, which is summarised as follows:

“The basis on which you can extract large sums of money in tax and pay it out in benefits is that most people think the recipients are people like themselves, facing difficulties which they themselves could face. If values become more diverse, if lifestyles become more differentiated, then it becomes more difficult to sustain the legitimacy of a universal risk-pooling welfare state. People ask, ‘Why should I pay for them when they are doing things I wouldn’t do?’ This is America versus Sweden. You can have a Swedish welfare state provided that you are a homogeneous society with intensely shared values. In the US you have a very diverse, individualistic society where people feel fewer obligations to fellow citizens. Progressives want diversity but they thereby undermine part of the moral consensus on which a large welfare state rests.”

Resulting in a situation where:

“Lifestyle diversity and high immigration bring cultural and economic dynamism but can erode feelings of mutual obligation, reducing willingness to pay tax and even encouraging a retreat from the public domain.”

The problem is essentially that too much diversity results in too few shared norms and values for generalised reciprocity to smoothly occur, breeding resentment and jeopardising the legitimacy of universal risk pooling schemes at the national level. Putnam (2007) later made similar points himself, arguing that more diversity results in lower levels of trust amongst and within ethnic groups in society.

While much of the discourse in the UK on this issue is centred around the effects immigration has had on communities and their trust, this is not the only factor that can result in lower levels of homogeneity and the breakdown of shared values and norms in any given community, something which will be discussed in more detail later. Former mining communities in the Northern Coalfield that are the focus of this study have seen relatively

low levels of immigration from abroad, although there has been a general increase in mobility across the whole of the UK in the 20th century as a result of technological advances and more recently to go on to higher education or find work (Murray & Smart, 2017).

Letki (2008) finds that rather than ethnicity, it is individual level deprivation, or poverty, which is the biggest barrier to higher levels of social capital. Deprived individuals and neighbourhoods have fewer opportunities to participate in social life and are associated with poor living conditions and community disorder, destroying social cohesion and solidarity (Letki, 2008: p.24). In his study of Social Capital in the UK, Hall (1999) also finds discrepancies in levels of social capital across different social classes, pointing out that professionals are three times as likely as manual workers to be a member of a volunteer association, whereas social clubs and trade unions are dominated by the working classes - both institutions that have gone into decline in recent decades as discussed in the previous chapter.

The effects of deindustrialisation on the social fabric of the community that provided the basis for high degrees of social capital is represented well in the literature. In their study on the social impact of deindustrialisation in the early 2000's, Waddington et al (2001) argue that economic decline had a dramatic and negative on the community, which was accelerated by the loss of the 'focal points of social contact', such as working men's clubs, pubs, local shops, libraries etc, as well as the loss of community rituals, resulting in a disconnect with the wider community and the loss of structures of social support, communal interaction and a weakening sense of place. In Durkheimian terms, these events and rituals were 'regular and constant practices, residues of collective experiences, fashioned by an entire train of generations' which provided the basis of a culture and shared way of life (Colls, 2004: p.294). These now vanished rituals and traditions that bring communities together such as leek shows or the miners picnic are crucial for developing social relations and developing shared identities which in turn result in us no longer seeing people as 'others' but instead as part of a wider identity, building trust and co-operation or in other words, social capital (MacGregor, 2018).

When interviewing former miners on the legacy of deindustrialisation, Strangleman (2001) finds that not only did they bemoan the lack of fulfilling alternative work, but also the

erosion of the work-based networks that emerged from work in the mine that comprised a 'complex nexus of friendships based on the industry that had been kept alive in villages through various networks of pubs, clubs and family and friends' (Strangleman, 2001: p.260). Gibbs (2021) also finds that people miss the local amenities that developed in the mining communities that provided the basis for high levels of social capital and trust amongst the community living in physically tight knit neighbourhoods. Gibbs finds that 'Affinity with industrial activities was entrenched by the infrastructure of community life built around them' that created the basis for a 'social fabric of cultural activities and social connections' (Gibbs, 2021: p.100; see also Hudson and Beynon, 2021: pp.184-256). Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, on his work discussing the power of community, described these venues that have been lost as 'civil space' or 'we-creating infrastructure', places people come together as a community, as a collective 'we' seeking the common good rather than an 'I' seeking our own self-interest (Sacks, 2020). Without this infrastructure, the ability to come together and work towards collective goods becomes considerably diminished. The problem is therefore not dissimilar for these communities than the one originally outlined at the start of this chapter by Goodhart. While his focus is on the effects of immigration diversifying values and lifestyles, the process of deindustrialisation has had a similar effect. Goodhart recognises this in his later work, noting that to develop a readiness in people do not require shared ethnicity or religion, but does at least need some shared interest and common experience to build a shared identity people can buy into (Goodhart, 2017: p.22). The atomisation and individualisation of life following the collapse of the mining industry and the collectivised culture that it created threatens to erode the sense of mutual obligation amongst communities and indeed mark a retreat from civic life.

These sentiments are backed up by a wave of recent quantitative data that shows that our social infrastructure is crumbling around us. A Local Trust (2023) report found that since 2012 760 youth clubs have shut down (YMCA, 2020) and 25% of libraries have been lost since 2005 and 25% of pubs since 2001 (Onward, 2020). The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that this has hit working class communities hardest, both because they have borne the brunt of the closures and because these communities relied more on this social infrastructure in the first place to support them through times of economic precarity (JRF, 2015; Locality, 2018). From 1991 to 2017 membership at working men's clubs fell by

around 25%, while members of tenants associations has fallen by 38% to just 6% (Onward, 2022). Trade union membership has also fallen from a high of over 13 million in the late 1970's to just under 7 million today (Department for Business, Energy, & Industrial Strategy, 2020).

This growing divide drawn along class boundaries in social capital and the resources it provides has attracted interest in the US. In his more recent work based in the US, Putnam (2015) has written about a growing class divide when it comes to Social Capital. In recent decades not only is there a divide in wealth, but also in resources that come from a growing inequality gap between the social capital available to well off children over disadvantaged children. Putnam argues this jeopardises the foundations of the 'American Dream' rooted in the virtues of hard work and meritocracy as well as resulting in a growing anger and discontent amongst America's left behind classes (something which will be discussed more below). This built upon the more controversial work *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010* Murray (2012) which argued that a rapidly diverging education and cultural divide across America was resulting in a process of national self-sorting. What has emerged, Murray argues, is a new lower class bereft of both social and economic capital as well as meaningful political representation. Murray notes that the new upper class enjoy high education levels, low family insecurity, low rates of divorce and criminality and stronger social and professional networks compared with the new lower classes. Both agree that this divergence in levels of social capital is a major break with the Tocquevillian tradition in American life to form associations to collectively tackle social issues through both formal and informal civic engagement. The results mark a threat not only to the fortunes of those in the new lower class but to the health of American democracy more generally.

From the research provided above we can reasonably suspect that the same phenomenon is happening here in the UK. These ideas warrant more research on to what extent this is indeed happening in the UK, how the process of deindustrialisation, new forms of work and decline of community ritual and tradition has damaged social capital in former mining communities here in our country, and how this can explain emerging political trends and changes in recent years and into the future.

2.3 - Political Impact of Social Capital

Changes in social capital in any given community will have profound social and political consequences. The next four chapters look at the literature on how changes in social capital and trust can make collective political action difficult, fuel populist movements, reduce support for collectivist political positions and how these changes in the UK have affected different social classes more profoundly than others resulting in an increase in inequality and political and social fragmentation.

2.3.1 - Political Action

The decline of social capital and both informal and formal forms of association inherently make political organisation more difficult. In his book on the value of 'third places', Oldenburg makes the argument that public spaces such as pubs, cafes, and other social venues are essential democratic forums that foster political debate where we discover common ground, reinvigorate local leadership and increase civic participation (Oldenburg, 2001: pp.66-72). In his study of the development of western democracies, Henrich (2020) argues that urbanisation and the development of voluntary associations was the driving force behind huge cultural and political movements across Europe from the reformation to the enlightenment, as people came together and discussed new political ideas and formed novel political organisations. The decline of cousin marriage in Europe led by the Catholic Church forced tribes to branch out and develop wider social ties thus increasing their overall trust of strangers as they came to identify with a wide range of voluntary groups rather than just their family, something Henrich argues is at the root of the prosperity of the west in the subsequent centuries to come. This is the antithesis to Banfield's study mentioned earlier, of a community based upon strict family nepotism resulting in extremely low social capital and trust. It has been argued that the advent of the coffee house in England was a driving force behind the English Civil war as people began to congregate in new social spaces which became hubs of radical ideas and organisation (Ellis, 2011). The same could be said of the development of working men's clubs and trade unionism for the massive political changes that resulted in the development of the Labour Party at the turn of the 19th century, where new spaces were built for working class communities to organise and develop collective political identities.

The social structures which all but disappeared during the process of deindustrialisation were politically and culturally important to working class representation. The 'focal points of social contact' (Waddington et al, 2001) of welfare halls, clubs, churches, and unions etc were hotbeds for both formal and informal political discussion and debate, and a goldmine for nurturing political talent for left wing political movements, particularly the early Labour Party. The Independent Labour Party itself was born out of an alliance between the intellectual middle class and the trade union movement with a will for better representation of the working class within parliamentary politics, and many pioneers of the early Labour movement were both trade unions representatives and lay preachers who had been politicised and who found a voice in social organisations such as trade unions and churches which became invaluable breeding grounds for talented working class politicians such as Keir Hardie, Jack Lawson, Nye Bevan, Ernest Bevin and many others.

Strong trade unions in particular were a key driver of working class representation in political institutions. Trade unions acted as a crucial medium for funnelling working men, and to a significantly lesser extent women, into office, giving a voice to working class people who had genuine influence in positions of power. In 1955 only 3% of Conservative Party cabinet members had working class parents compared to 55% of the Labour Party cabinet (O'Neill and White, 2018: p.13). Well organised and extensive unions provided a platform to promote talented working class representatives to high office internally and give them a platform to improve their public speaking and campaigning while providing the resources for a political education. They could also support their members both organisationally to campaign and lobby on their behalf, as well as financially (Quilter-Pinner, 2022). Political representatives that hail from working class communities played an important role in representing their interests. O'Grady argues that 'Class-based attitudes crystallise and strengthen through repeated interaction with people that share similar backgrounds and material interests, as well as through membership in institutions rooted in workplaces such as trade unions.' (O'Grady, 2019: p.9). The high degree of social capital in these working class communities, including mining communities, meant that political representatives who hailed from them were deeply rooted and identified with them and their interests. O'Grady concludes that the decline of trade unions in the second half of the 20th century has

resulted in a surge of 'careerist' politicians, who due to being less socialised within working class communities themselves are less likely to support policies that represent their interests.

The disproportionate effect this has had on working class communities will be expanded on later. This has not only affected politics, but working class representation across a range of sectors. In 2018 a study found a dramatic drop in working class representation in the creative industry (Brook et al, 2018), with the decline in the lack of social infrastructure such as working men's clubs where, as Cherrington (2012) points out, a number of working class performers got their first crucial break in the industry, a key reason. The decline in social capital is not just an issue for political representation in these communities, but for the richness and vitality of their culture too.

This ability to organise at a local grassroots level in these communities was perhaps demonstrated most clearly throughout the various stages of industrial action taken by mineworkers, in particular the 1984-85 strike. Mining communities were able to prolong the dispute for so long due to the vast networks of support through their communities at a local and national level. Kelliher (2017) outlines how community halls 'arguably constituted an alternative welfare system during a year without income', and that 'the real nerve centre of that year 'was not the National Union of Mineworkers headquarters in Sheffield ... but the Miners' Welfares in the villages' (p.1). In the short term, the economic difficulties and the industrial unrest during the process of industrialisation actually strengthened the sense of social solidarity in these communities. In *Bowling Alone (2000)*, Putnam argues that the solidarity and social capital in the US increased during World War II due to a collective sense of coming together against a common adversary, and it could be argued a similar phenomenon occurred in mining communities during the miners strike where the adversity and collective sense of shared struggle solidified the already strong levels of social capital and community cohesion (Putnam, 2000: p.270-271).

Perhaps most concerningly though, is the difficulty for any collective organising to get done at all when a society has low levels of social trust. While these 'focal points of social contact' are crucial for providing the infrastructure for political action, they are, as

Fukuyama (2001) points out, the result of social capital first and foremost, as opposed to a precursor to it. As outlined by Banfield (1956) in his study of the low trust society in Italy, the low levels of trust and inherent suspicion of any organisation, political or otherwise, outside the nuclear family made a political solution to the economic and social plight of the town impossible. Any attempt at political action was thwarted by an all-encompassing interest in the wellbeing of the family which made wider participation a non-starter.

Likewise, the short term showing of community strength throughout the process of deindustrialisation, such as during the 1984-85 miners strike, therefore could not be maintained in the following decades, as it relied on drawing its strength from the social infrastructure which was intrinsically linked to the collectivised, cohesive pit communities they were based in. The sense of community coming together in the face of adversity could not be replicated without the social infrastructure and glue of the pits themselves. Political and economic action is therefore extremely difficult to organise without some degree of trust, and therefore working to increase that trust is the first step for building a better society.

2.3.2 - Populism

There has been a growing interest in the way changing levels of social capital may help explain political trends, in particular the rise of populism across the US and Western Europe. Populism is a loosely defined political ideology or worldview that considers the fundamental tension in any society to be between a corrupt and self-serving elite, hoarding political and cultural power for their own interests, and a 'pure people' who are virtuous and authentic yet left institutionally powerless by the elite. Politicians or political movements labelled as populist usually have at the core of their messaging claims to represent the true interests of the people against the elites, and who promise to redistribute political power from the elites back into the hands of the people (Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017)). Populist movements therefore thrive where there is a growing suspicion of political and cultural leaders and the institutions they run, and where those institutions are increasingly dominated by a small sector of society who could be identified as societal or cultural elites. The UK faces something of a crisis of trust in political and other national institutions. Of

twenty four countries, only Egypt (8%) has lower levels of confidence in the press than the UK (13%), and by 2022 only 23% of people said they had confidence in parliament as an institution, down from 46% in 1990, with confidence in political parties at a mere 13% (Kings College London, 2023).

The association between social capital, politics, and the health of our democracy has been a growing subject of study in recent decades. Similarly to Banfield decades earlier, Putnam, in his 1993 work *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, argues that social capital is the most crucial factor to forming and maintaining a highly functional democracy. Mapping the performance of twenty regional governments in Italy, Putnam concludes that the most important factor overall was high degrees of social capital and civic engagement. Regions in Northern Italy thrived as a result of dense formal and informal networks while the southern regions found progress blighted through low levels of trust and civic participation making collective action difficult and faith in the laws and government weak. He concludes that rather than wealth creating a civil society, it is a civil society that creates wealth and the foundation for this is social capital and the principles of generalised reciprocity which allows for efficiency and effective collective responses to social and economic problems. Putnam notes that citizens in areas of high social capital will often collectively organise towards achieving shared political goals whereas those in areas of low social capital take on the role of 'Alienated and cynical supplicants' (Ibid: p.182). Putnam also finds that social norms and networks diminish if not used, pointing out that cycles of social capital can be marked by viciously high and low cycles (Ibid: p.170). Democracy therefore is strengthened by the presence of social capital as it relies on an engaged community of citizens who feel represented by its processes.

Despite this, in recent years there is only a little, but growing, work relating populism and political movements to social capital, and indeed despite a steady stream of interest in the concept of social capital and trust in the twenty first century, little research has been done to investigate its political consequences (Giuliano and Wacziarg, 2020). A number of explanations as to why social capital may affect populism have been suggested; 1. Individuals with dense social networks cope with economic changes resulting from factors like globalisation, technology, and immigration, 2. If populist views are not widely shared across a social network they may be suppressed through normative pressure and 3. In the

presence of low social capital and trust in traditional institutions, individuals are more inclined to feel both socially and politically isolated leading them to blame elites and seek outsider replacements. (Ibid, p.2). Boeri et al (2021) find a negative correlation between civil association membership and votes for populist parties. Giuliano and Wacziarg (2020) find a negative correlation between levels of social capital with regard to membership in civic associations, sports teams or by generalised levels of trust and support for Donald Trump in the 2016 election. In their book *One Nation After Trump* (2017), Dionne et al also ascribe the rise of support for Trump to the decline in community and social capital, drawing on the work of Putnam as well as other commentators from the 20th century who observed similar trends in the decline of community and growing political alienation such as Nisbet (1953) and Kornhauser (1959).

Studies have also found that populism is linked to feelings of decline and nostalgia, as politicians exploit frustrations over the loss of traditional values and an idealised memory of the past as former 'golden days'. Donald Trump's use of the slogan 'Make America Great Again' tapped into a deep nostalgia for many Americans who feel like they have been left behind by the social and economic changes in the past few decades. His success in 2016 shows how politically powerful nostalgia and a longing for the past can be (Gaston and Hilhorst, 2018). Populists across the west have skilfully presented themselves as a kind of 'Everyman' on the side of 'ordinary people' whose interests are ignored by a self-serving and corrupt 'establishment', tapping into a growing lack of trust in politicians' motivations and ability to improve their lives (Tannock, 1995).

This effect seems to have been particularly stark amongst younger generations who have begun to question the wisdom and legitimacy of representative democracy itself. Recent research has found that 61% of 18-34's agree that "having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections would be a good way of governing this country" compared to just 29% of over 55's. 26% of 18-34 year olds think democracy is a bad way of governing compared to just 8% of over 55's. The same study found a link between social connections and autocratic support. Young people with four or more close friends are less likely than those with three or fewer to support a strong leader (58% to 66%) or army rule (44% to 48%) (Stanley et al, 2022).

A related strain of literature looks at the relationship between social capital and attitudes towards immigration. This is particularly interesting given the centrality that a hostility for an open immigration policy has for the resurgent populist movements in Europe in recent years (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018: p.39). Gaston and Hilhorst (2018) note that a feeling of loss and a sense of decline is often paired with a growing sympathy for conspiracy theories and the scapegoating of a 'mythical enemy' who can be blamed for their problems today, and, across the west immigrants have come to play this part most prominently.

As outlined earlier, Goodhart (2004) argues that immigration can result in lower levels of social cohesion and therefore social capital, finding that a rapidly diversifying society can reduce the readiness to share (Goodhart,2017: p.22) whereas other authors such as Letki (2008) argue it is in fact deprivation that results in lower social capital, not immigration that is dampening levels of social capital. Herreros and Criado (2009) flip the argument on its head, arguing that it is in fact lower levels of social capital, measured as trust, which result in a hostility towards immigration. They argue that higher levels of social trust indicate a more positive attitude towards immigration as they moderate the effects of 'perceived threats', including the country's economic performance and their own personal economic circumstances, posed by immigration. Eatwell and Goodwin point out that behind working class support for populist parties in the UK and US was a belief that 'their group' had 'lost out' economically in the past few decades in relation to both the affluent middle class and immigrants (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018: p.215). Kesler and Bloemraad (2010) find that immigration can decrease trust and civic and political participation in countries with already high income inequality.

2.3.3 - Individualism & Collectivism

It has also been suggested that various levels of social capital can be an indicator for support for collectivist policy solutions. As Goodhart notes in the quote in the previous chapter, differences in lifestyles and values can bring into question the legitimacy of universal risk pooling. While Goodhart focuses on the effect of immigration on the breakdown of social cohesion in his essay, it could be argued that the same is true for the

drifting of once homogeneous, tight-knit communities as a result of the breakdown of industry and collective lifestyles.

In his book exploring the changing culture in the 'red wall' seats following the 2019 general election, which saw a wave of post-industrial Labour safe seats vote Conservative for the first time, Payne (2021) argues that once collective communities have become culturally more individualised over the past four decades since the decline of the old industries which forged strong work and place based collectivised communities. Payne argues that new employers and private housing has resulted in a more individualised life that has been recast in the neoliberal spirit of the 1980's. He argues the election in 2019 was won on a vision mixing Thatcherite individualism with New Labour state paternalism. Evans (2023) has made similar conclusions, arguing that neoliberal economic policy since the 1980's has crushed collectivised industry and trade unions and led to a huge increase in precarious and atomised work. The increasing emphasis on education, social mobility and self-employment has inevitably resulted in an increase in individualism to the detriment of the solidarity and comradeship common among large industrial workers marked by strong trade union membership.

This is part of a larger argument that western democracies have become generally more individualised in recent decades. Putnam traces this back to the 1960's, arguing that the decline in social capital across the US has coincided with both an insurgent libertarian new-right and counterculture new-left who offered alternative routes to the same goal of personal liberation and individual fulfilment that has come at a cost to social capital and the collective good. As society became more affluent, the structures and security of tight knit communities became less relevant, and people began to consider the emphasis on conforming to social norms as a barrier to realising their own individual identities, with a new focus being placed on the rights of the individual rather than the obligation of the individual to their community (Putnam, 2020). Haidt argues that modern western liberal democracies are historically unique in their emphasis on the rights of the individual and a moral code based on reducing harm, as opposed to other communities across the world, and indeed in more working class communities in the west, that give more credence to moral codes based around the family, community, loyalty, and respect (Haidt, 2012: pp.112-130; See also Henrich, 2020). Evans (2023) notes the material factors that have

pushed people into embracing individualism: as the new economic policy pushed by Thatcher and embraced by the new Labour governments emphasised education and social mobility, people began to become less rooted in their communities and more focused on pursuing their own personal aspirations and ambitions over the interests of the wider community based on the virtues of solidarity and comradeship.

Beyond the material push factors behind the rising tide of individualism, as society became more open and prosperous intellectual currents were also beginning to emphasise the importance of the individual and the virtue of radical freedom over the oppressive forces of society, finding its most complete expression in the work of thinkers such as Sartre and Foucault (Trueman, 2020). Giddens (1991) argues that modernity determines that our self-identities are no longer given, but are achieved by constructing a 'narrative of self'. In a modern globalised world concepts such as class or place are too fluid to define us and our identity must be formed and moulded by ourselves. This opens up new risks, and compromises the safety and security of the 'tight' cultures outlined by Gelfand (2021) that were discussed earlier. The ability to create and mould our own identities comes at the expense of certainty and structure, features that are valued more by some communities, in particular traditionally working class ones, than others.

Dennis and Erdos, 36 years after publishing *Coal is Our Life*, express concern that traditional working class communities were moving away from their roots in ethical socialism, based on family values, devotion to children, hard work and consideration for the community, to a form of egoistic socialism, which adopts a *laissez faire* social attitude, placing full responsibility on the state to support individuals to pursue whatever lifestyle they may choose (Dennis, Erdos, and Green, 1993: p.x). They argue that poverty and poor housing cannot be the sole reason for crime and rioting when the same communities suffered far worse hardship in the 1930's yet maintained their commitment to family and neighbourly mutual aid (Ibid: p.xi). They allude to the promotion of 'civic virtues' in friendly societies and other civic institutions in working class communities, noticed by Green (1993) as outlined previously. A similar argument is made by Fukuyama who, when investigating the growing lack of trust across the US, argues that community life there has been compromised by a rise in individualism and that the leading cause of this has been the growth in the 'rights culture' in the US and across the West which has eroded the authority of communities and

civic institutions. He believes that 'rights, which should be the noble attribute of free and public-spirited citizens, instead tend to become a kind of cover for selfish individuals to pursue their private aims without any regard for the surrounding community' (Fukuyama, 1995: p.316).

This ties into another argument that suggests the development of the welfare state has come at the detriment to social capital. This argument suggests that the informal welfare states that arose organically out of solidaristic communities as outlined earlier resulted in the emergence of strong ties of reciprocity and tight bonds across communities. The emergence of a state run welfare state results in aid being provided from above rather than horizontally (Kumlin and Rothstein, 2005). Alan Wolfe (1989) has argued that the welfare state jeopardises the social obligations and networks that results in weakening ties amongst communities, ironically posing a threat to the legitimacy of the welfare state as a result. This is a similar argument to Goodhart who argues that once the common bonds that unite us begin to evaporate due to the decline of a collective culture, we are less likely to support projects based on risk-pooling of resources such as the welfare state or the NHS.

Recent studies have supported the view that lower levels of social capital can result in less support for policies advocating for collective political solutions. Algan et al (2018) find that during the French election in the 2017 presidential election voters with low social capital and interpersonal trust were more likely to vote for Le Pen, whereas Melanchon supporters had higher levels of trust despite both sets of voters having similarly low levels of income and life satisfaction. They found that Melanchon voters strongly supported redistributive policies while Le Pen voters rejected them. They conclude that there is evidence to suggest that preference for redistributive policies is correlated with higher levels of interpersonal trust. This is consistent with Putnam's argument that social capital and trust are crucial to the principle of generalised reciprocity and finding collective solutions. Alesian et al (2018) also find a negative correlation between low trust in voters and support for re-distributive policies, and Kuziemko et al (2015) finds that low levels of trust could result in a situation where people care about inequality but have no faith in the government to implement policies to tackle it (see also Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022). Letki too argues that informal networks promoting social capital are a powerful force for enhancing trust,

reciprocity and a sense of solidarity that reduces the cost of policy implementation and increases support for collectivist preferences (Letki, 2008: p.102).

The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a fresh wave of research into social capital as researchers attempt to understand why some countries were more successful in their ability to implement social distancing measures than others. Gelfand et al (2021) found that countries with looser cultures, meaning those with weak social norms, had over eight times the number of deaths than nations with tighter cultures and strong social norms due to their ability to implement collective solutions to the pandemic with more success. Bian et al (2022) make similar conclusions, that countries with the ability to implement collective solutions during the pandemic spent less money on implementing policies with more success. They argue that the US's response to covid was severely hindered by expressions of individualism making co-ordinated efforts more difficult to implement. Brodeur et al (2021) found that countries with higher levels of trust in both their fellow citizens and in their public institutions were more likely to comply with stay at home orders. Durante et al (2021) found that those with higher levels of social capital both decreased their mobility voluntarily to tackle the outbreak of the virus and were more likely to adopt the social distancing measures put in place by the government.

The findings that lower social capital and trust performed worse during the pandemic when it came to adopting collective actions to stop the spread of the virus is consistent with the argument outlined in previous chapters that the collectivist nature of mining communities was beneficial to tackling the crises that often beset them. Bian et al (2022) found that while individualism has been linked to economic growth it can make responding to crises more difficult, using the poor handling of the pandemic in the US as an example. They conclude that individualism can exacerbate collective action problems during economic downturns.

It is worth returning to the work of Durkheim here, who, writing at the turn of the 20th century, feared that the specialisation of labour may result in individuals become overly enclosed from one another and losing their sense of common purpose, and if specialised work does not result in sufficient contact across the wider society then the 'awareness of the necessity of other's contributions will be attenuated' (Hughes et al, 2003: p.201). The

homogeneous work and life in mining communities created a 'mechanical solidarity' based on shared experiences and conceptions of the world. As a result a strong collective consciousness emerged, built around shared norms, values, and experiences. The other type of solidarity Durkheim suggests is 'organic solidarity' achieved by mutual interdependence where each individual plays a specialised role that contributes to society as a whole. It could be argued that former mining communities such as Ashington are experiencing a struggle to transition from being a community based around a mechanical solidarity to one based around an organic solidarity.

2.3.4 - Class & Realignment

The changes in social capital in the UK and across the west have not affected different demographics equally. As argued earlier, the decline in social capital and trust has a class element, as lower/working class people have experienced a sharper downturn in their social capital than those in the upper/middle classes in recent decades. I have outlined an argument that in post-industrial regions of the UK this is due to the decline in industry and working class jobs that have subsequently broken down their traditional collectivised communities and both the formal and informal networks that provided them with not only high levels of trust and social capital that resulted in the ability to organise collectively, but also a sense of belonging and purpose. Deindustrialisation has inevitably affected the traditional working classes, worse off both economically and socially since industrial work formed the basis for their employment and communities. The erosion of the 'focal points of social contact' or 'we-creating infrastructure' discussed earlier has therefore had a disproportionate impact on these communities and their ability to politically organise that relied on industry to maintain their ways of life as opposed to those that have been able to adapt more smoothly to the economic and social changes that have emerged in recent decades.

All of this is supported by recent quantitative findings. As outlined previously, working class communities have borne the brunt of closures to social infrastructure in particular as they relied on them more heavily in the first place. The John Smith Centre (2020) found that Respondents with personal incomes of £60,000 or more were three times more likely to

report high levels of trust in politicians than those with personal incomes of £10-20,000, and that Fewer than 1 in 5 respondents with personal incomes of £10,000-£19,000 reported high levels of trust in government, as compared with almost 1 in 3 respondents with personal incomes of £50,000 or more. This ties into the previous chapter where we analysed the relationship between populism and social capital. A UK Onward report found that neighbourhoods with higher levels of net trust are much more likely to have low levels of deprivation and that neighbourhoods with low levels of employment are also more likely to report lower trust (Blagden and Stanely,2023). The rise of populism is being fuelled by more deprived communities who have had their social infrastructure ripped apart and subsequently seen falling levels of social capital and trust.

This fits into wider debates about what some perceive to be a political realignment of British politics in recent years that no longer fits neatly onto the traditional left-right spectrum. In his book *The Road to Somewhere*, Goodhart argues that a new divide between Somewheres, those that are 'rooted and usually have ascribed identities .. based on group belonging and particular places' (Goodhart, 2017: p.3). They value security and familiarity and have strong group attachments and value traditional family norms. They are not authoritarian but 'regret the passing of a more structured and tradition bound world' (Ibid: p.24) and Anywheres, those with 'portable achieved identities based on educational and career success' (Ibid: p.3), who often move away from home, have professional jobs, good educations and tend to gravitate towards cities and metropolitan areas and as a result dominate our national institutions. They are meritocratic, egalitarian, embrace borderless worlds and value autonomy and self-realisation before stability, community, and tradition (Ibid: p.24). Since Somewheres are more likely to be in the bottom three quartiles for income and social class and have lower education, this distinction has an important element of class analysis. As Colls puts it, 'In the minds of metropolitan intellectuals at least, new ideas about ethnic and gender variability began to replace older ideas about solidarity and things that were supposed to be held in common. In a post-industrial, post-colonial, post-masculine, post-Christian world of fluid identities, ethnic diversities and global markets, the position of white working-class men who stayed attached to one place and a certain way of doing things (their own) looked distinctly uncomfortable.' (Colls, 2004: p.306).

Goodhart argues that recent political trends in the UK, in particular the vote to leave the EU which was driven by low income, low educated voters in small towns and rural areas can be explained as a backlash from these Somewheres, who feel like their economic interests have been ignored and their social instincts for order and tradition sneered down upon by the Anywhere dominated media and public institutions. He goes as far to call populism 'the new socialism' (Goodhart, 2017: p.72), as populist parties across Europe draw most of their support from the working class. Taking the EU referendum as his example, Goodhart argues that the Remain campaign focused too much on money and the financial loss of leaving the EU whereas the Leave campaign, like many successful populist movements across the west in recent decades, tapped into the rejection of the market and globalisation and the will to restore meaning to people's lives in the form of pride, belonging, community, identity and a sense of home, in particular in working class communities who have seen their industries collapse and communities disappear before their eyes (Ibid: p.53).

Goodhart's Somewhere/Anywhere dichotomy fits neatly onto Gelfand's tight/loose cultures distinction. Gelfand argues that there is a distinct class divide in her analysis of tight and loose cultures, with tight cultures more prevalent amongst the working class while looser cultures are more common in the upper classes as a result of working class communities having fewer resources to tackle outside threats or economic changes therefore using tight norms as a useful tool to do so (Gelfand, 2020: p.112-138). Gelfand argues that the rise of populism across Europe and America can be explained as a cultural fault line between predominantly working class communities that long for the tightness of strong norms, order and security fighting back against a political culture that over the past few decades has embraced looseness in the form of neoliberalism, globalisation and social progressivism. Indeed, Gelfand argues that the economic and social uncertainty due to the collapse of the USSR and the appetite for order and security and collective national identity left a vacuum for Putin to sweep to power (ibid: p.214), echoing concerns about the relationship between loneliness and social atomisation leading to totalitarianism and other radical political backlashes that goes back at least as far as Hannah Arendt (1951) and Simone Weil (1952). In other words, Somewheres could be seen as the losers of modernity as understood by Giddens (1991). They value the security and certainty of place and class and have struggled to build new identities in a globalised world that does not. The result of

this is the growing support for populist solutions that they feel are not currently being offered by the mainstream political parties who they see as fundamentally committed to the worldview of 'Anywheres'. There is data to support this too. One report found that the least secure financially fifth of voters are over twice as likely to have a negative view of democracy than the most secure fifth, 28% to 13% respectively, and that 18-34 year old graduates are more likely to have a positive view of democracy than their non-graduate peers (81% to 67%) (Stanley et al, 2022).

Like Putnam and Murray, and indeed other thinkers writing about the breakdown of community across the west including Sacks (2020) and Turchin (2023), Goodhart notes an emergence of a 'two nation' politics and a divide emerging between what he calls insiders and outsiders. He argues that outsiders find themselves not only increasingly poorer, less educated, and left out of not only public institutions and political parties, but as members of any civic organisation from churches, community groups, or any type of club as their 'social universe has shrunk to work, the family and the virtual reality of television, radio, and the Internet.' (Goodhart,2017: p.61). He argues representational inequality in western politics is tied to the fact that high income citizens are more likely to be civically active, up to date with key issues, getting out to vote, volunteering in elections and making political donations. As a result, their views are vastly overrepresented by a new 'political class' leaving those outsiders feeling ignored (Ibid: p.62). As argued in previous chapters, the social infrastructure of working class communities have been disproportionately affected by deindustrialisation which has made their ability to organise both socially and politically more difficult to the detriment of their civic activity. Again, similarly to Putnam and Murray, Deneen (2018) argues that while successful in its goal of ousting the old aristocracy who were reliant on inherited wealth and titles, a new aristocracy has emerged out of the cult of meritocracy and education who have begun to fraternise and self-sort, as well as take over our public and political institutions (See also Kotkin, 2021; Skelton, 2021) leaving working class communities feeling disenfranchised and unrepresented. The arguments outlined by Evans (2023) are again important here. Deindustrialisation has decimated the working class's basis of political organisation by breaking up trade unions and collectivised industry in favour of individualised forms of work and relentlessly promoting the virtues of education and social and geographic mobility, in turn uprooting people from working class

communities and atomising them away from their traditional communities. The decline of class consciousness is also important here. As outlined earlier, Colls argued that the shared collective experience of life and work created a rigid class-consciousness which was at the root of the ability to organise both industrially and politically. The watering down of that class-consciousness and the role of class as central to the formation of self-identities has therefore substantially weakened these communities' ability to effectively organise politically.

Research has found this to have a substantial political impact. A recent study found that a decline in working-class representation and the increased professionalisation of parliament have weakened the representation of working-class voters' interests, for example a shift towards centrist policies regarding welfare reform. In the 1920's 70% of the Labour Party were drawn from working class backgrounds compared to just 8% by the mid 1980's. The study found that working class politicians, those with a background in manual and unskilled labour, are more likely to support policies benefiting the working class (O'Grady, 2019). The lack of working class representation in parliament is therefore not simply cosmetic, but has real effects on policies and has likely contributed to their growing disillusion, lending support to the view of people like Goodhart (2017) who argue working class voices have been left unrepresented and ignored which has fuelled populist support for campaigns such as to leave the EU (See also Goodwin, 2023).

Quantitative research in the UK lends support to the view expressed by Putnam, Murray, and the others outlined here above and the emergence of a 'two nation' politics. A report found that non graduates are 20% less likely to find work through professional networks than graduates of the same age (34% to 14%). The same disparities in use of professional networks exist for 18–34-year-olds from lower (C2DE) and higher (ABC1) social grades (23% to 32%) and from lower and higher income households (19% to 39%) (Stanley et al,2022). Another study found that children from low income families have lower exposure to adventure in more structured activities such as joining the scouts or going on adventure camps which are crucial to building up children's mental resilience (Dodd, 2022). There is also evidence of a 'big sort' where higher income families move and begin to only fraternise with one another resulting in a kind of natural polarisation through income. We now tend to live closer to people with the same income and education levels as we did a decade ago

(Stanley et al, 2022). Perhaps most astonishing is the difference in divorce and marriage rates amongst parents of different social classes. Among high income couples 83% are married compared with just 55% of low income parents. 84% of parents are married in the top quintile compared to just 45% in the bottom quintile (Worringer, 2020). If we accept the points made by both Hudson and Beynon and Goodhart that the family is often at the epicentre of wider community ties while also providing a parachute of financial and other forms of support, then we must consider this a significant factor in widening the social capital gap between social classes which in turn, given the socio-economic benefits social capital brings, exacerbates existing inequalities.

2.3.5 - Summary

Throughout this literature review I have attempted firstly to outline the conditions that resulted in what I argue were levels of social capital and trust across mining communities. These tight-knit, place-based communities that merged work and social life allowed for high degrees of collective reciprocity and self-help which was fostered by strong norms and a thriving social life. The fabric of these communities was torn away during the process of deindustrialisation, leaving people in an anomic state due to the rapid social and economic upheaval resulting in an erosion of their social capital and trust and therefore their ability to come together to work towards collective solutions, as well as the ability to find a sense of meaning and dignity in their work and social life.

I have then outlined the small but growing literature on the political consequences of the decline in social capital, covering its relationship to political action, the rise of populism, its implications for collectivist political solutions, and how it is at the forefront of new political, and class, divisions. As pointed out by (Giuliano and Wacziarg, 2020), the relationship between declining social capital and trust and its political consequences in recent years has been a blind spot by researchers who are only recently beginning to consider its political implications in detail. This research will add to that growing body of work, focusing on the effects deindustrialisation has had on social capital in a former mining community in the North East of England and investigating how this has informed political attitudes and trends that we have seen in recent years. This research will also add to the

body of work investigating the effects of deindustrialisation in former industrial communities, touching upon changes in community and individual identity, the effects of evolving forms of employment and attachment to place and work and how this has affected the region's political trends. I seek to add to this literature by investigating how the decline of social capital in traditionally working class former coal mining towns may map on to what many see as a realignment in British politics and a growing gulf in levels of social capital between different groups and communities that broadly resembles a class divide and that can help explain why this political realignment has taken shape the way it has. In doing so I hope to also make a valuable contribution to our wider understanding of how social capital and trust can develop in working class communities in order for us to have a better chance of making the necessary changes to help build it.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 - Ashington

Ashington is a former coal mining town located in South East Northumberland. Ashington colliery was sunk in 1867 which followed a rapid increase in population and building of colliery houses and social infrastructure to accommodate the influx of workers and their families (Kirkup, 1991: p.8). Ashington colliery was part of a wider web of pits in South East Northumberland at the time which incorporated Woodhorn, Linton, Lynemouth, Newbiggin and Ellington, which at its closure in 2005 was the last operating deep mine in the Great Northern Coalfield (Ashington Town Council, 2023).

Ashington is famous for its sporting culture as well as its coal mining heritage. It was the home of Jack and Bobby Charlton who went on to win the world cup with England in 1966. A documentary, *Big Jack's Other World*, was made with Jack Charlton in 1971 by ITV Tyne Tees which followed Charlton around the streets of Ashington where he grew up, offering a fascinating glimpse into the tight knit, patriarchal communities that blossomed amongst the colliery rows. One time Newcastle United centre forward Jackie Milburn was also born and raised in Ashington as were England cricketers Steven Harmison and Mark Wood. The town is also sometimes said to be the birthplace of 'Pitmatic', a Northumbrian dialect that arose amongst the mining communities in Northumberland distinct to the traditional Geordie or Mackem spoken in Newcastle and Sunderland (Griffiths, 2007). The town also held the leek growing world championships and regular pigeon and whippet racing events, all of which were a common part of the working class mining heritage and tradition of which Ashington was once steeped in (Kirkup, 1991: p.114). Alongside this, the famous Pitmen Painters hailed from Ashington, pioneering working class art in the 1930's (Feaver, 2008). Ashington was also famous for its Geordie epicureanism and hospitality, boasting twenty-three working men's clubs at its peak, and it is often claimed amongst locals that it once had the most drinking establishments per person in the world (Kirkup, 1993: p.21).

At its peak, Ashington colliery employed almost 5,500 men and employed well over 3,000 into the 1960's and 70's when closures and redundancies began to accelerate. Thousands of men were also employed in the neighbouring pits in Ellington, Linton, Woodhorn, Lynemouth and Newbiggin. Around 9,000 in total were employed by the network of collieries leading some to call it the largest pit village in the world (Kirkup, 1993: p.6). The majority of these pits closed in the 1980's with Ellington colliery keeping a few hundred men in employment until its closure in 2005. Through the 1950's and 60's new housing began to be built in housing developments on the outskirts of the town and through the 70's-90's significant private housing estates were developed to the south and west of the town (Ashington Town Council, 2023). As with many former industrial towns during this period these developments led to major changes in the employment and culture in Ashington. Leek shows, whippet racing, and pigeon racing have all but disappeared other than as subcultures of those committed to keeping the old traditions of the town alive (Morton, 2014).

The fortunes of the town since the closure of the collieries is, like most former coalmining towns, generally considered to have been downhill. The town continues to struggle with relatively high levels of poverty, unemployment and poor public services which has been made worse since the financial crash and subsequent austerity that followed (Lavery, 2021). In 2019 Andy Haldane, the Chair of the Industrial Strategy Council and chief economist at the Bank of England, gave a speech in the North East on the economic progress of communities that focused on Ashington. Haldane was scathing of what he saw in Ashington in recent decades, observing that 'In towns such as Ashington, industrial-scale clearance of the dominant crop has led to permanent damage to the supporting eco-system – infrastructure, skills, jobs, social spaces. What is left is barren economic tundra, permanently leached of nutrients. That means a less fertile economy in which many have less to spend, nothing to save and too little to do.' (Haldane, 2019). As Jackson (2020) points out, the world we encounter in the Jack Charlton documentary of tight knit communities with flourishing personal relationships is a far cry from the one described by Haldane not fifty years later. This is not uncommon amongst former coalmining towns. The APPG on Coalfield Communities published a report in 2023 that found these areas suffer from below average wages, poor job growth, and a high number of residents dependent on benefits,

with the incapacity benefits claimant rate double the level in former coalfields than in South east England. They also found average life expectancy was poor and educational attainment lagged behind the rest of the country.

Like many coal mining communities, Ashington has been a traditional Labour safe seat electing Labour representatives consistently during the post war period, most recently as a part of the Wansbeck constituency. Despite this, in 2019 the majority was slashed as many traditional Labour voters abandoned the party over, depending on who you ask, a mix of a sense of betrayal of their vote to leave the EU and the unpopularity of the leader Jeremy Corbyn. Ashington has been chosen for this study because it is an archetypal former mining town which has gone through the process of deindustrialisation and decline in recent decades. It also follows crucial political trends in recent years as a typical 'red wall' town which broadly supported to Leave the EU and has seen its support for Labour decline in recent years followed by a big swing away during the 2019 election. Additionally, it is in the Wansbeck area where as the author I am rooted in and am passionate about understanding the issues facing it and how we can go about solving them in the future.

3.2 - Research Design

Research was carried out through the use of semi structured interviews which were the most appropriate method for obtaining deeper understanding of the personal experience of deindustrialisation and social capital in Ashington today. Semi structured interviews have the benefits of being both versatile and flexible, providing the basis for a structured interview while allowing for reciprocity between the participants and interviewer resulting in the discovery of information or detail that may otherwise have been dismissed by the researcher (Gill et al, 2008). The qualitative nature of the interview allows for a deeper and richer understanding to be found making interviews more suitable than other forms of data gathering such as questionnaires (Kalio et al, 2016). The nature of the interview allows for participants to provide responses through their own lens and as a result is particularly useful for gaining an understanding of their perception of the social world (Qu and Dumay, 2011). The rich qualitative data which is designed to be extracted from the interview was also designed to plug the gaps in the literature, in particular the recent work regarding the political consequences of a decline in social capital which have so far been largely restricted to quantitative analysis only.

Like any study, this one has its limits. This study focuses on the effects of deindustrialisation on social capital, but of course other factors have played their part. The role of technology such as the increase in car use and the rise of the TV and the internet have often found themselves accused of being behind the decrease in social capital across the west and undoubtedly they have made a significant contribution to the way we live in relation to one another. There are other factors that I think are particularly worth investigating when looking at the decrease of social capital in deindustrialised towns that remain under-represented in the literature. One is the effects of austerity since 2010 and how this has compounded the misery of the decades of deindustrialisation on social capital. The other is how the decline of religion and church attendance, in particular the primitive methodism that was once so widespread in the coalfields, has dampened the levels of social capital in once highly religious towns. Studies focusing on these topics would be hugely complementary to this study and would help build an even more robust idea of why and

how social capital has declined in these communities, and eventually therefore what can be done to revive it.

Is it also worth reflecting on my own role as a researcher, being rooted in the region of study and I have a personal interest in tackling the social and political challenges in Ashington and the surrounding area. I was inspired to write and research the role social capital played in the problems facing the town because of what I have observed growing up myself, and am therefore aware that I arrive at the point of study with my own preconceived beliefs and ideas about what I might find when conducting the interviews. The semi-structured interview allows me not only to delve deeper into the views and experiences of the participants, but to have my own interpretation of events challenged allowing me to reflect upon any assumptions or prejudices that I may unknowingly hold (Jamieson et al, 2023).

Criteria for the participation selection was that they were over 18 for safeguarding reasons and had lived in Ashington or the close vicinity for the vast majority of their lifetimes. Participants were selected from a range of ages and genders both to ensure a balanced representation throughout the research and to gain a generational perspective on the social changes in the town, the problems it faces today and the political consequences of this. Given the interest in political views and participation in the research study I also ensured there was representation from both those who were to my knowledge not active in local politics and those who were. This allowed for insight into how people came to be involved in local politics in the town and if this was relevant to the other changes perceived in the town over their lifetimes.

Participants were recruited predominantly through Ashington Hirst Welfare, Ashington Town Council and the Member of Parliament's office which is located in Ashington. Some participants recommended friends or colleagues as potential participants creating in some cases a wider network. Care was taken to ensure this did not result in a skew of world views or attitudes that came from interviewing people in the same social networks and therefore some participants recommended were not approached. All participants were given an information sheet and gave their consent to being recorded and having their contributions

analysed. Some were happy to have their names given but for the sake of security and consistency have been kept anonymous anyway. Interviews were recorded and transcribed before undergoing a thematic analysis through the software NVivo to identify important trends and themes along the process outlined by Clarke and Braun (2006).

Sixteen participants took part in semi-structured interviews lasting between 20-50 minutes where they were asked about their views and opinions on a range of issues relating to Ashington, such as if the community had declined or improved and how, their own personal relationship with the town, what the main issues in the town were today and how this may have changed throughout their lifetimes, employment opportunities today and their political views and activities. The participants came from a range of ages from 18-70 and included ten males and six females.

Chapter 4 - Results

The results will outline the key findings from the interviews and how each relate to the shrinking levels of social capital and trust in the town and the political consequences as a result. The results are split into five sections. Firstly, I will outline the impact and memory of the mining industry for those who worked in them as well as in the wider community. This will be followed by how changes in employment since the mines closed have affected the community, the relationship and attachment people have with the town today and how this informs their sense of identity in relation to the town and one another. This will lead into an examination on how deindustrialisation has resulted in a rise in individualism in favour of collectivism across Ashington and how this has affected the town's social capital. The fourth section will consider the perceived rise in crime and anti-social behaviour across the town and what this tells us about the levels of social capital and trust in the town today. The fifth section will examine how these changes have informed the political activity, concerns, and wider trends in the town in recent years.

4.1 - Remembering Pit Communities

Throughout the interviews it became clear that those who were old enough to experience life back when the mines were open had fond memories of both the comradeship of the work down the pit as well as the sense of togetherness it fostered as the close bonds formed down the pit spilt out over into the community. The pits not only provided both steady and well-paid employment that brought money into the town as well as a sense of dignity and economic purpose to the men's lives, but also acted as the basis on which a strong community was built upon. As one participant put it:

The mining industry was the economy, not just a stimulus for the economy, but it was the economy. And you know, from that, you look at the other part of it as a social community aspect of it, which was absolutely fabulous then, and I think we've lost a lot of that as well. And I think what I would point you to is like the traditions. You can look as far back as the pitmen painters, for example. But you look at the traditions of the mining industry. Sports, I mean Ashington when you look at the sportsmen and sportswomen that they've developed is just amazing compared to other areas, you've got to, you've got to like question why, you know, there's got to be a reason. Is it the water? Is it the pit? Is it the coal dust? I don't know what it is, but we've got a tremendous record in the community for sports. You know, we had Colliery cricket clubs, we had Colliery football clubs. There was the leek growing. There was the vegetable growing, there was the flower growing, the allotments - we've still got the allotments - you know, these sorts of things were terribly important to people. We had the, the whippet racing and all of this sort of stuff. Pigeon racing, homing pigeons. All of these sorts of things were like, based around the local community. - Andrew

Ashington has long been recognised as a town that provided an abundance of talent, in particular in sport as recognised in the above quote. Local historian Kirkup finds this as well, writing that strangers would often ask "How did a grimy little pit town become the hotbed of so much talent?" (Kirkup, 1993: p.6). One plausible answer is that the presence of a huge mining community with lots of social capital and a collectivist ethos provided a

unique opportunity to participate and thrive in team sports and other past times that was not as readily available in other communities with less social capital.

The basis for how the work in the pit came to bond the community together was both the relationship the pitmen had to one another down the pit as well as the close proximity of living along the colliery rows with homogeneous employment and low levels of mobility. One participant, when asked about the effects of working together down the mines brought the pitmen closer together, outlined that:

When I see *anonymised* and rest of the committee we shake hands with each other, we sometimes embrace but that's what we're all about because working in the mine, if I was working with you and you were working with me, I'm responsible for your wellbeing and you're responsible for mine. Because if you don't do something properly, don't timmer up properly or anything like that and it's dangerous, I could get badly hurt because of your dangerous practices. So, you've got the comradeship, you've got the banter, and it's all glued together with mining. - Patrick

This comment echoes the sentiments laid out in the literature review that the dangers associated with working down the mines and the reliance on one another to keep each other safe provided the basis for stronger levels of social cohesion and a deeper sense of place and pride in the communities' work and heritage (See Gibbs,2021: Grimshaw and Mates, 2022).

The idea that the physical closeness of the communities was tied up with the mine and how it shaped the social and communal life of the pitmen, and their families emerged as a common theme throughout. One participant observed that:

You had- just where this building is and over the road - colliery rows that's left. 9th row, 8th row, 7th row, you had other colliery rows that were on the doorstep of the colliery, look out the back door and you could see the colliery. They were all tight like blocks, if you opened your door and the person next door opened their door you were virtually next to them. It was a community where people were together, there was a togetherness. – Michael

Regular employment in the mines, which was often passed down the family, provided the basis for the survival of this way of life across generations:

I mean, I was, I left school with very few qualifications. I didn't like skip school. I really didn't like the authority and I must have been a terrible, terrible pupil, a terrible student. And as a consequence, I didn't get employment straightaway. I got a job as on a youth opportunity scheme, which the government paid for and then shortly after that I got a job because my father worked at the pit. - Andrew

When I left school, I didn't really have any plans of what I was going to do. A lot of people, lads, people have an idea of what they want to do when they leave school if you've got the right qualifications to go onto further education. So, my father says if you want a job in the mine we'll go and pop and see the manager. My father knew the manager and you went up and you say oh well any jobs coming up? And they'd put your name down and I think I got a start like September time. – Michael

This is an example of how social capital once worked in Ashington. The links and networks across the town, which often began with the family, allowed people to access opportunities that they otherwise would not have had. Putnam (2015) and Murray (2012), supported by qualitative research laid out in the literature review, have noted how in recent years working class communities have lost the ability to do this as they continue to fragment and lose their influence in a post-industrial world, while more prosperous communities continue to achieve high levels of social capital, giving their children and wider social networks a boost. The family being at the centre of these networks is also picked up by Hudson and Beynon (2021: p.246) and will be expanded on in due course.

Both the reliance on one another for safety at work and the neighbourliness that came from living in the colliery rows was the basis for a solid sense of solidarity and wider community life that could be recognised as a town with thriving levels of social capital. One aspect of this was the drinking culture that built up in the town when the mines were open. Many of those interviewed described pitmen as having a 'work hard play hard' attitude which resulted in an epicurean lifestyle outside of work that mining communities have become traditionally associated with:

'I mean, I can remember Ashington on a Sunday night at the Indus. If you weren't in before half 7, it only used to open at 7 on a Sunday night, if you weren't in by half 7 you couldn't get a seat. You'd be standing 2 to 3 deep at the bar.' - Frank

And that:

'People used to wait for the leek shows because the clubs were open all day. Miners worked hard and they played hard. That was the social life. Even now on the streets of Ashington, back in my day again just being a young lad, the clubs were always full. The social side. The shopping centres were full. If you look at old photos of Ashington, the street is full.' - Jack

References to community events such as leek shows were common. Others which were regularly mentioned were whippet racing, pigeon racing and the Northumberland Miners' Picnic that were fundamentally rooted in the community. Not only did they bring the community together, but they created a sense of rhythm to the calendar year to the extent that life began to almost literally revolve around the pit and the strong mining traditions that emerged from it:

But you worked hard and played hard. That was it. Then you saved up for a holiday. Three weeks of holidays, and you looked forward to the leek shows. The year was planned out. The leek shows in September or August or something like that. But you had your mates. And Friday nights. Taxis was like Exocet missiles from Ashington to Bedlington for the Domino when the clubs shut at 10:30, the only nightclub around here. The street was full, every club you went to was full. It was you know, a good atmosphere. – Jack

Participants often seemed to physically light up at the mention of these community events, in particular leek shows and the miner's picnic which were seen as synonymous with the spirit of mining communities:

I would say at a minimum 75% of your leek growers would have been pit lads. I mean you had other lads in the shows that would be window fitters and joiners. But

probably 75% would be pit lads. And it was a mining thing you know, that's what leek shows were just like everything else. - Frank

This long passage encapsulates the sense that the cultures and traditions of the town were deeply bound up by the pits:

I think the pits created that type of community and it was about competitiveness, it was about working hard and playing hard. You know, I mean, another thing which we haven't discussed really but I will, and I'll introduce it now and that's that the social clubs, the CIU, you know, that were there. You know we had in Ashington the highest amount of drinking establishments per head of population in the country in the town because people played hard, worked hard, and played hard, and that that was like, that's where the leeks came in. That's where the flowers came in to it, that's where the, well it was whippets not greyhounds. There was this competitive edge, working class traditions that people absolutely loved. I mean, I used to live in the East villas, and on a Saturday morning it was just absolutely amazing next to the Hirst welfare the miner's welfare. You wake up, not to the sound as you do now of seagulls, you used to wake up to the sound of whippets because you used to have the sweep, and the dogs down there used to be barking like mad, like hundreds of dogs racing on a Saturday morning and on a Sunday morning on occasions and just brought people together in an affordable sort of way. Nowt extravagant, but competitive. If you had the best dog, you were somebody, and that's the sort of thing that's missing. So, with your pals at work watching their back they're watching your back, but also having a competitive edge against other people in a different sort of way. And the leeks, I mean of the leeks you know, it was like, unreal. It was like gangster-ism with leeks, people used to sleep out nearer the leeks shows they used to sleep out, they used to have guard dogs like ferocious Pitbull Terriers. Garden leeks, you had people, basically the reason being that you had people who were that competitive were going around slashing leeks. You know this was terribly competitive. And I think that that's probably because we had the industry, held people together. Plus, away from the pit you know, people used to go to social clubs, and you used to have different groups of people in different social groups all the way around Ashington. It was

amazing. It was amazing. And again, this competitive edge, this sporting edge, the traditions, the cultures. - Andrew

Wray and Stephenson (2005), on their work on the ongoing cultural importance of the Durham Miner's Gala, note how community events and rituals, such as the gala, or indeed leek shows, are example of the 'visible representation of that complex process of socialisation into occupational identity', and quote Beynon and Austin (1993) on how they could be mechanisms 'through which miners and their families came together to publicly celebrate themselves, and in doing so build social solidarity, with children taken as a form of 'social baptism'' (p.184). Leek shows, along with events such as pigeon or whippet races, and the miner's picnic along with the everyday attendance to working men's club and local amenities were 'focal points of social contact', which 'allow collective community engagement and the celebration of industrial identity' (p.180). We will see in the following chapters the effects of the loss of these focal points of social contacts both socially and, subsequently, politically.

This collective spirit that resulted from the mining industry and the community it created fostered a high degree of trust amongst the community. Many participants were keen to emphasise that 'everyone knew everyone', for example:

It was thriving, it was family oriented. Everybody knew everyone. Everyone looked after everyone else. Doors could get left open and there was a choice of shops. - Isla

Or:

It was a much tighter community because everybody knew everybody. I mean when I was young in my 20's I could tell you everybody who lived in the house. I could start at the first row, and I knew every single person who lived in the house because nobody moved away. They were there, you worked at the pit, you got your house, and you were there till after you retired for life. - Frank

While in a small area such as a neighbourhood this may be true, the reality is that Ashington is too big a town for everyone to literally know everyone. Nevertheless, this is the perception of the town that most people remember. It may indeed be the case that since the mines overshadowed life all across the town for everyone living there it created such a

strong bond between those in the town that it may well have felt like 'everyone knew everyone' in some meaningful sense even if not in a literal one. The shared homogeneous lived experiences at work, in the community, and during community events and rituals served to form a collective identity that encouraged empathy and support for one another.

This links to the threat of over romanticising these ideal type pit communities and nostalgia, as warned against by Strangleman (2013). It may be possible, as argued by authors such as Bourke (1993), that some participants over romanticised the sense of community in the town while omitting the difficulties that existed during the time, including for example the economic difficulties and industrial turbulence that began before the mines were closed in the region. One participant for example recognised that:

And there was people who disliked each other you know; this wasn't like a big hippie commune where everybody loved each other and peace on earth. Quite the opposite. It was very political. There was lots of people, you know, like, disagreed. But the difference is that there could be some healthy, constructive discussions, debate. - Andrew

Nevertheless, it would be dismissive to simply shrug this off as nostalgia for communities that never existed. Like the findings made by Colls (2004) and Gilbert (1995), It is clear from the evidence provided by the interviews both that there was a strong community that did indeed have the mining industry at its core and that people had a strong sense of there having been a sense of community in the town that has now disappeared, and there are real reasons people have to be nostalgic and to think that they have indeed left behind a 'golden period' and entered into an era marked by economic and social depression. Even younger participants, who had been born long after the mining industry had passed its peak, had a perception of Ashington as a town that was once thriving and centred around tight knit neighbourhoods that had now disappeared. Therefore while, as outlined in the literature review, nostalgia and a sense of loss can be potent and dangerous political forces, this does not mean people have no right to feel them. It is simply a fact that Ashington has lost its mining industry that has been left unreplaced, and many people justifiably feel that in many ways life was better when it was there and long for it to either return or be replaced by some equivalent.

There is also explicit reference to the 'tightness' of the community that has shades of the work done by Gelfand (2018), who observed that working class communities developed strict, or tight, norms and substantial networks of mutual support and communication to help tackle external and internal threats. A community where 'everyone knew everyone' is in an ideal situation to collectively organise responses to any potential threats to their economic, physical, or social stability.

The mine left its imprint on the town everywhere it went. The sense of collectivism it created in the town was seen to as being the source of both formal and informal networks of support:

I think because the mines had such an impact on the town itself. When you look right the way down all the things that they actually funded and put in Ashington. When you look right the way back into the history from everything from the hospital that was built, the libraries and stuff like that, where they had such a massive impact of the education, the lifestyle, the health, and well-being of people within the town. So, when you look at things like the miners' welfare which is still standing there, to this day, if it wasn't for the mines, they wouldn't be there. - Patrick

Similarly to findings mentioned by authors such as Gibbs (2022) and Hudson and Beynon (2021), much of the formal infrastructure in the town set up to support the community was paid for by the miners themselves:

I mean to say we built the welfares, Ashington swimming baths the miners paid for that, we bought that. I mean to say over the years and that and *Anonymised* will be able to tell you a lot more what I can tell you. But the miners worked hard, they played hard. But we were very generous with our money, because when you worked at the colliery you could see how much of your money went to the welfares, we see how much went to the colliery band. - Patrick

But there were also vast informal networks of support across the town like those described by Colls (2004). This often originated in the family which stretched out into the immediate neighbourhood and then the wider town. One participant observed:

Because the thing is, when you look back at them, everything from the mums groups that used to meet and the nurseries that were run in central hall and all that kind of stuff. So, because you had that sense of community, where it may just be the fact that grandma is picking the kids up, you'll hear what it's like and then conversations and that would happen. - Danielle

And that:

So, my mam and dad both had jobs. But there was other people on the street, on North Seaton Road and Beamsley Terrace, who just the dad worked. So, the mams were at home. So, the other mams on the street almost picked up some of the parenting from the parents on the street. So, it's like there was a woman that she lived about 8 doors down on the other side of the road who she used to help me with my reading because when my mam was at work and stuff, but now so many people do have two jobs. – Danielle

The family as the centre of the wider network of support is not dissimilar to the findings of Young and Willmott (1957) who found in working class communities in East London that the family was the focal point of wider community networks rather than a buffer to them. The strongly family orientated communities of mining communities is outlined extensively by Dennis et al (1956), where the family unit is taken for granted as the economic model based around the division of labour between the man and woman. The above quotes highlight how this spilled over into wider community ties as the woman traditionally stayed home to carry out the domestic duties of the household, developing their own networks of support while the men were building them at the pit and in their other wider social settings. The family also served the bedrock of continuity and rootedness in the community from which the wider social networks could be built around. Hudson and Beynon find that in mining communities the family was often the institution that tied people to work, place, and community, and once the traditional family system started to deteriorate so did the deeper attachments to the town and the various social networks (Hudson and Beynon, 2021: p.246).

Both the pooling of finances and resource given by the miners to create amenities to support the community such as miners' welfare halls and public swimming baths as well as to networks of support that developed as a result of the neighbourliness of the communities takes a remarkable amount of social trust. Putnam uses the example of rotating credit associations as evidence of a group with solid levels of trust that has emerged from strong levels of social capital to which these initiatives developed by miners are similar (Putnam, 1993: p.167). The networks of support set up by the miners and their families themselves in these communities is another remarkable example of the generalised reciprocity, or 'self-interest rightly understood' that is so crucial to the economic and social development of a community, and which can only exist in an area with thriving levels of social capital and trust.

This chapter has shown that the 'ideal type' of mining community described by Waddington et al (2001) is vivid in the memory of those who have memories of the communities shaped around the mines. While perhaps tinged with a hint of nostalgia, though this can be overstated, people remember a town with thriving communities and robust social networks that gave them a sense of belonging and provided an 'umbrella of support' in hard times. These fond memories have only served to reinforce the idea that the town has gotten worse in recent years, fuelling their anger which will be examined in the following chapters.

4.2 - Attachment and Identity

As the pits began to close, the communities that were organised around the way of life they produced also began to fall apart. This chapter will outline how changes since the closure of the pits have altered people's relationship and attachment to both Ashington itself and the wider community and how it has changed the way they understand their own identities living in a mining town without a mine.

Coal mines across Northumberland began to close in the 1960's with the worst of the closures in and around Ashington coming in the 1980's when Woodhorn and Ashington were closed in 1981 and 1986 respectively (Northern Mine Research Society). Ellington pit remained operational until 2005, the last deep coal mine in the North East to survive, but was only employing around 300 men at the point of closure. The mining industry provided steady jobs for life that were often passed down generations and in some cases came with a house on a colliery row, tightly packed together on extraordinarily long rows of streets filled with neighbours. Due to the low geographical mobility and high financial security which the mining industry provided the village, strong roots and connections were established in and across neighbourhoods through family trees and a sharing of the same experiences and values as one another provided for by the cultures and traditions of the industry as outlined in the previous chapter.

As the mines began to close and the economy of Ashington began to change so did the communities themselves. Many participants picked up on the growing change in demographics as houses began to be built on the periphery of the town and people from across the region and beyond began to move in. This was most likely driven by the decline in miners' homes being attached to working in the pit as the mines themselves closed marking an increase in rented and privately owned properties in the town, accelerated by the Thatcher government's right to buy scheme. This resulted in an influx of people moving to the town with little to no connection or roots to the mining industry or Ashington itself, as

well as an increased mobility as people became more mobile, regularly moving in and out of rented properties. One participant noted that:

Well there's been a big influx in Ashington you know in the past 15 or 20 years you know, the majority of housing in Ashington was council housing, particularly in the Hirst area and then you had the miners properties, the rows, the rows here, like that, and that used to be 1 to 13. So 13 rows of houses right from there to the end and then you have the miners houses in the centre of Ashington the central to Hirst area. They were all miners properties and we have never had any problems anywhere with them because it was miners who were glad to get a free house. I mean, obviously delighted. So they were all occupied. That's all gone and what we've seen as a consequences that we've seen a lot of miners like moved on, a lot of people obviously have aged and died. And what we've seen is an influx into Wansbeck of younger people, younger families from different conurbations. Like North Tyneside, the city in Newcastle, or other areas. And many people have bought up these cheap properties and renting them out to people who were being booted out of properties in in other areas. So basically there's a bit of a ghettoization sort of thing in those areas. And again, that's, that is a consequence of a change in employment and a change of economy and a change of community. But it's also a sign of the times, which would have happened unless of course we still had like four or five pits and everybody still worked at the pits. - Andrew

It is difficult to find reliable data that can confirm the level of population influx into South East Northumberland over the past few decades, but the town council website acknowledges that beginning in the 50's through to the 90's there have been new housing estates built on the East, South, and West of the town. From the point of view of the participants however this has certainly led to a perceived decline of the strong feeling of community that many remembered in the town. There is also a recognition here at the end of the quote that the pits were indeed central to the way of life that emerged from the town, another theme that shown through acutely throughout the interviews. We will see throughout that many people lay the blame of any diminishing sense of community and quality of life in Ashington directly at the door of the closures of the pits.

Some people expressed a belief that these new estates did not have the same strength of togetherness that could be found in the old colliery rows for example. One participant described moving to Fallowfield, a new estate on the edge of town built in the late 80's:

We lived in Fallowfield and I hated living in Fallowfield because everybody just kept themselves to themselves. Every Sunday morning people were out cutting their grass and washing their car. And that just seemed that that's what life was like there. - Eric

The decline in the neighbourliness of the communities was a common theme when people described how they thought the town had declined. Indeed when asked why they thought the town had declined this was the most common answer, more so than a rise in poverty of material living standards. For example:

Well, first of all like that, it's like we used to know our neighbours. We used to know who lived across the road. Like if somebody new moved into the street, everybody knew within like a couple of hours who they were, whether they had kids who they were married to, where they worked and everything else. Whereas now it's, I moved into my new house just over a year and a bit ago. And the first thing I did when I arrived was give my neighbours a knock to introduce myself. And the woman next door is the old couple that had lived there for like 60 odd years. She turned round and went, we've had two different neighbours in since like, over the time we've lived here, and you're the first one that ever introduced themselves. And you're just like well, actually is it not a good thing to know who your neighbours are and know that people are looking out for you. And my neighbours on the other side. I lived there probably a year before I met them. And I'd give them a knock but they didn't answer the door because they don't answer the door to people. - Danielle

It is important here again to note that it is difficult to measure how much people know and trust their neighbours today compared to another give time in the past when the mines were open. As noted in the previous chapter it is important not to give in to the temptation to the forces of nostalgia that disregards the fragmentation and strife that would have inevitably been present in these communities to some extent. But regardless, the crucial point here is that the overwhelming perception amongst the participants is that the sense of

community has dramatically diminished in recent decades and that has almost always been to the detriment of Ashington and the people who live there.

As the mines which tied labour and place together as the glue of community began to erode so did the sense of neighbourliness and the social cohesion that existed beforehand. The monoculture created by the mines and the community built around it that made people feel as though 'everyone knew everyone' is gone and so is the social capital and trust that came with it. For example:

At one time this village was immaculate. You never saw a bit of litter or nothing. But then everybody who lived in the village worked at the pit and it had like a village way of life. So when they sold the houses off the older pension people didn't want to buy the houses so these housing companies bought them up. And then what happened was they rent them out. So they rent them out to people from towns and cities. And when they came in the village they didn't really understand the village way of life. And it was totally different. And this village now isn't a patch on what it used to be. Simply because, there's that many people moved into the village who don't do things the way we used to do it. - Frank

And:

And I think there's a lot of people from other parts of the country bought them. And, you know, they didn't live there they'd never been there before. And I think that, you know, they really didn't care whether the gardens are nice, they didn't really care who lived in them. And I think that's a big problem now. You can go and do and see because obviously some of the properties ended up in the, well they're owned now by Advance Northumberland, but by the northern coalfields property company, and you can kind of tell when you go down there where people own them themselves because the fences have getting bigger, barricade themselves in where advance have them because there has been some investment in terms of you know, the solar panels on for example, and then you can tell the people, the sort of absentee landlords because they're in a bit of a state - Bill

The view that Ashington was suffering from a lack of civic pride and had become unclean and poorly maintained could be contrasted with the words of a visiting Reverend in the 1930's, who commented that 'What are the things in Ashington I most admire? I admire the wide streets and well-kept gardens; I admire the cleanliness and homeliness of the houses in the colliery rows' (Kirkup, 1993: p.51). There is therefore on the one hand the issue of people moving in and out of rented accommodation with little incentive to engage with the community and look after their property, but the added problem of homeowners living in the town protecting themselves from the negative societal impacts of this and 'barricading themselves in', further privatising their own lives and engaging less and less with the community that they have grown estranged to.

Like young people born after the mining industry was largely closed in the town, residents moving into these tight knit mining communities missed out on the process of 'anticipatory socialisation' and were therefore unfamiliar to the norms, behaviours, and traditions in the town they possibly perceived as alien and old fashioned. As noted in the previous chapter, events such as leek shows that acted as rituals celebrating the traditional culture, bringing the community together, were fundamentally rooted in a mining way of life that was passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, these events and hobbies began to lose their popularity and impact as people migrated into the town unaware and uninterested and without any strong tradition in activities such as leek growing and pigeon, to the detriment of the social cohesion and social capital across the communities.

A number of participants felt that the increased mobility and influx of people into the town is at the root of the issue of a lack of attachment and civic pride. Some participants expressed the view that people who arrived in Ashington from elsewhere with no roots in the town or its mining past they are less likely to engage with the community and feel a sense of civic responsibility towards it which is a crucial building block of higher levels of social capital:

I think if you, obviously, if you're born here, through parents who are from here, like your mams like you're, you learn from them about the area and you know, you'll get the pride from them and stuff etc. Whereas if you've just come here to a North East

town like you know about a little bit you haven't really got like that, you're not really proud of it is so you don't really treat it like a like a community. It's more like just an area where you live, you know what I mean. - Owen

As a result of the economic landscape of the town fragmenting and the sense of community that came with it weakened, younger participants growing up in Ashington with no direct memory of the mining industry indicated a much looser attachment to the town today than the older participants:

I'm not saying I'm not proud to be from Ashington. I am proud to be from Ashington. But there's just nowt there for us. There really isn't. I never had a good childhood and that there. - Liam

When asked about their relationship with the town itself and where it fits into their identity younger participants were not forthcoming about their attachment to the town being important to their own understanding who they were. They were more likely to associate with achieved identities such as with educational achievement. For example, when asked what was important to her identity on young respondent replied:

Probably my education and being a mum. Yeah. Yeah. To be completely honest, but yeah, in terms of where I'm from, I'm not. I wouldn't say I was like, proud to be where I'm from, but I am in a sense, like, it's a weird one. I wouldn't boast about it. Because, just because of the stigma, but I am proud to be where I'm from because like, I've, I've grown up here, I've got an education here. Started a family here. All my family are here. Like it's just one of those ones. - Kim

This sentiment in both of the above quotes is that, that although many took some pride in being from Ashington, they did not have the same deeper connection with the town that many of the older participants showed. This has some precedent in related literature on the topic. One study found that young people had an almost dormant sense of attachment and pride to where they lived and would wish to remain there if educational and employment opportunities were more readily available (Eacott and Sonn, 2014). For many younger participants, a lack of opportunity for quality and solid employment that indicated

they would happily leave the town to improve their fortunes. One participant when asked if they think they could have a successful career if they stayed in Ashington responded:

Unless you've got really good job already. Or if you work in a really good industry or have a really good trade. I mean people who settle there will be joiners and plumbers and electricians and stuff that can do their job anywhere. But in terms of creative jobs, here's not like, I need to be in a city - Liam

These findings therefore echo those of others that young people can and do feel attached to their hometowns such as Ashington, but the lack of quality employment opportunities as well as the growing issues of crime, anti-social behaviour and shrinking levels of trust, which will be expanded on in the following chapters, mean there are too many incentives for them to leave. This creates a further brain drain as young people seek opportunities not available in Ashington, further exasperating the town's problems.

This is a far cry from the mining industry was thriving and well paid, secure work was readily available and a crucial part of peoples identities. Some older people still considered being a miner as a key part of their identity, despite having not worked down the mines for decades and having other careers once the mines closed:

I went from the pit to being a school caretaker for 23 years but my identity, I still feel like a miner and I'm in a mining area. - Patrick

On other occasions some younger participants simply saw Ashington as a town on the decline and wanted to get out while they were young:

Because it's just, it's just not like the nicest of places is it? There's still me friends and that here but like it's just not the nicest places I don't know if I want to raise my kids here. - Harry

While some did show an attachment to the town, others pointed out that due to the town's perceived decline, that there is simply nothing left to identify with or be deeply attached to, especially for young people who have known no different, a sentiment put colourfully by this participant:

Like when you move, if you move into a house share with people smoking weed all the time drinking all the time. You move in there's no carpets on the floor there's holes in the furniture, you're not going to put a coaster down for your cup of tea. You're not going to respect it because it was a mess before you got there. Like you wouldn't, you're not going to if you're born into that sort of shit, you're not going to have any sort of respect because it's never been any different. - Liam

Where people were no longer able to build a collective identity around work and place, they are left with the 'uncertain transition' outlined by Nayak (2006) and are forced to create new identities elsewhere. This again links to the economic decline of the region. Where people were once able to create meaningful identities around their labour down the mines and its pivotal role in the wellbeing of the country they now found themselves living in a town haunted by its past success struggling to find a new identity in its post-industrial reality:

I think, like, one of the things that's changed is the sort of the sense of the community's place in the world. So I think feeling like proud of, you know, being the biggest mining village of the world, you know, powering the Industrial Revolution despite how hard things were. It felt like quite an important community at one time. And I think, basically over the last 30-40 years, it's just, I'm not sure. People, I mean, I still would class myself as being proud to be from Ashington and proud of the town and stuff, but, you know, you hear people sort of criticising it and it's, you know, people call it Ashganistan or whatever, and it's sort of seen as quite a downtrodden place where people are not like, they're not beating their chest and saying, you know, I'm from Ashington or whatever. - Bill

Aye probably. Because there was a large, a pride in doing that, you know what I mean. Everybody came together, it's what Ashington was built for. - Liam

Again the pride linked with the mining industry and the identity that created for the town and the people living there shines through in these quotes, even amongst the younger participants who have no direct memory of the industry being open. While it is interesting and perhaps positive that they are able to engage with the town's history in this way, it has

the effect of feeding into the sense that the town has become a worse place to live and make its current lack of identity even more pronounced. The racial undertones of the popular derogatory nickname for the town, 'Ashganistan', will be explored in more detail as the participants views on immigration is examined in later chapters.

Despite being unanimous and often the most assertive in their agreement that Ashington had declined in recent decades, older participants were more likely to indicate they would not leave Ashington due to long standing roots and/or family ties and clearly had stronger ties to the town than their younger counterparts. For example, after discussing for almost half an hour about how the town has declined in her lifetime one woman answered when asked if she would ever move out of Ashington:

No, never. Even if I won the lottery. Even if I won £29 million. I wouldn't move out of Ashington. But I'd buy a bloody big house.

Why wouldn't you?

I can't leave my folks I can't leave my people.

Do you feel quite attached to it?

Oh, definitely. Definitely - Gloria

While it is inevitable that being older means you have more chance to lay down roots in a town it is concerning just how little attachment there was from young people towards the town. The lack of attachment is both an effect and cause of the town's decline. As the older generation who had strong ties to the town and were more civically active die out and the younger generations have nothing binding them to the town and community that the mining industry provided there is a gap left for those willing to become active in the community.

The lack of civically active young people is seen as a contributing factor in the decline of social capital in the town. Where 'elder' style miners would once take an active leadership role in the community younger people appear to be lacking. As one participant put it:

A lot of people probably feel a bit isolated, now they live a bit outside the centre of town or other parts of the town and that. A lot of the working men clubs have closed over the years and have turned into like theme kind of pubs because it costs a lot of money to run a working men's clubs and have committee members and a lot of the younger generation haven't taken the mantle over the years being on committees and things like that, they just want to be out with their mates and have no worries and that you know. A lot of the old, probably ways and attitudes hasn't passed on and that you know. - Michael

Many of the existing structures such as miners welfares are kept going by those with connections to the mining industry, a group who are rapidly aging and growing smaller.

So when you look at things like the miners welfare which is still standing there, to this day, if it wasn't for the mines, they wouldn't be there. But obviously, you haven't got that, like almost the organizational structure anymore, to keep the things going and it's now relying on people that were part of it to keep the legacy alive as such. - Patrick

The sense from the participants that the social infrastructure of the town has vanished as the mining industry wound down is in line with the experience of participants found in the work done by Gibbs (2021) and Hudson and Beynon (2022). The effects of this will be looked at in more detail in the following chapter.

The feeling that comes from the above quote that this lack of attachment has contributed to the decline of the sense of community or social capital in the town was a common one. As young people no longer go through the rituals of 'anticipatory socialisation', as described in the literature review, via the traditional route of working in the pit and immersing themselves in the communities that emerged from that work, they are no longer taught the traditions, norms and expectations of behaviour learnt by earlier generations. As a result the significance and importance of the community based in this way of life begins to diminish and with it the social capital and trust that came with it. For example when asked why they believe young people do not get involved in community events as much as previous generations, once participant explained:

Well, again, it's down to the mining community. The mining community you know, the shift work. Say the father had the pigeon, he would take his son, his grandson or whatever along to that place. And there was the interest. So that was the next generation doing that, the likes of allotments. Again, if you walk up Ashington street lots of gardens can be done. But it hasn't been instilled in them that it's more people go by your house than what come in your house. - Isla

Again, we see this idea of 'instilling' certain values and norms of behaviour in young people, through the process of anticipatory socialisation, that participants were acutely aware was no longer happening, and again the explicit belief that this was down to the collapse of the mining industry. Or, perhaps to put it more bluntly, as the culture that emerged from the mining industry vanished and has been left unreplaced, there is no culture, traditions, or norms to be socialised into. This above quote also once again touches on the importance of the family institution into socialising the next generation into the community and nurturing a sense of attachment to Ashington and its culture and traditions. As argued by Dennis and Erdos (1993), as the traditional family unit has begun to fragment people no longer have that first port of call to learn about and become embedded into the town, its culture and its norms and values. Hudson and Beynon and Young and Willmott both find evidence to suggest that the family is a significant institution in rooting families into communities and acting as a nucleus for wider social relationships across a community, findings that are supported by these sentiments.

This jeopardises the ability to develop norms, values, and social capital. As outlined in the literature review, Fukuyama (2001) observes that 'not only do norms from such sources not come about through decentralised bargaining; they are transmitted from one generation to the next through a process of socialisation that involves much more habit than reason.' Ashington is a town that has lost those habits which made socialisation and the transmission of norms possible resulting in a dramatic decline in social capital. There was a clear perception amongst the older participants that their younger counterparts were uninterested and uneducated on the norms and expectations they themselves were raised to accept, and as a result a certain feeling of resentment began to shine through as they blamed the younger generations for the declining standards and expectations regarding

their values and civic activity. This final quote illustrates the view precisely that the mining industry provided the basis for a thriving community based around shared beliefs and expectations that emerged from the way of life that emerged around the mines themselves. The next chapter will focus on the decline of the community in the town in recent decades and the rise of a form of individualism that has come to replace it to the detriment of the levels of trust the town once enjoyed.

4.3 - Community & Individualism

In the previous chapter we investigated how as the mining industry was broken up so were the strong communities that relied on a solid place-based industry to maintain its norms and ways of life. Attachment to the town was subsequently weakened and the neighbourliness and social capital the townspeople enjoyed began to wane. This chapter will investigate how this has resulted in the breakdown of a community feeling in the town and the rise of a more individualised society.

Like in the previous chapter, the generational divide was clear to see, and a number of the older participants were keen to emphasise what they perceived to be a difference between their own attitudes towards one another and the wider community and the attitude of younger people in the town today:

My opinion is, and my philosophy is, the younger generation is a complete different generation to where I'm from, because they don't have the dialogue with each other. They're not part of a team, or most the time they're not part of a team. Being part of a team. It's a football team, it's a cricket team, if it's a team at the pit. If it's a team in the shipyards. Teamwork, it's priceless. I mean, see, we've got a strong team here. You've got the office staff. And then we've got six tradesmen so that's another team. But the younger generation divin't seem to get into teams or they've never been part of a team because a lot of the lads and lasses that's coming through, a lot of them didn't play football and stuff like that now, just silly little things like that. - Patrick

The generational divide older participants saw between themselves and their younger peers is in line with Putnam's own findings in *Bowling Alone* (2000), who concludes that a considerable chunk of the reason behind the falling levels of social capital in the US is down to generational difference. Putnam, as laid out in the literature review, mentions in particular the effect of World War II and the sense of togetherness that was built up due to the shared goal of the war effort, that 'participation in a common cause tended to enhance feelings of comradeship and well-being' (Putnam, 2000: p.270-271). Haidt calls this phenomenon 'muscular bonding', where wartime conditions allow us to move beyond a

focus on narrow self-interest, trust one another, and create a collective 'we' that overtakes our focus on ourselves as individuals (Haidt, 2012: p.257).

The effect of working down the pit appears to have had a similar effect on the men and wider community, bringing them together around a shared comradeship and purpose. Without any similar binding force, the younger generation no longer feel the same sense of shared purpose and togetherness and the inevitable outcome is a renewed focus on the individual rather than the wider common good. This links to the argument put forward by Evans (2023), that the new forms of un-collectivised work in the modern economy that have become prominent since the decline of industry are inherently individualised, focused on education, social mobility, and competition rather than solidarity and comradeship.

For some, the generational divide seen across the community was a direct result of the changes in employment. As described earlier, work in the pits fostered a unique sense of comradeship amongst the miners which in turn spilled over into the wider community. Once the bond that was built over work down the pit was taken away, the town was left without the glue that held people together as individuals into something more encompassing:

I mean, even your art, your art classes. It's about the Pitman painters, which was a heck of a thing. And then you had the colliery bands and every pit had a band. So a lot of the youngins got into the colliery band. It's the same as being on a team. You work together. You're gan away together. You go to competitions and contests together. So I think a lot of togetherness that we used to have especially in Ashington in the local area Wansbeck area isn't there anymore, for the reasons that we haven't got the pits and that in my opinion. - Patrick

Again we see an explicit recognition of the way working down the mine was the glue to bringing not just the miners together but the whole community including children and women who had their lives dictated as much by the routines and traditions that arose from the mining industry as much as the miners themselves. The networks of support that emerged in these communities that were elaborated on earlier were as much a result of the mining industry as was the comradeship amongst the pitmen, and suffered as much once the mines closed:

And I think I don't know whether or not that has got anything to do with the whole pits closing down or whether it's just a general change. Do you know, I don't know. But there was very much because, because people were working in such a large industry like that everybody knew everybody. You know, so my grandma would know somebody at the other end of Ashington because their husband worked with her husband kind of thing. So and that was lost somewhat. So yeah, it did, bind people together. I think, not just the workers. But the families, the wives, the children as well from that side of it. - Natalie

The collective bonds that emerged from the pit and the traditions born out of them were the basis for huge interest in community events bringing the town together. As the last generation of miners has begun to die out so have that traditions and events that were so crucial in bringing people together such as leek shows, miners picnics, dog races and much more:

I just think it's that generation that's kind of left us now, that's died off. And I think a lot of those were part of that. That whole you had your mineworkers, then they had the allotments. That was what they did. In their spare time. And then we'll go to the allotment and then the leek shows and things like that. But predominantly those people who took part in that they all knew them from a community through work or through socialising, and they had something in common, then, which then stemmed in different interests and that not having something in common now, I think is kind of seen a community disperse slightly. - Natalie

I think because you've lost the big employers. It's like when you look back, you did have the mines, you had the factories, and you almost had them key people within them organizations that pulled the community together with hundreds of employees who brought the families together. So it might be when you had things like factory fortnight and things like that. And when the again the miners picnic it was like a massive day where everybody come out and celebrate it together. Where because we've lost them massive industries, and them big employers who did organise the events. I think it's almost that sense of community in that sense has gone. - Danielle

These sentiments are in line with the findings of Wray and Stephenson (2005), who argue that once those 'focal points' of community engagement were dismantled along with the mining industry itself, people reported a disconnect with 'the very community that once defined all aspects of their lives. At the heart of this disconnection is the loss of importance sources of social support, opportunities for communal interaction, and the pride associated with an industrial identity based on mining', something they note applies both to women and men growing up in these communities (p.180). Young people do not only struggle with finding employment in a post-industrial landscape, but indeed the ability to integrate in the community at all as the community that came with the industry went with it.

The result is a more individualised community where the bonds and obligations felt towards each other that were built upon the social capital produced by the mining industry have eroded. Some participants bemoaned what they perceived as a community where individuals had become isolated, selfish, and uninterested in any form of civic participation both formal and informal illustrated by the below quotes:

Everybody looked out for everybody, everybody was more or less in the same boat then. There was... it didn't have such a thing as you know, anybody having anything more than anybody else. - Eric

It goes back to that thing about people being sort of individualistic. Like I mean there's no like sort of, its competition as well, like people at work but they don't really like, they're not together. They're not like friends. They're just like, there to like, put money, put food on the table, you know, they're not like there to have a good time and stuff. Whereas miners like, it was more of a community spirit, they used to go for like a pint afterwards and stuff. Yea, like sort of people used to go for pints after work and go to the social club every Friday and Sunday with their partner or whatever and play bingo and that. Now you go up the street, there's people fighting and that. - Owen

No, not really, there's not a sense of togetherness is there? Everybody's all against each other, like, it's like there's, there's not a sense of togetherness. - Harry

Course it has yeah, you just need to look at the houses that are all going up and people that live in the colliery rows now are probably looked down upon by those that are living in the new housing estates that are going up. Everybody looks out for themselves now. - Eric

Do you think people your age care about Ashington as a town?

No, I just feel like things people care about themselves. - Harry

I would say there's less people family orientated. There are less people now. Kids are more selfish. They have kids when they're 16, 17. And what they don't realise is they've got them children to look after for well 14 year before kids can really be told that it can look after itself. And that's, that's not happening. - Isla

The first quote here focuses interestingly on the growing inequalities and differences in the town compared to the equality both in economic terms and social standing when the pits were open. While some people did well out of the rise in home ownership and growing diversity of the employment market as the region deindustrialisation (Payne,2021), others fell into a spiral of generational poverty which has resulted in a growing divide between the haves and have-nots in the town, a trend picked up on in recent literature across the wider country. The family as an institution is again mentioned here. Isla, the participant, argues that the growing individualism has weakened the sense of obligation even from parents to their children with detrimental effect.

Again this harkens back to the point by both Putnam (2000) and Haidt (2012), that crisis events like WWII focus our efforts on collective goals and give us a feeling of 'being in the same boat', and how the mining industry was able to act as that bridge across the community that in a way nothing is capable of doing today. We will see in the following chapters how a community where 'everybody looks out for themselves' and people are no longer interested in working together can have devastating political and social consequences.

While people considered this to be happening all across Ashington to an extent, older participants in particular were keen to point out once again the generational differences between the individualism and lack of any sense of community amongst young people, as opposed to their older counterparts, who some participants believe are more civic and community minded than their younger peers:

I think it's down to lack of lack of interest because the community don't think like what we used to. The veterans hut, they've started, beside the job centre, they've got like snooker boards and that. And once a month, they've been doing it for about two years now, they started like a coffee morning once a month. And they're raising money, and they do, they make, it was originally the NHS flowers like a thank you. Then they started doing caterpillars and birds, and they're wood. It's all ran by volunteers. And they've got some of the special needs place involved to help paint them and they sell them, and they've raised an awful lot of money. Now when you go there, I think it's on this Saturday if you wanted to have a look, the majority are older mature people that are keeping the thing going. But the youth, they do not get younger people involved in that type of thing. - Isla

There's, there's not much empathy, and just not much sympathy for the young ones, towards the peer group, towards their own peer group. There doesn't seem to be that closeness. See, my brother had, me older brother and my younger brother now they still have the same friends they had when they were at school. They might not see them for months at a time. But when you see them, it's just, it just knits back together. - Gloria

Perhaps this is again a case of the older generations romanticising communities from the past and their own civic mindedness. But nevertheless the distinct feeling that things were not only bad but have become worse was clear and is a potent force for driving what many see as a sense of decline in these communities that seemed to be most stark amongst those older participants.

Once again, the concept of anticipatory socialisation is useful here. Many had at least the perception that while former mineworkers who had gone through that process of socialisation continue to be community-minded and maintain the sense of comradeship with one another despite the mines no longer being open. The younger generation however, who have not had the opportunity to develop such strong ties with one another and the wider community, are more individualised and not as communally orientated. Nevertheless, the above quotes do however highlight that there was still a sense of community persisting in Ashington and some degree of social capital both formally and informally remaining despite the difficulties of the past few decades. As well as the example of the veteran's hut, sports teams such as the local football and boxing clubs came up as examples of strong civic organisations giving people an opportunity to come together and contribute to their communities:

But I go boxing and that since I've had cancer, I've had a hard recovery. But the boxing, there's lads from the pit gan there, and its, there's a lot of lads from the armed forces going there with mental health problems. But it's the mining and the boxing club and that because the lad who owns the boxing club whose had it 30 year, should have a bloody medal the size of a frying pan, is an ex miner been there 30 year and has been very, very well, and apart from all being ex miners and that it's the boxing got us glued together so were glued together in more ways than one because we've got the mining backgrounds, we've got the boxing and we've also got other lads who are there from the armed forces and things like that. - Patrick

You know, Ashington Football Club which I've been involved with for a long time, is doing better than it was when I was younger, you know, this is like, probably the third time it's been saved from nearly going into real difficulties and potentially closure and there are a lot more people that go on there and a lot more people watching. So I think that said, you know, there are very specific things that that have gotten better and I think generally things have deteriorated but there has been some investment in facilities. - Bill

It is worth noting the recognition of armed forces workers here alongside ex-miners who continue to seek being part of a team or organisations. This fits neatly with Putnam's

thesis that war efforts bring people together to work towards shared goals and the view I have put forward that working down the pit provided a similar collective focus to bring people together around a common goal.

In this chapter we have seen how the changes in employment and attachment in the town have resulted in a decline in the community and an increase in individualism. The next chapter will go on to investigate how this ties into the rising levels of drug use and anti-social behaviour in the town and what this tells us about the shrinking levels of trust across the town.

4.4 - Crime

Alongside the general retraction of the community, which was explored in the previous chapter, the rise in levels of crime, in particular drug use and anti-social behaviour were consistently brought up as a significant marker of how things have declined in the town in recent decades. This is particularly significant, given that crime levels are often correlated with the level of social capital present in any given community (Akçomak and Bas ter Weel,2012; Dilulio,1996; Sampson,1999), and can therefore be used as an indicator of levels of trust and social capital present in Ashington today.

Many people, in particular the older participants, complained that the issue of anti-social behaviour and drug use had gotten out of control in the town compared to the low crime neighbourhoods marked by high degrees of social cohesions they remember from their childhoods. Again, the root of this was employment in the mining industry and the informal yet strict hierarchies that emerged amongst the men which would function as a check on any behaviour straying too far from the established norms of what is acceptable:

I think there's a massive point here right there is really, and that was that the miners themselves used to, like, police each other. We had young people coming into the mining industry. Lots of young people coming in, who now otherwise would be in either unemployed or perhaps in low paid employment. And that again, it's about the community. It's about the fact that if he had had a fight on the Friday night, and you went to the pit on Monday morning, and if you were wrong about it you would get absolutely hammered. The you know, that the, the more wise individuals, the elders as it might be described, would more or less that you know, they police themselves, police the young people. - Andrew

Here we see the idea of the 'benign police force', outlined by Hudson and Beynon (2022: p.253), where 'elder' pit men would maintain order within communities by strictly imposing norms and expectations on children and their younger counterparts. This is similar to the concept of collective efficacy, broadly the idea that neighbours will intervene to control the behaviour of deviant individuals or groups in the interest of the common good to maintain

order and security (Sampson, 1997), strongly linked to the levels of trust and solidarity across a community (Browning, 2004). It is difficult to measure just how effective this was, but it was not an uncommon sentiment. This is highlighted well by this testimony from a former pitman who had experience of both disciplining younger workers and being disciplined himself by older colleagues:

When you had the pits, and you're a young lad, the older people would kind of control you. They would tell you how to behave and you'd respect them, so you took notice. Nobody takes notice now. When the pits were open you always had, *Anonymised* will tell you the same, you always had your rough men. And they would keep the younger ones in line. I mean I remember going out once and getting in trouble with the police at Lynemouth colliery. Three older men were waiting to see me when I got in the baths. "What do you think you're doing? Making a fool of yourself at weekends like that? You need to sort yourself out." There's none of that now. - Frank

When I was younger this village here, if anything happened bad I would stop that. Without a shadow of a doubt. Burglars weren't tolerated. If they did come into the village we found out who they were and they got wrong for doing it. That was the way the community was. - Frank

Pit men were seen to take on the role of informal wardens who imposed and enforced strict expectations and rules in order to uphold the standards that maintained the 'tightness' of the coal mining communities. But it was not only the pit men themselves who would act as a check on the anti-social behaviour in the communities, but the wider networks and connections of friends and families across the neighbourhoods where 'everybody knew everybody' that meant that communities would be able to self-police anti-social behaviour. For example:

Because everybody knew everybody. You would go along, and you would say, Oh, well that's Mrs. Bickerton along there, her daughter is Mary, Mary's had two sons so if there was a little bit of mischief down here, you will go straight to Mary or Mrs.

Bickerton type of thing and say hey, you know, Tommy's been misbehaving or you would, you would shout at them say, "hey, get yourself away back", you can't do that these days. - Isla

And because the communities kind of become more fragmented, and not everybody works at the same place or drinks in the same clubs or whatever. It's not a case of oh, well, I know that person's dad. So if they see me there I'll not say anything because they'll tell their dad or whatever. I think that was probably a big thing, there was quite an inter connected thing where everybody knew everybody and I don't think they do anymore. - Isla

Everybody used to know everybody on the street, but people just get moved in and moved out and people have got so sort of like they don't set roots that you'd be like used to. Like there used to be families passing homes down the family, but now because everything's like mostly council houses, especially around Hirst. People moved in and out, like you say, the antisocial behaviour thing, moves families around and moves people out who don't want to live next to a certain family anymore. All that sort of thing and there's no sort of community like, especially with the kids. Kids don't respect the older people like they used to. You know you wouldn't dare speak to anybody, because of your mam you wouldn't speak to any adults like, like shit because they knew who your mam was. - Liam

Many made clear their frustrations with the police and their growing inability to get a grip on crime. Interestingly these frustrations were often alongside the view held in the above quotes that crime in mining communities was extremely low in the first place and would often be dealt with by the community itself meaning there was far less reliance on the police than there is today:

If anything in the 80's, if anything was stolen even in Ashington you could find out who was responsible for it fairly quickly. Because to be honest then there wasn't very many people who would break into people's houses. So you could find out. You didn't rely on the police you would find out yourself. And things were policed by

individuals. But now there's that many of these people doing break ins and burglaries it would be so hard to find out who had done it because there's loads of them. - Frank

Yeah, if you had an odd personnel, you know, as I said down the colliery rows if you had somebody that was going along and they were up to mischief, then probably the whole street would get a hold of the person and sort them out. But then again, as well, you see used to see the police wandering around on their bikes or just walking around as well. And when I was a kid that you are actually frightened of the police, I don't think kids are frightened of police anymore. - Eric

The tight communities where 'everyone knew everyone' and vast social networks, often forged and maintained by the women across the town, as outlined by Colls (2004) in the literature review, meant that anyone committing crime could be easily identified and therefore disciplined. This created a kind of shame culture where bad behaviour would not only be punitively dealt with, but deterred by the social stigma that would be attached to it, made possible by the high degrees of social capital across the town.

People also commonly expressed the opinion that the rise in both anti-social behaviour and drug use as well as disdain for authority was a symptom of the growing lack of respect people had for both the town and those living in it as a result of its decline over the past few decades. Again many recognised the reason behind this to be the collapse of the mining industry that gave both individuals and the town itself a sense of dignity and purpose that is no longer there:

There's no respect anywhere. The likes of this. You know they've made a great job of the welfare. But you can see they'll sit and write. You know, they'll damage it you know, just for the sake, it isn't, you know, it isn't necessary. In life, you've always had sort of a small gang of thugs, mischief makers. But these now are getting bigger and bigger and bigger. - Isla

I mean, it's always been a bit iffy, especially, like the area I'm from. Just like with the kids and the anti-social behaviour and stuff like that. But I think back to when I was growing up the early 2000's, 90's. The kids were rough and they were anti-social, there was anti-social behaviour, but now the kids are just feral, there's no sort of, they just don't care. They don't care about where they live they, they don't care about anybody they speak to people like shit. It's just like the other day I was watching out my bedroom window and these kids just walked up the back way outside the window, kicked down the bin and set fire to what was in the bin and kicked it all over the street. And the kids just walked away down the streets on their back and two random blokes came out of two different houses and started picking the litter up, didn't say a word to each other. People are, are so desensitized to it now. - Liam

It was clear that many thought a lack of employment that has become a generational issue was at the root of this. Since the mining industry closed there has been limited opportunity for secure stable work and a common view was that many families had been left behind and the usual routes of embedding the values and way of life in the town through the mines had disappeared creating a kind of generational cycle of poverty. This is a far cry from the pride in both work and place and the sense of purpose that was instilled through work in the mines covered in previous chapters. That a cycle of poverty would develop is unsurprising given that it was clear in the earlier chapters that the family was so often the first place younger people were introduced into work and the community:

Parents of a certain kind of household kind of not so much household income, but people that are from a certain kind of subculture of people that are just like in the villas, for example, though, they have had nothing in their life. So what they'll do is they'll ingrain it into their like kids that they're not going to be anything they're gonna they're not gonna have anything this is this is life. This is what you do. By whether that's, like, just getting a job at not getting any sort of education. I mean, there's nothing wrong with that. But that just being ingrained like, this is how we live like there's nothing to be had. - Liam

There was more respect, I think the parents instilled more discipline in their children them days. They'd say if you do this you'll get a good hiding or a clip across the ear and sometimes you used to get a dressing down off the local policeman or a clip across the ear. In some cases when the children got home they'd been misbehaving they'd get a good rollicking off their parents. But like I say I think a lot of kids growing up now, the generation where you maybe have families that's been on benefits for a lot of years, haven't worked, so in some cases they might think they're on easy street, they're getting their benefits, their rents paid and things like that so there's no incentive to work. And then their kids have kids it's like the same kind of cycle repeating itself. I'm not saying it's happening all the time but you do get scenarios like that where families have never worked over the years. Is it because there's no work for them? Like I say the mines have closed down, things like that, so has anything really replaced all them thousands of jobs that's been lost? - Michael

This sense that the family was the key institution where norms and values would be learnt is also found by Dennis and Erdos in their essay *Families Without Fatherhood*, who put the breakdown of the traditional nuclear family at the centre of what they perceive to be a moral breakdown in working class areas in the midst of deindustrialisation. While appreciating the benefits of the decline of a sometimes oppressive institution in particular for women, they find the result has been the appearance of a 'a new type of young male, namely one who is both weakly socialized and weakly socially controlled so far as the responsibilities of spousehood and fatherhood are concerned. That is just another way of saying that he no longer feels the pressure his father and grandfather and previous generations of males felt to be a responsible adult in a functioning community '(Dennis and Erdos, 1993: p.xv). In other words, the anticipatory socialisation that embeds the norms, values, and expectations towards the wider community onto young men was achieved first and foremost by the family. The consequences of weaker families is therefore weaker socialisation, and in Durkheimian terms a weaker collective conscious to maintain order and stability.

Again this was linked to the mining industry, in particular the work itself down the pit, which due to its reputation for gruelling conditions and hard work embedded a degree of

self-respect in the men who were able to construct an image of themselves as selfless hard workers providing for both their families as well as the wider community in which they lived:

And of course, if you've got more people in employment and that, that's it's not just about the finances of job security. It's more self-esteem, isn't it? It's the fact that you're getting five days a week or you're working five or six days a week through the night at six different shifts, whatever it might be. And you feel as if you've got a place in society you feel as if you're contributing to the community. And of course you are and you know, when them jobs are lost, and you've got different types of employment. Lots of people are now unemployed, lots of people aren't even on the employment register. Now you know, they're just not working, which is a huge issue.

- Andrew

I think it does play a part in it because generally when you go out to work, you have some self-respect, you know, and you're communicating with people and you learn to take on board their ideas, their opinions and such. I think that you know, that there's no drive then to have standards is there, like I do think it plays a big part in it. But I think as well as the community. The kids are then, there's not a vast amount for kids to do. So that then sparks off a little bit of their antisocial behaviour kind of thing. - Natalie

Again the concept of anticipatory socialisation is important here. The respect for both themselves and others that pit men would learn down the mine would spill again creating a sense of togetherness and a commitment to the wider community. Through both the work down the mine as well as the sense of communalism built up through the neighbourliness, as well as the community events and rituals, people felt part of something bigger than themselves creating a respect and self-esteem which would act as an internal deterrent towards behaviour which would be seen to compromise that. As this above quote nicely outlines, without this sense of purpose and respect for both themselves and the wider community, people end up feeling directionless and often drifting into criminal circles as a result.

Others expanded on this view that since the mines closed so has much of the social infrastructure that came with it meaning that younger people often left without proper employment had no way of filling their time otherwise. They argued that traditional hobbies such as pigeon racing or leek growing that could have offered some sense of purpose or direction outside of work have almost vanished from existence, and membership in more formal associations or clubs has steadily declined:

I was reading years ago maybe the 60's and 70's you had a big dance hall above the old co-op building which a lot of the miners used to go to and probably met a lot of their future wives and girlfriends at the time so there was always something to do that fetched people together. Then you had the Northumberland Miners picnic in, I think June every year, the big gala the Northumberland gala. The Durham one's the biggest one in the country, I remember the Northumberland gala being at Ashington as a youngster. You used to have the bairns marching plus jazz bands, which was children from every town had a jazz band maybe two or three and they had different names like the melody makers from Ashington, and you used to have people run them like parents and the kids used to during the winter months train with instruments like trumpets, trombones things like that and every summer they used to go to galas all over the North East to compete and used to march with their big banners and that you know. It was like a way of probably keeping the kids off the street probably something for them to do. You know you've got nothing like that nowadays you know a lot of the kids have doing other things and that you know. Like you say the times have changed, cultures have changed. - Michael

I think its cos there nowt else to do. It's a wide range of things. The jobs are crap, there's nothing for them really to do, they don't they don't feel really wanted by the state or wanted by organisations or anything like that you know. - Owen

I think they probably do but there's like not opportunities or like other places for them to go like. So I just and I take if it's just like, it just becomes normal doesn't it. It's like what their friends are doing and it's like because like they go off to play football or anything but they might not get on the team like you can get drugs easier

than you can get some things especially with being like young kids because you just need to find someone's phone number really and just ring them up and they're not gonna care as long as you're putting money in their pocket. - Harry

On the one hand, it is clear that some people put the rise in crime and drug use down to simply having nothing else to fill their time, which is certainly a contributing factor. The lack both of quality employment and of the 'focal points of social contact' has left towns like Ashington with little opportunity for either work or casual socialising, and the inevitable result is that some people will turn to crime and drugs, both to make money and simply to alleviate boredom. But there are also undoubtedly other factors at play. Not only would the social infrastructure of mining communities give people something to fill their time with, but would, often as their main priority, as outlined by Green (1993), act as institutions which would promote conformity to social rules, and the norms and virtues of community, mutual aid and good character, as well as self-restraint in 'the wasteful and self-indulgent expenditures of drink and gambling'.

Once this 'we forming' infrastructure began to crumble as the community began to retract along with the pits themselves and was left unreplaced, the next generation were not being exposed to the virtues and ideals of communalism, working together towards collective goals and general civility. This, according to Dennis and Erdos (1993), is the key difference between the 'ethical socialism' of the unemployed men during the 1930's who remained committed to family values, devotion to children, hard work, and consideration for the community, and the 'egoistic socialism' of today that espouses an individualistic lifestyle insured by the welfare state. Crime rates can therefore not only be put down the unemployment, but a decline in this infrastructure which underpinned the high levels of social capital the town once had.

The high levels of social capital and trust in towns like Ashington relied on this thriving social infrastructure, such as working men's clubs, libraries, leek shows, pigeon races and so on, that bought the community together. Not only did these events offer places for people to socialise and associate with one another, but provided both settings for young people to be socialised and learns the norms and social rules expected of them alongside

providing a wider 'umbrella of support' where 'people could develop their individual talents and personalities in a civil society' (Hudson and Beynon: p.186). Without them, a 'contemporary anomie' has emerged where the social ethic breaks down resulting in an absence of any moral regulation giving a sense of structure to people's lives. The 'normlessness' that replaces it leaves people atomised and confused, and the lack of social cohesion can result in higher levels of crime and deviance. It is easy to see how this has happened in deindustrialisation towns like Ashington, where rapid economic and therefore social change has torn up the infrastructure of their communities, leaving people feeling directionless and purposeless. Fraser and Clark (2020) have established a link between the process of deindustrialisation on community infrastructure and the incentives that can give to the next generation without any meaningful employment or guidance to take up a life of crime that can offer both lucrative pay and a sense of belonging, both of which would have been previously provided by steady work in industry and a role in the wider community.

All of this has resulted in a community where people expressed that they no longer felt comfortable being out in the town in the evening or spending time in social spaces such as pubs or clubs either for fear of violence and anti-social behaviour or simply because there is no atmosphere anymore:

I do not feel, do not feel safe at night at all, or in the dark in Ashington. There's no police. You never see the police and when you do it's, I was whinging about the doctors earlier on, when you do it, you're put on hold you're put on whatever. "Ah we might get there eventually". I spoke to a little shopkeeper. He actually closed the business. He had video footage. And last time I spoke to him he was still waiting on the police coming. And a little thug with a hammer, any other time he should have been lifted but he couldn't do anything he couldn't even put his hand on him. - Isla

Because you don't know them you don't know where they've come from. You don't know anything about them and it's the visual, the flat cap, you know, the baseball cap with these little monkey bikes, or the motorbikes or whatever, and it's a gang culture. I wouldn't go to Asda at night-time now and that's just shopping. - Gloria

Last time I was out in Ashington I was sat and I just said what am I doing here? There was a load of junkies there on the left to is, on the right were fully fledged alcoholics. And I remember once my dad told me you're only as good as the company you keep. And I thought what am I doing sat here? I mean it was never like that in the 70's, 80's, 90's. - Frank

The result is a downward spiral where growing levels of crime reduce the levels of social capital and trust as people no longer either want to or feel safe leaving their house, which in turn leads to more crime and so on. That people now no longer feel safe in the evening in Ashington is a damning indictment of the level of trust across the town, and a sobering benchmark by which to judge just how far the town has come from the times when people wouldn't feel the need to keep their doors locked when they went out of the house.

It is worth mentioning that some suggested they felt some relief at the disappearance of such tight knit suffocating communities and recognised some benefits to the looser communities today. One woman outlined the draconian social expectations on women in the past and how the easing of this, although potentially at times at the expense of some of the benefits outlined by having tight knit communities, are tangible:

I mean, at one time people went out on Friday and Saturday. The men went out on the Friday and took the wives out on Saturday and the men went out on Sunday afternoon. It's not so much like that now because women have more freedom as well. The women can go to the club themselves. When I was a young woman and went out, I had to get a man sign me in at the door or I couldn't get in. The doormen wouldn't let me in unless I had a man to sign me in. And that man was responsible for my behaviour. - Gloria

It is also once again worth considering the role nostalgia might be playing in people's recollection of crime in their own childhoods compared to now. One participant reflected on the anti-social behaviour that to some extent has always been present in working class communities throughout the years:

Well, I would say is, you know, I see people like saying about young people doing things they shouldn't be there. And lots of the stuff that we're doing I did, like I didn't smash things up or whatever, but like, you know, when I was 14, I used to get four cans of lager and go into the park and drink and I did that for three years, massive groups of young people. People don't like that now but I'm pretty sure that a generation before me they were doing the same thing so you know, it's not necessarily there's less things for people to do either because people talk youth clubs and things like that, but like I never went to a youth club. I wouldn't have wanted to go to a youth club. - Bill

It is of course true that anti-social behaviour and general misbehaviour is present in all communities, and there are also countless examples of moral panics and folk devils who become scapegoats for wider societal problems, something that we risk doing here as well (Cohen,2011). Nevertheless, the concern that there has been a breakdown in what could be described as moral standards in working class communities since deindustrialisation has been ongoing for some time, and was being written about by the likes of Green (1993) and Dennis and Erdos (1993) for a number of decades. Indeed Dennis and Erdos consider the possibility that their concern over a rise in crime and anti-social behaviour North east working class communities is nothing more than a moral panic. They highlight that 'by 1991 there were almost as many crimes recorded in the Northumbria police area (226,000) as had been recorded in the whole country in 1938 (238,000)', alongside the potential issues of underreported and undetected crime (Dennis and Erdos, 1993: pp.71-80). Other research does indeed back up the idea that deindustrialisation has been a significant factor in increasing crime in former industrial communities. Farall et al (2020) find a direct quantifiable link between the economic restructuring throughout the 1980's, resulting in industrial decline and regional unemployment, with a negative impact on education levels and an increase in adult offending. They find that between 1980 and 2000 there was a 20% increase in those receiving police cautions from regions with higher industrial job losses than elsewhere.

Perhaps most importantly though is the perception that this is happening. Other than this one more reflective contribution, all other participants believed anti-social behaviour,

often fuelled by drugs, had increased in recent years leaving many of them feeling unsafe and disconnected from the wider community. I believe there is enough evidence from these interviews and other previous studies to show there has been changes in post-industrial communities as a result of the closure of the mining industry that has resulted in higher levels of both the volume and intensity of anti-social behaviour and drug use for a range of reasons discussed above. But even if it is nothing more than a moral panic the perception can nevertheless have powerful consequences both socially and politically which will be discussed in the following chapter.

This chapter has outlined how the lack of quality work since the pit closed alongside the loss of the tight knit communities built around the culture of the town as a mining village has resulted in a considerable perceived increase in anti-social behaviour and crime. The discussions I had with participants indicated that Ashington had become a paranoid and low trust community beset by rising crime which in turn resulted in even lower levels of social capital in a cruel self-reinforcing cycle. The next chapter will focus on the attitudes and opinions of the participants towards politics, both their specific concerns as well as their more general attitude towards our political system today.

4.5 - Politics

You would think in a time of hardship, maybe the community would actually come together. But I don't think that's really been the case. I think it's kind of going the opposite way. - Eric

The above quote encapsulates the paradox at the centre of political life in Ashington today. While all participants agreed to some extent that Ashington is in the midst of a general malaise both economically and socially, many described a town bereft of meaningful political action or organisation to do something about it. Some participants were sought after due to their involvement in local and regional politics and other community organisations to provide an insight into how they became involved to potentially give us an idea about why so few people have followed their course.

It was clear when asking about their view on politics in general that many had a markedly negative view of our political system and the results it has produced for their town in recent decades. The range of quotes below illustrate the recognition participants had of the widespread political apathy across the town and at times were self-reflective on their own inaction.

I think a lot of people in Wansbeck, and possibly the whole country but I know more about Wansbeck, I think a lot of people have lost the will. Or they're not interested so much. - Patrick

My point of view, you get more and more politicians sitting in the club, giving up points of views, and when I say politicians it's like, when you go to a football match, you have 50,000 managers point of view, but you've got one manager and I'm sick of telling people and I'm one, I'm one of them, if you've got your point of view, get to your council meetings, put a point of view across. If you're not happy what's going on in your town, get to your council meeting. If you're not happy with your leaders, get your council meetings. But they don't, they'll not get off their backsides and are quite happy, well there not happy, they'll go with the flow with that's going on,. They'll be politicians or staunch militant, right wing left wing or whatever. But they'll

not get off their arses and do something about it. I'm exactly the same. We just go with the flow. - Jack

Issues covered in previous chapters come through vividly here. The more individualistic those living in the town became as a whole as well as the lack of attachment many felt for the town meant that many people were of the view that the fortunes of the town collectively were not their responsibility and were unlikely to therefore organise collectively to do anything about it:

They live in their own little bubble. And they'll have you know, a half dozen friends which they go round to each other's with their prams and their babies and you know they haven't got a vision to see, they haven't got the vision to help themselves, get out of the hole that they're in because they blame society, they blame the benefits, they blame their neighbours, they blame you know whatever. I think that this generation is a blame society, not my fault not my problem. - Isla

As the above two quotes reveal, people in Ashington are not without their political opinions, indeed many have strong views on a range of political and social issues. But as is also outlined, people very rarely organise to do anything about them and as we will discuss below, very few people are actively involved in local political organisations. This ties us back to the inability for the town to collectively organise due to, what I argue, is its low social capital and trust.

Many people felt that Ashington is purposefully ignored by the government who were too far out of touch with the town to care. Many felt resentful about the political decisions taken over the past few decades that have in their view negatively impacted on the town:

When you've been beaten with a stick for a lot of years you back off. It's like now. You've got Mick Lynch and the NHS, and then you've got the Tory government saying we're in parliament, we'll change the laws to beat you. - Jack

I think the younger generation don't think, politics is a different issue. I think people would think politics is too corrupt now. I think that's because of the way the media's you know about MP's second jobs making millions of pounds and then you've got a

prime minister, who's a millionaire billionaire or whatever, who doesn't understand what people are going through when I just think people have got no faith in politicians. - Eric

Some participants referred to the neighbouring town Morpeth, an old market town five miles West of Ashington, which they believed got favourable treatment by decision makers due to it being more prosperous:

I mean, do you think Ashington, or the people of Ashington, are ignored politically?

Yes. Definitely. Definitely. I think it's a land that time forgot. Like the big black, like go no further than the big black hole. Go to Morpeth. Just look at the gritters. Morpeth gets a lot more gritters than what Ashington does. I think there is a big divide. - Isla

You know, look at Morpeth It's very different. It's very different. You know, a lot of people think that Morpeth gets everything.

I mean, do you think that's true?

To a certain extent I do.

How exactly do you mean?

I just think they have better facilities better shops. More money being put into there. If you go up Ashington main street, if you look at the buildings you know they haven't been kept up you know they're crumbling. - - Carol

We'll go to Morpeth high streets. The cafes, everything, it's lovely. It's really, really tidy. It's nice. Think of going through Morpeth high street with the cafes and facilities they've got in Morpeth and then go through Ashington. And it's just a poor relation to Morpeth. I'm not into politics, I don't know the reason is for it but there's something sadly wrong. - Frank

Many people held this view that the decline of the town is a result of successive government's ignoring the town, and some had the view that the town is purposefully ignored by governments in favour of more prosperous areas near and afar. Although none

were able to give concrete examples their view is backed up by a range of writers (Turchin, 2023; O’Grady, 2019; Putnam, 2016; Murray, 2012) who also notice a growing divide between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ which is fuelling political resentment. This divide is not only economic, but also about social capital and trust. As the more prosperous town accumulate more social capital, and therefore enjoy all the benefits outlined in the literature view, towns that have suffered over the past few decades as a result of deindustrialisation continue to fall further behind. It is clear that people, even if they cannot point to concrete examples, have taken notice.

Levels of formal political participation are low. Indeed there would have been nobody involved in the local Labour Party under thirty-five to interview at all, the only party consistently active and organising in the town to any meaningful extent. Those that were actively involved in local politics were asked how they became involved:

Weirdly so all my work within the community, sort of led us to end up in politics. So I'd always like run a community organisation for 12 years now. But I was finding all the things that, that cause me to start that also led me to the line of politics. So everybody says “oh somebody needs to do something about that. The kids are causing antisocial behaviour. Somebody needs to do something about that. There's no sense of community somebody needs to do something about that. The kids can't read and write. Somebody needs to know who it was that somebody because we're always looking for somebody to do something”. And I ended up going I guess it's gonna have to be me. - Danielle

I was involved from being probably seventeen eighteen years in Ashington Football Club and the first person who I ever really knew who was involved in politics was the chairman of the club at the time it was *Anonymised*, who had been a county councillor for years and he basically said, you know, you're interested in the community and you know, had always been like a Labour supporter and the family had always been supporters, but never really involved in it. And he kind of said, you should join up and like, come and do some stuff. And then so I did. - Bill

I ended up getting into politics because of the miners' strike really. I mean, I was, I left school with very few qualifications. I didn't like skip school. I really didn't like the authority and I must have been a terrible, terrible pupil, a terrible student. And as a consequence, I didn't get employment straightaway. I got a job as on a youth opportunity scheme, which the government paid for and then shortly after that, I got a job because my father worked at the pit. I got a job at Lynemouth pit and then basically, the miners' strike came along and shaped my thinking. I was on the picket lines, obviously, I was involved in a lot of things during the miners' strike supporting the National Union of Mineworkers. And the thing is, you know, I've got politicised by going to rallies with all these speakers. - Andrew

All three of these accounts describe getting involved through existing organisations such as trade unions or football clubs. It was recognised that the decline of many of these organisations, in particular the trade unions, since the mines closed had resulted in fewer platforms for people in the town to become politically engaged:

There's not an equivalent sort of where there was an issue, and you would get 900-1000 men at a meeting on a Saturday morning. I mean that didn't happen every weekend, but throughout the year if somebody had been killed and if there was a pay dispute, you would get people. And you know, you got people, don't get me wrong the miners themselves weren't all hairy arsed hard line lefties. I mean, people like me were called commies you know, the word like socialist, socialism wasn't used that much when I was coming up it was, you're a commie, you're a red. But them sort of platforms are gone. If you could speak to 800 - 900 people and people even whether they like you or dislike you think well he's representing us. That gives you that platform. I cannot see anything; I mean the only thing you can really see in the last few years apart from the Corbyn era is the Enough is Enough sort of stuff where your I mean you might get 1,000 odd people. - Andrew

I think there was a more formalised structure of that happening in the past. So obviously, when you have the collieries, you had the NUM, you had you know, the mechanics union all of that kind of stuff. And if anybody showed any promise through those things, they will be encouraged by people in the union to get into the Labour

Party and you know, potentially, you know, stand to become a councillor and stuff and people tell stories of all you know, you would never been selected as a councillor, the first thing you do, maybe they'll be opening come up on the school governors and you would have to like go through a Labour Party branch to be part of that. And it wasn't just the NUM obviously you know, there was other unions involved and they did almost kind of almost talent spot people on a bigger scale. So you know, what I've described earlier how I got involved in it. I think somebody saw something in me that would be useful. And I was kind of pushed towards it. But I think that used to happen almost in a formalised way when the unions were bigger. And you know, it wasn't just the unions, you had things like the CIU and other organizations that were probably built on the backs of the unions that sort of spotted anybody with a bit of talent and push them towards the Labour Party and push them towards the council route. - Bill

Organisations such as trade unions or sports clubs would offer the opportunity for people to represent their peers and get elected as officials which formed the basis of future political careers. While grassroots football continues to be strong in the local area, along with other sports clubs like boxing or gymnastics, this is something of an anomaly, as other forms of participation and organisation such as churches, welfare halls, pubs, clubs and crucially trade unions has declined dramatically. This is again linked by many to the collapse of the mining industry, as well as the argument made by Evans (2023) that modern work is inherently more individualistic which makes organising collective political action in the workplace today much more difficult. Without the collectivising force of the big industrial employer trade unions and other organisations which relied on the culture produced by the mining industry to survive:

Whereas now we haven't got the mines. We haven't got the unions. We haven't got that organisational side of things, whereas every miner was part of the Union so were pretty much part of the Labour Party. And that went up and down. So because the unions fed that the workers the workers fed to the unions, which fed into the Labour Party whereas I think that's gone. Because a lot of you've got so many jobs that have got absolutely nothing to do with unions and organisation. - Danielle

Exactly like, as I said before like back in the day. It was people were spotted in the mines through the union and stuff and that's where the likes of Dennis Skinner for example, I imagine, where he became political and an MP. *Anonymised* was the same and *Anonymised*. But today it's not as though you can go to KFC and speak to someone and say like, ah you know, try and attract them to be a councillor or MP from KFC or McDonalds, or even from places like Akzo Nobel It just wouldn't happen. And I think that has a lot to do with the weakness of trade unions as well. Because like obviously back then trade unions were seen as the norm whereas now it's very difficult for the unions to organize and stuff in the workplaces. - Owen

The result is a town with very little grassroots political organisation with low levels of participation and a high degree of apathy and feeling of hopelessness amongst its people. These trends echo those outlined by Banfield in his work *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (1958) discussed in the literature review. I would not go as far as Banfield who describes a community utterly incapable of working together towards the common good due to chronic lack of social capital and therefore trust. People in Ashington are capable of coming together to work towards collective solutions certainly at least in small groups. Many small organisations work towards supporting various people around the community and there does at least in certain contexts remain a level of friendliness and openness that has long been associated with Geordie's. But it is nevertheless true that the ability to come together to work towards the common good has significantly diminished. It would be unthinkable to imagine the ambitious civic projects achieved by the miners in the past being organised today, and the growing atomisation, individualism, and rising levels of crime explored in previous chapters have left people feeling isolated and unsafe in their own town. This touches on perhaps the most crucial point outlined at the start of this chapter, that while all participants agreed Ashington had in some way got worse over the past few decades, there is very little organised effort politically or otherwise to bring people together and do something about it. The decline of social capital and perception of a rise in crime and lack of attachment make it extremely difficult for people to collectively organise towards the common good. This is not unlike the observation made by Fisher (2009) in his influential book *Capitalist Realism* in which he argues that despite recognising the flawed nature of our

current society we have lost the ability to even perceive of a better alternative future. Since the mining industry closed the people living in Ashington, although aware of the problems facing the town and in their own individual lives, seem incapable of coming together and organising around any unifying values, ideas or vision that could serve to bring about the positive changes that are needed.

The lack of political participation amongst the working class towns like Ashington can have substantive policy effects. As argued by O'Grady (2019), the decline in working class representation in parliament has resulted in less support for policies that favour the working class. As the social infrastructure that once nurtured people in towns like Ashington into political roles have disappeared there are less obvious routes for working class people to become involved in political or civic institutions. This has contributed to the growing lack of trust in our elected politicians who people in Ashington rightly identify as from different backgrounds and experiences from them and who do not have their interests in mind when passing legislation. The only way this can be balanced out in the long run is if more working class people become involved in politics and get elected to parliament, which will require rebuilding the traditional routes they once took to become politically and civically active through trade unions and other civic institutions.

Lurking underneath all of this is a growing tide of populist views in particular towards immigration. Many participants had a growing resentment towards the way they perceived their brutal treatment from the government to the apparently favourable treatment offered to immigrants and asylum seekers arriving in the country:

These foreign people are mollycoddled by our government. A white lad wouldn't have getting away with what a coloured lad gets away with. And people noticed. And they were kowtowed to. You know, even now they are put in hotels. And yet there are soldiers living on the streets. Now that pisses even me off. I looked after black bairns I looked after Asian bairns. They were just bairns, they're children. But I can understand where the prejudice, where it's being reborn. And I blame the government, I don't blame anyone else but the government. - Gloria

Immigration. Yes. And I'm really strong on this because it really boils me to think I've got ex-servicemen that are sleeping on the streets and these come across illegally on these rubber boats and get put in a hotel. Hang on. That lad there fought for the country. He's been in Afghanistan. He's been Wherever. And he's living on the streets. Sorry. These people that can afford, because obviously that they've paid to get in this dinghy, why don't they just stand in a queue and go through legally? If they want to, if they want to come to England do it legally. Because obviously they've got the money. - Isla

You know what I cannot weigh up. These migrants are coming across in boats. We're getting them in boats and safeguarding them in England. Why can we not just turn the boats around and put them back in France where they came from? For the life of is I cannot weigh that up. Our boats are going out there and we're fetching them into England. They came from France. France isn't at war, they aren't at risk in France. Why can't we take them back to France where they came from. I mean 400 in yesterday. Now this is going to be a massive problem. And it's a massive problem with people in the pubs and the clubs. That's all anybody is talking about at the minute, what we going to do about these immigrants? Now where does it stop? - Frank

The comparison between the treatment of ex-servicemen who are homeless and of immigrants arriving in the country is a common one and was often brought up unprompted when discussing the political priorities of participants. This is despite the town having relatively low levels of immigration compared to other parts of the country and nobody giving any concrete examples of ex-servicemen in the town or region finding themselves homeless. According to the latest Census Northumberland was 97.6% white, an overwhelming majority well above average across the country. Participants belief that this was driven by the government is evidence that the growing distrust and alienation with our political system and lack of representation, backed up by research done by O'Grady (2019) is adding to the hostility towards immigrant communities as they compare what they see as their own ill treatment by successive governments to what they often perceive as favourable treatment towards immigrants.

This lingering hostility to immigration is concerning, but it is crucial to note that twice it was highlighted that these views were spread in ‘the pubs and clubs’, both in the above quote and here:

I mean, if you look at working men’s club, they’re like havens for like UKIP’ers and that. - Owen

The very ‘focal points of social contact’, such as the pub or club, that I have argued were at the centre of the strong levels of social capital and solidarity in these former mining communities are now the very places that populist and anti-immigrant views find fertile ground to spread. Why this is the case is difficult to say, and it is important to avoid simply dismissing those with these views as bigots to be ignored. Some arguments, like those put forward by Goodhart (2004), point out the tension between having high levels of social capital and trust alongside a multicultural society where people have fundamentally different beliefs, values, and social norms. I do not wish to dismiss this argument outright, but in the context of investigating social capital and trust in Ashington it is redundant here anyway since, as mentioned, Ashington and Northumberland have such relatively very low levels of immigration, it would simply be impossible to argue that this is the key to the declining levels of social capital and trust the town has experienced given the evidence for a vast range of other factors that have been laid out throughout this study. We must therefore, as I have done throughout, look for alternative candidates for the falling levels of social capital. Nevertheless, it may be the case that a powerful right wing media along with a rise in the debate around the merits of immigration have resulted in people equating the two regardless. In the presence of low social capital and trust in traditional institutions individuals are more inclined to feel both socially and politically isolated leading them to blame elites and seek outsider replacement (Giuliano and Wacziarg,2020). The perception of decline and a nostalgia for the ‘good old days’ can be a powerful political force, and as outlined by (Gaston and Hilhorst, 2018) has been used by populists to fuel anti-elite and anti-immigrant sentiment in particular across working class communities who have suffered from the political and social changes of the past few decades. It is therefore more likely that, as Herreros and Criado (2008) point out, it is in fact their lower levels of social capital and trust that result in a hostility and paranoia towards immigration as another ‘perceived

threat' to their individual and community well-being rather than the actual presence of immigrants that fuels this view. Just as they served as key sources of political and social organising in coal mining towns, the points of contact in these communities such as the remaining pubs and clubs serve as vectors for these views to be shared and reinforced amongst a demographic feeling increasingly threatened. It is important therefore to examine in more detail what has been the cause of the crumbling sense of community like this work has so far attempted to do, so our energy can be channelled into providing real solutions, namely increasing levels of social capital and trust, rather than the quixotic fixation on immigration as the root of all our problems.

But the signs for maintaining a healthy democracy are ominous. As Putnam (1993) finds, a flourishing democracy is strongly correlated with high degrees of social capital and trust. Social capital is the lubricant by which democracy can smoothly function. Without repairing these social bonds and finding a means to increase both interpersonal trust and trust in our institutions then this lack of social capital poses a genuine threat to the health of our democratic norms and people's trust that our system of government is the best one for addressing their concerns. A decline in social capital therefore not only creates a distinct sense that things are getting worse, and given the social and economic importance of social capital things almost certainly are getting worse, but also results in a situation where because of the lack of social capital and trust people are unable to politically organise to make things better, threatening the underlying assumptions of a liberal democracy based on freedom of association and expression.

Chapter 5 - Discussion & Conclusion

5.1 - Discussion

This study has focused on investigating the effects of deindustrialisation on the levels of social capital in Ashington, a former coal mining town in Northumberland, and the social and political consequences that have emerged as a result.

The picture painted of Ashington when the mines were open by the testimony of those interviewed is close to the 'ideal type' of mining community as described by Waddington et al (2001) as 'physically isolated and occupationally homogeneous', which were organised around strict norms of gender roles and tight knit and interlocking neighbourhood relations creating dense social networks that reinforced traditions of mutual aid. This picture is largely what was described by participants when recollecting life in these communities. All of the participants old enough to remember the communities at their peak had fond memories of the thriving communalism, comradeship, and availability of work and all of them were nostalgic for what they saw as better days. At the centre of this was the mining industry itself from which shared experiences, norms and ideals built up a strong collective consciousness and solidarity in communities where 'everyone knew everyone'.

As noted in the previous chapters we must be careful not to romanticise what were often suffocating and uncomfortable communities, especially for women. But nevertheless, the perception, romanticised or not, was that these communities provided a stability and lively social life that is sorely missed. This does not mean that everyone was friends with everyone, or that life was without its frictions and disagreements. But as Colls (2004) argues, the evidence is overwhelming that these communities organised around the mining industry were indeed more than simply fleeting relationships, but deeply established common cultures around which a shared identity was built.

The results of this study clearly show that as the mining industry collapsed and disappeared, so have those shared identities that provided the basis for high levels of social capital and trust. This is unsurprising. The pits not only provided steady and dignified work

but also forged deep attachments between the pitmen and their families both to the town and each other, and the basis for something resembling a distinct local character with its own habits, practices and disposition. The comradeship that emerged from the dangerous work down the pit, as well as the homogeneous nature of the physically close living quarters, fostered high degrees of social capital from which a high level of trust and strong norms of reciprocity grew. The traditions and culture that emerged from the pit was a distinctly social and communal one, marked by well attended community events such as leek shows, whippet and pigeon races and the Northumberland Miners Gala. For men, work and social life was fundamentally collective and public rather than individual and private. For women, life was lived largely in the home but too was by no means private. Vast networks became established in and across neighbourhoods like those described in East London in the 1950's by Young and Wilmott (1957) with the extended family at its centre. These networks created a social network and robust support system where the whole community raised children, and in doing so became socialised both in and out of work into the traditions and cultures of the town. Therefore, while the usual suspects for declining levels of social capital such as the explosion in use of cars, the internet, and TV have undoubtedly played their role to some extent there are deeper and more significant forces at play, and it is this breakdown of not just an industry but a way of life that has had the most devastating consequences for social capital and trust in Ashington.

Life fundamentally revolved around the pit, with its physical work and shift patterns as well as the norms, culture and way of life that emerged from the work that spilt out into the community. The eerie prediction outlined earlier that: 'For the miners today, the death of their industry means that the heart is torn from their communities. There is no overall planning of new industries or of training or of education for leisure; there is no more than marginal provision for economic security. We did not paint the mining community in any *couleur de rose*, but this community without the mine and mineworkers is in danger of becoming merely an aggregate of socially isolated and culturally condemned human beings'. (Henriques, 1969: p.9). To describe Ashington, and other post-industrial towns like it today, as 'merely an aggregate of socially isolated and culturally condemned human beings' is sadly no exaggeration. As the results from the interviews laid clear, Ashington and its residents

have become financially poorer and socially atomised, and the result is falling levels of trust, rising crime and an inability to collectively organise towards the common good.

Central to this is the decline of the communalism and togetherness which relied on the mines and the way of life built up around it. The fundamentally communal lifestyle that resulted in healthy amounts of trust began to contract, as people were no longer socialised into the traditions and cultures of the town which had lost the glue binding it together. As a result, interest in events like leek shows, whippets, pigeons and celebrating the region's mining heritage naturally began to fade, and attendances at the 'focal points of social contacts' dwindled. Both men and women were both forced to find alternative careers that were unable to recreate the comradeship and dignity of the work down the mines. This also led to a breakdown in the traditional 'breadwinner' family model, which many people argue was central to the facilitating the socialisation of the next generation into the norms, values, and expectations of the town, crucial to building the collective consciousness that the social capital and trust were built upon. It is also argued that family itself is the nucleus of the wider networks of relationships from which the wider community is built. Family can function as a force of continuity that roots generations in a given place from which webs of support and community naturally arise, while also acting as an invaluable source of support for parents when raising their children. (See Hudson and Beynon: p.246; Dennis and Erdos, 1993; Young and Willmott, 1957)

Subsequently, the ritual and traditions centred around the mining industry that served to bring the community together and nurture a shared identity were lost. As the town expanded and more and more people moved in from elsewhere and others found new, more varied forms of work, the homogeneous nature of the town was disrupted. People no longer lived by the rhythm set by the mine and as a result the social life of the town that was rooted so deeply in the mining industry began to be disrupted. Previously Ashington could be described in Durkheimian terms as a town pulled together by something resembling a 'mechanical solidarity' where a collective consciousness was built around shared experiences, assumptions, and norms. The rapid economic changes that have broken up this collective consciousness have resulted in what Wray and Stephenson (2005) accurately diagnose as a 'contemporary anomie' as the social fabric of the town was ripped from

beneath them and left unreplaced, leaving people feeling isolated, atomised, directionless, and powerless.

Dennis and Erdos (1993) describe this as a kind of 'non-culture' (p.69) of 'alienated people sharing and sanctioning the absence of socially oriented values' (p.84). Without a recognisable culture or shared identity, people are no longer able to be socialised into a system of norms and practises in both work and the community, as there is now no shared identity for people to be socialised into, and no agreed upon understanding of social norms that can bring people together. This can be linked directly to the decline of social capital that has emerged as the mines closed. As argued by Green (1993) social organisations such as friendly societies, trade unions, Methodist churches and simply organisations such as working men's clubs the promoted the virtues of 'good character', mutual aid, duty, solidarity, and self-discipline. Not only were pit men socialised into work down the mine, but in the wider community through these organisations which provided a place for people to learn the social norms and expectations of the community and direct people towards a common purpose. These organisations also provided an 'an umbrella of support, a space in which people could develop their individual talents and personalities in a civil society' (Hudson and Beynon, 2021: 186) that is sorely missed today. Alongside the vast social networks that emerged, these norms and expectations kept crime rates low and encouraged reciprocity and charity with a wide range of community amenities and events, as well as insurance schemes organised amongst the community itself.

Today Ashington is beset by an increasing drug use problem fuelling more and more crime (Bourne, 2021) as well as what I find to be a worsening lack of social trust and ability to work toward the common good. Dennis and Erdos link this directly back to this state of anomie where 'Culture refers to the totality of learned experiences passed from one generation to the next. Anomie refers to a state of affairs in which culture is feeble or absent—when every individual responds to a given situation according to his own emotional or his own more-or-less carefully calculated response—when every man does what is right in his own eyes (Dennis and Erdos, 1993: p.85)'. While unemployment, low pay, and poverty, all well above average in Ashington and the surrounding areas (Lavery, 2021), undoubtedly fuel crime, the lack of social capital, both in social infrastructure and the informal neighbourly

webs of support, and the tight norms once typical of coal mining communities like Ashington have left the town without any effective means of social control or of deterring anti-social behaviour and crime. Crime and anti-social behaviour for many people, in particular young people, has not only become a useful way to alleviate boredom or make money, but has become normalised in the absence of any moral norms or social control to keep anti-social or violent behaviour in check. Without the ability to come together as a community to deter crime, or for young people to form meaningful collective identities around work and place, they are left with the 'uncertain transitions' (Nayak, 2006) to build their own identities without pride in their work or anything to attach them to a decaying culture. This inevitably runs the risk that identities will be built around crime, rebellion, and outright nihilism, a concerning symptom of widespread anomie going as far back as Merton (1938). In this sense, mining communities, and the culture they produced, could be understood as moral communities. Haidt gives the definition of morality as 'interlocking sets of values, virtues, norms, practices, identities, institutions, technologies, and evolved psychological mechanisms that work together to suppress or regulate self-interest and make cooperative societies possible' (Haidt, 2012: p.314). I have argued and demonstrated that mining communities build up their own norms, values, and broader way of life's that facilitated high levels of social capital, trust, and therefore the ability to regulate self-interest and facilitate cooperation, and that the collapse of the mining industry has dismantled this moral system making cooperation and norms of generalised reciprocity unsustainable.

This is not to say everybody living in Ashington is a narcissistic, immoral criminal, indeed far from it. From my own experience and what came through from the interviews, is that Ashington overall is not a moral wasteland, and those who participated in this study deplored what they see as not only an economic decline, but a spiritual and moral one too. The majority of the people living in the town, as is the case anywhere, are law abiding, friendly and generous. But the decline in trust that has occurred for all the reasons outlined above inevitably affects everyone both individually and as a collective. Most crime is always committed by a small minority (Falk et al, 2014), and a few 'bad eggs' can have a corrosive effect on the perception of the town and as a result its general levels of trust when there is not the formal or informal infrastructure across the country to deal with it. The result is a general consensus amongst those interviewed that the town has become dirty, run-down

and for some outright dangerous and unpleasant. It is also important to recognise that Ashington is not without any social capital or organisations or institutions capable of bringing people together. Both the town's football club and boxing club were highlighted as examples of community organisations that have remained strong and bring the community together while providing support and guidance for the younger generation. Nevertheless these alone are not enough to fight the tide of growing individualism, social atomisation, and the decline of the trade unions as well as the vast amount of the town's other focal points of social contact outside of sports clubs. It also worth acknowledging that not everybody living in Ashington today is poor, and the majority of the participants I interviewed were not financially in dire straits. While poverty is a growing issue and remains very high in deprived pockets of the town and across the region (Lavery, 2021), many people have prospered materially since the closure of the mines, in particular those who bought their properties. Indeed a defining feature of many 'red wall' seats at the 2019 general election was high levels of home and car ownership (The Economist, 2021). The participants nevertheless all bemoaned the vanished sense of community and togetherness that had its roots in the dignified work and community centred around the mining industry, and they all unanimously agreed that the town had gotten worse to live in rather than better no matter their own personal wealth or circumstance.

I show that this breakdown of trust has resulted in profound political implications. Despite the consensus that the town has gotten worse over the past few decades there are no realistic attempts to organise a collective solution to fight back against it either politically or otherwise. Like the town outlined by Banfield (1958), the lack of trust means that any attempts to organise a movement where people come together to work towards a common purpose has become extremely difficult to outright impossible. Trust and a sense of common purpose is a fundamental precondition to a successful political organisation or movement and without the mining industry and culture that it came to represent, Ashington is without one. Young people in particular are generally uninformed and uninterested in being involved in local politics and recruitment in the town's Labour party, the only party organised locally to any extent, is non-existent amongst this demographic.

It is clear from the interviews that people not only have a lack of trust in each other, but also the traditional political and social institutions that so often acted as the vehicle for successful political organisation. Trade unions where workers could be elected to political positions and gain experience representing one another have been weakened as have institutions such as churches which gave ordinary people the opportunity to engage in public speaking and become local leaders. The town feels utterly ignored by the mainstream political parties and have lost trust in their ability to solve their own and the town's wider issues. Political apathy is growing as people feel unrepresented and lack confidence that mainstream political parties are able to find solutions to their own personal economic plight as well as the town's overall decline. The research conducted by O'Grady (2019) suggest that they are justified in this view, and that a lack of working class representation has indeed resulted in their priorities becoming side-lined and voices ignored within parliament. This lack of representation has deteriorated due to the towns inability to politically organise effectively due to a lack of social capital and trust. Without the strong institutions that nurtured political talent, in particular trade unions and churches, working class political representation has suffered. This only feeds the sentiment that our key political and social institutions do not represent their view or concerns and have little understanding of their lived experience.

The 'collective depression' (Wray and Stephenson, 2005: p.181) that has spread across the town since the decline of the mining industry is in danger of becoming a collective anger, aimed at both our political institutions, but also those who are at growing risk of becoming scapegoated for the problems Ashington faces. The changes people have seen over the past few decades have been effectively exploited by populist movements here in the UK and across the US and Europe. These forces have expertly tapped into the feelings of financial hardship, social atomisation, and the sense of nostalgia and loss with significant electoral success (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018). The immigrant scapegoat that has been so useful for these movements is alive and well in Ashington today, despite the town having relatively low levels of immigration. While this is a concern, if these forces are to be stopped then the reality must be faced that people in Ashington have much to be nostalgic about. It is a fact that the mines were closed and left unreplaced, and with them a source of stable and dignified employment alongside vibrant communities that fostered high levels of solidarity

and belonging. Leek shows, pigeon shows, whippet racing, and miners' picnics, highlights in the social calendar that bought the community together, have vanished, while workings men's clubs, libraries, pubs and churches, places people were able to congregate and come together, the 'we forming infrastructure', have shut down and fallen into disrepute while high streets are beset by empty shop fronts and mass consumer brands with little character or local history. While these former industrial communities had their own problems that have been addressed throughout, there is much to be missed about the sense of community they provided, or in other words the social capital that emerged from them and the value of living in a high trust society.

Gelfand (2021) argues that populist successes like the election of Donald Trump or the Brexit vote are rooted in the anxieties of individuals, in particular working class individuals, who feel threatened by economic and social disruption in an increasingly global world. They have seen this disruption uproot their culture and communities and yearn for the 'tightness', stability, and security of the past - and the thriving levels of trust that emerged in their communities as a result of it. This is perhaps an uncomfortable truth for those committed to the virtues of a 'loose' society who see social norms as inherently oppressive, serving only to maintain a status quo from which a select few benefit while stifling the individual's ability to express themselves. This tension is at the root of the divide identified by Goodhart (2017) between 'Somewheres' and 'Anywheres', those who value security, familiarity, and rootedness against those who prefer autonomy, mobility, and individual self-creation. As Goodhart points out, these Anywheres have come to dominate political and social institutions, partly for reasons discussed throughout regarding the difficulty facing working class people finding routes into these institutions, and have therefore shaped policy in favour of their own worldview to the detriment of Somewheres, risking a political backlash by these groups which the likes of Eatwell and Goodwin (2018), as well as Gelfand (2021), suggest is at the heart of the vote to leave the EU here in the UK and the success of Donald Trump in the US.

Gelfand (2021) has shown that tight norms help communities tackle collective threats, yet in this case the threat itself of deindustrialisation has destroyed the foundation on which the strong social norms were built off. While in previous bouts of economic downturn

pitmen could turn to the vast familial and communal networks to support one another and find structure and stability in rigid social norms, deindustrialised communities find themselves today atomized and alone, left to navigate their harsh social economic and social reality themselves. The risk we run as a result is ever more sinister populist forces laying the blame at the feet of scapegoats, most likely immigrants, for the decline in social capital and trust, and for people growing in desperation to be seduced by even more extreme solutions to bring about the structure and stability they so desire.

5.2 - Contribution to the literature

This study has contributed to our understanding of how social capital was built and subsequently lost in former mining communities, and argues that the social capital and trust in these communities, underpinned by the mining industry itself, was the foundation of both their economic industrial success and their ability to collectively organise efficiently as a community to work towards shared goals. I build on and reinforce some findings in the existing literature on the consequences of deindustrialisation, demonstrating how its most devastating legacy is not just the loss of jobs in former mining and other industrial communities, but the loss of the norms, values, and social infrastructure that built up as a result of this particular form of work and the way of life it produced that provided a sense of security, communalism, and belonging. The rich social world of miners and their families, permeated with dense social networks and a plethora of community rituals and traditions, would serve to bring them together and nurture a shared sense of identity essential for building trust and norms of cooperation.

I support the view that economic and social changes are inherently related, and political policy decisions to move away from industrial work have had direct and devastating consequences for the social and communal life in the communities affected. Like Evans (2023), I argue that economic changes have created inherently more individualistic communities with a reduced focus of solidarity and comradeship, the result being people young and old feeling a sense of 'social fragmentation, competitive individualism, normlessness, uncertainty and anxiety' (Johnson & Duberley, 2011: p. 564), lacking any meaningful sense of belonging as they struggle to create their own identities in the wreck of the industry that still haunts their community, similar to those stories told by Nayak (2006) and Hollands (1996). I therefore also contribute to the existing literature on the decline of social capital in the west more generally. While Putnam (2000) does consider the decline of trade union membership and manufacturing jobs as a factor in the decline of social capital, I place it centre stage by arguing that the mining industry was the fundamental platform for building and maintaining social capital in towns like Ashington which were fundamentally arranged around and reliant on coal mining not just financially, but for how their entire way of life and web of social connections and networks were organised. If we wish to repair the

bonds of social capital we therefore need to consider it not only in social policy decisions but in economic ones too.

I not only make a contribution to the literature investigating the effects of deindustrialisation on social capital, but on the growing interest into the political consequences of changing levels of social capital. Echoing the study conducted by Banfield (1958) over half a century ago, I argue that the decline in social capital and trust in Ashington since the closure of the mines has left the town in a state of political paralysis. Communities are stuck in the paradoxical position of being in, what participants unanimously agreed to be, a state of seemingly terminal decline, yet are unable to organise themselves towards achieving shared collective goals due to a lack of trust and the absence of anything to bond them together or any established norms of generalised reciprocity - the cornerstone of any socially and economically successful community for both Putnam and Fukuyama. My findings support the view that this is largely down to the crumbling of the social infrastructure in mining towns that disappeared along with the mines that would act as places that could facilitate social and political organisation such as trade unions, churches, and working men's clubs, as well as shared sense of identity through community rituals and tradition such as leeks shows, greyhound races and the Northumberland Miners' Gala. Without these venues and events helping to build formal and informal social capital and trust around a shared identity, norms of generalised reciprocity have failed to survive.

I also argue that this breakdown in social capital and trust is at the root of the current festering of political frustration and anger towards our politics in general. I therefore contribute to the body of working seeking to understand contemporary political trends in former industrial towns such as Ashington which in the past few years have lent their support at the ballot box to leaving the EU and a Conservative Party promising to make this a reality. Through the lens of social capital, I find support for the view that a growing number of people in Ashington believe that our politicians and political institutions no longer work in their favour, and many believe they are blatantly rigged against them and their interests. This crisis of both trust and confidence in the town itself and towards political institutions leaves fertile ground for populist movements to take advantage of these frustrations and create scapegoats out of minority groups upon whom the blame for their growing sense of

fear and atomisation can superficially be pinned on. I argue that the vote to leave the EU was a relatively benign backlash against a political system they feel ignores their concerns and interests compared to the more sinister forces that await on the horizon if we continue to turn a blind eye to these trends. As Putnam (1993) argues, democracy itself is built upon underlying assumptions about our ability and willingness to trust and work alongside one another towards the common good, of which social capital is the lubricant. Without it, we risk the very future of our most fundamental political assumptions and make a leap into the dark of what should come to replace them.

Overall I have attempted to bring together two strains of literature by looking at the consequences of deindustrialisation through the lens of social capital. I have therefore used the concept of social capital to build on the literature that seeks to help us better understand the legacy of deindustrialisation in former mining towns such as Ashington in a way that can help us explain and comprehend the recent political changes and trends within these communities. I have also added to the literature seeking to explore modern trends in social capital in the UK and other western democracies, contributing to our understanding of how social capital is built and lost, and why social capital may be declining in the UK, in particular amongst working class deindustrialised communities.

Subsequent studies should focus on not only building on this work to create a broader and more comprehensive understanding of how social capital was gained and lost in mining towns like Ashington, but also with what actions can and should be taken by both central government and communities themselves to rebuild their social infrastructure and trust. Some potential avenues for fruitful research include deeper dives into the decline of religion as a social force in the coalfields as well as a studies focusing on how austerity and the covid-19 pandemic have contributed to changes in social capital and trust in post-industrial towns like Ashington. Likewise, while this study has touched on the effects that changes in the way families are structured may have contributed to changing levels of social capital in Ashington, a deeper look at the significance of this for the perceived breakdown of community in towns like Ashington would be invaluable, in particularly given the stark socio-economic divide in marriage and divorce rates across social classes. Efforts to find

solutions to rebuilding social capital and trust must focus on revitalising a shared common identity that people in Ashington can associate with, and a system of values, norms, and obligations that they are willing to buy into beyond a focus on narrow individual interests. Given what is at stake, the importance of this task ahead can hardly be overstated.

5.3 - Conclusion

The result of the interviews conducted throughout the study provides robust qualitative data that supports the view that deindustrialisation has had a negative effect on levels of social capital and trust in Ashington, a former coal mining town in South East Northumberland, and has had important political consequences as a result.

I have shown throughout this study how the mining industry created more than just steady income for thousands of families, but the basis for a culture itself, complete with norms, values, social infrastructure, rituals, and traditions that provided the foundation for building a shared identity from which high levels of social capital and trust emerged. I argue that this was swept away with the mining industry itself, leaving Ashington without the tools to build social capital and trust. The social and political consequences have been profound. A pervading sense of rootless individualism has emerged, leaving people feeling isolated, unsafe, and lacking a sense of belonging or sense of attachment to their place or one another in any meaningful capacity.

The result is a crisis of representation and confidence amongst residents in Ashington of our political system and institutions of which the consequences could be fatal for instilling faith in the most fundamental assumptions of our liberal democracy. The organisations that once provided a route for people in mining towns like Ashington to gain experience in political and civic leadership have vanished as the social infrastructure of the town was swept away along with the mines themselves. Work has become more precarious and individualised compared to the rigid collectivised work of the mining industry, making workplace organisation more difficult and trade unions weaker, a traditionally important route into a political career for working class politicians. Political tensions continue to simmer underneath the frustration that risks boiling over. I have provided evidence to support the view that the rise of populism and hostility towards immigrant populations in towns like Ashington are compounded by the town's lack of social capital and trust. Any attempts to 'level up' or otherwise improve former industrial towns like Ashington up and down the country must not only focus on rejuvenating their local economies, but also on revitalising their once thriving but now depressed social universes. These two goals are not

unrelated. I have shown throughout that the mining industry itself was the basis for the rich social world in mining communities by creating a shared world of norms, values, and experiences. We must rediscover the value of tight communities and the sense of belonging and security they bring in particular in times of economic precariousness.

This study has argued that at the root of the range of social and political challenges facing Ashington, and countless deindustrialised towns up and down the country, is the endemic lack of social capital and trust that leaves individuals feeling isolated and afraid and makes collective action to work towards solving common problems impossible. While a social capital theory of everything regarding the problems facing Ashington today would be too reductive, I would argue that re-building social capital and trust is at least a necessary, if not sufficient, condition to reversing the fortunes of Ashington and thousands of other deindustrialised towns across the country since the collapse, and hopefully the findings in this study will go some way to helping us to achieve that.

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Appendix

Participants

All participants have been given a fake name to protect their identity.

Andrew. 60. Male.

Bill. 39. Male.

Carol. 58. Female.

Danielle. 40. Female.

Eric. 62. Male.

Frank. 66. Male.

Gloria. 70. Female.

Harry. 18. Male.

Isla. 66. Female.

Jack. 61. Male.

Kim. 25. Female.

Liam. 29. Male.

Michael. 59. Male.

Natalie. 37. Female

Owen. 30. Male.

Patrick. 62. Male.

Consent Form

Project title: *Sense of Place in the Post-Industrial North East**

Researcher: **Ben Sampson**

Department: *School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA)*

Email 

This form is to confirm that you understand what the purposes of the project, what is involved and that you are happy to take part. Please initial each box to indicate your agreement:

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated [dd/mm/yy] and the privacy notice for the above project.	
I have had sufficient time to consider the information and ask any questions I might have, and I am satisfied with the answers I have been given.	
I understand who access to personal data will have provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.	
I agree to take part in the above project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.	
I understand that anonymised (i.e. not identifiable) versions of my data may be archived and shared with others for legitimate research purposes.	
I consent to being audio recorded / being video recorded / having my photo taken and understand how recordings / photos will be used in research outputs.	
I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, and other research outputs. Please choose one of the following two options o EITHER I agree to my real name being used in the above o OR I do not agree to my real name being used in the above	

Participant's Signature_____ Date_____
(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS) _____
Researcher's Signature_____ Date_____
(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS) _____

*Working title at the time of ethics approval.

Participant Information Sheet

Project title: *Sense of Place in the Post-Industrial North East*

Researcher: *Ben Sampson*

Department: *School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA)*

Email: 

You are invited to take part in a study that I am conducting as part of postgraduate research masters project at Durham University.

This study has received ethical approval from SGIA's ethics committee of Durham University.

I graduated from Durham University in 2020 with a first class degree in Philosophy and Politics and now work for a Member of Parliament in the North East alongside my studies.

Before you decide whether to agree to take part it is important for you to understand the purpose of the research and what is involved as a participant. Please read the following information carefully. Please get in contact if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

The rights and responsibilities of anyone taking part in Durham University research are set out in our 'Participants Charter' that can be found here:
<https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/charter/>.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of the changing relationship people have developed throughout the process of deindustrialisation in the former Northumberland coalfields across generations and the effects this may have had on their political views.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited because your personal background makes you a suitable participant to be of worth to the project.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is voluntary, and you do not have to agree to take part. If you do agree to take part, you can withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

Your rights in relation to withdrawing any data that is identifiable to you are explained in the accompanying Privacy Notice.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part in the study, you will be undergo an interview conducted by myself alone. The interview venue and time will be agreed between us prior, and all necessary Covid-19 measures will be taken in line with government guidelines.

The interview will have no set time limit but will aim to be around 45 – 60 minutes long. You can stop/leave the interview at any time at your discretion.

Are there any potential risks involved?

You may find questions asked may make you uncomfortable or ask for information you wish not to share especially regarding your political opinions. You can refuse to answer any question you do not want to answer or discuss or share any information you wish to keep confidential.

Will my data be kept confidential?

All information obtained during the study will be kept confidential unless explicitly agreed beforehand otherwise. If the data is published it will be entirely anonymous and will not be identifiable as yours.

Full details are included in the accompanying Privacy Notice.

What will happen to the results of the project?

The results of your answers will be analysed throughout the final dissertation of the project. All information provided by yourself will be strictly anonymous unless explicitly agreed otherwise.

No personal data will be shared, however anonymised (i.e. not identifiable) data may be used in publications, reports, presentations, and other research outputs. At the end of the project, anonymised data may be archived and shared with others for legitimate research purposes.

Durham University is committed to sharing the results of its world-class research for public benefit. As part of this commitment the University has established an online repository for all Durham University Higher Degree theses which provides access to the full text of freely available theses. The study in which you are invited to participate will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. The thesis will be published open access.

Who do I contact if I have any questions or concerns about this study?

If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please speak to the researcher or their supervisor. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please submit a complaint via the University's Complaints Process.

Thank you for reading this information and considering taking part in this study.