THE ENGLAND AUGUST 2011 RIOTS: AN EXPLORATION OF EMERGENT NARRATIVES AND COUNTER-NARRATIVES

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Brighton for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

June 2023

Abstract: The England August 2011 riots: an exploration of emergent narratives and counter-narratives

The purpose of this research is to explore how the August 2011 England riots have been represented and responded to by a range of post-riots engaged constituencies.

The thesis contributes to our understanding of the riots and their interpretation in the following ways: it provides an interrogation of official narratives of the riots in relation to a set of fast-tracked policy responses labelled as riots responses by government. In contrast, and in response to party political narratives that dismissed any political content to the 2011 riots, some riots counter-narratives are explored. These demonstrate links between the shared personnel, networks, and politics of some of those involved in student protests of 2010/11 and the August 2011 riots.

Theories influencing the thesis include authors who have understood party political responses to the riots as a response of a cynical or broken state, based on pre-existing racialised historical notions of an underclass.

An interrogation of official narrative and policy responses to the riots is underpinned by methodological understandings of discourse, narrative and counter-narrative. Further, Bassel's notion of 'political listening' influenced my responses to public riots conversations and the selection of research participants for interview, whilst techniques associated with non-participant observation were deployed during public events.

Specific steps taken to investigate this topic have included: desk-based interrogation of government narrative and policy responses to the riots; attendance at over 20 public conversations about the 2011 riots in London; undertaking 20 semi-structured interviews with people visibly dealing with 2011 riots issues at least one year after these events, and six interviews with people targeted for their policy expertise.

The research shows that whilst the rioters were narrated by government as a-historical, non-political opportunist criminals, government narrative and policy responses were in fact themselves opportunistic and based on historic ideological understandings of the young urban poor. Government responses also include the use of pre-planned policies and an assumption that politicians already knew what caused the riots before any public inquiry was undertaken. This is contrasted to the representation of the riots within forms such as Grime music. Use of new technologies by some London based young people enabled the development of new creative outputs articulating counter narratives of the riots. New documentary films were used at public events as vehicles to provoke ongoing public conversations about the riots.

Implications include the importance of providing space for robust counter-narratives in public life concerning events such as the 2011 riots. It supports an emerging literature that seeks to redefine what can be understood as political activity *vis a vis* dissolving the split between protest and riot, and how we might understand new forms of participatory politics. Far from being a-historical, one-off events, the 2011 riots should be understood within a wider context and trajectory.

Contents

Acronyms, Abbreviations and Definitions

ASH: Architects for Social Housing (involved in many campaigns against the form of 'regeneration' happening in cities across the UK, including post-riots 'regeneration', with a focus on the need for good quality social housing and against the selling-off of social housing stock).

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation.

BID: Business Improvement District (thesis refers to Croydon).

BLM: Black Lives Matter (in the US there is one group that coordinates, attracts funding, and deals with media; in the UK there is no single group associated with the name).

Blackberry Messenger: a relatively cheap mobile phone with a 'closed' network widely in use by young people at the time of the riots and used to send messages to each other.

Chav: a pejorative term used to refer to working class people and culture.

CCTV: Closed-circuit television (used widely after the riots to identify rioters).

CJS: Criminal justice system.

CSJ: Centre for Social Justice (right-wing think-tank set up by Conservative Party Minister Iain Duncan Smith).

DCLG: Department for Communities and Local Government (at the time of the 2011 riots, the Minister for the department was Eric Pickles).

EMA: Education Maintenance Allowance (introduced by New Labour government to provide a small weekly sum of money to enable poorer people to stay on in education post-16. Abolished by the Conservative-LibDem Coalition government, elected 2010, despite pre-election promises to keep it).

Facebook: brand name of a social media platform launched in 2004.

GLA: Greater London Authority.

Grenfell/Grenfell Fire: refers to the Grenfell Tower social housing block fire that took place at the Lancaster West Estate in the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea on 14th June 2017 at a 24-storey block built in the early 1970s. The official death toll is 71, with at least 70 injured. Unknown to residents and fire-fighters the building was clad in cheap flammable material. A public inquiry is ongoing.

Hard Stop: called an 'enforced stop' by police, the term is used for a type of police practice which preceded the death of Mark Duggan. It refers to a pre-planned operation during which armed, plain-clothed officers in police vehicles deliberately intercept a vehicle and confront the passengers.

HDV: Haringey Development Vehicle (a controversial private-public 'regeneration' partnership in the London Borough of Haringey).

INQUEST: In capitalised form is the name of a UK charity, the only one in the country that specialises in providing expertise and support on state related deaths and their investigation to bereaved people, lawyers, advice and support agencies, the media and parliamentarians.

IPCC: Independent Police Complaints Commission (changed name in Jan 2018 to Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC).

Kettle/Kettling: refers to a controversial police tactic to control street protesters. Police officers wearing riot uniforms use their bodies to form a "cordon" around a group of protesters. The area inside the cordon is called a "kettle" and the process of enclosing protesters in this way is called "kettling." Often people are not released from the kettle for many hours.

Leveson Inquiry: appointed and convening just before the 2011 riots, this was a public judge-led inquiry (Lord Justice Leveson) into the culture, practices and ethics of the British press following the News International phone hacking scandal. It examined relationships between police, media professionals and politicians amongst other factors. It was broadcast on national television.

Media: I draw here on Kenix's (2011 and 2015) explanation of the relationship between so-called mainstream media and alternative medias. Whilst Kenix disputes that they are binaries, instead demonstrating the relationship between the two, for the purposes of discussion Kenix suggests that historically alternative media has been defined by their ideological differences, limited reach, reliance of citizenship reporting and links to social movements.

In distinction, mainstream media has been situated within and take part in co-creating ideological norms, relying on professional reporters, closely associated with corporations and governments and with widescale reach and influence. In terms of my reference to media riots reportage, I am referring to such local and national newspapers including their online versions, national radio and TV coverage.

MOPAC: Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (consisting of police commissioners, London).

MP: Member of Parliament.

MPS: Metropolitan Police Service

NatCen: National Centre for Social Research describe themselves as: "Britain's largest independent social research agency. For the last 40 years we've worked on behalf of government and charities to find out what people really think about important social issues and how Britain is run" (www.natcen.ac.uk/).

NCS: National Citizen Service, launched by the Coalition government before the riots.

New Labour: a term used to describe Labour governments since 1997, where former Labour leader Tony Blair tried to distinguish a 'modern' Labour Party from its roots. Associated by its critics with neo-liberal ideology and practice.

Occupy London: linked to an international wave of protests directed against capitalism and economic inequality and/or state repression, often with particular reference to austerity measures brought in since the global financial crash of 2008 (known as 'the bankers crash'). The form of protest involves occupying urban

spaces for lengths of time. Occupy London emerged a few months after the 2011 riots, and defined itself as for social justice, demanding an alternative to an undemocratic system.

Precariat: a term used sociologically to refer to an increasing class of people experiencing insecure employment and income. This may include very low waged people or high earning freelancers – they share an insecure standing in relation to the workplace. Some argue that it is a feature of neo-liberal governance as an insecure workforce is a more compliant workforce.

PM: Prime Minister.

RCVP: Riots Communities and Victims Panel. The government declined to commission a full public inquiry into the 2011 riots and appointed this committee instead.

RDA: Riot (Damages) Act.

RtR: the short-hand term used in this thesis to refer to the Reading the Riots project, a Guardian newspaper/London School of Economics (LSE) collaboration to investigate the 2011 riots. It included interviews with rioters, police officers, lawyers and official victims of the riots.

Social Media: refers to media used to enable social interaction. Includes web-based and mobile applications that allow individuals and organizations to create, engage, and share new user-generated or existing content. See also definition of Media above.

TFP: Troubled Families Programme, social policy launched by the Coalition government shortly after the 2011 riots.

Tottenham Defence Campaign: launched on 5 October 2011. The families of Mark Duggan, Cynthia Jarrett, Roger Sylvester, and Joy Gardner joined together with community leader Stafford Scott, also a spokesperson from the mid-80s Tottenham riots. The campaign highlights the high number of contentious black deaths in 2011 involving police contact. (https://www.facebook.com/Tottenham-Defence-Campaign-249658788451433/).

Trident (Operation Trident): The origins of Trident were in the efforts of community activists to see gun murders of black community members taken seriously. However, by 2013, Met Chief Bernard Hogan-Howe, under the rubric of his 'Total Policing' policy, re-positioned Operation Trident to a controversial focus on anti-gang work. (James, 2014; Webbe, 2013)

Twitter: brand name of social media micro-blogging site that allows members to post short messages called tweets.

UFFC: The United Families & Friends Campaign is a coalition of those affected by deaths in police, prison and psychiatric custody, supporting families https://uffcampaign.org/

YouTube: Social media platform primarily used for sharing video content.

Acknowledgements

For Frances and Christy

Sincere thanks to the following individuals and groups of people who helped me in producing this thesis:

Candidate's Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed   ......Suzanne Hyde..........................…

Dated   ………07/06/2023……………………..

Chapter One – Introduction to thesis

<u>Introduction</u>

This thesis is concerned with ways that some commentators, including political parties, national government, local councils, and individuals in London, responded to the English riots of 2011.

To explain the research approach and to provide context and overview, this introductory chapter is divided into two sections.

Part One is focused on a summary of key events leading to the 2011 riots and provides a timeline that starts with the death of Mark Duggan during police contact, followed a few days later by five days and nights of riots. Discussion of the use of language regarding riots and a summary of the socio-economic and political context of the riots concludes the section.

Part Two is focused on the research approach taken in this thesis including the research question, the rationale for taking this approach, the research methods adopted and the wider contribution to knowledge made by the thesis. The final part of this section includes a summary of the *Reading the Riots* project (RtR) and the relationship between doctoral work and previous employment on the project, concluding with signposts to take the reader through the ensuing chapters.

<u>Part One</u>

This section includes an outline of Mark Duggan's death during police contact; police responses in the immediate aftermath of his death, and collective action on the streets during five days of August 2011 in English towns and cities. These riot events include fighting the police, taking goods from commercial premises, and setting fire to street furniture and premises.

Mark Duggan's death, historical memory, and police impunity

The reason for starting the discussion of the 2011 riots with Mark Duggan's death is that it is widely agreed the riots that began in Tottenham on 6th August 2011 were linked to his death during police contact a few days earlier (Lewis et al, 2011; Murji,

2017). His death was the 'spark' (Solomos, 2011), flashpoint (Waddington, 2012) or fuel for anti-police sentiment linked to community memory of police injustice:

> … the role it [the manner of Duggan's death] played in providing a spark for the 2011 riots provides a link to previous riots in 1981 and 1985, when racialised rumours about the role of the police played an important role in the outbreak of violent confrontations between sections of minority communities and the police.
> (Solomos, 2011)

Deaths of black and brown citizens following police contact, including Joy Gardner (1993), Roger Sylvester (1999), Azelle Rodney (2005) and Kingsley Burrell (2011), 'haunt' the spectre of another death during police contact (Appadurai, 2013).

On Thursday 4th August 2011, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) in London shot dead 29-year-old Tottenham resident and father of four, Mark Duggan, following use of the controversial 'hard stop' procedure[1]. This happened as part of an ongoing police surveillance operation, which was part of police 'Operation Trident'[2]. The official police narrative is that Duggan was armed (Metropolitan Police, 2012). The police stopped a taxi Duggan was travelling in and shot him twice shortly after he left the vehicle. He died at the scene (Gilmore and Tufail, 2014).

Mark Duggan's death came just months after the death of another black Briton, David Emmanuel (also known as DJ Smiley Culture), during police contact in March 2011. According to the official narrative, Emmanuel died in Surrey after he stabbed himself in the chest during a police raid at his home (Athwal, 2011).

The failure to prosecute police officers after deaths during police contact fuelled a sense of police impunity where officers were seen as protected by the criminal justice system. The last time a police officer was successfully prosecuted for a death in custody was in 1969, when two police officers were found guilty of assault and

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[1] A 'hard stop' refers to a pre-planned operation, called an 'enforced stop' by police, during which armed, plain-clothed officers in police vehicles deliberately intercept a vehicle and confront the passengers.

[2] The origins of Trident were in the efforts of community activists to see gun murders of black community members taken seriously by the police. However, by 2013, Metropolitan Police Chief (MPS) Hogan-Howe, under the rubric of his 'Total Policing' policy, re-positioned Trident to a controversial focus on anti-gang work. (James, 2014; Webbe, 2013).

sentenced to a few months in prison after the death of the first black man to die in police custody in the UK. Several 'unlawful killing' verdicts at inquests, including that of Azelle Rodney, who also died during a 'hard stop', failed to lead to a single successful prosecution (Couvée, 2013).

The grief of the Duggan family, their friends, community and others who shared ongoing concerns about deaths (particularly of black citizens) during police contact, was compounded by two further factors in the immediate aftermath of Mark Duggan's death. Firstly, on 5th August 2011, in a call for witnesses to the shooting, the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC)[3] inaccurately announced Duggan had been shot dead after he had shot at a police officer (BBC, 2011(b); Dikeç, 2017, loc.1085-1113). Secondly, neither the IPCC or the MPS formally informed the Duggan family of his death or followed police protocol regarding the appointment of a family liaison officer (Bridges, 2012; Dikeç, 2017). Murji, (2018), considers how the 2011 riots have been framed and suggests we reflect on the lack of family liaison before the 2011 riots and compares this to the lead-up to riots in Brixton in the mid-1980s, including the fatal use of firearms by the police on both occasions.

> The protests that followed the Duggan killing eerily echoed the events surrounding the police shooting of a black woman, Cherry Groce, at her home in Brixton in 1985, in a raid where the police were targeting her son...That shooting also led to a protest around the local police station and, eventually, disorder. The connection between these two events can be used to propose that the start of the 2011 riots has less to do with everyday policing but instead the rarer, but highly consequential, use of firearms. (Murji, 2018)

Murji (2018) considers that in the cases of both the Duggan and Groce families, it is possible that police action in the wake of the shootings could have prevented or contained rioting. In both cases, police failed to implement family liaison procedures to communicate with and support the families. For Murji, deaths during police

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[3] The IPCC is now known as the IOPC (Independent Office for Police Conduct)
https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/

contact and lack of family liaison are an institutional problem that can lay the ground for likelihood of riots.

Tottenham, the site of the first riot event in August 2011, had not only witnessed deaths of local black and brown citizens during police contact, but was also the site of the 1985 Broadwater Farm (Estate) riot which was triggered by the death of local black mother Cynthia Jarrett as police searched her flat. The death of Police Constable Blakelock[4] during the Broadwater Farm riots also haunts police/community relations in the area. There were multiple arrests for PC Blakelock's murder and an overturned prosecution (Barling, 2004; Smith, 2013, 2018). In the film, *The Hard Stop* (2015)[5]. Duggan's Aunt Carole says, "they persecute every black kid on Broadwater Farm until they find Blakelock's murderer." This sense of injustice formed part of the historical memory of Tottenham, the site of the first riot event in August 2011 (Connerton, 1989; Solomos, 2011; Wallace 2014, 2018).

After Duggan's death, it was revealed the IPCC received the ballistics report on the day Mark Duggan was killed which confirmed the only shot fired was by armed police. The incorrect IPCC statement to the press that the shot was fired by Duggan was not withdrawn until five days later (Independent Press Standards Organisation, 2015). In the subsequent review of their own 2011 riots policing, the MPS blamed miscommunication with the IPCC. An incident of death during police contact and subsequent follow-up is usually referred straight to the IPCC (Metropolitan Police, 2012). The MPS argued that an official press release from the police stating that Duggan had shot at the police:

> … is likely to have originated from the very first verbal briefings
> given from the scene to the IPCC including the fact that a police
> officer had been shot and taken to hospital …The subsequent

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[4] PC Blakelock was found dead after the 1985 riot at Broadwater Farm Estate in Tottenham. He had been stabbed multiple times. To date there has been no conviction for his death that has been upheld.

[5] This UK documentary, *The Hard Stop*, tells the story of Mark Duggan, his life, family and death including the perspectives of two of Duggan's friends. It includes discussion of the mid-80's Tottenham Riots and the 2011 riots. https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3688612/

reporting of this gave the impression that Mark Duggan had fired upon police, which was not true. (Metropolitan Police, 2012, p.24)

The MPS review suggests the force was not sure they had permission to talk to the press and thought press clarifications should come from the IPCC since the MPS was subject to an IPCC inquiry (Metropolitan Police, 2012, p.6). Referring to discrepancies between the perception of Duggan family members and the family liaison officers appointed by the MPS, the report states that:

… the parents of Mark Duggan were not personally informed of his death and this caused extra distress to them. The MPS notes that the family's complaint was upheld. (Metropolitan Police, 2012, p.22)

Mark Duggan's death, subsequent press statements stating he had shot at police, and the lack of family liaison and clear communication from the MPS led to increasing community alarm and frustration.

6th August 2011 riots and beyond

A peaceful demonstration was held on Saturday 6th August. Family and community members, led by women and children, marched to Tottenham police station to seek answers regarding Duggan's death. The acting police Borough Commander who was in charge that day was unfamiliar with the history of the area and historic police/community dynamics.

Eye-witness accounts of the demonstration estimate there were around 200 people gathered in front of the police station. The crowd was comprised of predominantly young black women, many with children, and there was a handful of police outside the station mainly directing traffic so the protest could go ahead (Morrell et al, 2011). Things remained peaceful and community leaders and police officers in the station sought to communicate. Around dusk the police appeared to try to disperse the crowd or push people away from the police station (Reicher and Stott, 2011; Stott and Reicher, 2011, loc.1027-1036). Film footage of an incident captured a key turning point. A young woman was apparently pushed over and struck by the police and the incident was immediately posted on YouTube. It was included later in a

video made by Tottenham residents in the riots' aftermath, *Rebellion in Tottenham*[6].
A woman is heard to shout, "It's a girl, it's a fucking girl, look how you're dealing with
her..." (Reel News, 2020). The perception of this incident *in relation to* Mark
Duggan's death, the police response to it, including lack of family liaison and the
press release alleging that Duggan had shot at the police, combined with the
collective memory of previous deaths during police contact, all proved incendiary.

From early evening on Saturday 6th August, Tottenham High Road became the
scene of tension between police and the crowd and included attacks on police and
setting fire to vehicles, street furniture and commercial premises, many of which
adjoined residential properties (Lewis et al, 2011; Newburn 2016). Between
Saturday 6th and Wednesday 10th August 2011, twenty-two of thirty-two London
Boroughs experienced a range of riot events. Other affected cities and towns
included Manchester, Salford, Birmingham, Nottingham, and Liverpool. Some argue
there were also physical attacks on middle-class status symbols like expensive cars
and shop windows displaying high-end goods (Stott and Reicher (2011).

The last of the riot events took place in Birmingham on Wednesday 10th August
following an appeal for calm and unity across communities by Tariq Jahan, a father
who had lost his son in the riots (BBC, 2016). In addition to Mark Duggan's death, at
the end of the five days four people had lost their lives (Morrell et al, 2011). Insurers
estimated the financial costs were likely to reach £200 million. The costs, numbers
of arrestees and the appointment of extra-ordinary night courts and Sunday courts
is discussed in Chapter Five.

I have summarised the riot timeline below.

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[6] *Rebellion in Tottenham*: A film made by local people in Tottenham just after the 2011 riots.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Faysa6h0lR8

2011 Riots timeline

Date - 2011	Place	Events/Features
Thursday 4th August	North London	Tottenham man Mark Duggan shot and killed in a police 'Hard Stop' as part of Operation Trident.
Friday 5th August	North London	Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) releases statement to media asking for witnesses. Incorrectly states that Mark Duggan shot at police. Family hears about Duggan's death from TV reports. Absence of police-family liaison protocols.
Saturday 6th August	Tottenham	Peaceful march to Tottenham police station led by women and children. No police commander with experience of Tottenham resident-police tensions available. Police push a young woman over. The crowd erupts. Fighting police, setting fire to pavement furniture and premises, looting of shops that evening around Tottenham.
Sunday 7th August	Other areas of London	Fighting police, setting fire to pavement furniture and premises, looting of shops.
Monday 8th August	Nottingham, Manchester, Salford, Birmingham	Riots outside London.
Tuesday 9th August	London	Riot events peak and wane in London. PM Cameron and politicians on streets.
Wednesday 10th August	Birmingham and elsewhere	Three men killed in Birmingham. A father, Tariq Jahan, appeals for unity and calm. Arrests made in London.
Thursday 11th August	London and elsewhere	Large numbers of police on the street. More arrests. Fast-tracking of offenders overnight. Parliament debates riots. 'Rogues Gallery' of riot offender pictures released to press.
Friday 12th August	All cities with arrestees	Over 2000 arrests for riots related offences. Sunday/Night Courts go into operation.

Riot, disorder, rebellion or uprising?

Words and language used to describe collective public events including fighting police, taking goods from commercial premises and setting fire to vehicles, hold different meanings for different actors. For example, the word 'riot' was widely used by media to describe events of August 2011 (Bassel, 2012) and 'public disorder' is used by the police to describe the events (Metropolitan Police, 2012) and is utilised in some academic studies (Waddington et al, 1989).

The Riot (Damages) Act formulated in 1886 provided the legal framework for responding to the August 2011 riots. The implications of using this archaic legislation to pursue post-riot prosecutions and organise financial compensation is explored in Chapter Six.

'Uprisings' or 'rebellion' are concepts used by some activists and community members to signify political purpose and intent concerning riot events. In some cases, 'uprisings' is used to show solidarity with those engaged in street-based conflict with the police. The film, *Rebellion in Tottenham* (Reel News, 2020), Clover's book *Riot Strike Riot* (2016, p.111-112) and the book *Urban Uprisings* (Thörn et al, 2016) are examples. The Black Cultural Archives in Brixton also list collective street-based conflict between young black people and the police in the1980s under the subject heading 'Uprisings'.

In a reading of recent European riots, including the English riots in August 2011, Thörn et al (2016) attempt to bridge the gap between the separate literatures of protest and riot, drawing on Laclau and Mouffe's concept of 'processes of articulation' (1985), showing how apparently instantaneous riots can have links to organised protest, including demands for structural change. In Chapter Seven, I explore how 'riot' was used to describe the 2010-11 student protests that preceded the August 2011 riots, including in relation to how the police dealt with the crowd.

As I became immersed in the habitual use of 'riot' in my employment as a researcher before this thesis that was focussed on the events of August 2011, I use the word riot in this thesis unless I am citing the police (who prefer 'disorder') or

citing others who prefer 'uprisings'. Nevertheless, I am sympathetic to the use of 'uprising' or 'rebellion' to describe these and similar events.

The socio-economic and political context to the 2011 riots: austerity politics and protest

As this thesis is concerned with fieldwork conducted after the riots, with a consideration of how the riots reverberated in subsequent years, the socio-economic and political context of the riots is considered relevant to understanding them (Bloom, 2012). This includes discussion of the party-political context in which the 2011 riots emerged; austerity measures; protests about cuts to public services; government and police responses to protest, and links to the 2011 riots.

Hall et al's (1978) utilisation of Gramsci's notion of 'conjuncture' helps us understand a public event like a riot as linked to a wider trajectory of events, particularly focused on a crisis in governance and legitimacy of government. Conjuncture can refer to significant periods of time, sometimes decades, where we can interpret a public 'moment' as related to a long period of crisis which is characterised by similar struggles, contradictions and economic models and frameworks utilised by governments. In relation to the 2011 riots we can apply the notion of conjuncture as relating to an emerging 'law and order' response to street based collective action, a breakdown in consent for austerity politics (that involved escalating cuts to public services, elaborated in Chapter Two) and a move to more coercive forms of governance (Jefferson, 2014 (b)). Similarities between the Coalition government of the day (Conservative Party majority and smaller Liberal Democrat Party (Lib Dems) alliance) and previous Labour governments was alluded to by Professor Paul Gilroy speaking soon after the 2011 riots to an audience in Tottenham about the death of Mark Duggan and the subsequent riots. Gilroy talked about the consequences of a lack of meaningful choice at the ballot box, including the 2010 General Election, and pointed to a lack of significant ideological and policy differences between the main political parties. He saw this as 'a poverty of imagination' and implied this should inform our understanding of why people might take to the streets to be heard. This provokes us to consider how effective voting

might be in these circumstances and what happens to voices critical of the party-political consensus:

> The question is supposed to be was there politics in this rioting or was it just a cry for help or a cry for things? And I think the question shouldn't be was there politics in this rioting and looting, but is there politics in this country? Because when you have three parties who are saying the same thing [applause] there's no politics in Britain. There's a kind of entertainment, there's a bit of theatre... (Gilroy, 2011)

Mouffe (2000) suggests democracies that over-emphasise consensus and fail to provide arenas for disagreement and conflict end up increasing the likelihood of street-based conflict. Mouffe argues we need to embrace 'agonism', a condition where conflict and disagreement between friendly adversaries is encouraged, as the important partner of consensus is dissent (2000, p.113). She is particularly critical of so-called 'Left' parties who embrace the same politics as the 'Right':

> I submit that to present such a view of politics as 'radical' is really disingenuous, and that instead of being conducive to more democracy the radical centrism advocated by New Labour is in fact a renunciation of the basic tenets of radical politics. (Mouffe, 2000, p.111).

Mouffe (2000) argues that institutions that contest power relations of dominance and violence are central to a healthy liberal democracy. Without these institutions, we can expect to see the rise in religious fundamentalism and right-wing populist parties, an emphasis in popular culture on scandal and lifestyle and an over-reliance on the criminal justice system to resolve conflict (2000, pp.115-116).

The Coalition Government had been in power since May 2010 and during the general election campaign, Conservatives promised not to abolish the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA), a small monthly allowance that encouraged poorer 16-19-year-olds to stay in education (discussed in Chapter Seven). The LibDems attracted a sizeable youth vote at the General Election by criticising the previous Labour Government's role in the 2003-11 Iraq War and promising to abolish university tuition fees (Ibrahim, 2014; Myers, 2017). Once in government, both

parties reneged on electoral promises and accelerated austerity policies rolled out by the previous Labour Government, which had been justified by Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrats as an essential response to an international financial crash in 2008. This included cuts to public services and increases in tuition fees. Sold to the public as a necessary response to the financial crash, the Government promoted the notion of the public being "all in it together" (Cooper and Whyte, 2017). Austerity measures rolled back state spending and state support for the poor. Despite claims of 'all in it together', the impact of austerity politics is not evenly distributed among social groups. Evidence suggests austerity was racialised, gendered, classed and ageist in its application and effect and these factors overlapped and intersected (Blackman and Rogers 2017; Cooper and Whyte 2017; Davies, 2019). Cooper and Whyte (2017) suggest austerity is a kind of institutional state violence which maintains social inequality and is characterised by death and illness among the poor.

Former Guardian journalist, now Professor Gary Younge, reflected in November 2019:

> In April 2010, the then Liberal Democrat leader, Nick Clegg, painted a bleak scenario during the election campaign: "Imagine the Conservatives... get an absolute majority, on 25% of the eligible votes. They then turn around in the next week or two and say, 'We're going to chuck up VAT to 20%, we're going to start cutting teachers, cutting police and the wage bill in the public sector. I think if you're not careful in that situation… you'd get Greek-style unrest." The Tories got 23% of the eligible vote. They did not win an absolute majority but, with Clegg's help in the Coalition government, it all happened anyway. (Younge, 2019)

Davies (2019) outlines a range of impacts of austerity on young people from increases in personal debt and loss of youth services, to increases in mental ill-health. Universal and targeted services for young people fell by 40% between 2010 to 2017 (Churchill, 2018). Other examples of specific cuts to services include evidence produced by the trade union, Unison, that shows youth service cuts have amounted to £400 million since 2010. While acknowledging a full assessment of impacts cannot be achieved until a later date, Lupton et al's 2015 review of the Coalition Government's five-year social policy record demonstrates that spending

on young people had declined by 18% during that period. They refer to analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies that suggests:

> … there will already have been a sharp rise in relative poverty (and in poverty against a fixed line) between 2012/13 and 2014/15 for children and for working-age non-parents, and then a further rise to 2020/21, with the relative child poverty rate reaching 21 per cent, up 3.5 percentage points from 2012/13. (Lupton et al, 2015. p.6)

Immediately prior to the 2011 riots, youth workers in Tottenham had raised concerns that 75% cuts in local youth services could lead to street protests that summer (Cooper, 2012; Koumi, 2011; Topping, 2011). Haringey youth workers interviewed for this thesis also reported young people in the Tottenham area had been campaigning against threatened cuts to EMA and were begging their parents not to vote Conservative at the May 2010 election because they feared further erasure of opportunities for young people. Research by the Runnymede Trust, who trained young people to facilitate discussions about the 2011 riots in hairdressers and barber shops in the riots' aftermath, found racialised inequalities and historically poor relationships between police and black and brown communities and young people as underpinning the events of 2011 (Nwabuzo, 2012). There is further discussion of cuts to youth services branded as a response to 2011 riots in Chapters Two and Six.

The austerity cut to services that most concerned some research interview participants was the introduction of the 'spare room subsidy' (known as the 'bedroom tax'). The tax adjusted housing benefit to pay only for rooms that reflected family size. Implemented in April 2013, it was branded by the Coalition Government as a response to the 'problem' of under-occupation in the social housing sector and led to a reduction in the housing benefit eligibility of working age social tenants seen as consuming too much housing (there was a 14% cut for one spare bedroom, a 25% cut for more than one). The policy was one of numerous benefit reforms that claimed to 'simplify the system', 'incentivise work' and substantially cut costs (Gibb, 2015). Moffatt et al (2016) examined the implementation of the 'bedroom tax', which at the time of their research affected an estimated 660,000 working age social

housing tenants in the UK and reduced weekly incomes by £12 to £22. Participants recounted negative impacts on mental health, family relationships and community networks. This is explored further in Chapter Six.

Consent for austerity measures before the 2011 riots was increasingly challenged in street protests and university campus occupations. In addition, a wider set of anti-austerity street protests linked to trade unions and activist groups characterised 2010/11 (Bloom, 2012; Ibrahim, 2014; Myers, 2017; Thörn et al, 2016). These anti-austerity and student protests were often met with pre-emptive arrests and use of the controversial police technique of kettling[7]. There was prolonged street antagonism between police and protestors (Bloom 2012; Hancox, 2011 (a)) and punitive sentencing of those arrested (Pina-Sánchez et al, 2017). Prime Minister (PM) Cameron called the student protesters at Parliament Square in December 2010 a "feral mob" (Addley, 2010). Due to the policing of these protests, some commentators (and doctoral research participants) referred to these street-based events as riots (Mason, 2017; Thörn et al, 2016). This is explored in Chapter Seven.

Student protests and occupations brought together different constituencies of young people, including younger (and often poorer) further education students campaigning to keep EMA and older university students and staff campaigning to abolish university tuition fees (Myers, 2017). By August 2011, young people were increasingly networked, in part augmented and mediated by new technologies, and information was shared across different groups through use of social media platforms and cheap Blackberry phones for example (Boyd 2014; Jenkins et al, 2013).

Beyond the riots, some young people interviewed in this study were frustrated by the representation of young people who were protesting or rioting as 'feral' in media and government. Increasingly networked youth were keen to tell their own stories and develop their own narratives about issues raised by street protests and August

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[7] Kettle/Kettling: refers to a controversial police tactic to control street protesters. Police officers wearing riot uniforms use their bodies to form a "cordon" around a group of protesters. The area inside the cordon is called a "kettle" and the process of enclosing protesters in this way is called "kettling." Often people are not released from the kettle for many hours.

2011 riots. These issues, plus deaths in custody, were represented in youth culture like Grime music, which provided a soundtrack that was shared across student protests and August 2011 riots (Hancox, 2012 and 2018), whilst some other young people made documentary films about the riots, discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight.

I turn next to an outline of my research question and focus.

Part Two

Here I focus on my research question, the aims and rationale surrounding it and a summary of methods used to investigate the question. This includes an outline of how the thesis contributes to our understanding of the riots and the interpretation of the riots by different groups. The section ends with a summary of the RtR project and how employment on the project influenced doctoral study.

Research question, rationale and methods

My research question is:

> How have the 2011 riots been represented and responded to by a range of post-riots engaged constituencies?

The rationale for this focus includes the following processes, experiences, events and activities.

The thesis reflects an exploratory research process as I attempted to capture and explore what I saw and heard at public events marketed as riots-related several years after the riots and then to map this against official versions of the riots. After spending a year employed on a research project to investigate the days and nights of the riots (explained later in this chapter), in attending public events about the riots at the beginning of the doctorate several years later, I did not have a singular mission in mind regarding what or who I would encounter but sought to consider, 'what is happening a few years on regarding people still addressing the riots in public forums, who is still talking about the riots and why, and what have they got to say?'

I used the overlapping traditions of discourse and narrative analysis (Atkinson, 2000; Atkinson et al, 2010; Fairclough, 2013; Tamboukou and Livholts, 2015; Thomson 2011) to follow riots debates. Tamboukou and Livholts (2015) outline how we can use 'discourse' to describe the choice of words or metaphors used within any given context and 'narrative' to talk about the bigger story being told. I use the concepts of discourse and narrative to describe what I heard during fieldwork and what I read in a desk-based analysis of political responses to the riots. In Chapter Three, I elaborate on approaches to understanding discourse and narrative and how they can be applied to research.

Having lived and worked in Lewisham, Southwark, Haringey and Hackney and been recently employed as a researcher examining the 2011 riots, I had an interest in ongoing public conversations and re-readings of the 2011 riots when I began doctoral work in late summer 2012. I looked for riots-related public events and attended public conversations that often coalesced around film screenings of *Riot from Wrong* (RfW) (Riot from Wrong, 2012[8]) and *Riots Reframed* (RR) (Riots Reframed, 2013[9]). Audiences at the events were mixed in terms of age, racialised and classed identities, politics, and riots experience. The composition of different audiences was also influenced by the venues where they were held; some in universities, for example, others at community venues. Discussion about film content, audience concerns and questions about riots formed the focus of the events, with a panel offering their thoughts. The 2011 riots were re-read and re-presented at the events and there was an airing of ongoing concerns that some felt were raised by the riots but were not being addressed in public life. My aim was to understand the 2011 riots in relation to pre- and post-riots context from the perspective of official narratives about the riots and emerging counter-narratives at the time I conducted fieldwork.

Some young people channelled their frustration at negative narration of racialised youth into the production and promotion of documentary films that sought to represent the riots differently, using the films as vehicles to elicit ongoing public

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[8] *Riot from Wrong* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkeKQl56-7c
[9] *Riots Reframed* https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwiuGWH0WQdBv4lMLLTHA8w

conversations about the riots at public events. At the same time, some young people were setting up social media platforms with multiple uses and goals. These included reportage via written, spoken word and video formats and covered issues relating to 2010-11 student protests and subsequent August 2011 riots.

Bamberg (2004, p.367/368) offers a useful way to define and understand 'counter-narrative' and considers how we might resist grand or dominant narratives and their tactics. He explains a process of counter-narrating – an exploratory process in interactive spaces where new cultural milieus are formed. This allows new versions of events or narratives to emerge, but not as a fully 'oppositional' process. This explanation helped me to understand, describe and analyse counter-narratives.

I wanted to capture what the film makers and social media platforms were doing and saying concerning the 2011 riots to illuminate how the riots reverberated over time beyond riot events. I became interested in the contrast between government narration (including reasons for these types of narratives) and the alternatives offered by new 2011 riots representations. I sought to explore the *relationships between* the government narration of the riots (see Chapter Four) and policy roll-out (see Chapters Five and Six) and the counter-narration found in new youth outputs (see Chapters Seven and Eight).

Untangling these relationships was a useful lens through which to re-read the 2011 riots and to consider them in relation to events like street protests and campaigns highlighting deaths during police contact. It brought some youthful counter-narratives into research discussion. Reviewing relationships between government narratives and actions raises the question of whether government responses to the riots can be seen as genuinely new or opportunist re-workings of pre-planned policies (Wallace, 2014). Examining counter-narratives in relation to state narratives allows us to consider what alternative types of government rhetorical and policy responses might have been possible.

The perspectives that countered dominant riots narratives were not widely apparent in academic literature or journalistic coverage about the 2011 riots when I started fieldwork (some were yet to emerge). A notable exception was the work of academic

Leah Bassel who with reference to media responses to the riots co-organised a conference in November 2011 where young people were invited to give their perspective on the riots and media coverage (Bassel, 2013 and 2017). The audience included representatives from media organisations. She was influenced by Les Back's emphasis on 'the art of listening' in research (2007) and developed this further into a notion of the importance of 'political listening' in research (Bassel, 2013 and 2017). Her work promotes the importance of giving platforms to and listening to voices otherwise marginalised in media and political discourse. This doctorate is influenced by her emphasis on the importance of listening to and documenting such accounts.

A key moment in setting the direction of the thesis and doctoral fieldwork came in the summer of 2013 when I attended two events in London in quick succession that were marketed as riots related.

The first was an event where I was a panel member reflecting on the riots with an audience of London-based regeneration professionals. Here the Tottenham Labour MP, David Lammy, made a statement about the legacy of the riots. The three-person panel was asked to respond. I was invited to the panel via a Twitter enquiry because of my previous pre-doctoral employment in a riots research project (summarised later in this chapter). The other panel members included a voluntary sector professional from Tottenham and a regeneration professional key to rolling out post-riot regeneration plans in Croydon.

The Croydon regeneration professional expressed the need not to talk about the riots in Croydon and how senior members of Croydon Council encouraged silence on the matter. Informally, he said, "we don't talk about the riots anymore in Croydon". It was bad for business – the business of attracting developers to build a new shopping centre. Talking about the 2011 riots was seen as spoiling this new opportunity and reinforcing negative perceptions about geographical parts of the borough due to be regenerated, perceptions that needed 'forgetting'.

The second event took place a few days later at a community venue, Rich Mix, in Hackney, East London, on the two-year anniversary of Mark Duggan's death. It

involved non-participant observation at a whole day event where the riots were the central topic. This event was promoted as a youth-led event 'where young people talk, and older people listen' and it coalesced around extracts from the film RfW. The event also showcased entrepreneurial activities of young people who were part of UK Fully Focused Productions[10] a youth project and social enterprise formed just before the August 2011 riots. They were key organisers of the event which commemorated Duggan's memory and acknowledged the manner of his death and how his family had been treated by police. The event was branded as focusing on 'a deeper conversation' about the 2011 riots.

Reflecting on the two events, I became interested in the contrasting approaches to continuing to talk about the riots in public life (or not) and what could be learned from them in a research context. The events provided diverse readings of the meanings of the riots as well as illuminating how they reverberated over time for some individuals and communities.

I subsequently interviewed the Croydon development professional and through him identified a handful of people in Croydon for interview who were still publicly grappling with post-riots issues. I continued to attend and observe events hosted by film makers, which allowed me to develop research relationships with key people involved in organising and contributing to the events. These included: official and unofficial victims of the riots[11]; professionals dealing with the roll-out of policies branded as official riot responses; and activists and artists still talking about and representing the riots through different mediums.

Compiling and using a semi-structured topic guide, I aimed to capture different perspectives about the riots and post-riots legacies. Most research interviews were generated through a process of snowballing and a small number were targeted for

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[10] https://www.fullyfocusedproductions.com/ and https://www.fullyfocusedproductions.com/million-youth-media

[11] I use the term 'unofficial victims' to distinguish people hurt by events associated with the riots such as the Duggan family and those punitively sentenced but who aren't recognised by politicians as victims. I use the term 'official victims' to signpost those who were called victims by government such as those who lost homes, businesses, sense of security etc.

their expertise, including those dealing with the Troubled Families Programme (TFP) and offering support to official victims of the riots (further details are provided in Chapter Three).

In addition to semi-structured interviews and observation at public events, I undertook some analysis of key official documents including local and national riot panel reports and statements to parliament and media by government ministers, paying attention to narrative and discourse (Atkinson et al, 2010; Thomson, 2011). I also draw on academic work that critiqued government narrative and policy responses and used this as a secondary source in the thesis (Nijjar, 2015).

Interviews were inevitably influenced by the types of audiences attracted to public events about the riots. There is no claim here to a representative sample of those continuing to represent or talk about the riots in public life or those affected by riots absent from such events.

The thesis evolved into a contrasting of state responses to the 2011 riots to the perspectives of some other voices including professionals, activists, artists and youth-led social media platforms.

In the thesis write-up, review and editing process, I realise that I had pre-supposed more engagement with young people through interviews than I achieved. In fact, research interviews also include the perspective of older people grappling with compensation claims, regeneration priorities, supporting young people as youth workers and in professional roles dealing with the implementation of policies branded as riots responses by government. Young people drove the organisation of public conversations about the riots and were the authors of new counter-narratives of the riots. Whilst their perspectives remain at the forefront of what I have learned, this is not a thesis solely about young people and the riots. It includes my understanding of youthful perspectives alongside others and forms a snapshot of concerns from some people still talking about the riots and/or grappling with the riots' aftermath at the time of fieldwork.

Whilst this research is not solely about youth, it draws upon a range of official discourses and popular narrations of 'the state of youth today', in relation to 'stigma and stigmatising discourse'; criticises a series of hastily assembled policies designed to address supposed problems and issues facing youth (the governance of youth) amongst other groups, and has sought to identify new forms of politics and 'youthful agency' challenging some of the foregoing (governance by youth).

I fully acknowledge that as a white middle-aged woman no longer living or working in the areas where I conducted fieldwork, my readings of what I saw and heard are inevitably filtered through the lens of my own privileges and life experiences.

I am also aware that in this thesis I have mostly captured the perspectives of people with quite definite stories to tell about the riots and that the stories of those who might have been more ambivalent about riots, whose politics might have differed from the organisers of public events about the riots, or who may have been profoundly affected by riots but chose to stay at home are not necessarily captured here.

How the thesis furthers understandings of the riots

The thesis aligns with and underpins understandings of the riots in the following ways:

This thesis sits alongside and contributes to literature that examines policy responses to the 2011 riots and provides a focus on the Troubled Families Programme (TFP) and post-riots anti-gang policy. These literatures explore social policies as post-riots policies. They include literature about the TFP: (Crossley, 2015; Garrett, 2019, pp.25-45; Lambert and Crossley, 2017) and anti-gang policies (Cottrell-Boyce, 2013; Gunter, 2017; Hallsworth and Brotherton, 2012; Pitts, 2013; Valluvan et al, 2013; Williams, 2015 pp.18-35). In this thesis I consider whether these responses can be understood as a response to the 2011 riots (Dillon and Fanning, 2015; Newburn et al, 2018 (a)), or whether they were responses based on pre-existing plans and assumptions about a racialised young urban poor rooted in notions of an underclass (Blackman and Rogers, 2017; Crossley, 2015; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Welshman, 2013).

In a desk-based review, I explore the final report of the government-appointed Riots Communities and Victims Panel (RCVP) and examine the relationship between it and post-riots social policy. I assess what happened to the report's recommendations. I also examine the processes and findings of several local riots inquiries and consider their relationship to the national inquiry.

At the beginning of my research in 2012, with a few notable exceptions (Bloom, 2012), there was little focus in research literature on exploring links between the shared networks and politics of those involved in student protests of 2010/11 and the August 2011 riots, or political activities afterwards like the Occupy London[12] protests that emerged in the autumn of 2011. In recent years, there has been some academic and journalistic analysis of these issues (Halvorsen, 2015, 2017). These themes were present in some doctoral research interviews and the findings of this thesis are informed by that literature and add to and contribute ethnographic detail to it. I explore the temporal proximity of the August 2011 riots in relation to the student protests earlier that same year (Ibrahim, 2014; Myers, 2017; Thörn et al, 2016). The thesis draws from and contributes to literature that seeks to dissolve the distinction between protest and riot in academic work (Thörn et al, 2016). It illustrates the role of Grime and new platforms provided by some young people to explore issues raised by the 2011 riots (Atfield, 2017; Millington, 2016).

I have sought to bring riots counter-narratives produced by some young people through arts and journalism into academic discussion. As such, the thesis provides a snapshot of public conversations about the riots and explores cultural counter-narrations produced in the years after (see also Bassel's iteration of political listening in the 2011 post-riots space (2012, 2013, 2017). The thesis attempts to contribute to what Tyler (2013 a) calls a 'storying' of the activities of 'revolting

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[12] https://occupylondon.org.uk/ **Occupy:** an international wave of protests directed against capitalism and economic inequality and/or state repression, often with particular reference to austerity measures brought in since the global financial crash of 2008 (known as 'the bankers crash'). The form of protest involves occupying urban spaces for lengths of time. Occupy London emerged a few months after the 2011 riots, and defined itself as for social justice, demanding an alternative to an undemocratic system.

subjects'. In considering some public responses in the riots' aftermath, the thesis illustrates the notion of young people's participatory politics (Boyd, 2014) where social media enabled some young people to participate in and create 'networked publics' (Jenkins et al, 2009).

The experience of 'official victims' who lost homes or businesses and a sense of security was forefronted in some journalistic coverage after the riots but is largely absent in academic research literature with a few notable exceptions (Doern, 2013 and 2016). My fieldwork captured the perspective of some official victims and/or people who were campaigning on their behalf. These findings contribute ethnographic detail to this research literature.

The thesis adds ethnographic detail to literature that examines how riots and post-riots politics were experienced by research participants in Tottenham and Croydon who were experiencing local regeneration schemes branded as 'post-riots' responses at the time of fieldwork (Dillon and Fanning, 2013, 2015 and 2019; Hatherley, 2011; Millington 2012; Wallace, 2012 and 2014). In Tottenham and Croydon, regeneration coalesced around shopping centres. Despite this, I have come across little critical analysis of the development of new shopping centres as a useful or legitimate response to 2011 riots, other than three inter-related papers by authors Dillon and Fanning (2012, 2013 and 2015) which examine the history of regeneration in Tottenham.

Next, I turn to a summary of my employment on a research project investigating the 2011 riots that preceded doctoral work and draw links between this experience and the shape and form of the doctorate.

Reading the Riots

This thesis is influenced by my employment as researcher on the *Reading the Riots* project (RtR) in the months following the August 2011 riots and leading up to the start of the doctorate. I focus here on a summary of the project and how it impacted the doctoral research process.

Summary of *Reading the Riots (RtR)*

The *Reading the Riots* project (RtR) was a partnership between *The Guardian* newspaper and the London School of Economics. It was inspired by a research partnership between a newspaper and a university developed in the USA after riots in Detroit in 1968 (Meyer, 2011; Robertson, 2011; Younge, 2011 (a)).

A team of researchers was recruited for RtR and employed by *The Guardian* to conduct interviews, whilst a team of research analysts was employed by the LSE to thematically analyse interview transcripts.

Phase One, between September and December 2011, focused on what happened on the days of the riots from the point of view of people who self-identified as rioters and/or were convicted of rioting (Robertson, 2011; Younge, 2011 (a)). We carried out one-to-one semi-structured interviews with 270 rioters during this period. I conducted interviews in prisons in and around London with prisoners convicted of 2011 riots-related offences. During the week of press coverage, I took part in a live Question and Answer session (along with other colleagues) on the Guardian's website.

Phase Two of RtR between January and June 2012 focused on the experiences of professionals and 'official victims' of the riots. The team conducted interviews in cities affected by riots including London, Manchester, Salford, Liverpool, and Birmingham. There were semi-structured one-to-one interviews with 65 lawyers (including defence and Crown Prosecution Service), 130 police officers of various ranks and roles, 30 people who came out to defend their communities and businesses, and 40 'official victims'. In addition, eight 'Community Conversations' were held in community venues in riot affected areas. *The Guardian* covered Phase Two in July 2012.

During Phase Two I was employed by *The Guardian* as a full-time researcher as part of a team based at their office in London. I conducted interviews with defence and prosecution lawyers in London, Manchester, Birmingham, and Liverpool. I also interviewed junior and senior police officers who policed the riots at New Scotland Yard in London, Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester, as well as interviewing

some officers based outside London who came to assist the MPS as part of a 'mutual aid' scheme.

As Phase Two gathered pace, a colleague set up Community Conversations to encourage 'grassroots debate' in areas affected by riots. Organised with local community groups, these were designed to gather views from people directly affected by the riots and their aftermath (Brown, 2012; Brown and Hyde, 2012). The first debate took place in Tottenham at an event in support of the campaigning group North London Citizens, who launched their *Citizens' Inquiry Report* into the causes and consequences of the riots in Tottenham. Speakers included David Lammy, the Labour MP for the area, and local children who attended school with the children of Mark Duggan. Subsequent debates took place in Peckham, Croydon, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, and Salford and at a further event with faith communities in London. I took part in some of the panel presentations at these debates.

I also undertook data analysis of interviews with people who defended their communities and presented findings at academic forums that the academic lead was unable to attend. Since RtR, I have presented findings and reflections on the project in academic seminars and lectures at Brighton and London Universities and helped design riots modules at the University of Brighton and the Free University of Brighton[13].

I continued to work at RtR until its conclusion a month before the London Olympic Games in 2012.

Relationship between Reading the Riots experience and doctoral work

RtR opened the door to studying the riots (and association with it helped secure a bursary). Despite some mixed feelings and experiences of the project, it gave me a thorough grounding in riot events and the perspectives of a range of people involved in or impacted by the riots.

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[13] https://freeuniversitybrighton.org/

The experience of working as a researcher for RtR has influenced the shape and direction of this thesis in the following five ways.

First, as we were collecting a vast amount of personal testimony, I correctly assumed it would provide an oral history of the riots, but incorrectly assumed the testimony would be publicly available to communities and researchers through a public archive like The Black Cultural Archives[14] in Brixton or a university archive like the Mass Observation Archive[15]. Whilst I and colleagues raised questions about this at the end of Phase One, lack of resources for redaction was one of the reasons cited for not putting the material into an archive. As researchers we were asked to sign over our research interviews to the project and it was made clear we had no ownership over them and were not able to draw on interview transcripts for our own work. Whilst conditions of employment indicated otherwise, I hoped I might negotiate access to some transcripts for doctoral work. At the start of the PhD in the autumn of 2012, I approached the academic project lead about access to RtR research transcripts for doctoral purposes. At a one-to-one meeting he indicated I *might* be able to gain access after I had gathered new data and formulated my research ideas further. Since I was on a time-limited funded PhD and needed to seek ethical approval for my study, I was advised by my university that I should not wait on a 'maybe'. So, while research experience with RtR has been invaluable in the doctoral process, this thesis is based on new data collected during doctoral fieldwork.

Second, RtR provoked an interest in 'rioter' motivation and perspectives. The riot as a moment in a life story struck me as a valuable focus. Prisoners interviewed during RtR narrated their riots experience in relation to lived experience including homelessness, economic struggles, and the impact of racism and inequalities. Whilst I was primarily interested in rioter perspectives, my experience in Phase One of RtR made me feel ambivalent about pursuing rioter stories in the doctorate. During the first month of RtR Phase One, I teamed up with another researcher to knock on doors of known rioters in Hackney. *The Guardian* had a database of

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[14] https://blackculturalarchives.org/
[15] http://www.massobs.org.uk/

publicly available names and addresses of people already convicted of riots-related offences and the names were divided between researchers. Although I had lived and worked in the area, I no longer did so; I was an outsider and what we were doing felt potentially intrusive. I felt increasingly unsure about meeting rioters during RtR. I was aware how people might perceive such a journalism project as well as classed, gendered and racialised identity and power issues in meeting people on their doorsteps to ask about their experiences whilst they had no wider frame to assess who we were or were not. Whilst we had no contact with the police or authorities, the police were still actively pursuing arrests through the post-riots trawl of CCTV. I thought, "why would you talk to me? I wouldn't talk to me if I were you." In the end, my interviews with rioters in Phase One were with people who were already convicted of riots-related offences and incarcerated in prisons and young offender institutes.

In the early stages of doctoral work, I met PhD students working on riots-related topics through riots-related academic events. Some asked if I had contact with rioters who might be willing to become research participants. They assumed I had contacts through my involvement in RtR, but in fact I never knew the full names of rioter research participants and was unable to maintain contact with them due to RtR confidentiality procedures. I was also reflecting on research motivations and the notion of researchers trying to contact 'rioters' as outsiders. I concluded people with insider status would be better placed to tell these stories and I was better placed to interview people who were willing to engage with me at riot-related public conversations I was attending from late 2012 as a doctoral student.

Third, other than in Community Conversations and some journalistic pieces, RtR was not officially recording the experiences of gatekeepers and connectors in communities, such as professionals, youth and community workers, and activists who had first-hand experience of the riots (other than lawyers and police officers). During Phase One of RtR I had visited faith communities in Hackney with other researchers and heard views from children on estates who were more upset by police helicopters chasing rioters than the riots, as well as the recollections of faith leaders who had helped in the riot aftermath. The thesis was an opportunity to

capture some of these types of perspectives and to think beyond the five days of riot events which had been the focus of inquiry in RtR.

Instead of trying to reach people who were actively involved in rioting, soon into the doctoral research process I turned my focus to the people I was meeting at the public events discussing the riots outlined in the section above, considering how some of them were representing the riots in the aftermath.

Fourth, I was impressed by young people making films about the riots and taking them to community venues for discussion whilst adapting films in response to community feedback. The young people's films and the discussions surrounding them were impressive in their rootedness in localities, in their attempts to give a platform to the Duggan family and friends, and in their attempts to debunk the racist, ageist and classist stereotypes about rioters that dominated other coverage and outputs.

Finally, I am aware that whilst I was an 'outsider' at *The Guardian*, by the end of Phase Two, I became an 'insider' regarding RtR (as far as any of us who were contracted on daily rates to the project were 'inside'). RtR was my point of reference particularly in the first few years of doctoral research. I cite it throughout this thesis, and it provided a useful starting point and lens through which to view the riots. In places, for example in Chapter Five, I draw on *memories* of some RtR interviews and experiences to supplement the discussion of new data.

I have also listened to stories told about riots *beyond* the project and/or in *contra-distinction* to it. Consequently, doctoral research has informed my re-reading of the RtR project.

Conclusion

In this chapter, Part One provided an overview of the 2011 riots. This includes a summary and timeline of key events leading to the riots, starting with the death of Mark Duggan during police contact and events that unfolded in the days after his death, including five days and nights of riots. The section includes a discussion of the language used surrounding descriptive concepts such as 'riot'. A summary of

the socio-economic and political context to the 2011 riots concludes the section. I suggested that an understanding of Hall et al's articulation of conjuncture allows us to consider the riots as part of a wider trajectory (1978). This allows us to understand the riots as part of a wider moment, linked to an economic crisis (details of which are outlined in the next chapter).

Part Two of this chapter includes a summary of the research approach, including my research question; the rationale for taking this approach; the research methods, and an outline of how the thesis contributes to an understanding of the 2011 riots. The final part of this section included a summary of RtR and the relationship between doctoral work and my previous employment on the RtR project.

I conclude now by signposting to other chapters in the thesis.

Chapter Two focuses on a thematic review of the literature that helped me to develop the thesis and types of analysis. Chapter Three outlines the thesis methodology and individual methods used.

Chapters Four to Eight provide a summary of research findings. Within each of these chapters I lay out findings and any theory relevant to the chapter, discuss the findings in relation to theory and academic literature pertaining to riots in a designated 'discussion' section and finish each chapter with a designated 'conclusion' that summarises what is contained in the chapter.

Chapter Four focuses on party political responses to the riots and provides an analysis of processes surrounding the appointment of a government panel to investigate the riots and the content of their final report. Chapter Five examines government policies rolled out after the riots and government claims that they were riot responses. These policies include the TFP and anti-gang policies. Chapter Six explores what happened to 'official victims' who lost homes, property, and sense of security during the riots and those punished for riots involvement. Chapters Four to Six explore the notion that government responses to the riots were opportunistic.

Chapter Seven is focused on street protests and university occupations in the year before the 2011 riots, including the campaign to save the Educational Maintenance

Allowance (EMA) and protests against cuts to public services. In this chapter I also explore the representation of some of these issues in Grime music and UK Hip-Hop. In Chapter Eight riots counter-narratives are explored, particularly those articulated in new films and through new social media platforms set-up by young people frustrated by dominant negative representations of young people. The thesis ends with a small Conclusions Chapter pulling the strands together.

Next, I turn to an outline of literature used in the development of the thesis.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

<u>Introduction</u>

This thesis explores how the August 2011 England riots have been represented and responded to by a range of post-riots engaged constituencies. These responses and representations are extracted from a range of evidence including party political narratives; governmental interpretations; media commentaries; academic analyses; and counter-narratives that emerged during the thesis. This review includes literatures that address national trends and policy responses regarding the August 2011 riots. However, as research fieldwork was London-based, the review includes some London-focused literature.

In drawing on literature to help my analysis, I have been influenced by historic criminology riots literature. However, this literature review is inter-disciplinary and draws on the work of academics in urban geography, with reference to types of pre- and post-riot regeneration. Sociological literature explains patterns of inequalities, governance of the poor, and analysis of media practices that can be applied to the 2011 riots.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of how various literatures informed the development of the study and the decisions I made regarding the form of the study. For example, at the beginning of my research I read historic literature that focused on theories about riot crowd dynamics and riot causes. I outline how and why I moved from this literature to other sources that analysed broader factors surrounding the riots.

After outlining the rationale for including and excluding literatures in this chapter, I summarise types of literature that informed the processes and write-up of this thesis. This begins with a discussion of literature that informed the methods and methodological approach deployed in this study such as literature which illuminates the relationship between discourse and power. The chapter then moves to literature that reflects key thesis themes: neo-liberal governance; youth and young people; stigma and stigmatising discourse; underclass and social exclusion; Broken Britain; Big Society and Austerity Politics. The chapter concludes by contrasting different

types of academic responses to the 2011 riots including literature that examines the role of consumption in the riots and literature that focuses on more 'political' causes.

I have taken a thematic approach in this review, grouping literatures into eight key themes that have impacted the research. I have needed to be selective, and the literature reflects what I have found most useful, rather than providing a comprehensive analysis of the material on every topic.

Rationale for inclusion/exclusion of literatures

At the outset of doctoral work, I was new to criminology as an academic field. Whilst I had been working on the 2011 riots as a research topic (see discussion in Chapter One), I had not been able to theorise the riots in relation to historic literature and academic understandings of mass public disorder.

I began a literature review that focused on historical understandings of public disorder in the UK. Authors included Hobsbawm (1952, 1971) who suggested rioting became part of the fabric of collective bargaining and a form of protest against the state in pre-unionised eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain when there was no 'legitimate' form of parliamentary political representation or mechanism for collective representation. For Hobsbawm, these 'primitive rebels' (particularly the urban poor) would air frustrations at material conditions like lack of jobs through active public disorder. The historian E.P. Thompson (1968, 1971) showed how collective disorder events were motivated by a common sense of grievance and rooted in popular shared conceptions of 'custom' and 'justice' connected to agriculture and commerce. Rioting was an act of resistance towards landowners and owners of capital who had become detached from a sense of a 'just' or 'moral economy' held by the masses. This literature informed my thinking and planning as I set out to examine the diverse ways the August 2011 riots had been represented.

Because I have limited space to cover riot theories, rather than cover this historic literature in detail, I have chosen to include in this chapter *contemporary* authors who address these issues *with specific reference to the 2011 riots*. These contemporary authors – who stress the frustration of 2011 rioters at material conditions combined with an analysis of a neo-liberal state response that blamed

disorder on 'dangerous' groups and the lack of alternative narratives – are useful in examining the public disorder of August 2011.

As the thesis progressed, I focused more on the socio-political context in which the riots emerged (rather than the riot events) and found it useful to draw upon a literature of neo-liberal governance. In part, this research is theoretically underpinned by an understanding of the 2011 riots as a response to a crisis of neo-liberal governance. That discussion is located in literature that is broad in its outline of tactics of neo-liberal governance and specific in its application to events like the 2011 riots. Reference to this literature is repeated throughout the thesis and in this chapter.

Several of the themes in this chapter include an iteration of techniques of neo-liberal governance in contemporary austerity politics which were rolled out after the 2008 financial crash. This type of literature does not always directly address the 2011 riots (and in some cases precedes them), but political references to an underclass, readings of modern Britain as 'broken' and government 'Big Society' solutions provide a context in which to understand the riots and political responses to them in the years after the riot events.

The first theme, discourse, narrative and power, relates to methods and methodology. I have found it useful to read literature that outlines understandings of language and power to examine how 2011 riots have been understood and represented. I have drawn on authors who provide guidance on the critical questions we can ask of texts such as government speeches, reports, and policy documents, to illuminate underlying power relations. These authors include discourse theorists like Foucault and others who have developed his ideas in relation to understandings of discourse, narrative, and power. These helped my understanding of how and why groups responded to the riots, which also helped me to decide on methods of investigation within the fieldwork such as critical readings of government representations and social policy roll-out coalesced around the riots. The main summary and outline of these ideas is contained in the next chapter, Chapter Three.

The second theme of this review is concerned with definitions and tactics of governance associated with neo-liberal economics that are relevant to readings of events such as the 2011 riots. I draw from these understandings throughout the Findings Chapters.

The third theme touches on youth and youth transitions. Whilst the thesis isn't solely focused on youth, young people were often blamed for the riots and discussion about the riots in public life often related to anxiety about 'the state of youth'. Young people have also been particularly targeted and affected by austerity politics and this discussion is included within a later thematic elaboration of austerity.

The fourth theme, stigma and stigmatising discourse helps articulate the role of stigmatising language and practices aimed at rioters and their communities. This literature also helps us to understand the pre-planned social policy roll-out aimed at troubled or troubling citizens in the riot aftermath and demonstrates how stigmatising language was particularly deployed at youth.

The fifth theme articulates historic notions of an underclass. Notions of an underclass were invoked in the stigmatisation of rioters, their families and communities, and is linked to both Conservative Party and (New) Labour Party understandings of the urban poor in both rhetoric and policy making.

The sixth theme, Broken Britain and the Big Society, explores the agenda presented by the Conservative Party at the General Election of May 2010. This theme illuminates the thinking and planning already in place before the riots which influenced official responses to the riots.

The seventh theme, Austerity Politics, draws on literature that assesses the impact of cuts to public services as well as literature that theorises the August 2011 riots in relation to a response to the austerity agenda.

Finally, I discuss literature that directly addresses the 2011 riots in relation to riot events like looting and discussion on the role of consumption. I contrast these approaches with 'political' readings of the riots that argue we should read the riots as containing more than intent to consume and/or as being led by greed.

Thematic review of literature

I begin with literature that outlines understandings of discourse, narrative and power. Please note that an outline of how I have tried to apply these ideas in this thesis is contained within the next chapter, Chapter Three.

Discourse, narrative, and power

Literature that explores the principles of the respective (and overlapping) traditions of discourse and narrative analysis (Atkinson, 2000; Atkinson et al, 2010; Fairclough, 2013; Tamboukou and Livholts, 2015; Thomson 2011) helped me to interpret primary and secondary sources. I drew on these approaches to examine and analyse the words used to talk about riots and rioters; what stories were told in public life; what stories were concealed or revealed in the post-riot time frame; how and why dominant narratives were contested; how we might understand the riots as a moment in a wider trajectory of events; and the relationship between the stories told about rioters in public discourse and social policy formation.

Tamboukou and Livolts (2015) outline discourse and narrative methods and their theoretical origins whilst contending that as there is no prescriptive method for doing either, this opens the possibility of using aspects of different traditions in their interrelation (p.5). They locate modern iterations of discourse analysis within the work of Michel Foucault from the 1970s as being concerned with the active role of language in the production of knowledge and power through text and talk, genre and representation. The term discourse can be used to refer to the specifics of language, such as the words or metaphors used, including consideration of why one concept is used over another.

Tamboukou (2015) suggests that narrative research involves a sense of space and time and raises questions about how the past is contracted into the telling of stories, including how cultural memory works in the narration of stories (p.44).

Chase suggests that narrative theorists define narrative as a distinct form of discourse; related to meaning-making through the shaping or ordering of

experiences and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time (2013, p.56).

Such an approach affords an emphasis on the meaning that people attach to events, rather than a focus on the minute details of those events themselves. Chase (2013, p.62, drawing on Polkinghorne, 2007) suggests that:

> The researcher's primary aim is not to discover whether narratives are accurate accounts of actual events, but to understand the meanings people attach to those events. (Chase, 2013, p.62)

Ideology and hegemony

For Fairclough, a key proponent of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), one of the key purposes of CDA is to investigate how practices, events and texts arise from and are ideologically shaped by *relations of power* and *struggles over power* (Fairclough and Wodak, 1995). Ideologies reside in texts and are open to diverse interpretations (Fairclough and Wodak,1997). Fairclough argues ideologies are:

> representations of aspects of the world which contribute to establishing and maintaining relations of power, domination, and exploitation ... Analysis of texts is an important aspect of ideological analysis and critique. (Fairclough, 2003, p.218)

In addition to the concept of ideology, an interpretation of the post-Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony (1971) is central to understandings of discourse and power in approaches to discourse such as CDA. Gramsci observes that the maintenance of contemporary power rests not only on coercive force, but on winning majority consent through 'peaceful' means of hegemony. This 'hegemonic' process and the search to achieve a state of 'hegemony,' where it feels impossible to challenge a dominant viewpoint, has been influential in furthering understanding of how consent is won and maintained in regimes of governance.

Gramsci sought to move beyond Marxist dichotomies that understood capitalist society as dualities of a material economic base supported by a cultural superstructure. He argued that dominant social classes use discursive processes in the cultural superstructure to create popular consent for unequal distribution of power and wealth. He used the term hegemony to describe this discursive

construction of consciousness and identity. The concept of hegemony implies the cultural superstructure is more than a reflection of material economic reality; it may contribute to the creation of social reality itself, even if the economic base ultimately determines people's interests and class (Rear, 2013, p.3). According to Gramsci (1971), hegemony is a state of social consensus achieved without recourse to violence or coercion.

> … we can say hegemony is the expansion of a discourse, or set of discourses, into a dominant horizon of social orientation and action by means of articulating unfixed elements into partially fixed moments in a context crisscrossed by antagonistic forces. (Torfing, 1999, p.101 cited in Rear, 2013, pp.7-8)

When discourses become hegemonic, the social practices they structure can appear so natural that society fails to see understandings of 'natural' behaviour as the result of hegemonic practices.

For Gramsci, the domination of a specific discourse is never complete or permanent and can be challenged by counter-hegemonic practices that attempt to install an alternative hegemony (Rear, 2013, p.8). Gramsci sought to account for the ability of groups like the working-classes to recognise their own social oppression and to resist it.

Discourse theorists including Laclau and Mouffe (1985) draw on Gramsci to expand the category of class. They reject the notion that society is a single field of hegemonic struggle and suggest it takes place in multiple social domains including race and gender.

While Foucault identifies a dominant thought paradigm articulated in multiple discourses, many CDA theorists and discourse theorists like Laclau and Mouffe (1985) present a more conflicted picture where different discourses co-exist or struggle for the right to define truth. Foucault emphasised conflict at the discursive level; for him, all discourses are productive and generate a counter-discourse that opposes the dominant discourse (2002).

Neo-liberalism and aspects of neo-liberal governance

An examination of specific readings of neo-liberalism and modes of governance are relevant to understanding both the triggers for the riot events of 2011 and the form and content of state responses.

In a critique of the use of the term neo-liberalism in literature about the city and urbanism, Pinson and Morel Journel (2016) define neo-liberalism as:

> … the set of intellectual streams, policy orientations and regulatory arrangements that strive to extend market mechanisms, relations, discipline, and ethos to an ever-expanding spectrum of spheres of social activities. (Pinson and Morel Journel, 2016, p.137)

Hall (2011) locates the elaboration of neo-liberal governance in what he calls the crisis of the late 1960s and 70s when the UK and US economies went into recession. UK Prime Minister (PM) Margaret Thatcher (first elected 1979) and US President Reagan (first elected 1981) saw an opportunity to usher in a new form of economic and political governance. This included ending the central educative role of the state and shifting to a more authoritarian state role. This shift in governance from 'above' harnessed and to some extent legitimised populist moves 'below' (Hall, 2011). Hall paints a picture of a contradictory strategy where the state presents itself as anti-statist, while operating in a state centrist manner. Under this mode of governance, market mechanisms are extended into public life, while public services that benefit the poor are reduced and penal policies aimed at the poor increased.

Hall reflected on the potential longevity of PM Thatcher's and others' governance methods (1985). Hall argued that Thatcher had won power 'on a long leash' and that in the long term the Radical Right were likely to succeed. Indeed, we can see a consolidation of neo-liberal governance from PM Thatcher and PM (John) Major Conservative governments, through to Labour PM (Tony) Blair and PM (Gordon) Brown governments. Neo-liberalism was escalated by the UK Coalition Government formed in 2010 and the Conservative governments that followed.

For Wacquant, neo-liberalism has an institutional core that makes it distinct and recognisable (2012, (b) p.71). He argues it is not just an economic regime focused

on privatisation of services and a reduction in the role of the state, but a *political* project where a centaur-state practises liberalism at the top of the class structure and punitive paternalism at the bottom. In *Urban Outcasts* (2008), Wacquant draws on ethnographic work in the South Side of Chicago and La Courneuve in Paris to compare French banlieues and U.S. ghettos. He argues they are fundamentally different, but often treated as comparable in neo-liberal policy-making terms. Wacquant concludes that working-class territories of European cities are best conceptualised as anti-ghettos where class, not 'race', is the main organising principle of social life. State techniques solidify the state of *'advanced marginality'* experienced by significant portions of the 'precarious' population. Serving different social functions, some districts become reservoirs of low-paid labour, while others become human 'warehouses' (2008, p.11). In Wacquant's reading of the neo-liberal state, the urban poor are both targeted and 'made outcast', with the latter operating partly through discourse. Foucault (1991) referred to this treatment as "exemplary disciplining" while Dikeç refers to these areas in France as 'badlands of the republic' (2011).

For Wacquant, the neo-liberal state is both absent and active in citizens' lives (2008, 2012). It is absent and 'rolled-back' in terms of the withdrawal of state provision of services and collectivist welfare support structures, including genuine opportunities for all citizens (Squires and Lea, 2012). It is active and 'rolled-in' in terms of governance of the poor through use of surveillance and containment including welfare conditionality (Rodger, 2008; Squires and Goldsmith 2017).

Conditionality is a system where welfare 'benefits' are subject to conditions, including unpaid work and sanctions if conditions are not met (see Flint, 2019; Slater 2012; Wacquant et al, 2014). Individuals are prohibited or required to desist from designated anti-social behaviours, and this is enforced through legal mechanisms like Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). These mechanisms also require 'anti-social claimants' to engage with support services as a condition of welfare provision including housing and education (Squires, 2008).

Neo-liberal governance extends from the penal state to the *security* state*,* particularly through surveillance and regulation of urban space via technologies like

CCTV. Here even 'peaceful' protest is seen as a 'disruption' that needs management and policing (Lea and Hallsworth, 2013, p.28).

The neo-liberal state's 'advanced marginalisation' of the poor (Wacquant, 2007, 2008), or, to use Dikeç's term (2017), 'exclusion of the poor', is linked to a negative narration of places where the poor reside. This 'territorial stigmatisation' extends to people associated with these areas (elaborated further in the next section on Stigma).

In an examination of party politics and neo-liberal governance, Mouffe (2000) questions the so called 'centre' ground in politics, the nature of democracy and its embrace or disavowal of conflict. Mouffe argues that former US Democrat Party politicians like President Clinton, and former UK Labour Prime Minister, Tony Blair, made the fundamental mistake of believing a hegemonic order is the goal for democracy, and any inherent challenges are the threat (p.113). She suggests we need to embrace 'agonism', a condition where conflict and disagreement between friendly adversaries is encouraged and seen as central to healthy democracy (p.13), arguing that dissent is the partner of consensus (p.113).

Institutions through which power relations of dominance and violence can be contested are vital for a healthy democracy:

> … to negate the ineradicable character of antagonism and to aim at a universal rational consensus – this is the real threat to democracy. Indeed, this can lead to violence being unrecognised and hidden behind appeals to 'rationality', as is often the case in liberal thinking which disguises the necessary frontiers and forms of exclusion behind pretences of 'neutrality'. (Mouffe, 2000, p.22).

Mouffe suggests we need to redefine boundaries between left and right politics rather than abandon them, and that ideological *differences* are central to a healthy liberal democracy. Otherwise, we risk political disaffection and declining participation in the political process (p.114). The real task for the Left, says Mouffe, is to come up with a credible and clearly articulated alternative to neo-liberalism rather than capitulating to neo-liberal hegemony and pretending otherwise (p.121).

Next, I consider the theme of young people and youth.

Young people and youth

I recognise that a significant proportion of those involved in the riots, as participants, as victims, as family members of both groups, were young people.

In this chapter and throughout the thesis I draw on elements of youth studies literature including the assessment of impact of some neo-liberal practices of governance on young people, such as austerity politics, stigmatising language, and criminalising processes.

Youth studies and a focus on youth transitions provokes us to consider how youth has been understood and constructed. An influential theme that has run through UK research on the sociology of youth, or youth studies, is a consideration of young people transitioning from youth to adulthood, especially from school to work, from family home to own home and other markers of adulthood viewed as a rite of passage (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). Murray and Gayle (2017) suggest that it is now accepted that with changes in work patterns, the churn of young people in and out of education and employment, including periods of long-term unemployment, and changes in housing opportunities amongst other factors, the traditional rite of passage from youth to adult status has been disrupted. They chart how young people's opportunities and experiences have changed over the postwar decades; the period that has traditionally been termed as the 'youth' phase appears to be extending further into adulthood. They suggest that a key interest in youth transitions research is that young people's lives are frequently held up as a barometer of wider social change (Murray and Gayle, 2017, p.9).

Barry (2007) considers the use of youth transitions research in criminology and in understanding youth offending, pointing out that several authors were making the case for criminology to accommodate youth transitions in trying to understand an individual criminal career, concluding at the time that this was not yet being pursued in any systematic way.

MacDonald (2006) stresses the importance of qualitative, biographical and long-term research in attempting to understand youth transitions. MacDonald reviews youth research where young people's biographies, some that included crime, were

marked by flux and did not roll on deterministically to foregone conclusions. Critical moments that were unpredictable could turn transitions towards or away from crime. He therefore cautions against approaches that prioritise individual explanations for transitions at the expense of an assessment of the 'risks' presented to young people by a range of contexts.

Criminal Justice System interactions during youth transitions have been pursued in a range of guises in recent years, including biographical longitudinal research and use of mixed methods research, including cohort studies. McAra and McVie (2010) reflect on a longitudinal mixed methods study of pathways into and out of offending amongst a cohort of more than 4,000 young people in the city of Edinburgh. Key findings include that: involvement in serious offending by young people is strongly linked to experiences of multiple aspects of vulnerability and social adversity; early identification of at-risk children is imprecise, and inappropriate use of formal controls risks recycling young people around the justice system, irreversibly labelling and stigmatising them, with negligible beneficial effect. Pathways out of offending are facilitated or impeded by critical moments in the early teenage years, particularly the experience of exclusion from school. Appropriately targeted diversionary strategies can increase desistance from serious offending.

In this chapter a further specific discussion of the treatment and representation of youth within literature is contained within broader headings of stigma and stigmatising discourse; and reference is made to youth within the themes of underclass; austerity politics and 2011 riots literature.

Stigma and stigmatising discourse

I start this discussion with particular reference to stigma, youth and young people before moving on to a wider application of the notion of stigma in relation to phenomena such as the riots.

a. Young people and stigma

Blackman and Rogers' (eds), *Youth Marginality in Britain* (2017), is concerned with examining and challenging the representation of youth within dominant discourses,

as well as illuminating types of material realities for poor youth. In the foreword to the book, MacDonald (2017), notes how a twin discourse of 'youth in trouble' and 'as trouble' have historically shaped representations of youth (p.xiii). Blackman and Rogers (p.7) list some of the terms used to talk about young people under hardship. These include 'marginal', 'underclass', 'precariat', 'dispossessed', 'feckless', 'rabble', 'yobs' etc. We might add the terms 'feral' and 'mindless,' which were repeatedly used in public discourse to label youthful protestors and rioters since the 2010/11 student protests and were repeated widely in public discourse after the August 2011 riots.

Hall et al's, *Policing the Crisis* (1978), offers a re-articulation of Stanley Cohen's (1972) theory of folk devils and moral panics. Cohen had outlined the phenomenon of 1960s sub-cultural 'mods' and 'rockers', who were presented as scary, violent youth through an informal alliance of media, police, and politicians. This led to a 'moral panic' about this type of young person and the casting of mods and rockers as folk devils.

Policing the Crisis, written collaboratively by members of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, used the notion of folk devil and moral panic to examine the articulation of the phenomenon of 'mugging' by media and politicians during the 1970s. Hall et al demonstrated how street crime in the UK became cast as a 'new' type of crime, including deployment of types of newspaper reportage and police statistics. However, an examination of crime statistics by Hall et al showed little actual change in rates and patterns of crime. The narrative of the 'black mugger' filled newspaper column inches for the press and provided justification for the police to 'address' street crime. It may also have elevated crime statistics through the deployment of police tactics such as 'stop and search'. Moral panic was fuelled by media amplification of an issue and an over-focus on black youth.

In these two cases of the negative characterisation of mods and rockers and the black mugger, the state presents youth behaviour as a new and scary phenomenon by illuminating, amplifying, and stigmatising certain types of youth. These groups of young people are negatively labelled by self-interested actors. This operates in self-referential and replicating ways, to the extent of creating a potential self-fulfilling

prophecy as police may believe the narration of this new type of criminal young person and harass them as a result, thus causing conflict between police and this group.

Hall et al also focused on a crisis in British capitalism at the start of the 1970s and a lack of collective consent for government policies, as unemployment rose and living standards stagnated. For Hall et al, the creation of a folk-devil in the form of a 'black mugger' justified more punitive criminal justice policies and provided a diversion from state failures, through the blaming of immigrants and their descendants as the cause of crisis, rather than state failure. This led to special police units tasked with 'stop and search' procedures to 'prevent' crime and more punitive sentencing for street crimes. Statements by the police, judges and politicians were important sources for the press, and most press stories were based on police statements or court cases presented to the public as facts.

Hall did not suggest this was an active conspiracy by the ruling class but, in Gramscian terms, they achieved hegemony through a self-referencing portrayal of a 'new' phenomenon. Thus, consent was gained for more authoritarian policing of black communities – in part through media construction and structuring of knowledge where anxieties could be projected onto a racialised cultural figure.

Revisiting *Policing the Crisis* and exploring its enduring legacy, one of the authors of the original text, Jefferson (2014 (b)), recalls that sensitisation and controlling activities by the authorities preceded any 'dramatic event'. This was how the 1972-73 mugging panic unfolded. A change in the way troubling events were being signified within mass media was also explored, deploying the idea of a deviancy amplification spiral, which they re-named a signification spiral. They identified two key escalating mechanisms in this spiral: 'convergence,' where a specific issue is linked with other problem issues (making it more threatening), and 'thresholds,' where the threat potential of any issue can be escalated by linking it with more threatening thresholds. Historical contextualisation was crucial in understanding the meaning of a moral panic and Hall et al located mugging within the Gramscian notion of conjuncture (the latter is outline in Chapter One).

Nijjar (2015) draws on Cohen's notion of moral panic to understand the 2011 riots, and examines how the newspaper, the *Daily Express*, represented these events. Whilst she focuses on one newspaper, her analysis can be extrapolated to wider media coverage. Utilising critical discourse analysis, she identifies themes that characterise the *Daily Express* coverage of the riots. These include the identification of young people as the primary participants in the disorder, and consistent reference to them as 'thugs', 'yobs' and 'looters.' She argues this synthesis of youth and criminality resemble Hall et al 's (1978, p.223) notion of 'convergence', where young people and crime become semantically linked. The leather jacket of the folk devil of the 1960s is replaced with the 'hoodie'.

Valluvan et al (2013) also apply the theory of folk devils and moral panics to the narration of the 2011 riots in public life:

> ... the racial pathologisation of black youth as 'folk devils', gangsters, and drug dealers, and, generally, as culturally degenerate, was as evident in the popular and media narration of the 2011 riots which followed as it was in the 1980s. (Valluvan et al, 2013, p.4)

In a Foucauldian reading of the positioning of youth, exploring links between discourse and action, Kelly (2007) argues that the problem for young people is that they increasingly cause adults anxiety, and that youth are discursively constructed as a threat to wider society. This makes them a target for increasing amounts of government interventions including stigmatising and disciplinary practices.

> How we imagine these intersections produces our understandings of Youth – and these understandings have real consequences in the lives of young people. In this sense we can argue that anxieties and mistrust about youth have become increasingly governmentalised – rationalised, institutionalised and abstracted under the auspices of a constellation of State agencies, quasi-autonomous non-government organisations, and non-government organisations (Foucault, 1991; Rose, 1999). This governmentalisation energises processes of surveillance – surveillance that is targeted and focused, in the interests of economy, at those populations that pose, or face, the greatest dangers and risks. (Kelly, 2007, p.167)

Kelly contends that this institutionalised mistrust of youth is further structured along class, gender, and ethnic lines. The consequences intended or otherwise, of this mistrust are experienced differently by populations of young people.

A material consequence of stigmatising language and practices is summed up by Bond and Hallsworth (2017) who suggest that young people are often positioned in dominant discourse as an underclass, devoid of a work ethic and addicted to benefits (2017, p.75). They suggest young people are often portrayed as violent perpetrators, yet are made vulnerable by stigmatisation, deployed to justify cuts to access to public services.

b. Wider processes of stigma

Wacquant (2007) outlines the use and purpose of using stigma, attached to places inhabited by the poor (including terms like 'sink estate'), which create *'territorial stigmatisation'.* In other words, people are stigmatised, discredited, and devalued because of the urban places they occupy and/or are associated with. The stigma attached to people and place is used to justify treating both differently. We can see this in operation in the site of the first August 2011 riot event, Tottenham (discussed in Chapter Six).

In a twist on this notion of territorial stigma, Wallace (2012 and 2014) argues that in order to de-legitimise the 2011 'rioters', they were stigmatised and made abject by politicians and media by portraying them as having harmed 'their' communities. In this invocation, the usually stigmatised areas are portrayed as homogenous sites of goodness, harmed by bad rioters:

> … dominant narratives of the riots often played on racialised and unitary notions of communities as pre-existing, cohesive political and social life-worlds that had been lost, disrespected, and victimised by the 'rioters' (Wallace, 2014, p.14).

Wallace (2014) contends that the diverse and multiple events of August 2011 were 'staged' and 'storied' by media and politicians to represent socio-spatial 'communities' as fallen, harmed or resurgent. This disguised the governing dualities of abjection/exclusion and participation/responsibility.

Addressing neo-liberalism and its 'revolting subjects', a 'thick description' of neo-liberal governance, Tyler (2013 (a)) draws on inter-disciplinary literature to articulate a form of neo-liberal state symbolic violence through the paradigm of 'social abjection' (p.3) or 'othering' of groups.

According to Tyler these 'others' are scapegoats – immigrants, gypsies, rioters – who become 'national abjects'. Tyler refers to these figures as:

> Ideological conductors mobilised [by politicians and media commentators] to do the dirty work of neo-liberal governmentality … symbolic and material scapegoats, 'mediating agencies' through which the social decomposition effected by market deregulation and welfare retrenchment are legitimised. Tyler, 2013 (a), p.9.

Against an insecure and precarious economic climate, these can include fear of the immigrant or the rioter and are semantically linked to policies and stories (narratives) concerned with border controls (and, we might add, a political narrative that pushed the need for punitive sentencing of offenders such as rioters).

For Tyler, stigmatisation acts as a form of governance that functions through the generation of 'social insecurity' based on the active crafting of fear and disgust amongst the public, of the immigrant or rioter for example. This is undertaken by an informal alliance between politicians and media ultimately mobilised to elicit and win public consent for punitive cuts to public services (Jensen and Tyler, 2015). Tyler (2013) examines how public consent is gained for policies that 'corrode democracy' (p.5) and 'securitise' profits for the super-rich (p.6). She draws on Foucault and argues that neo-liberalism should not be identified with laissez-faire approaches to government, but with permanent vigilance, activity and intervention (Tyler, 2013 (a), p.6).

> … only through an empirical focus on the lives of those *constituted as abject* can we consider the forms of political agency available to those at the sharp edge of subjugation within prevailing systems of power (Tyler, 2013 (a), p.38).

How can the revulsion of the state towards those abjected and at the bottom of the class structure be directed back towards the state? Tyler's use of the term 'revolting

subjects' allows us to consider how the abjection may also be a tool to fight back (Tyler 2013, p.13 (a). Tyler's chapter on the events of August 2011, *The Kids are Revolting*, examines tropes of underclass (discussed later in this chapter), feral youth and mindlessness. She uses her concept of social abjection to explain how the riots were characterised by politicians and media as 'apolitical' and locates the causes of the riots as part of a neo-liberal legitimation crisis (p.183).This allows us to place the August 2011 riots within a trajectory of events wider than five days of rioting (Bloom, 2012; Dikeç, 2017; Hancox 2018; Hall et al, 1978; Thörn et al, 2016).

Tyler's 2020 book, *Stigma: the machinery of inequality* (that she calls a sister book to *Revolting Subjects*), develops her thesis further and, articulates stigma again as a productive form of power, which is used as a mode of governance, a violence from above (2020, p.27). Tyler also suggests anti-stigma resistance might be key to exploding our current conjuncture by pointing to a history of anti-stigma resistance struggles (p.20). We might consider Black Lives Matter (BLM) campaigns in this light, as well as the memorialising of people who died during police contact at United Friends and Family (UFF) marches which fight for justice and keep the memory of loved ones, who died during police contact, alive (Elliot Cooper et al, 2014, p.161).

The othering and abjection of rioters within dominant discourse is explored further in Chapter Four. Next, I explore the social construction of the notion of an underclass and how it has been deployed in responses to the 2011 riots.

Underclass and social exclusion

The rhetorical response to the 2011 riots by politicians and media was to characterise rioters as a specific type of young person, associated with criminal values, who were linked to troubled families and communities (outlined in Chapter Four).

> ... Government, which sought to portray the riots not as a form of
> protest that could be linked to social and economic inequalities
> but as the product of the absence of morality and community in
> sections of the urban underclass (Solomos, 2011, 2.2).

The term underclass and the meanings attached to it are contested and literature outlined here helps us understand its meanings and historic use. Not all politicians and commentators who draw from this type of understanding of poverty explicitly use the term underclass in their discussion of topics such as riots or poverty. However, if we understand where the term originated and the assumptions associated with it, we can see how and where the idea of an underclass has been animated in relation to the 2011 riots.

Themes raised in literature regarding the underclass suggest it is often used to negatively describe a group of poor people who are characterised as different from the 'deserving poor' and 'ordinary' society (see Blackman and Rogers, 2017; Crossley, 2015; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Searle, 1979; Welshman, 2013).

The underclass is cast within different iterations as making choices to engage in some or all of the following behaviours: unemployment; uptake of state benefits, and an inclination towards criminal and deviant behaviours. This is characterised as learned behaviour passed from family and peers between and through generations. Lister (1999) documents how the concept of the underclass is expressed by some proponents of the term in relation to disease, contamination and, we might add in relation to riots discourse, contagion and epidemic.

Crossley (2015) outlines some ways an understanding of poverty has been linked to problematic types of families, communities, and behaviours that form an underclass. This includes Victorian concerns about a 'social residuum' in relation to the job market, and later 'unemployables', who became the target of social reformers and politicians, including the Eugenics Society. The latter were influential in promoting the idea of a 'social problem group' in the 1930s and 'problem families' after the Second World War. Viewing the issue as related to inherited traits, they attempted to reduce the fertility of the unemployed by popularising birth control, and a voluntary sterilisation campaign aimed at preventing the propagation of 'defectives' (see also Searle, 2011).

Welshman (2005) outlines how in June 1972, in a speech about poverty, Sir Keith Joseph, then Secretary of State for Social Services, referred to a 'cycle of

deprivation'. Subsequently, a large-scale Department of Health and Social Security-Social Science Research Council Research Programme on 'Transmitted Deprivation,' was established. Welshman charts continuities between this and Joseph's earlier concern with 'problem families'. Joseph went on to work as a minister in the Margaret Thatcher government in the first part of the 1980s, becoming one of her key allies, and is 'credited' in part with shaping the emerging neo-liberal Thatcherite policy making that defined the ideology of her (and subsequent) UK governments.

Charles Murray is one of the most famous and controversial proponents of the underclass as a lens through which to examine and understand poverty (and in the US context, race). At the invitation of *The Sunday Times*, in 1989 he visited Britain from the USA in search of the 'underclass', (Lister, 1999). Lister discusses two influential papers written by Murray emphasising trends in 'illegitimacy', crime and unemployment, marriage, and the state of the British family. The focus on the behaviours of the underclass for Murray include 'undesirable behaviour', failure to hold down a job, truancy from school and casual violence.

By 2001, Murray was 'refining' his underclass thesis in relation to the US and UK, stating:

> I do not mean people who are merely poor, but people at the margins of society, unsocialised and often violent ... parents who mean well but who cannot provide for themselves, who give nothing back to the neighbourhood, and whose children are the despair of the teachers who have to deal with them. (Murray, 2001 p.3).

In *The Bell Curve* (1994), Herrnstein and Murray argue that intelligence quotient (IQ) is genetically and racially pre-determined and cannot be significantly affected by social class, environment, or education. To put it crudely, their argument is that 'white' people are innately intellectually superior to 'non-whites.'

Criticisms included that IQ tests are constructed to test certain types of cultural capital and that intelligence and race cannot be measured by universally agreed measures. Reyes (2019) argues this is a classic eugenics argument where

Herrnstein and Murray apportion behavioural trends like single motherhood to a set of cultural values, whilst viewing poverty and criminal behaviour as the result of low IQ. Their theory implies certain populations must be managed and contained 'for the good of the nation.' Cazenave and Neubeck (2001) demonstrate the implications of theories like that of Murray and Hernstein. Referring to their ideas as promoting a cognitive underclass made up of low-income people with lower-than-average-intelligence, these powerful ideas influence electorates and policy makers with respect to African Americans. Cazenave and Neubeck (2001) argue that welfare policy has been deeply racist, with theories such as those expressed in *The Bell Curve*, encouraging politicians to present racist ideologies as facts.

However, not all iterations of an underclass set out to blame people for being on the margins in relation to paid work. Lister (1999) points to perspectives that implied members were *not* necessarily causing their own plight and demonstrated the impact of discriminatory employment and housing policies on minority ethnic groups. In an essay which helped to popularise the notion of an 'underclass' in Britain, Sivanandan (1976) attacked the creation of an 'underclass' in Western Europe and the USA. The result, he contends, is a 'symbiosis between racism and poverty' under multinational capitalism. Sivanandan considers the intersection of race and class in work that located capitalism within an understanding of a history of imperialism and offered an analysis of structural racism ahead of its time.

Others, including Guy Standing's work on the 'precariat' (2011, 2014 (a) and (b)) have attempted to unpack how modern class relationships operate in terms of the job market. The term precariat is used by Standing to describe differentiated and shared experiences of insecurity in relation to income and employment. In this re-casting of social class and relationships to the workplace, a low-paid rioter and a public sector police officer may share a set of precarious structural circumstances relating to economic insecurity.

It is the emphasis on cultural and behavioural patterns to characterise the underclass that has become so controversial within the so-called 'underclass thesis'. These have become embedded in a narrative of poverty that talks about 'long-term dependency' on the state. These iterations, particularly popular with and

utilised by neo-liberal governments, have downplayed the role of structural inequalities in poverty and emphasised a deficit amongst groups of people who, it is implied, hold faulty cultural values and make bad lifestyle choices. It was these types of casting of a racialised underclass that were invoked after the riots (see Chapter Four).

MacDonald and Marsh (2005) suggest that invocations of the underclass never disappeared from political discourse and policy making but were subsumed by New Labour Governments into a focus on 'social exclusion' and concerns about 'social cohesion' (p.13). Here there was a focus on places and the people who live in them (p.19). They demonstrate that the new social exclusion agenda was underpinned by older elements associated with the underclass and suggest the idea that work should be the focus of tackling social exclusion promoted by New Labour Governments for example, ignored an inconvenient truth, that paid work does not necessarily prevent exclusion (p. 20).

In another shift in the characterisation of the underclass, Hayward and Yar (2006) argue that the 'chav' became a new socially constructed underclass and switched emphasis from 'concerns' or 'moral panics' about poor people and their relationship to the workplace, to a 'concern' about their patterns of consumption. They point out that the word 'chav' has long-established associations with marginalisation and social exclusion. In terms of its etymology, 'chav' owes its origins to the Romany dialect word for small child ('chavo' or 'chavi'). In this iteration of the underclass the chav is seen as vulgar, lacking in 'taste,' and not 'classy' because of their consumption choices. The word 'chav' has been used pejoratively, aimed at single mothers, young people in sportswear, and working-class celebrities with lots of new money but no 'class' to go with it. They are cast as 'flawed consumers' unable to make the right choices (Hayward and Yar, 2006, p.18):

> ... in a cruel irony, rather than helping to recreate the purported
> lush life of so called 'celebrity chavs', street-level attempts to
> mobilise cultural capital based on overt displays of designer
> clothing have instead inspired a whole new raft of bizarre micro
> social control mechanisms, including everything from town centre
> pubs and night clubs refusing entry to individuals wearing certain

brands within their premises ... to the recent 'zero tolerance' policy imposed on 'designer hoodies' and baseball caps by major shopping centres ... badges of identity serve also to function as overt signifiers of deviance (Hayward and Yar, 2006, pp.22-23).

Rhodes (2013) argues that a discourse of whiteness became embroiled in the politics of blame following the 2011 riots, in the linking of the 'chav' to a 'feral underclass':

> ... the latest manifestation of increasing anxiety about a loss of 'respectability' of swathes of the 'white working-classes', and their replacement by an apparently dysfunctional, socially redundant and morally unrestrained section of society. (Rhodes, 2013, p.50)

Rhodes explores the idea that not all whites are seen as equally white (pp.51-52). Rhodes suggests that themes of interracial contamination and racial degeneracy remain central to representations of the 'chav'. This symbolic 'darkening' is used to taint the 'whiteness' of those it targets (p.53). Such castings of the white chav are also used to denigrate the ongoing importance of race and its inter-section with class inequalities.

In Chapter Four we see how the term 'chav' was used by one commentator to accuse white working-class youth of 'becoming black' in their consumption choices, blaming both the choices and the individuals making these choices for the 2011 riots. We can see echoes of the rioter as a flawed consumer in some responses to the 2011 riots, considered later in the chapter in relation to 'looting.'

MacDonald (1997) points out that whilst in the USA the underclass has become a code for race, in Britain it has been directed towards negative portrayals of youth. Social policies to deal with the underclass have largely been directed at young people, including the reduction of benefits to single mothers, the withdrawal of unemployment benefits for under-18s, the growth in workfare (working for benefits), punitive sentencing of young offenders and authoritarian restrictions on young people's cultures and social lives (MacDonald, 1997, p.18).

> ...I suggest that the underclass debate is in large part a debate about youth, even if some writers are less than explicit about the

fact that their prime suspects (or subjects) are young people.
(MacDonald, 1997, p.19)

MacDonald charts how this concern about youth behaviour took place against a backdrop of industrial restructuring in the 1980s, the collapse of traditional workplace trajectories and the challenges that this placed on youth transitions to adulthood (p. 22). MacDonald argued that if the underclass theory were to be substantiated, there would need to be proof that young people in these localities named as such were being socialised into a *distaste for* work and traditional patterns of family life, and a *taste for* crime and welfare dependence, all learned from economically sidelined parents.

Revisiting some of these complexities, in 2008 MacDonald reflected on years of ethnographic research conducted by himself and colleagues on the life transitions of young adults from one of Britain's poorest neighbourhoods in Teesside. The research provides evidence that contradicts the casting of young people as an underclass (pp. 236-237):

> Our interviewees were born between the mid-70s and mid-80s, the period in which a quarter of all jobs – and a half of all manufacturing and construction jobs – were lost to the Teesside economy ... The shocks and crises of global-local economic change scrapped culturally set ways of achieving secure, 'respectable' working-class adulthood ... working-class young adults here still possess conventional – even 'hyper-conventional' – attitudes to employment but have been dispossessed of opportunities to realise them in anything other than sub-standard, 'poor work'... (MacDonald, 2008, pp. 245-246).

MacDonald reflects that understanding these historical processes of socio-economic change led him and his colleagues to conclude that rather than 'underclass,' these young people are better described as 'the economically marginal' - and 'economic marginalisation' is the best explanation of their condition.

Garrett (2019) suggests the 2011 riots were a turning point in a reanimation of the underclass in British political rhetoric, in the form of the Troubled Family. The Troubled Families Programme (TFP), branded as a policy response to the riots by government, is discussed in Chapter Five. Garrett argues that to understand neo-

liberal governance in relation to inequalities and marginalisation, we need to examine language and terms within the dominant discourse, including media and party-political representations of the riots. Garret links these to other cultural representations of the poor including 'poverty porn' where the lifestyles of the poor are made the subject of TV programmes like *Benefits Street* (2014, 2015). Drawing on Wacquant's notion of territorial stigmatisation (2008), Garrett argues the iteration of the sink estate (and associated stigma attached to place) and the chav *before* the riots meant some commentators were influenced to read the riots in ways that dismissed other readings linked to racialised and classed structural inequalities and inequities.

To understand why specific types of families were singled out after the riots we can return to Hall et al. Jensen (2018) usefully draws upon *Policing the Crisis* in her book, *Parenting the Crisis,* focusing on Prime Minister, David Cameron's, post-riots pronouncements on troubled families as her starting point. Here she utilises Hall's articulation of 'authoritarian populism' promoted by Margaret Thatcher, where the state is the 'discipliner' of the immoral welfare recipient, striking miner or rioter, whilst these abjected groups are blamed for a public crisis. The argument here is that public consent is orchestrated to achieve consent for punitive narratives and policies aimed at 'othered' groups semantically attached to a welfare crisis. Ultimately, Jensen demonstrates how the Coalition Government's response to the 2011 riots was in relation to a manufactured 'common sense' that undermined the welfare safety net, in the name of 'responsibilising' families. Here she draws from (and writes with) Imogen Tyler's notion of 'abject' citizens, such as rioters (in Jensen and Tyler, 2015). Rioters, troubled families and 'benefits broods' amongst others become ideological conductors for neo-liberal governance to fuel public disgust and win public consent for punitive cuts and policies like the Welfare Reform Act of 2012, which accelerated conditionality attached to benefits (Patrick, 2014).

The most recent broad iteration of the underclass thesis can be seen in the Coalition Government's outline of a 'Broken Britain' and I turn to this literature next. Broken Britain was a dominant government narrative before the riots. The riots

became stitched to Broken Britain and inextricably woven into how the government narrated the riots.

Broken Britain and the Big Society

In 2010, Philip Blond, a former lecturer and advocate of 'progressive conservatism' outlined a notion of civic conservatism, arguing Britain was broken by too much state intervention and free market economics (Blond, 2010). Listing a litany of alleged failures, he argued for more civic participation and engagement to mend Broken Britain through the promotion of volunteerism. This 'fix' became known as the 'Big Society.' His ideas influenced the leader of the Conservative Party, David Cameron, who became Prime Minister of a Coalition Government in May 2010. Introduced by David Cameron in his Speech to the Conservative Party Conference on 8th October 2009, the principles behind the Big Society were explained in detail (Cameron, 2009). Cameron positioned it in contrast to Labour Governments (since 1997), which he cast as 'Big Government' and linked to the hollowing out of the moral centre of society, which had ended in 'moral failure'. It provided a central motif for the *Conservative Party Election Manifesto 2010: We're all in this together* (Conservative Party, 2010, and Ransome, 2011). The title of the manifesto became a trope often repeated by PM Cameron and government ministers to claim that 'we' are all responding to the 2008 banking crisis, which led to a global recession, not by imprisoning bankers, but by adjusting our behaviours to save the government money.

Slater (2014) traces the deployment of working for benefits (or workfare) as a mode of regulation to 'cure' Broken Britain to the activities of former Conservative Party leader, Iain Duncan Smith, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions during the Coalition Government formed in May 2010. Duncan Smith set up a right-wing Conservative Party think-tank, the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) They published reports including *Breakdown Britain* in 2006 which adopted an 'inclusive' use of the term 'family breakdown', summed up in three key words: dissolution, dysfunction, and 'dad-lessness'.

According to Slater (2014), the CSJ mission statement (BASW, 2006) declared it would put social justice at the heart of British politics. However, on its website, which is populated with the term's 'breakdown' and 'broken,' there is no definition of social justice. Slater (2014, p.953) cites an interview Duncan Smith gave to the *New Statesman* magazine in 2010 where, when asked to define social justice, he responded with the vague answer, "…to improve the quality of people's lives." The institution of marriage was viewed as a key solution to the problem of family breakdown. As Slater reminds us (2014, p. 961), this 'reading' of working-class communities and histories is contested by social historians of the family. Slater (2014, p. 956) highlights that the CSJ continued to draw heavily on the work of Charles Murray.

Reflecting on government responses to the 2011 riots, Jensen (2013) argues that Prime Minister David Cameron's 'Broken Britain' rhetoric evoked assumptions that underpinned representations of an underclass. Cameron's position was that economic advantage is achieved by living well and making the 'right' choices, and that poverty is a result of bad choices and lifestyles rather than the result of neo-liberal economic policies.

In a passionate critique of neo-liberal governance in relation to the 2011 riots, Levitas (2012 (b)) considers features like the Big Society, with its emphasis on self-reliance, in the context of cuts to public services (and therefore, jobs). Invoking Naomi Klein (2007) Levitas calls the Big Society agenda a 'neo-liberal shock doctrine,' that contributed to the redistribution of assets to the wealthy. Levitas asks if we need cuts to public services and questions why this was normalised in such a wealthy country. She also points to a lack of robust opposition from the political party in opposition, the Labour Party. The focus on cuts to services and increases in volunteering meant people were encouraged to work for free. She contrasts this to the history of working-class self-organisation and self-help that she argues has been undermined by neo-liberal governance. Levitas juxtaposes the behaviour of elites to that of rioters receiving punitive prison sentences.

The narration of the 2011 riots by politicians like David Cameron (outlined in Chapter Four), including the deployment of terms such as mindless, feral, and

troubled in relation to rioters, fitted with the wider Conservative Party narration that Britain was Broken. Part of the 'cure' was an escalation of austerity politics, which I examine next.

Austerity Politics

By the time of the August 2011 riots, the UK Coalition Government was pursuing what has become known as 'austerity politics.' This involved a focus on cutting government spending and state support through public services, including welfare benefits. This was justified in government rhetoric as a response to the global financial crash of 2008 where a banking crisis led to global recession. As austerity politics was rolled out by the Coalition Government, the government implied Britain was financially broke. There was no money for welfare payments and public services, and we must all 'tighten our belts'. There were massive reductions in state provision of services, an escalation of privatisation and an increase in 'conditionality' attached to state assistance (Cooper and Whyte, 2017).

In their edited volume, *The Violence of Austerity* (2017), Cooper and Whyte suggest that austerity politics have been underpinned by UK governments since 2008 by the idea that governments:

> … cutting expenditure, will encourage more private consumption
> and business investment and therefore more sustainable
> economic growth … cuts to public expenditure are preferred over
> maintaining public expenditure and/or implementing tax increases.
> (Cooper and Whyte, 2017. p.3)

Cooper and Whyte argue austerity is based on a set of inter-connected deceptions, including the notion that 'we' all caused it and therefore 'we' should all solve it, sold to the public through the trope 'We're all in this together'. Citing a speech by Cameron as opposition leader in 2008, where he blamed the Labour Government for the global financial crash and argued the UK deficit was caused by government overspending, they point out this is not supported by hard data. The data demonstrates that, on average, the Blair and Brown Labour Governments borrowed less than the Thatcher and Major Conservative Governments. The real problem was not the government cry of 'we maxed out our credit card' but a global financial crisis

we could not control (p.6). Meanwhile, in contrast to PM Cameron's referral to student protesters and 2011 rioters as 'feral' (discussed in Chapter Seven), there was no narration of bankers as feral looters. They suggest that austerity politics ensures the wealth of the wealthiest is increased at the expense of public assets and the security of the poorest is made more precarious. Governments promote:

> … spurious claims that economic consolidation leads to recovery, to downplay the counter-evidence exposing these myths, to foreground the predatory demands of business, and to politically cut out marginalised groups who fail to adjust to the impossibly harsh conditions of austerity… (Cooper and Whyte, 2017, p.15)

Critics of austerity politics, such as Cooper and Whyte and their contributors, argue that Conservatives in government since 2010 obscured the notion of out-of-control, unregulated capitalism with the need for austerity, a type of institutional state violence against the poor.

The impact of austerity politics is not evenly distributed; it does not affect age groups, social classes, and ethnic groups in the same way. It intersects to create multiple layers of disadvantage and discrimination that is ageist, ableist, gendered, classed and racialised. Evidence of this is presented in a range of studies, such as that of social geographer Dorling (2016), who reflects on the UK's Office for National Statistics (ONS) annual mortality figures. Dorling describes the figures released in 2016 as representing and unprecedented rise in mortality. Dorling places blame for this rise in mortality rates on austerity measures. In 2018 the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in its first review of the UK since 2009 and the first verdict on the austerity policies pursued by successive governments since the 2008 financial crash, concluded austerity measures and social security reform had a disproportionately adverse impact on the most disadvantaged. The Committee recommended that the UK reverse the cuts in social security benefits and review the use of benefit sanctions and conditionality. They expressed concern about the high number of low-paid jobs that did not pay a living wage and suggested immediate measures to tackle a housing crisis that included homelessness, the high cost of often poor-quality rental homes and a lack of social housing. They stated that austerity politics breached the UK's international human rights obligations and

suggested that cuts in taxation meant there weren't sufficient funds to address social inequalities.

Emejulu and Bassel (in Cooper and Whyte, 2017, pp.117-118) make the point that for people of colour, especially women, austerity should not be the starting point for understanding racialised negative impacts of social policies. They suggest that well before the 2008 crisis, many women of colour were already living in a virtually permanent state of austerity. They ask of a critique of modern governance that uses austerity as a starting point: 'whose crisis counts and whose crisis is being named and legitimated?' They also illustrate how public sector cuts do not just affect people who use them, they also affect staff who work in the sector and, as such, are a double hit to a racialised poor (see also Emejulu and Bassell, 2017 (b), *Whose Crisis Counts?*).

> Austerity functions as an exclusive category that only names and legitimises some groups' experiences, while subjugating others … reinforces common sense understandings of economic inequality which assume a racialised social order of white supremacy.
> (Emejulu and Bassell, 2017 (a), p.119)

Perhaps it is more accurate to identify austerity politics as a moment in a series of other moments, part of a conjuncture, that has included intersecting and over-lapping layers of racism, classism, ageism, sexism, and ableism in state policy making.

In an assessment of the impact of austerity on young people and youth services, Davies (2019) argues young people have been treated by politicians as 'citizens in the making' with reduced rights (p.7). Despite the increase in their voting in general elections between 2015 and 2017, young people have not been a priority for politicians, because of their status as 'a person in transition' (p. 6). Davies points out that in one of the first acts of austerity politics, the Coalition Government shut down the Youth Opportunities and Youth Capital Fund that gave young people some limited rights to participate in decision making about the allocation of public funds. Yet in the same year the Coalition Government talked up youth voice. At the same time, the growing youth precariat saw a drop in wages for young people, an increase in youth homelessness, the loss of the Education Maintenance Allowance,

rising youth unemployment and the rise of the gig economy (with insecure working conditions including zero-hour contracts). Davies reported that young people were carrying large amounts of student debt as a mental health crisis had hit young people in the UK (p.7-9). These cuts to youth services have resulted in the redundancy of experienced youth workers, an increase in unqualified volunteers and in some instances, the closure of valued youth work facilities (Mason, 2015, p. 58).

In the concluding section of this review, I consider some academic readings of the 2011 riots that coalesce around notions of the riots as primarily linked with consumption and looting or readings of the riots as an active form of protest.

2011 Riots literature – relationships between consumption, looting, fighting the police and the 'political'

Here I turn to academic responses that focused on consumption as a lens through which to understand the riots. I juxtapose this to other academic argument that suggests something more complex than defective consumption was happening in the riots, including some political intent. Debates coalesce around the impact of neo-liberal governance. Some academics read the riots as responses by those inculcated with neo-liberal values and stress the importance of looting in this reading. Others argue that rioters were sophisticated in their intent and activities and suggest that rioters were actively resisting aspects of neo-liberal governance.

Bauman (2011) interpreted the riots as status frustration, an 'appropriation of the right to go shopping' by 'disaffected consumers' rather than as political acts by deprived or disenfranchised citizens. Žižek (2011) argues it is difficult to conceive of the UK rioters as revolutionary (in Marxist terms) and suggests they better fit the Hegelian notion of the 'rabble', who can only express their discontent through 'irrational' outbursts of destructive violence and 'zero-degree protest'. Žižek dismisses explanations put forward by 'rioters' for their actions in interview-based research, including the Reading the Riots project, arguing the interviewees told researchers what they wanted to hear, and employed sociological language to do

so. He dismisses the riots as a significant moment in resistance to neo-liberal modes of governance, suggesting they were a form of 'a-political envy.'

Academic readings of the 2011 riots that saw these events as *all* about shopping and consumption, is exemplified in a paper called *Shopocalypse Now* (Treadwell et al, 2012). This contends the riots were 'a neo-liberal triumph' (p.1), an example of the shallow pleasures and distractions of consumer culture (p.2) enacted by marginalised subjects beset by the prospect of cultural irrelevance.

They argue that their research data, 30 interviews with young men who rioted in London and Birmingham conducted in the immediate aftermath of the riots, demonstrates in the absence of a unifying political symbolism, rioters 'had nowhere to go but the shops'. They took the opportunity to do some 'free shopping' in a context characterised by what the authors describe as 'a deep cynicism and inertia'. They cast rioters as marginalised subjects who look to 'shallow' pleasures and distractions of consumer culture to console themselves in their misery. Treadwell et al conclude that '…perpetually marginalised youth populations have become moody and vaguely "pissed off" without ever fully understanding why.' (2012, p.3).

According to the authors these were 'consumer riots' that had no other substance.

> … No demands were issued, no articulate account of dissatisfaction was offered and no image of a better and more just world could be created … Consumerism, indulgence and excess are the markers of a good and successful life, and failure to be actively and continually involved in this symbolic realm reflects cultural irrelevance and an absence of life. (Treadwell et al, 2012, p.8)

In modern consumerist society the authors suggest that rather than acts of 'transgression,' the riots were another attempt at 'sensation,' and that looting was:

> … the sole way the subject can imagine itself as still being alive as it stares down the dark abyss of total pessimism; no past, no future, no narrative, no representation … rendered obsolete by post-political culture (Treadwell et al, 2012, p.2).

Their thesis is elaborated further in Winlow et al (2015), where the same authors conclude that the 2011 riot events were 'consumer riots', characterised by an

absence of politics. Those who rioted are dismissed as the children of the consumer-capitalist good life. They state that: 'Meaningless violence is the only language for the poor to draw upon. The only message was one of "unfreedom"' (Winlow et al, 2015, p.141)

In contrast, others challenge the notion the riots were all about acquiring loot and question how far looting constituted the main riot event. Drawing on RtR data, Platts-Fowler (2013) concludes looting was not as prevalent as many accounts suggest. She argues the data indicates two-thirds of riot incidents had little or nothing to do with looting and, in some local authority areas, looting accounted for less than a tenth of what occurred (pp.21-22). She concludes that these findings undermine the explanatory power of personal greed or consumerism. Platts-Fowler draws on MacGinty (2004) who proposes a typology of looting. This establishes that in addition to economic motives, looting can be understood as symbolic (such as taking goods as 'trophies'), strategic (sending a message about a change in power relations, however temporary), or selective (some rioters looted 'to order'; others targeted goods like food and nappies).

Platts-Fowler argues that this aligns with Angel's (2012) view that riots are inherently political events because they both provoke and are a product of what Habermas (1975) describes as a 'legitimation crisis.' Here the modern state, in its attempts to maintain profitability in a capitalist-based economy, fails to retain political legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens. Platts-Fowler points out that solidarity and integration were evident in the looting behaviour in 2011. Participants stood in the way of cameras, presumably to avoid fellow looters being identified. Looters taking goods from other looters was reported, but rare, and violence was targeted at non-participants. Overall, she demonstrates looting can have non-economic motives.

At a multi-disciplinary academic conference concerning the August 2011 riots which was captured in a report by Allen et al (2013), participants were encouraged to consider how we might re-conceptualise and reclaim the riots not as 'a-political' but as forms of resistance to, or manifestations of, current material contexts of poverty and growing social distance under neo-liberalism and contemporary capitalism. An

academic from the floor of the conference pointed out that if you are not valued for anything other than your trainers or your mobile phone, then it might be viewed as a 'political' act to get them through looting.

A nuanced reading of consumption and the riots comes from a paper produced from this conference by Jensen (2013) who reflects on how the riots, specifically 'looting', played a key role in the production of what she terms 'a new cultural politics of wanting'. This is where wanting by the poor is represented as problematic, and a sign of material fixation and irresponsible consumerism. This positioning obscures other factors, such as police antagonism, police stop and search practices, Mark Duggan's death, and so on. She cites RtR research which showed a significant section of our rioter sample stated that they went out to fight the police as a primary motive. Jensen argues we need a sophisticated understanding of structural inequalities that does not lead to social scientists dismissing the activities of the poor to gain material goods as a moral failing or a neo-liberal driven, mindless activity.

Millington (2016) also takes issue with approaches that overemphasise looting and consumerism. He argues they diminish an understanding of subjectivity and the riots as a political act. He suggests these approaches feature a masochistic satisfaction in identifying an incapability of the young to channel their energy into progressive politics and characterises young people by a 'lack.' A crucial point made by Millington, one absent in so much riots literature, is that looting is a different type of activity to shopping. Looting in this context (as opposed to a colonial one) symbolically returns products of labour to the community who work in the shops selling the commodities or those who covet the goods through the shop window but cannot afford them (whilst acknowledging it doesn't return the goods to those who produced many of them in poorer countries).

The Guardian journalist Gary Younge (2011 (b)) also argued that rioters were neither shopping nor shoplifting:

> … challenging the police for control of the streets, not stealing
> coppers' hubcaps. When a group of people join forces to flout both

law and social convention, they are acting politically. (Younge, 2011 (b)).

Criticising narratives that characterised young people as merely acting out a neo-liberal script, and drawing on Tyler's use of the term 'social abjection,' Wallace (2014) reflects that these:

> … worked to support the notion of an 'abject' population on the loose. This downplayed the actualities of the 'riots' as a set of nuanced, complex responses to a whole raft of day-to-day micro-injustices experienced, most starkly by Mark Duggan and his family, but also constantly by huge numbers of inner-city young people. (2014, p.14)

Another reading of the 2011 riots views these events as part of a rejection of neo-liberal politics. Thörn et al (2016), in an edited volume, place the 2011 riots in relation to a reading of a series of relatively recent European riots. Contributors attempt to bridge the gap between the separate literatures of protest and riot, providing a structural analysis of 'uprisings' related to neo-liberal urbanism and new urban social movements in Europe (p.8). They define the latter as including collective acts that address spatialised power inequalities. This may involve violent or non-violent acts, but forms part of an urban collective chain of acts. They draw on Laclau and Mouffe's notion of 'processes of articulation' (1985). These processes allow us to see how moments of uprising can be understood as part of a wider urban social movement and the demand for structural change. They point to the importance of understanding empirical movements, considering the relationship of a riot to wider events, as an empirical question.

> … as to what extent this becomes translated into more prolonged and sustained collective action in the form of a social movement (Thörn et al, 2016, p.48).

What links two different types of collective act is not necessarily that there is concrete interaction between them, but that they address the same spatialised inequalities (Thörn et al, 2016, p.24). In the same volume, Slater (2016) argues the 2011 riots in England can be viewed in this way, in relation to the student protests of late 2010 amongst other anti-austerity and housing protests (explored later in this thesis, in Chapter Seven)

In a comparative study of contemporary riots, including the English riots of August 2011, Dikeç (2017) contends that neo-liberal democracies have failed. This is in relation to inequalities and racialised and classed exclusion, combined with systemic police violence aimed at groups the police have negatively targeted, which sows the seed for violent eruptions or 'urban rage'. In this reading, uprisings are products of policy choices which include gentrification processes that marginalise and exclude the poor. This rage can be destructive but instead of pathologising rioters we are urged to attend to the source of the rage. Dikeç distinguishes between the violence of an uprising and the violence of ongoing state repression. For Dikeç, uprisings are inherently political because they reveal or illuminate the geographies of legitimate grievances (Dikec, 2017, loc.3379).

Fatsis (2012, 2015) argues that dismissal of rioters as an a-political manifestation of neo-liberal consumer culture is vague and unhelpful, and underplays the significance of the intersection of race, class and age which were at the heart of racial and highly political events. In blog posts, Fatsis (2012, 2015), refers to race as the 'elephant in the room' in public examination of the 2011 riots, concluding that the events were racial and political,

> … and not the arbitrary and unfortunate by-product of consumerism's allure on disenfranchised youth, living under the spectra of neo-liberal economy's tyrannical excesses. (Fatsis, 2012, 2015)

Valluvan et al (2013) argue the characterisation and dismissal of the 2011 riots as a violent and delinquent consumerism works to:

> … erase acknowledgements of racially structured inequalities from public conversation just as it uses racialised cultural maps to distinguish between good and bad consumers. (Valluvan et al, 2013, p.172).

In examining the Salford August 2011 riots (characterised by a huge attack on the police), Valluvan et al argue it was a form of protest politics. They argue these riots targeted the state, represented by the police, in a form of anti-state mobilisation which the framing of the failed consumer cannot descriptively accommodate or account for (2013, p.167). To entice the police into direct confrontation generates an

unnecessary complication and in Salford they argue 'rioters' had a different aim which relates to 'structurally embedded hostility as opposed to a series of impromptu criminal whims'" (Vulluvan et al, 2013, p.168).

Clement (2016) concludes that the downplaying of the role of the state in the riots and the dismissal of politics within these events is a dangerous road for criminologists:

> If criminology ignores the state's role in repression it ends up seeing urban uprisings … as about something other than politics and resistance to racialised state violence. (Clement, 2016, p.194)

Conclusion

This chapter began with a summary of some approaches to understanding power, narrative and discourse as this offered methodological underpinning to the thesis. This discussion included literature that elaborates the concepts of ideology and hegemony.

This was followed by an outline of literature that articulates neo-liberalism and tactics of neo-liberal governance. This included literature that deploys an understanding of neo-liberalism in relation to the context of the 2011 riots and government responses to these events.

A short discussion of youth and youth transitions within literature, acknowledged that concern about 'the state of youth' was narrated by politicians in the riots' aftermath. It included literature on youth transitions that contrasted approaches that stress individual pathology in these transitions to those that emphasise economic restructuring which has seen withdrawal of opportunities for young people within transitions.

Literature that puts a focus on stigma as a tactic of neo-liberal governance was examined in its specific relationship to representations of youth and more broadly in its application to marginalised groups. This discussion included those that argue that the deployment of stigmatising discourses aimed at riots and rioters was a deliberate state tactic.

In aligning riots and rioters to an underclass, including modern iterations of 'chavs' and framing rioters as responsible for a 'Broken Britain,' rioters were cast as 'other' or to use Tyler's term (2013), 'abject'. This served, in part, to justify a certain set of state responses to the riots and an absence of others. Hall et al's (1978) re-working of Cohen's theory of 'folk devils and moral panics' (1972) to include structural accounts of discrimination were used by some academics to interpret stigmatising party political and media representations of 2011 riots and rioters.

Modern techniques of neo-liberal governance that drew on historic social constructions of an underclass within a Britain that was cast as 'broken' by the main political party at the time of the August 2011 riots was covered in this review. So too is literature that addresses the reality that racialised and/or economically poor young people were particularly targeted within negative post-riots public discourse, narrative and policy making.

The themes deployed in this review clearly overlap, and this reflects intersecting issues related to state responses to race and class. These different literatures need to be read in relation to each other. Literature was drawn upon that explains austerity politics, where public services were cut back as punitive policies aimed at the poor were being rolled-in at the time of the riots. To understand austerity, we need to understand its uneven impacts through racialising processes and the targeting of youth in negative government discourse and policy making.

Addressing complex themes relating to a wide trajectory that precedes and succeeds five days of rioting helps to place the riots in relation to neo-liberal governance and practices that extend into and beyond the economic.

Finally, two features of the riots and their representation in academic literature were considered: looting of goods and questions about any potential political intent or political content within the riots. Literature that foregrounded the looting often downplayed any notion that the riots were in any way political. Perspectives that emphasised the political tended to address issues such as racialised policing before the riots linked to police tactics such as stop and search and deaths during police

contact. They also put a spotlight on the anti-police elements of the 2011 riots and links between personnel and networks *vis a vis* student protests of 2010/11.

In the next chapter, drawing upon some of this literature, I outline the methodological approach to the thesis.

Chapter Three – Methodology and Methods

<u>Introduction</u>

I have taken a qualitative approach to the research to explore how the August 2011 England riots have been represented and responded to by a range of post-riots engaged constituencies. As I was interested in exploring the meanings that people attached to the riots, I chose primary research methods that were based on listening to and speaking with people. This included people who were either choosing to continue to talk about the riots in public life and/or working in a professional capacity in relation to the riots' aftermath. I supplemented this with desk-based interrogation of state responses to the riots and other secondary sources.

This chapter explores the steps taken in the doctoral research process. It begins with a discussion of issues about insider/outsider research position and proceeds with an outline of the three concurrent research methods deployed and my reasons for choosing them.

Observation was the first method and included the use of participant and non-participant observation at over 20 public conversations about the riots. The second method was the identification of research participants and carrying out 26 semi-structured interviews. I outline decision-making processes in approaching research participants, including a profile of those who were interviewed. This discussion is followed by consideration of issues related to consent and a summary of data analysis. The third research method was a desk-based review of secondary sources. These included: government statements to parliament and press; a government-appointed inquiry to investigate the 2011 riots; academic appraisal of government policy responses to the riots and a reading of criminological and inter-disciplinary literature on the riots; austerity politics and types of neo-liberal governance.

This discussion concludes with an analysis of how theories about understanding discourse and narrative can be applied to a critical reading of official riot statements and documents. I summarise how discourse and narrative techniques have helped the analysis of my research data.

First, I turn to a discussion of research relationships and my position as a researcher.

Research relationships, insider/outsider status and personal position

Ware and Back (2002) explore the ways that whiteness is a discourse of power that needs to be stated and named within practices such as social research (pp.14-15). As a white middle-aged woman living in Sussex, my vantage point and privileges differ from the diverse range of people living and working in areas where I conducted fieldwork in London. I am aware I have 'read' what I saw and heard at public riots events and in research interviews through a racialised, classed, gendered, and age-related lens. My position has been informed and limited by these factors.

My perception of what we might call a post-riots public conversation (Bassel, 2012), has been shaped by a London-centric approach to fieldwork. A further element in my research 'position' is that during fieldwork I was an outsider who did not live or work in an area affected by riots.

Previous experience of research and evaluation projects involved some effort to recompense research participants (e.g., giving vouchers in return for time involved in the interview). I felt conscious of being able to offer little as a PhD student. I attempted reciprocity by paying for meals and drinks at doctoral research interviews, offering time and thoughts at riots-focused events facilitated by research participants (where appropriate and asked for), supported these events through an online and physical presence and shared networks with participants where relevant. I wished I could have offered more. For some participants, research with a high public visibility and fast outputs would have served as a public platform, but I was not able to offer this in doctoral work (for discussions of fair trade in research see Cammarota and Fine, 2008, and Fine, 2018).

I conducted fieldwork in London because I was based in Brighton and had lived and worked in London for many years previously. I had some personal and professional contacts in riot-affected areas like Hackney and Haringey, as well as contacts from RtR. Geographical proximity meant I could attend public riot events and travel to

London to conduct research interviews. As such, the thesis is London-centric in its focus. The audiences encountered at public conversations, my existing contacts (explained later in this chapter) and research participants who were interviewed in this thesis, reflect that two of the most riot affected areas (in terms of amount of riot events and damage caused) are Croydon and Tottenham.

In the latter years of doctoral work, my ability to 'be there' at events (and to 'write-up') has been restricted by caring responsibilities, but I have continued to follow riots-related debates and the public visibility of research participants through online forums.

I turn now to the research process in relation to methods deployed, what I hoped to do and what I achieved.

Observation

Although I was originally focused on interviewing rioters and considering the riots as a moment in a life journey, I shifted my focus to capturing the varied perspectives of those who volunteered to talk about the riots in public life at least one year after the riots (see final part of Chapter One, where I outline some reasons why I abandoned trying to reach rioters).

Research fieldwork for the thesis began with trying to contact rioters and/or the gatekeepers who might lead me to them. I started attending public conversations about the riots in the late summer of 2012 and continued until late 2016. These events coalesced around the screening of two new films about the riots and included panel and audience interaction afterwards. The events were promoted and commented on by young media users who were using self-generated social media platforms to discuss issues of interest to other young people. Early-on in this process I took part in an event where a development professional stated, "we don't talk about the riots anymore in Croydon", a perspective confirmed by research participants interviewed in Croydon soon after (see discussion in Chapters One and Six).

Turning up to events and 'being there' at public conversations about the riots formed an essential part of the research process (Cooper et al, 2004; Hammersley, 2007); it gave me a feel for who was continuing to host and contribute to riots debates one year on and more.

These conversations, with films like *Riot from Wrong* or *Riots Reframed* as central, took place in a variety of venues hosted by universities and community venues (some I had no access to took part in 'closed' institutions like prisons). To find out about the events, audience members may have networked with others, looked for events with riot-related content, or seen events advertised on social media platforms like Twitter or via the marketing material of host venues.

Attending these events as a non-participant observer (Cooper et al, 2004; Hammersley, 2007), I remained largely silent in the public debate after film screenings (sometimes taking notes at the time, sometimes later if that felt inappropriate). I talked with event organisers and informally with audience members, which helped illuminate the parameters of the events and the motivations of both organisers and participants. I became interested in the perspectives of organisers and audience members and shifted my research focus to capturing the issues raised a year or more after the riots. From these activities I identified some people to approach for research interviews. I use the term 'connectors' when writing up the viewpoints of those bringing people together to facilitate or take an active part in public conversations about the riots (Spalek and McDonald (2012: p.23):

> … individuals who may experience community memberships in highly complex ways and are able to negotiate forms of frame alignment so that groups with very different 'positionalities' are able to work with each other, for common goals. (Spalek and McDonald, 2012, p.23)

For my purposes, the term connector includes those who have had a public presence in London in contributing to an ongoing public conversation about the riots up to six years beyond the riot events. The connectors I interviewed had different perspectives towards and experiences of the riots. They were councillors, MPs, community activists and artists, and some undertook legal work, wrote for

mainstream and social media and spoke at and/or organised open meetings and events. Some connectors were producing or encouraging others to produce new cultural products (including books, films, artwork, music, and podcasts) to discuss the causes and legacy of the 2011 riots. Connectors lived and/or worked in riot-hit areas and had first-hand experience of issues before and after the riots that affected local communities. Some went onto the streets during the riots, were wrongly arrested during the riots, and/or were involved in supporting communities and individuals in the aftermath. They did not all share the same perspective on the riots, but all either brought others together to discuss them publicly or contributed significantly to forums, and/or supported people affected by riots.

I wanted to avoid a research approach that relied solely on interviews, so I sought a wider context in which to engage with potential research participants (Jamshed, 2014). As purposive snowball sampling (Robinson, 2014) became part of the research approach, observing, and at times participating in, events was a key element in starting the research process. Access to events was open and I sought to build research relationships with connectors there. Some connectors started to recognise me, and we built conversations over events (sometimes reinforced through engagement on Twitter) which led to research interviews in some instances.

Initial interviews were with people I met at these public events. A few supplementary interviews were conducted with senior officials who helped implement state programmes branded by government as responses to the riots. Details of the context and content of public riot events and the research interview sample, including the recruitment process, is documented later in this chapter.

Due to former involvement in RtR, I had some 'insider' status concerning the research topic and fieldwork activities. Most of the time I was in an audience listening to contributions from the panel and audiences, but in three instances lines were blurred between insider and outsider status (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). This was in relation to getting to know the film makers and being invited as a 'former RtR researcher' to contribute to the reflection on the films and issues raised by the riots. I took part in panel discussions in academic settings and helped to facilitate a few of them. I was also presenting findings from the RtR project at academic lectures and

seminars and developed an undergraduate module for students around this material and riots more broadly. I attended but did not present at academic conferences including *Riotous Behaviours* (Allen et al, 2013) and a symposium on riots and popular culture (Webb and Robinson, 2013). The conferences provided other places to get to know some of the film makers cited in this thesis, and further opportunities to think beyond the riots and engage with riots-related issues.

I was present at over 16 public conversations, where either the film *Riot from Wrong* or *Riots Reframed* formed a key part of the event and related discussion. In addition, I attended: parts of the Mark Duggan inquest; a showing in Parliament of the film, *The Hard Stop*; an event showcasing MP David Lammy's reflections on the riots two years on, where I participated as a panel member; and other events (facilitated by organisations including Black Lives Matter, Defend the Right to Protest Campaign and United Friends and Family Campaign that addressed the 2011 riots in relation to previous riots, street protests and deaths during police contact.

Interviews

This discussion is split into two sections. The first section covers: choice of interview as a method and type of interview decision making; a summary of the research interview process; and reflection on some implications of choosing semi-structured interviews as a method. The second section is an outline of the interview sample and includes recruitment of research participants and their relationship to the riots and riots' aftermath.

Choice of method, processes and implications

Interviews provide a way of collecting information on, and finding out about, things the researcher cannot directly observe (Patton, 2002). Semi-structured interviews allow for continuity and flexibility across interviews. In choosing semi-structured interviews, I was influenced by using this method successfully as a researcher before and during the RtR project. With a wide variety of research participants, a semi-structured approach with a topic guide facilitating open questions, allowed the interviewee to do most of the talking. I did not want to assume what was a priority

for research participants and allowed them to focus on topics they raised themselves.

Using semi-structured interviews with 26 research participants who lived and worked in riot-affected communities, I aimed to find the point and place the riots played in their lives, whether personal, professional, or both. I moved from here to consider any ongoing legacy or long-term impact of the riots for their communities or clients and how they have engaged with this singularly and with others. This included an emphasis on the context in which they had been working, and the representations of the riots and riots' aftermath they are aiming to portray, challenge or engage with.

> … researchers are interested in how narrators make sense of
> personal experience in relation to cultural discourses …
> researchers treat narratives as a window to the contradictory and
> shifting nature of hegemonic discourses, which we tend to take
> for granted as stable monolithic forces. (Chase, 2013, p.57).

To summarise, the topic guide included headings designed to elicit reflection on experience of the riots at the time and since. Categories included: roles, place and experiences at the time of the riots; memories of the riots; viewpoint on the riots at the point of interview; opinions on legacies or footprints of the riots; priorities for self and others beyond the riots; and perspectives on the usefulness of continuing to talk about and reflect on the riots (or not), and why.

In interviews with targeted professionals, I tried to tease out what they understood as the relationship between their area of expertise and the riots. I was not focused on the veracity of their policy programme area *per se* but wanted to understand whether there was a relationship between the policy and the events of August 2011. In these interviews I asked them to summaries their role, service and any ongoing relationships of their role and service to the riots.

During interviews I noted any terms or phrases I needed interviewees to clarify or define in their own words and raised these at the end of interviews. I also noted under-developed topics or anything unusual in relation to other interviews and observations at events. Some research participants shared biographical information

and trajectories, whilst others reflected on the riots purely from a professional context.

A positive outcome of this semi-structured approach is that I gathered a rich amount of data in terms of different riot perspectives, priorities, and ongoing legacies. There was also a wide range of experiences. Some challenges this posed for data analysis are discussed later in this chapter.

Scoping conversations with connectors who offered to be interviewed showed most preferred one potentially long one-to-one interview in a quiet part of the interviewee's work premises or in a local cafe quiet enough to be able to use digital recording equipment. Preference was also expressed for post-interview email and phone communication in response to a fully transcribed interview script provided after interviews.

Some interviews lasted an hour, whilst others went on for hours or took place on multiple occasions. Whilst some were conducted in the relative 'vacuum' of a café, many involved a wider conversation as part of an invitation to a riot-focused event or professional setting (e.g. artist studio). Apart from three telephone interviews with targeted professionals working in the Troubled Families Programme and as Police Commissioners at MOPAC, interviews were conducted at a place of the research participant's choosing.

There has been repeated contact with some research participants because we have bumped into each other at public events, or we have made active efforts to keep in touch (the challenges of caring responsibilities made this more difficult in recent years).

Interviews and notes from conversations were transcribed. Where post-interview dialogues took place, the written transcript of the interview and any accompanying field notes were the main vehicle for further discussion. The research participant had an opportunity to clarify, amend, elaborate, or delete from the transcript, as well as to indicate any statement that needed to be anonymised.

The digitally recorded audio data produced from research interviews was placed on a password-protected hard drive.

I turn now to more specific discussion of the interview sample and recruitment.

Interview sample: recruitment, composition and relationship to the riots

In this section, I begin with a discussion of a range of issues related to the interview sample and then proceed to lay out who I interviewed, why, and in what chronological order.

Initial recruitment for research interviews came from contacts I established in public conversations described above. The sample was recruited through networking at these events; snowballing of contacts coming from meeting people at events; targeting of professionals with insider knowledge of programmes like the Troubled Families Programme and the government compensation scheme; contacts with people I had met during the RtR project (and who were also in a connector role); and people from my personal networks in Haringey where I was a former resident and Borough employee.

I focused on capturing what I was seeing and hearing at least a year after the riots. This included the perspectives of those who were continuing to explore the riots publicly and those who worked in a post-riot context.

Some participants were happy to be named or accepted that their identity would be obvious from what they talked about, but a few weren't happy to be publicly identified. In these cases, I have been vaguer about the description of their organisation in this thesis and therefore their personal identity cannot be identified.

To make it clear to the reader who I interviewed, I use the words of interviewees to describe their role and their relationships to the riots e.g., film maker, community worker etc.

Where a research participant is described as 'young', they were under 25 at the time of the research interview.

I do not claim the sample represents all people present at the public riots conversations attended, or all people who sought to represent the riots in public life. The interviewees reflect who I could reach and who would agree to engage with me as a researcher several years after the riots.

Research participants were varied in age, and racial, classed and gender identities and most were in a connector role – including paid work, volunteering, activism, and creative endeavours (described in more detail below).

They engaged with me in my role as researcher as a relative outsider who wanted to reach people interested and willing to talk about their perspectives and experiences of the riots. These relationships were varied; some participants I met only once, while with others there was a longer and deeper engagement. Some connectors offered a type of collegiate friendship since we met each other at the same events and were interested in sharing perspectives and observations. In some instances, we shared public platforms to reflect on riots events (details and examples are provided later in this chapter).

Connectors are more than able to put their own views forward about the riots in a range of mediums (e.g., film, novel, artwork, social media, public meetings). It would be disingenuous of me to claim they needed me to give them a 'voice' (for discussion on how meaningful this term is now, see Thomson, 2011).

Interviewees who reflected on why they agreed to be interviewed gave a range of reasons that included: it was an opportunity to have a say in a research context (as opposed to journalistic, artistic, or other); it allowed them to further contribute to knowledge about the riots and ongoing legacies; or it was a way of contradicting or responding to dominant discourses, narratives and representations of communities and individuals, including within research literature. There was interest in reflecting on and articulating circumstances and lives beyond the riots. Many were wary about why researchers and journalists were interested in 'looking back' or just focusing on the days of the riots, (see Bassel 2017). Ongoing realities were a pressing concern and there was a desire to talk about them at events, in some of the cultural outputs that represented the riots, and in some research interviews. These realities included

the legacies of punitive sentencing; ongoing cuts to public services; and the lack, apart from punitive sentencing, of an obvious visible government riots response. For some participants, engaging with university research was viewed as a useful way of demonstrating partnership working to community group funders for example, and viewed as a potentially useful alliance, including opening up sites at which to show their film or cultural product to a youth audience.

To break this down into more detail, the following section outlines how the 26 research interviewees were recruited, their relationship to the riots and/or why I targeted them for interview. I have included the code used to refer to them in the thesis in brackets after they are introduced below. The section concludes with a statement about those I was unable to recruit.

Chronological list of research interviewee participants

The first person interviewed was a Croydon development professional, a connector who was talking about development issues in Croydon at a range of forums, who said publicly and privately, "we don't talk about the riots anymore in Croydon" (01). I sought to investigate this point of view further (see discussion in Chapter One) and through them identified a handful of people in Croydon still publicly grappling with post-riots issues.

These people included: a Croydon Labour MP who was raising the impact of the riots in parliament two years after the riots and was involved in supporting 'official victims' in their fight for compensation and access to public funds (02); a voluntary sector professional who managed local voluntary sector post-riots provision and whose project had hosted post-riots films and discussions (03); and a Labour Party councillor trying to investigate where local riots regeneration funding awarded by local government had been spent (04). These interviewees also suggested I interview a campaigner for compensation for those who lost their business in the riots. In fact, I had already met her at a Community Conversation during the RtR project (05).

In the same time period that I met the Croydon development professional, I attended a youth-led event run by UK Fully Focused, a film collective who made

the film *Riot from Wrong* (RfW) and took the film to community venues where further discussion of the riots was encouraged. I interviewed one of the arts-led youth workers who set up UK Fully Focused and who presented RfW at many public events (06) and a young film maker working with the organisation who helped make the film, also presenting it at public events (07). They suggested I talk with Youth Media Agency, a social enterprise and umbrella organisation that helped young people set up their own social media platforms and which had supported UK Fully Focused. As a result, I interviewed the founder and coordinator of Youth Media Agency, a former youth worker with many media contacts who contributed to the Leveson Inquiry on negative representation of youth within mainstream media (08). They introduced me to other young people's projects in North London that were influenced by the 2011 riots in their social media practices.

One of these young people's projects was producing an online current affairs magazine by and for young people. I interviewed one of the young organisers who cited the riots and 2010 student protests as a key reason for establishing the magazine (09). The second project was a social media forum run by and for young people that provided spoken word and written pieces about issues relevant to young people. I interviewed one of the young organisers who was driven to set up their forum to challenge coverage of the riots and the negative representation of young people (10). I also interviewed a third young person who ran a social media forum and talked about representation and the riots, including the role of Grime in telling stories (11).

Through Twitter I identified a youth project in Haringey that was telling stories about the riots and targeted them for interview. I interviewed two youth workers who worked during and after the riots in Haringey: a front-line youth worker (12) and a senior manager (13) who reflected on young people's campaigns against cuts to Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) before the riots, amongst other issues.

I conducted three further interviews in Haringey with people who were personal pre-riot contacts. They were a former Labour councillor at the time of the riots

(14); a former regeneration professional who was critical of post-riots regeneration plans in Haringey (15); and a young person who was employed on a National Citizens Service (NCS) summer programme as a mentor to young people (16).

A year after *RFW* was released, another film, *Riots Reframed (RR)*, was produced and I interviewed the film maker (17). As was the case with RfW, the film maker took the film to community venues to elicit public conversation about the riots, where the film maker was a part of or central to the event. I also interviewed two people I met in the audience at RR events. The first was a young person who supported friends and families who had lost loved ones during police contact and had taken part in United Friends and Families Campaign events (18). The second was supporting students and rioters arrested during the 2010/11 student protests and 2011 riots (19) with legal and other issues, within a campaigning organisation.

A further two interviews were with people I had met during the RtR project and whom I knew were pursuing 2011 riots issues beyond the events. The first was a lawyer close to the Duggan family who was involved in defending student protesters from 2010/11 and August 2011 rioters (20). They also appeared on panels to discuss the riots at various events. The second was with a Tottenham-based community activist, on the streets during the Tottenham riots, who provided perspectives on families whose loved ones were arrested for rioting. They were also involved in leading and taking part in post-riot events (21).

As I commenced my doctorate in the autumn of 2012, I contacted two artists for interview who were representing the 2011 riots on Twitter. The first was a novelist who wrote a female lead character based during the riots (22). The other was a visual artist who had a riots-inspired exhibition in Tottenham for several months (23).

To understand government policies branded by government as official responses to the riots, like the Troubled Families Programme (TFP) and compensation for victims during the riots, I targeted professionals involved with the implementation

of the schemes. As a result, I interviewed a senior civil servant involved in the local roll-out of TFP (24), and a key member of the TFP national evaluation team prior to completion of the final evaluation report (25). As a result of a contact from the Croydon compensation campaigner mentioned previously (5), I also interviewed a Mayor's Office [London] Police Assistant Commissioner (MOPAC) who oversaw official victim compensation payments (26).

I was unsuccessful in reaching or engaging with some people I targeted for interviews. I approached Conservative Party councillors in Croydon but had no reply. Similarly, attempts to contact those close to the New Labour leadership in Tottenham who were rolling out responses to the riots were unsuccessful. Other than the MOPAC Officer, attempts to reach members of the London Assembly were also unsuccessful.

23 of the 26 research participants interviewed were visible in the public post-riot arena in London and what I have called connectors. I have referred to their 'connecting' roles as a key shared element that involved talking visibly and/or bringing different people together to discuss the riots. Each had different identities and life experiences and different experiences of the riots.

I did not reach the many thousands of people who had some involvement in riots who did not turn out to discuss the riots at a public event several years later. I also fully acknowledge that not everyone at the public events shared the same experiences or viewpoints of the riots. I was able to interview those most willing to talk and engage with me when I was clearly trying to engage and/or was engaged in conversations with the organisers of such events.

The remaining interviewees were approached because they were officially engaged with post-riots policy. They included two TFP professionals; one MOPAC officer; one young youth work professional involved in peer-to-peer work; one Tottenham Labour councillor at the time of the riots; and one Tottenham former regeneration professional.

Seven of the 26 research participants were under 25 years old. Audiences at public riot events were mixed in age, although conversations were often led by cultural products produced by young people and organised by young people. Later in this chapter, I address the issue of silences and omissions within narratives. In reflecting on my own omissions, in writing-up, digesting and reviewing the thesis, I realise that I had assumed more interview engagement with young interviewees than I achieved. This assumption was in part skewed by the fact that young people led the public conversations and produced new counter-narratives of the riots. In fact, research interviews include the perspective of older people who were grappling with compensation claims and regeneration priorities, supporting young people as youth workers or in other professional roles and dealing with policy implementation branded as riots responses by government. Whilst the youthful perspectives remained at the forefront of what I have learned, this thesis is not solely about young people and the riots. It contains youthful perspectives alongside others and forms a snapshot of *some* people who are still talking about the riots and/or grappling with the riots' aftermath several years later.

Gaining consent and research ethics

Consent regarding research interviews was discussed informally in pre-interview scoping conversations. I explained the right to withdraw from the project, as well as the right to alter or amend any part of the post-interview transcript. We also discussed the issue of preserving the anonymity of others referred to in the interviews.

A Participant Information Sheet (PIS) was sent to participants before we met (Appendix 1). Before beginning interviews, I asked if there were any questions or if any clarification was needed. I brought a spare copy of the PIS to the interview, summarised the contents verbally and gave participants the opportunity to read it if they wanted to. Not wishing to take literacy and English as a first language for granted, I also read the consent form before the interview started and dealt with any questions. The consent form was signed before the interview started.

Anticipating research participants were familiar with ethics and informed consent as part of their formal and informal professional lives, I explained specific relevance to a research context. I also explained the access of supervisors to research data and whether there was any need to redact names or identifying information in research transcripts prior to sharing with research supervisors.

Most interviewees were happy to be named and, in some instances, it was difficult to disguise identities (in the case of film makers for example). I have left out any detailed information that was flagged as 'off the record'.

Data analysis

Transcripts of semi-structured interviews with 26 people differently positioned in relation to the riots and riot aftermaths posed challenges for research analysis. Analysing and coding interviews and deciding on topics to pursue in the thesis was more complex than if I had interviewed 26 rioters or 26 youth workers and used a thematic analysis to compare them.

However, I followed the principles of thematic analysis and coded them in relation to each other. Each transcript was read through in its entirety to get an overview of the content and how the interview developed (Bryman, 2016; Guest et al, 2012). Mirroring the model set out by Braun and Clarke (2019), I conducted a basic thematic analysis of fieldwork notebooks and interview transcripts, developing codes as I went through the data. Thematic labels were then developed into a working framework which included major themes and related sub-themes. This framework was used to code the remaining transcripts and add any new themes. Themes were often linked with several others. This process demonstrated that no single theme sits in isolation. Notes were added about how themes were linked; for example, cuts to services were often described in relation to the impunity of elites ("one rule for us, another for them", etc).

In the analysis of transcripts, I added any responses of interviewees (including silences or omissions) to the data collected on their topic area.

Because I used a semi-structured topic guide and did not impose categories of questions like Troubled Families Programme, water cannon and police prosecutions, I did not gather systematic interview data on what, for example, research participants thought about specific state riots responses or lack of them. Whilst I have made the point throughout the thesis that specific issues were not raised by research participants as a priority, I acknowledge I did not ask direct questions about them in the interviews. This is due in part to the iterative nature of the research; it was not a linear process. I was reading about state responses to the riots, observing them as they emerged and reading academic appraisal of government responses whilst I was attending public conversations about the riots and undertaking research interviews. Where research participants did volunteer these topics in interviews, I have provided quotes in the five findings chapters, Chapters Four to Eight.

As most interviews were semi-structured, research participants presented a rich seam of data that covered many subjects. Because I interviewed artists and observed the art some of them created, this thesis could have focused on artistic representations of the 2011 riots. However, I could not encompass this in the parameters of this thesis and because my background is in social science, I pursued themes weighted towards social science understandings and meanings.

In choosing data to elaborate in the thesis, I focused on themes I could develop through reference to secondary sources and research interviews. These include references to state responses to the riots; the treatment of official victims; ongoing concerns about regeneration plans; racialised, ageist and classed austerity cuts to public services; deaths during police contact with apparent impunity; and the drive to develop new social media platforms run by young people for young people in response to state narratives about the 2011 riots and 2010/11 student and anti-austerity protests.

Desk-based analysis of secondary data

An overview of the academic literature that informed the thesis is covered in Chapter Two. It includes literature that directly addresses the 2011 riots, as well as

literature that outlines and assesses government interventions after the riots. The 'discussion' sections of the findings chapters, Chapters Four to Eight, draw on this and other literatures relevant to the findings of that chapter.

Analysis of secondary data, such as state representations of the riots in parliamentary speeches, written reports and statements and cultural products produced by young people, was subject to thematic analysis (including consideration of discourse and narrative deployed in them).

One of the themes emerging from public conversations and research interviews was anger at state narration of the riots and of the lack of a positive state response to the riots, so I went back to parliamentary statements and press statements made by politicians after the riots after research interviews were conducted. I then worked through documents that demonstrated or claimed to demonstrate government action. These included the government appointment of a panel to investigate the riots, the Riots Communities and Victims Panel (RCVP). I examined the final report of this panel and looked at the remit, terms of reference, the content and any embedded assumptions. I sought to trace the impact of the report and any link between its contents and government riots responses. I then largely used academic papers to analyse the Troubled Families Programme (TFP) and post-riot anti-gang policies. I was particularly interested in tracing their origins and weighing up how these could be seen as genuine responses to the riots.

Other themes raised in research interviews, including post-riots regeneration and compensation schemes, deaths in custody and the punitive sentencing of rioters led me to seek out publicly available official data, as well as journalistic reporting and campaign group literature on the topics.

In addition to examining the riots narratives of research participants, I was also interested in narratives from secondary sources and the connections between research participant and government and party-political narratives.

Influence of discourse and narrative approaches

My interpretation of primary and secondary sources was informed by the principles of the respective (and overlapping) traditions of discourse and narrative analysis (Atkinson, 2000; Atkinson et al, 2010; Fairclough, 2013; Tamboukou and Livholts, 2015; Thomson 2011). I drew on these approaches to examine and analyse the words used about riots and rioters; the stories told in public life; the stories concealed or revealed in the post-riot time frame; how and why dominant narratives were contested; how we might understand the riots as a moment in a wider trajectory of events; and the relationship between the stories told about rioters in public discourse and the formation of social policy regarding the 2011 riots.

I have not used a single technique to read public representations of the riots. I have drawn on guidance from discourse theorists influenced by Foucault about how we can question texts to reveal power relations regarding words used, stories told and silences and omissions within a text.

Applying discourse and narrative approaches

Drawing on Foucault, examples of how to apply an understanding of discourse include those advocated by Thomson (2011) and Fairclough (2013).

Thomson (2011) suggests we use Foucault's notion of discourse as a method to apply to textual analysis. This may lead us to ask questions of a text like a news report, government report or policy document, including what is being represented as a truth or a norm; how this is constructed; what 'evidence' is used; what is left out, hidden, or silenced; what is foregrounded and backgrounded; what is made problematic and what is not and why; what alternative meanings or explanations are ignored; what is kept apart and what is joined together; what interests are mobilised and served by this and what are not; how has this come to be; what identities, actions and practices are made possible and/or desirable and/or required by this way of thinking; what are disallowed; what is normalised, and what is pathologised?

Fairclough (2013) argued every communicative event has three dimensions and should be analysed accordingly. This involves examining text including linguistic

features and structure; considering discursive practices surrounding the production and consumption of text, including the institutional and organisational circumstances of the discursive event; and examining the constitutive effects of discourse (Fairclough, 2013, p.212).

Approaches offered by authors like Fairclough suggest texts need to be considered in terms of what they include, but also what they omit, hide, disguise or silence – including alternative ways of constructing and defining the world. As such, the researcher's job is not just to read a text's political and social ideologies, but to consider alternative ways it could have been written or constructed and what the alternatives imply in terms of representing and understanding the world, and the social outcomes it might generate.

> This is particularly true of texts produced in political contexts – speeches, policy papers, reports etc. – since they are often aimed at achieving the hegemony of a particular point of view with the explicit aim of creating change within other (i.e. non-discursive) aspects of social practice (Rear, 2013, p.14).

These approaches to discourse were helpful in 'reading' the local and national riots panel reports and other government documents including statements to parliament, as well as thinking about the counter-narrations of the riots which were evident in my research.

Accounts of understanding social policies as narratives (Atkinson, 2000; Atkinson et al, 2010; Miller 2019) were also helpful in interpreting sources. In examining assumptions underlying the development of post-war urban policy in Britain, Atkinson outlines the role of narrative. Atkinson argues policy making involves construction of a social 'problem', along with a social policy 'solution' which develops a discursive narrative or 'story' that illustrates the causes and evolution of the problem (2000, p.211). Atkinson describes a dialectical relationship between the discursive and the non-discursive (social policy) so each cannot exist without the other (2000, p.212). Atkinson draws on Jameson (1989) who argues individual narratives do not exist in isolation but reflect and conceal a deeper more pervasive narrative related to a social (class or group) interest. Narratives, therefore, are never

'innocent', nor are their underlying 'master codes' immediately accessible (Atkinson, 2000, p.213).

Drawing on Foucauldian understandings of power, Atkinson et al (2010) view narratives as a 'chance outcome' of the interaction of knowledge formations and governance arrangements that are composed by visible and invisible hands. They try to organise reality in a particular way whilst attempting to mask or deny contradictions in that reality and limit our perception of such contradictions. This is a form of closure, or what is termed a 'strategy of containment'. The authors show how issues are excluded from policy agenda by a process called 'mobilisation of bias'. This happens through a process of non-decision-making, where certain issues are organised out of politics. Our task as researchers is to reveal some of these structured processes.

Atkinson (2000) uses Hajer's (1993) notion of a 'discourse coalition', a group of actors who share a social construct about the world and how it functions. Atkinson (2000) explains how these actors draw on pre-existing notions of action – in other words, the ways similar problems have been dealt with in the past or currently. The actors operate from a structure of power which provides a stage to frame the way a problem is constructed and guarantees an 'audience' who will listen. During this process a 'problem' (like the inherently criminal mindless troubling rioter), which can be congruent with a viewpoint of a discourse coalition of politicians for example, is constructed. The story told presents a 'solution' which complements the thoughts and actions of the discourse coalition (Atkinson, 2000).

Using the example of New Labour and Conservative Party policy narratives, Atkinson demonstrates how this discourse coalition may see the two main UK political parties collaborating on agendas like immigration to set the boundaries of problem and solution. Each political party may use different performative utterances to appeal to their own audiences, but the wider agenda has been set, framed, and agreed on and enacted through powerful stories about the 'other'. The performative style may appear 'harder' or 'softer' to the respective electoral audiences, but the result is that major structural factors remain unchallenged and no alternative policy

solutions are offered. I apply this to opposition party leader Ed Miliband's response to the 2011 riots in Chapter Four.

According to Miller (2019), social policy narratives gain allegiance through the concepts, values, emotions, and symbolic connotations (ideographs) embedded in their storylines. Identification with a narrative depends on a shared understanding within a community or referent group. He argues that to understand narrative subscription (to buy into and/or give consent to a policy) is to understand the psycho-social origins of discursive power; it is not simply subject to logic and evidence, but also to emotions and it requires emotional investment and identification. The prerequisite for the latter is communities.

> Although narratives can legitimate policy proposals, narrative subscription implies little about legitimacy of the narrative, particularly among the non-subscribers. Legitimacy is afforded to a narrative when it comes to dominate public attention – by gaining subscribers and political prominence – in a policy discourse.
> (Miller, 2019, pp.241-2)

For Miller, politics is a process whereby actors from various backgrounds form coalitions around specific *storylines*. Storylines are the way actors try to impose their view of reality on others, suggest social positions and practices and criticise the alternatives. Miller understands policy discourse as the discussion around a policy issue. He sees narratives as competing accounts about what the problem, solution and goals are. Narratives are structured by storylines that give them coherence. With the help of a storyline, the narrative orders ideographs into a satisfying sequence and makes the argument coherent. Miller points out different narrative types including a nativist narrative which involves otherised groups and is storied in racialised and classed ways.

Notions of discourse coalition, narrative subscription, and storylines are useful in considering public narrations of rioters as the 'problem' of Broken Britain and policy responses like Troubled Families Programme and punitive prison sentences for rioters. They are also illuminating when considering the Broken Britain and troubled or troubling families explanations for the 2011 riots by the main political parties. I explore this in Chapters Five and Six.

Drawing on Foucault, Atkinson (2000) reminds us that power always engenders resistance, and the potential of counter-narratives is always present. He reminds us that domination is only ever partial, and policies are rarely realised as intended. Hall's work on media reception (1980), shows that recipients of media messages were able to interpret or 'decode' texts. They questioned or ridiculed attempts to influence their self-perception and identities and used humour, cynicism, and counter-narrative to contest the discursive practices of hegemonic elites (cited in Rear, 2013, p.18). Dominant representations of riots and rioters were challenged, and counter-narratives emerged years after the riots. Examples of the latter are in Chapter Two discussion of relevant literature and in Chapter Eight.

Livholts (2015, p.81) points out Fairclough's desire to shift emphasis away from mere discourse critique to identifying strategies for social change and argues that social change is intimately bound with consideration of narrative, including policy narratives and narrative imaginaries of future practice. The latter resonates with Bassel's hope for the liminal spaces created by public riots conversations (2017). Bassel argues that providing space for abjected people to speak and be heard is a process of deliberative democracy (2017, p.12). Rear suggests that as producers of text themselves, critical discourse researchers can expose hegemonic practices and contribute to their dissolution. (2013). Similarly, Bamberg (2004, pp.367-368) considers how we might resist grand or master narratives. Using the term 'microgenesis', he links the process of counter-narrating to the process of sense-making which is narratives-in-interaction and an emergent rather than fixed process. He explains these interactions provide the arena for new narratives to be created. In this way counter-narrative is not oppositional but an exploratory process that happens co-creatively in interactive spaces where new cultural milieus are formed. As such, grand or master narratives are not fully hegemonic. Theories of counter-narratives were useful in considering young people's riots narratives which were not given prominence in public life. This is elaborated on in Chapter Eight.

Exploring competing stories about the riots was useful when it seemed a dominant story was being actively challenged years after the riot events of 2011, albeit with limited financial resources and with less 'reach' than dominant stories. Influenced by

authors who suggest ways Foucauldian approaches can be applied to interpreting research material, my research approach was informed by an understanding of local and national riots reports, policy responses like the TFP and post-riot party political statements to media and parliament as texts that shape stories about groups like rioters and the possibilities and limits of government responses. However, these texts omit other stories and possibilities. The principles of resistance and counter-narratives were also useful in considering riots narratives in community venues and cultural outputs which were absent from national political narratives at the time of the riots.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined my approach to gathering data, including interviewing and observation. I have considered the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis' qualitative methodological approach and how, with its emphasis on the meanings research participants attach to specific events, it allowed me to explore how the August 2011 England riots have been represented and responded to by a range of post-riots engaged constituencies.

Specific methods allowed me to focus on listening to and speaking with research participants who recalled events several years later and chose to talk about the riots in public life and/or were professionals working in the riots' aftermath. I have included a summary of my attendance at over 20 public conversations about the riots, how I used participant and non-participant observation and how I identified and interviewed 26 people. I also included a summary of who I recruited. I considered consent issues and concluded with a summary of data analysis.

The chapter included discussion of a third research method that involved a desk-based review of secondary sources. This discussion concluded with an analysis of how discourse and narrative theories can be applied to a critical reading of official statements and documents about the riots. I summarised how techniques related to discourse and narrative have helped the analysis of research data in this thesis.

In reviewing my research approach, I concede I had imagined more engagement with young people through my interviews. In practice, the research interviews also

include the perspective of older people grappling with a range of post-riots issues. Young people drove the organisation of public conversations about the riots and were the authors of new riots counter-narratives, so their perspectives remained at the forefront of what I have learned. But this is not a thesis solely about young people and the riots. It features youthful perspectives alongside others and is a snapshot of concerns of *some* people still talking about the riots and/or grappling with the aftermath when fieldwork took place (late 2012 to late 2016).

I move on now to five findings chapters. The first of these, Chapter Four, focuses on party-political responses to the riots including statements to parliament and the appointment of a government inquiry. I identify tropes and narratives in the representation of riots and rioters in government and party-political discourse.

Introduction to Findings

In seeking to explore how the 2011 riots have been represented and responded to by different constituencies, I have laid out five findings chapters. These seek to demonstrate both *how* the riots have been represented and responded to by different groups, and the *relationships between* types of responses and representations.

Each chapter contains an introduction; outline of findings; a discussion section where findings are discussed in relation to theory; and a conclusion.

In order to explore how the 2011 riots have been represented and responded to by government and other politicians, in Chapters Four to Six I have drawn upon Foucauldian understandings of power, articulated by authors such as Atkinson et al (2010) who show how issues become excluded from the social policy agenda by a process termed as *mobilisation of bias* which includes use of *discourse coalitions* and *ideographs* (explained in Chapter Three). This occurs through a process of non-decision-making, whereby certain issues are organised out of politics. In Chapters Seven and Eight I draw upon Bamberg's articulation of counter-narratives (2004) and Boyd's (2014) and Jenkins' (2013) understandings of participatory politics and networked publics to explore how the 2011 riots have been represented by some young people in London through the mediums of film and use of social media.

In Chapter Four, I explore government and media narratives and discuss the lack of an alternative narrative from political opposition parties which may have affected decision making regarding the type of state methodological inquiry to appoint, as well as the terms of reference of such an inquiry. An examination of government rhetoric (and lack of an alternative in public life) provides an early indicator of what type of policy responses were to be rolled-out after the riots and the narratives reflect a historically rooted understanding of an underclass.

After considering the narration of the riots by government and other actors in Chapter Four, including an examination of the official government inquiry into the riots by the Riots Communities and Victims Panel (RCVP), in Chapters Five and Six

I focus on an examination of the *content* of what the government said they would do in terms of policy and practice.

In Chapter Five the content of government responses explored includes examination of criminal justice system (CJS) responses to the riots and an examination of the Troubled Families Programme (TFP) and anti-gang policies. Chapter Six is focussed on post-riots regeneration plans and compensation schemes for 'official victims' taking place amongst a context of cuts to public services. For Tottenham and Croydon, these coalesced around the local football stadium in the former, and a new city centre shopping complex in the latter. I also consider some of the social policies that have affected housing in riots-affected cities such as London.

A key goal of Chapters Five and Six is to elaborate government social policy responses to the riots and consider whether these responses were in fact new policies and/or what might be considered as helpful social policy interventions in the riot aftermath. I consider how these actions (or lack of action) have been presented in government texts, juxtaposed to how they have been experienced by research participants and others, including academic critique. I conclude that party-political leaders and government ministers chose to narrate the riots in ways that pre-dated the riots and then referenced/branded already existing policy plans as 'new' riots responses (Wallace, 2014). They responded to the riots not by listening to young people or communities affected by riots, but by using it as an opportunity to justify the rolling out of pre-planned policies that addressed the perceived defective citizenship of the urban poor (Wallace, 2014). Not admitting to their pre-existing agenda, the public narration of riots and rioters was through presentation of an a-historical narrative that said this was about mindless criminality of the moment (Slater, 2011, 2012, 2016).

In Chapters Seven and Eight I explore how government riot narratives did not just have a relationship with their own policy making, they provided an incentive for some young people to want to take control of stories about youth, protest, and riot. Public narratives of the riots incensed and incentivised some young people in London to actively challenge these representations and produce counter-narratives.

Chapter Seven begins with a discussion of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and student protests against its demise, exploring that student protests and 2011 riots contained some of the same people and/or networked youth, who were sharing experiences through the mediums of Grime and Hip-Hop, mediums largely overlooked in the research literature on the 2011 riots. Chapter Eight has a focus on two sets of young people's practices influenced by protest and riot: the setting up of new social media platforms, and film making. The chapter explores the role of community memory and counter-narrative and revisits the notion promoted by government ministers (and party opposition leaders) that there was no politics in the riots or in the minds of rioters.

Next, in Chapter Four, the first of the five findings chapters, I turn to government narration of the riots and how this was replicated in their appointment of the Riots Communities and Victims Panel.

Chapter Four – Findings: Official Narrative Response to the Riot Events of August 2011

Introduction

This is the first of five findings chapters. As the aim of the thesis is to identify and examine how the 2011 riots have been represented by different constituencies, here I examine the official narration of the riots in public life in the riots aftermath.

I begin by outlining responses to the riots from politicians and media, including the lack of publicly available counter-narratives of riots and rioters from party political opposition leaders. I reflect on the framing of rioters in the media which largely replicated government narratives, and reinforced stereotypes and tropes of good and bad citizens.

The chapter continues with an examination of the processes surrounding the appointment and execution of the national government inquiry into the riots by the Riots Communities and Victims Panel (RCVP, 2012). This includes an analysis of the remit and findings of the RCVP, as well as reflecting on government responses to these findings and comparing these to some local riot panels' recommendations in London, from Croydon and Tottenham.

Key findings of the chapter are drawn together in a final discussion section. I observe that party political narrations of the riots were iterated in relation to a notion of the underclass, framed in modern terms in relation to a so-called Broken Britain, in need of Big Society solutions (see Chapter Two). These were pre-existing ideologies and policies held by the biggest party of government in the Coalition Government of the day, the Conservative Party. This raises questions about how far we can consider government rhetorical and policy responses to the riots as genuinely new and leads us to contemplate how far the government was listening to evidence about the causes of the riots.

This discussion sets the scene for the next two findings chapters, Chapters Five and Six, which consider actions taken by government centred on a social policy roll-out

and shows the relationship between party political narratives and the social policy 'solutions' offered.

Summary of government narration of 2011 riots

Foreshadowing the official social policy response to riot events, on August 11th, 2011, the recently elected PM Cameron offered a diagnosis of the causes and a set of solutions to the riots in a speech to the recalled Parliament, just one day after the last official event recorded as 'riot-related' (Wednesday 10th August 2011). He invoked the 'good citizen' (e.g., official victims who lost property due to riot events) and the 'bad citizen' (e.g., rioters and their families). The latter were cast as criminal perpetrators to be dealt with through the criminal justice system, chastised for their defective and/or deficient culture:

> … the innocent victims … the law-abiding people who play by the rules and who are the overwhelming majority in this country, I say: the fight back has begun … We are on your side. To the lawless minority, the criminals who have taken what they can get, I say: we will track you down, we will find you, we will charge you, we will punish you. You will pay for what you have done.

> … This was not political protest, or a riot about politics. It was common or garden thieving, robbing and looting … This is not about poverty; it is about culture – a culture that glorifies violence, shows disrespect to authority and says everything about rights but nothing about responsibilities. *(PM Cameron)* (BBC, 2011)

PM Cameron declared that gang injunctions would be rolled out across the country (BBC, 2011). In turn, he linked gangs to poor parenting and dysfunctional families: "At the heart of all the violence sits the issue of the street gangs … mainly from dysfunctional homes …" (BBC, 2011).

Echoing explanations for Broken Britain in Conservative Party rhetoric before the riots (in the 2010 general election manifesto for example) poor parenting was blamed and linked by PM Cameron to the notion of lack of moral character (Conservative Party, 2010). The remedy offered was more discipline and regulation within social institutions including the family, schools, and the criminal justice system:

> In too many cases, the parents of these children – if they are still around – do not care where their children are or who they are with, let alone what they are doing … We need more discipline in our schools; we need action to deal with the most disruptive families; and we need a criminal justice system that scores a clear, heavy line between right and wrong … all the action that is necessary to help mend our broken society. *(PM Cameron)* (BBC, 2011)

Consistent with the analysis from the Conservative Party's 'Centre for Social Justice' think tank report *Dying to Belong* (2009), PM Cameron told the recalled Parliament that the causes of the riots were not to be found in structural issues, like poverty, racism, or youth unemployment, but in immorality: "… tiresome discussion about resources. When there are deep moral failures, we should not hit them with a wall of money."

On August 15th, PM Cameron linked a national fight for security to the need for a battle regarding social behaviour. Gangs were again blamed for riot events:

> A concerted, all-out war on gangs and gang culture … a major criminal disease that has infected streets and estates across our country (Cameron, 2011).

'Social media' was immediately targeted as being a potential organising mechanism to blame for five days and four nights of riots events initially assigned to young users of platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Blackberry messenger (Gangwar et al, 2013). PM Cameron stated that he had liaised with intelligence services about whether it would be right to shut these platforms down during the riots.

Use of social media platforms, particularly Twitter and Facebook, to organise riots was debunked by subsequent research like that by RtR (Lewis et al, 2011). Meanwhile cheap Blackberry messenger phones were found to be a preferred way of communicating for many young people, just a tool for communicating by phone and text. Although this type of explanation offered nothing illuminating in terms of understanding the underlying causes of riots or individual motivations to participate, two young people were subsequently found guilty of trying to incite a riot on Facebook and were each sentenced to four years in prison (Bowcott et al, 2011 and Roberts and Hough, 2013).

In contrast, technological responses of the state were praised by PM Cameron and juxtaposed to the 'problem' of 'human rights' in relation to the riots' response (BBC, 2011):

> … by capturing the images of the perpetrators on CCTV … their faces are known, and they will not escape the law … no phoney human rights concerns about publishing these photographs will get in the way of bringing these criminals to justice. (BBC, 2011)

In addition to drawing on existing Conservative Party tropes to diagnose the cause and 'solution' to the riots, there were references and hints of policies that were subsequently rolled-out and already long planned by the party within the context of the Broken Britain narrative (discussed in Chapters Five and Six).

In the aftermath of the riots, PM Cameron invoked historic notions of an underclass and talked again about the role of families. He blamed parents for the behaviour of their offspring and accused them of being wilfully absent from riot courts. Absent dads were blamed for sowing the seeds of the Broken Society and implied by PM Cameron to be at the heart of the riots (Cameron, 2011 (a)):

> The question people asked … 'where are the parents? Why aren't they keeping the rioting kids indoors?' Tragically that's been followed in some cases by judges rightly lamenting: "why don't the parents even turn up when their children are in court?"
>
> … Perhaps they come from one of the neighbourhoods where it's standard for children to have a mum and not a dad ... (Cameron, 2011(a))

In fact, the Reading the Riot's research project (Lewis et al, 2011) concluded that many young people were effectively 'lost in the system'. Police stations were full, and arrestees were moved around. Many parents were not sure where their young were and were frantically trying to get suitable clothes to the relevant police station or court (Bawdon and Bowcott, 2012).

As absent fathers were blamed, so too were single-mother households, (Jensen and Tyler, 2015, Jensen, 2018). Allen and Taylor (2012) suggest that the emphasis on broken and troubled families is highly gendered. The historic trope of the 'problem' of the working-class single mum emerged as a focus of concerns around

parenting, youth and 'proper' citizenship. They argue that the troubled mother of the riots is narrated as being of 'another species' distinctly different to the responsible, resilient, middle-class mother who reflects the norms of contemporary citizenship promoted by Cameron.

Government ministers reiterated the themes raised by PM Cameron, invoking a picture of Broken Britain to be solved by the Big Society (see discussion Chapter Two), foreshadowing the official state policy response to riot events.

The Home Secretary at the time of the riots, Theresa May, conflated a range of issues, implying they were all linked to the riots (May, 2011):

> … known gang members … Almost two million children are brought up in households in which nobody works … We have the highest level of drug abuse in Europe. There are almost a hundred knife crimes committed every day and nearly a million violent crimes every year. (May, 2011)

Animalistic terminology was deployed to describe young people's role in the riots. Kit Malthouse, Deputy Mayor of London (responsible for policing at the time), accused a 'feral youth': "… whether they are anarchists or part of organised gangs, or just, you know, feral youth who fancy a new pair of trainers" (Sparrow, 2011).

Similarly, Ken Clarke, Minister of Justice, talked about a 'social deficit' within riot communities and the need for 'robust sentencing' of members of the 'feral underclass' whom he said were responsible for the events: "… the hardcore of rioters came from a feral underclass, cut off from the mainstream in everything but its materialism" (Clarke, 2011),

Whilst politicians talked of feral youth, the need not to get bogged down in human rights, the rights of 'innocent' victims and the need to come down hard on 'rioters', much media discourse followed a similar trajectory and juxtaposed notions of good and bad citizens.

The Sun newspaper, after declaring in a front-page headline that 'Britain Is Sick', followed it with their 'Shop a Moron' campaign which ran as a headline feature and encouraged parents to hand in their children to the police, neighbours to report on

each other, etc. ('Riots: Chance to Shop a Moron', 2011, and 'Riots: Chance to Shop Another Moron', 2011) These themes were echoed in other press coverage. *The Daily Mirror* ran a headline on 13th August, 'Shop Your Child … it Hurts but it's Right' (Paperboy, 2020). As if in symbiotic relationship with PM Cameron and his ministers, *The Times* newspaper ran with the headline, 'Judge asks: where are the parents of rioters?' on 13th August (Brown et al, 2011), the *Sunday Express* headline of 14th August read, 'Bring Back National Service' (Buchanan and Murray, 2011), and the *Daily Telegraph* headline of 11th August was, 'Our Sick Society' (Paperboy, 2020). In the *Daily Telegraph*, journalist Allison Pearson asked how we ended up 'with some of the most undisciplined and frighteningly moronic youngsters in Europe?' (Pearson, 2011).

Official explanations of causes and solutions invoking the bad citizen were repeated by many elements of the commentariat, not just politicians and journalists. In a notorious commentary, the historian David Starkey racialised and classed the debate in a very particular way. On BBC Newsnight he declared that he had been revisiting Enoch Powell's April 1968 infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech (Channel 4, 2008) and that he had realised how 'right' Powell was about immigration and multi-culturalism, i.e., that they were both problematic for 'white' Britain/Britons. Starkey blamed so called 'chavs' for the 2011 riots, and their appropriation of 'black' culture. This implies a problem 'black culture' that infects poor whites, as if it was a poison or disease. He declared "… the whites have become black" (Hallsworth and Brotherton, 2011, TruthCauldron, 2011).

There was a striking absence of any other narrative in public life concerning the riots. Slater (2017) drawing on Tyler (2013) suggests that people were stigmatised as justifying the riots if they contradicted dominant narratives in public life (see Chapter Two). In a BBC interview, respected commentator and activist, Darcus Howe, who had a long history of commenting on Black British and Black English identities and experiences called the riots 'insurrections' (Bunce and Field, 2013, Bunce and Field, 2017, and Media Diversified, 2017). When he attempted to talk about 'stop and search' and its disproportionate use amongst young black men he was harangued by the interviewer who repeatedly asked if he condoned the

violence before dismissing Howe as 'no stranger to riots' (OfficialLondonRiots, 2013). The BBC was later shamed into a public apology to Howe ('BBC Apologises over Darcus Howe', 2011).

In the immediate aftermath of the riots, the media reference to those who came out to clean up the streets as the 'broom army' or 'wombles' reinstated the 'good citizen' in urban public spaces affected by riots. David Cameron praised those who took part in the clean-up in his social fightback speech of 15th August 2011, contrasting them with the bad citizens blamed for the riots: "… last week we didn't just see the worst of the British people; we saw the best of them too." (Cameron, 2011 (a)).

Only one research participant, 23, a visual artist who represented the riots in an exhibition in Tottenham, mentioned the clean-up within a doctoral research interview as she was in touch with people involved in the local clean-up. There was no discussion of it at public conversations about the riots attended during fieldwork. It is worth noting here that these conversations took place several years after the riots and ongoing legacies were at the forefront of audience discussions, rather than the clean-up.

The only other indirect nod to the 'riots clean-up' from research participants was from research participant, 21, a community worker and activist based in Tottenham who said in a research interview in 2014:

> … That sweeping of the streets, I would say they tried to sweep it [riot causes] under the carpet … if you sweep something under the carpet you just build a big bulge, with all the rubbish … and that is where we're at now.

Visual images, particularly those deployed in newspapers, including the use of the rogue's gallery of faces supplied by the police, were used to name and shame the 'bad' rioter. 'Good citizens' were invited and implored to 'turn in' loved ones, foes, or themselves to the police, which constructed and reinforced stigmatising narratives:

> The underclass was given popular physiognomical expression in the rogues' galleries of CCTV images of accused rioters, circulated by the police in the aftermath of the riots and featured on the front covers of many national newspapers and on numerous vigilante social media pages. (Tyler, 2013, para. 7.1)

I have focused here on identifying written and spoken government narrative responses to the riots and suggested a relationship between these narratives and pre-existing narratives about the poor. In Chapters Five and Six I link this to the post-riots social policy rollout. I have also suggested an absence of alternative voices within media coverage of the riots. However, there was also an absence of counter-narrative from party political leaders which I turn to next.

Lack of party political counter-narratives

As the neo-liberal Conservative Party narrative came to dominate public rhetoric in the immediate post-2011 riots' aftermath and beyond, with few opposing media voices, what were party political 'opposition' leaders saying at the time?

Rather than challenge the Conservative orthodoxy by offering an alternative reading Ed Miliband, leader of Her Majesty's Opposition, the Labour Party, echoed much of the rhetoric by Cameron et al on good and bad citizens, the need for more parental responsibility and the role of gangs.

On Thursday 11th August 2011, in a statement to parliament Miliband said:

> The victims are the innocent people …There can be no excuses, no justification. It is right the Crown Prosecution Service is taking into account the aggravating circumstances within which the horrendous criminal acts we have seen in recent days took place.
>
> Does the Prime Minister agree that magistrates and judges need to have those circumstances at the front of their mind so that those found guilty of this disgraceful behaviour receive the tough sentences they deserve, and the public expects?
>
> … The responsibility we need from top to bottom in our society, including parental responsibility … A sustained effort to tackle the gangs in our cities, something we knew about before these riots … (Miliband, 2011).

The Labour Party leader's comments were not contradicted by any leading party figures. In Tottenham, scene of mid-80s riots and locations of the first 2011 riot event, local Labour MP, David Lammy, released a book, *Out of the Ashes*, in the immediate riot aftermath. He too focused on lack of a moral compass, absent dads,

gangs, and consumerism. In common with the dominant political voices of the day, he dismissed the notion that the riots were in any way 'political', focussing instead on a proliferation of hedonism and nihilism.

Bridges (2012) points out that David Lammy was one of the first politicians, standing in front of cameras on Tottenham High Road the day after the first riot event in Tottenham, to describe the rioters as "mindless, mindless people". Bridges argues that Lammy gave the lead to others in the characterisation of the riots and rioters as illegitimate, a-political, self-seeking criminals. Bridges reminds us that there is a consensus that the initial unrest in Tottenham in 2011 was a more general (and violent) anti-police protest and nothing to do with the hedonism or consumerism that may have formed part of some looting events at later 2011 riots. Lammy conflated different riot events, silencing the grievances of his own constituents angry at the death of Mark Duggan and the subsequent failure of duty of care towards his family by the police.

In another apparently seamless fit with Conservative Party narrative, Nick Clegg, Leader of the Liberal Democrats and coalition partner to the Conservatives in government, reiterated that gangs, failing families, and the welfare state were potential riot causes in a speech to his party members on 13th August 2011:

> … people who play by the rules should be the ones who thrive.
> Those who think they can break the rules and reap rewards need
> to know that their time is up ... (Clegg, 2011).

The only MP who asked more searching questions in Parliament was MP Caroline Lucas, leader of the Green Party (HC Deb, 11th August 2011).

> … seeking to understand violence is a world away from seeking to
> justify it. Indeed, we ought to try to understand it to stop it
> happening in future. Given the growing evidence, from Scarman
> onwards, that increasing inequality has a role to play … can the
> Prime Minister reassure the House that comprehensive impact
> assessments will be undertaken before his government introduce
> any more policies that increase inequality? (HC Deb, 11th August
> 2011).

Lammy and Miliband deviated from the established narrative later. However, it matters that neither, with the potential to be key voices at the time, offered an alternative narrative on the riots' causes, social policy interventions, or lessons in regard to racialised structural inequalities. In particular, the lack of party-political counter-narrative also had implications for the type of government investigation into the riots. I turn now to a consideration of how these party-political narratives became embedded in government actions with specific reference to the processes surrounding the government's own inquiry into the riots.

State methodological response: Riot Communities and Victims Panel (RCVP)

Underpinning most pronouncements from politicians in the days after the 2011 riots was the assumption that they already knew the causes and what should be done. The implication of these conclusions was that there was no need for a far-reaching public inquiry. All that was required was a roll out of 'known' solutions which, in most cases, were policies already drafted and planned before the riots (the latter is explored in Chapters Five and Six).

Illustrative of this approach is the statement by Mayor of London, Boris Johnson. He echoed the views of a former Conservative Party PM, John Major, who declared in a law-and-order debate in 1993 that "Society needs to condemn a little more and understand a little less" (Haydon and Scraton, 2002). As he faced an angry crowd in Clapham involved in the riots clean-up, Mayor Johnson declared on 9th August 2011 that he had already "… heard too much sociological explanation and not enough condemnation" (Davies, 2011).

One significant area of departure from the otherwise unified opposition party support for Cameron's rhetoric was the suggestion from party leaders Miliband and Clegg of the need for an official investigation into the riots (albeit a limited inquiry and full of caveats). However, they did not insist on a full public inquiry with the scope and reach of the Scarman Inquiry and subsequent Scarman Report (1981) that followed the Brixton riots in the early 1980s, or the Kerner Commission and report in the USA after riots in Detroit (United States, NACCD, 1968).

Miliband said that there should be an investigation of the causes but cautioned against an overly academic basis for inquiry:

> Not an inquiry sitting in Whitehall hearing evidence from academic experts but reaching out and listening to those affected by these terrible events. (Miliband, 2011).

Clegg, in common with Opposition leader Ed Miliband, also called for some research but not one that was 'too understanding' saying that it should be both ruthless and thoughtful at the same time:

> We need to understand. I don't mean 'understand' in the sense of being understanding or offering even the hint of an excuse. I mean understand what happened, to get as much evidence as we can. Then we can respond, ruthlessly but thoughtfully.
>
> … we don't need research to tell us that much of this was pure criminality, but the more we can learn the better.
>
> … looking into gang culture, so that we can combat it more effectively. In policymaking as in war, it is important to know your enemy … (Clegg, 2011)

It is worth noting that Clegg is already diagnosing causes, in this case 'gang culture', whilst at the same time calling for an inquiry that tells us the riots were all about pure criminality. He identifies rioters as 'enemy', managing to invoke war imagery *vis a vis* social policy making.

Despite the August 2011 riots being the biggest incidence of public disorder in many years and amongst political pronouncements that 'we all knew what had caused the riots … criminality, pure and simple', the Coalition Government appointed the Riots Communities and Victims Panel (RCVP), with a brief to examine the causes of the riots and prevention of future riots. An understanding of the processes surrounding the official methodological response to the riots in the immediate aftermath is key to understanding specific types of policy rollouts (outlined in Chapters Five and Six).

In the appointment of the RCVP panel, intentionally or unintentionally, the Coalition Government linked work (or absence of work) to morality and 'good character' by choosing the former head of Jobcentre Plus, Darra Singh, as the leader of the

RCVP. The panel also included Simon Marcus, founder of an alternative education charity; Heather Rabbatts, a qualified barrister and former Chief Executive of Merton and Lambeth Councils; and Maeve Sherlock, a life peer since 2010 working on her doctorate on Faith Schools and former Chief Executive of both the National Council for One Parent Families and the Refugee Council. Whilst the panel was mixed in terms of ethnic identities, it included no judiciary, academics, or social policy specialists in the field, and no recognisable 'community leaders' from riot-affected communities. The cost of the panel and its outputs was an estimated £200,000 and it held no powers to order the implementation of any of its recommendations (Dodd, 2013).

I have identified four key features of the report that relate to the terms of reference of the inquiry and raise questions about its independence from government.

Firstly, in examining the 'foreword' to the report, the terms of reference of the RCVP (and its limits) are apparent. It states that the panel had a brief to:

> … investigate the causes of the riots and to consider what more could be done to build greater social and economic resilience in communities. (Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2012, p.3).

This remit appears to pre-suppose their key conclusion i.e., that individuals, families, and communities *need* more *resilience*, that a lack of it caused the events of August 2011, and that more of it might act as a preventative for more public disorder.

The middle section of the report arguably conflates qualities that might make up 'resilience' with the use of the term as a given, as if the reader shares an understanding of what constitutes 'resilience'. It then links resilience to the term 'character building'. In reading the report one is left wondering what 'resilience' is, what it usefully (or unhelpfully) means in this context, what definition is deployed in the report and why the panel complied with the assumption that lack of it was the cause of the riots, and that more resilience was the way to prevent further riots.

I return to the notion of resilience regarding the 2011 riots towards the end of this chapter as I consider how the Coalition Government responded to the RCVP report.

Secondly, there is further pre-supposition in the 'foreword', which concurs with the government's pre-existing austerity politics. Here, 'there is no more money' is portrayed as a 'fact' rather than a political choice. The assumption is that whatever recommendations the panel might make, the issue of lack of additional resources is one that has already been determined.

> We are actually aware that additional financial costs will be difficult
> to justify given the current economic climate. The vast majority of
> our recommendations involve the better use of existing resources
> (Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2012, p..4)

Thirdly, there are references to pre-existing Conservative Party policies and values as 'givens', for example the benefits of the Big Society. This includes an emphasis on volunteering as good for individuals and communities.

Finally, there is little critique of the government's narrative on 'criminality' in the immediate aftermath of the riots. The inclusion of a 'Usual Suspects' category/sub-heading mirrors government language and assumptions about who took part in the riots i.e., those repeat offenders with previous convictions. The RCVP final report reflects that the small pool of reoffenders who rioted demonstrates '… how a relatively small group of people can through their persistent criminality blight the community they live in' (Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2012, p.88).

Elsewhere, the type of people taking part in riot events of August 2011 is contested, as is the number of first-time offenders. Ball and Drury (2012) argue that the focus on known offenders in initial police investigations, which used police databases to find people who fitted the profile of a potential 'rioter' or 'looter' potentially distorted the profile of those who took part. In addition, the extensive use of CCTV evidence in the rapid response to events served to bias the arrest statistics. Those with faces uncovered and previously known to the police were most likely to be arrested quickly and gave the impression that 'rioters' were mostly those with previous convictions. Some rioters without previous convictions were identified by the public who saw them via tabloid and television media. The least likely to be identified were those whose faces were covered. Ball and Drury (2012) argue that the myth of the 'usual suspects' was perpetuated in the RCVP's report, which declared that 'Nine

out of ten [suspected rioters] were already known to the police' (Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2012, p. 11).

The government referred to the final RCVP report as an independent set of findings, so the replication of stigmatising language and misleading 'usual suspect' categories is significant. In fact, they were part of a self-fulfilling and self-feeding political narrative. In a close reading of the RCVP report, I conclude that to a large extent its analysis remains within the pre-established dominant narrative of the riots and was strongly influenced by neo-liberal ideology. This stresses the necessity of cutbacks in ameliorative public services, embeds assumptions about the 'usual suspects' and puts a stress on a need for self-responsibility through deployment of an ill-defined focus on resilience.

However, despite the apparent compliance with government narratives and a remit which actively pre-supposed some of its conclusions, the RCVP final report *does* deviate from this to some extent. I explore this next.

Counter-narrative from the RCVP

The final RCVP report deviates from government narratives in three significant ways.

Firstly, in contradicting government rhetoric after the riots, the RCVP stated gangs were *not* a significant feature of the riots and only use the word gangs once in their final report. The panel drew on other empirical research that had been conducted by the time they went to print, which dismissed gang membership or gang organisation as a significant part of the riots (Lewis et al, 2011). The RCVP concurred with this research: '… we know that most convicted rioters were not gang members' (Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2012, p.49)

However, in a section labelled 'Character Building and Resilience' they refer to *a culture* that may have encouraged a lack of empathy by riot participants, providing recommendations for work with young people at risk of offending, such as mentoring.

> … gangs operate in a large number of areas where the riots occurred. Some young people are exposed to imagery and attitudes associated with gang culture from an early age which glamorise a life of criminality outside the system and which eschews any empathy for the victims of crime. (Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2012, p.49).

Similarly, Harding (2012) argues that urban *gang culture* and *values* fuelled the actions of those present on the streets in August 2011. Harding suggests that the riots were a form of 'street government'. Increasingly present in poverty-stricken areas, this suggests that any suspension of rivalries was due to a need to fight the police – a bigger common enemy and the bigger gang.

Many rioters interviewed for Reading the Riots said the police were 'the biggest gang on the street' and that individual gangs played no significant part in orchestrating events (Clifton, 2011 (a) and Newburn et al, 2011 (b)). For many 'rioters', the opportunity to fight 'the biggest gang' was reported as a liberating experience and a chance to take back the streets (Newburn et al, 2011 (b), and Newburn, 2016). There is further discussion on gangs and the riots in Chapter Five.

In the second departure from government narrative, the RCVP makes specific recommendations concerning young adults. These focus on rehabilitation rather than punitive sentencing; the potential of restorative justice; and an approach to policing that addresses the use of 'stop and search' and issues of trust and accountability regarding perceptions of the police.

The RCVP expressed regret that a restorative approach appeared to have largely been ignored by probation officers and youth offending team staff after the riots and recommended a review to see where and when restorative justice had been used in riot-related cases and why it had not been used more extensively.

However, the RCVP report is vague on what is meant by the need to 'address' a range of criminal justice system (CJS) issues. It is hard to imagine their range of recommendations coming to fruition without identifying new staffing and training resources.

Thirdly, the final RCVP report contains many references to 'troubled' families; for example, in their conclusion they focus on character deficit: '…we feel that the riots demonstrated the need to focus on how we instil character where it is lacking' (Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2012, p.7).

It is noteworthy that the RCVP made it clear they preferred the term 'forgotten families.' Significantly, they also rejected the idea that the government's already-planned TFP (Troubled Families Programme) was an appropriate and relevant policy response *to the riots*.

> … we support the work of the TFP but the overlap with rioters is limited … a significant connection between TFP families and the families of the rioters has not yet been established. (Riots Communities and Victims Panel pp.6-7).

Whilst gangs, punitive sentencing and troubled families were dismissed by the RCVP, their emphasis on 'character' suggested a deficit in rioters and effectively linked to the government's pre-existing 'underclass' narrative around young poor people and the need to focus on addressing 'deficits' through social policy interventions.

In summary, the final RCVP report in March 2012, provided limited emphasis on the complex intersecting structural factors that may have led to the riots and little critique of the government's narrative concerning bad citizens and 'criminality'. The conclusions focused on individual, family, and community pathology. As Fitzgibbon et al (2013) point out, it de-racialised the conflict and stuck to a formula central to a neoliberal responsibilisation agenda that blames victims of deprivation for their own socio-economic exclusion (see Chapter Two). Despite this, it departed from government narratives in stressing alternatives to the use of custodial sentences and remand in custody, dismissing gangs as a significant issue in understanding the riots and questioning the validity of the Troubled Families Programme as a legitimate response to the riots. These counter-narratives were dismissed by government, and this is outlined further in the next chapter.

NatCen

The other national government-sponsored examination of the events of August 2011 was conducted by the National Centre for Social Research, NatCen. They were commissioned by the Cabinet Office to address the involvement of young people in the riots. This included a focus on potential triggers for youth involvement, paying attention to what happened in five geographically affected areas (and two areas unaffected by rioting) (Morrell et al, 2011).

The authors identify a series of 'nudge' and 'tug' factors that affect young people's likelihood of getting involved in riot events (Morrell et al, 2011, p.12) and develop a behavioural typology that characterises what they saw as distinct types or levels of involvement in 'rioting'. Some young people moved through various levels and types of behaviour during riot events. For example, the 'curious watcher' could become a 'thrill-seeker'. Within the 'looters' category they identify opportunists who might take the opportunity for 'free stuff', whilst 'sellers' planned their activities to maximise profits.

These typologies do not explain what collective experience emerged during the riots that might lead individuals to decide to 'loot' or 'thrill seek'. In other words, it does not explain why these riot events were happening in the first place. Other empirical research demonstrates that 'riot' behaviours were more multi-layered than the identified categories suggest. For example, looting was more complicated than simply taking things to acquire 'free stuff' for personal use or to sell for profit (see Chapter Two).

The voices of people in the NatCen research in riot-affected communities are useful in encouraging discourse about their perspective and the issues they raised. Policing, abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), an issue elaborated on in Chapter Seven, and a series of structural and economic factors were all raised by those interviewed by NatCen. Elements of the NatCen report echo other empirical research on the riots which sought to elicit 'rioter' and community voices (Lewis et al, 2011). In this sense, the NatCen report addresses a gap in other government-sponsored rhetoric.

However, there are few concrete recommendations in the report and whilst it appears to have informed the interim report of the RCVP, which reproduced the NatCen typologies of rioters as a 'fact', (Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2012) I have found no evidence (or claims to evidence) that the report has had any impact on social policy.

Narratives of local riot panels

Another trace of the official state response to the riots can be found at local level, as many individual Local Authorities appointed their own local inquiry panels.

Reflecting two of the geographical areas that experienced the most riot events in London (and the experiences and reference points of doctoral research interview participants), I have examined some of these reports for Tottenham, where the first riot event occurred in 2011 (in the London Borough of Haringey, North London) and the London Borough of Croydon, where the largest number of riot events happened (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel Report, 2012; Tottenham Community Panel Report, 2012).

As there was no overarching public inquiry with a centralising brief to bring all this together, some counter-narratives are in evidence. However, they appear to be marginalised within national discourse and policy making.

Croydon Riots Panel

In the immediate aftermath of riot events, the Conservative Party-controlled Croydon Council appointed a local independent panel to investigate the riots. The panel had four members: two local councillors, one member of a local faith community, and chair William Barnett QC (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel Report, 2012). Whilst the findings, published early in 2012, were given to the RCVP for their final report, the Croydon panel was independent of the RCVP in terms of its processes and execution.

The 48-page final report, referred to locally as the 'Barnett Report' summarised what the panel thought had contributed to riots events in Croydon and the 'lessons learned' in terms of preventing further public disorder. Their conclusions were partly

based on written submissions and interviews with members of the public and key stakeholders affected by the riots or involved in dealing with the riot events (e.g., police and community workers).

The Barnett Report suggests that the riot events in Croydon were the result of complex causes, including structural factors, and that no single factor could be isolated as a cause. Unlike the rather a-historical government approaches, it pointed to a range of issues before the riots:

> … a melting pot of underlying tensions that were present before the rioting took place … 'stop and search', unemployment and lack of opportunities amongst people living in areas affected by the riots … a contributory factor in the riots. Overcrowding, the physical environment, high levels of crime and the high levels of poverty in the areas of London Road (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel Report, 2012, p. 29)

The overall narrative about the riots and rioters in this report is noticeably different from government rhetoric in relation to four key issues:

Firstly, the Barnett Report dismissed the idea that local gangs had caused or instigated the riots. The Panel has found that existing gangs did not play a pivotal role in the rioting and looting in Croydon. Secondly, the Barnett Report was dismissive of blaming social media for riot events, commenting that closing mobile phone networks and/or social media would not have been a useful or positive action. Thirdly, it does not make specific recommendations about 'Troubled Families' or 'Resilience'. Fourthly, it emphasises the role of policing, specifically in relation to community relations and transparency of police practices. Rather than call for a more punitive approach to sentencing, it highlighted the need for a review of the use of stop and search (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel Report, 2012, p.28 - 40). Barnett raised concern at already planned impending cuts in policing services, an issue ignored by the RCVP and in Minister Pickles' parliamentary responses to the RCVP. The Barnett panel also rejected the suggestion that the army should have been deployed as '…any forces deployed to the area would not have arrived until after the riot had finished.' (Croydon Independent Local Review Panel Report, 2012, p.34)

Tottenham Riots Panels

In Tottenham, there were numerous local post-riots panels and reports. I have chosen two to focus on here that were raised by research participants and appeared to have some local influence. The first of the two, hosted by the Tottenham Community Panel, chaired by local council leader, Claire Kober, presented its final report, *Taking Tottenham Forward* in 2012 (Tottenham Community Panel, 2012). The panel of 10 included local community workers, faith community representatives and councillors. In their final report, *Taking Tottenham Forward*, recommendations fall into five key areas, including need for improvements in: inward investment, area image, young people's opportunities, police and community relationships and the need to reward 'community engagement' in policing structures and culture. Specific attention is given to problematising policing and stop and search procedures and increasing community involvement and local leadership. Overall, the report highlights the needs of local young people, and the need to improve the image of the area, including attracting resources and investment to change the area. In common with the Barnett Report in Croydon, there is no recommendation on 'Troubled Families' or 'resilience'.

However, this report was superseded by one more in line with the government narrative, and that had a controversial impact on social policy in the area at the time of research interviews. Henceforth referred to here as *The Lipton Report*, *It Took Another Riot* was published later in 2012 and was commissioned by Conservative Mayor of London, Boris Johnson. Based on the findings of an 'independent' panel and chaired by property developer Sir Stuart Lipton (Mayor of London, 2012), whilst there were two academics on the Lipton panel, alongside local MP David Lammy, membership was weighted more heavily towards those with business backgrounds.

I focus now on this 90-page report as it appeared to have had more long-lasting influence on regeneration issues in Tottenham. It aligns more closely with government narrative than the other Tottenham report or the Barnett Report in Croydon. The Lipton Report makes ten recommendations which include addressing local housing, travel, and employment, and has a strong emphasis on changing the built environment. The values underpinning the Lipton Report are reflected in the

four-page Chairman's 'foreword' which discusses the need for physical regeneration, refers to 'failed housing estates [that] should be redeveloped' and highlights the Troubled Families Programme as a key means to reducing 'anti-social behaviour'.

Self-help and self-responsibility is promoted within the report, which alludes to Big Society ethics and apportions some blame for the riots on conditions in Tottenham and on Tottenham residents, '… the community must share responsibility for the riots…' (Mayor of London, 2012, p.38). Echoing government rhetoric, it linked 'gangs' directly to the riots. One of its ten 'critical recommendations' focused on policing, acknowledging that police/community relationships are historically poor in Tottenham.

Discussion of finance and budgets is contained in the Executive Summary (Mayor of London, p.32) and alludes to the need for *more* public-sector service cuts. However, the Lipton Report breaks with the RCVP, government narrative and policy making when it comes to the need for more funding and resources for policing, stating that: 'Policing would benefit from additional funding to extend the role of community policing in the community.' (Mayor of London, 2012, p.33)

Lipton suggests that Tottenham needs police officers who are incentivised to stay in the area for at least five years. It also states that Tottenham Police Station should not be closed or replaced with 'access points' at other community locations and would benefit from a new, smaller, better-designed station that maintains a full 24-hour service (p.50). In fact, in January 2013, Scotland Yard announced it planned to close 65 of the capital's 136 police stations, including Tottenham, and reduce the opening hours of 25 others (Davenport et al, 2013). After a campaign, Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, reversed this decision and Tottenham Police Station remained open (Thain, 2013).

These local reports reveal that in Conservative-held Croydon, post-riots rhetoric often departed from that of government whilst in Labour-led Tottenham, the Lipton Report often reads as a seamless fit between Conservative government rhetoric and local policy making. Perhaps this is not surprising given that 'resilience' was a

New Labour discourse and policy driver (Burchardt and Heurta, 2009; Chandler, 2014). The TFP also had its origins in New Labour family policy (Bond-Taylor, 2014; Lambert and Crossley, 2017; Sayer, 2017). However, it also illustrates the interplay between New Labour and Conservative Party neo-liberal policies and narratives (see Chapter Two).

Despite the range of inquiries, the government was slow to respond to their recommendations, and in many cases simply ignored conclusions that contradicted their own narratives and policy preferences. I explore government responses to its own inquiries next.

Government response to the RCVP final report

Government processes

The first of two written government responses to the RCVP final report presented in early 2012 was made by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Minister Eric Pickles, in a brief written response to Parliament presented on 13th July 2012. Its main purpose was to thank the RCVP panel for their findings and only fills a couple of pages of A4 in text (Pickles, 2012). The second (30 page) written ministerial response made to Parliament, was presented a year later in July 2013 (Gov.UK 2013 (a)) and covered what the government had (or had not) done to implement the findings of the RCVP.

In the year between the two statements, there was rising frustration at a lack of an official update on actions the government had taken to address the RCVP report. This led, in summer 2013, to questions being raised in Parliament by two London Labour MPs, Steve Reed in Croydon, and David Lammy in Tottenham.

In March 2013, the Guardian newspaper reported that evidence from David Lammy showed the government had implemented just 11 of the RCVP's 63 recommendations. One of the 11 recommendations that were accepted or implemented was '…greater work to be done with potential problem families' (Dodd, 2013).

During a doctoral research conversation in early 2014, when I asked MP Steve Reed (research participant 02) about him raising the issue of the RCVP report in Parliament, he reflected that:

> It's just been shelved, hasn't it? There was a lot of fuss at the time about welcoming it, but they've simply parked it. (Research Participant 02)

The final full government parliamentary response, submitted over a year after the RCVP final report was published, made no reference to the questions raised in Parliament by MPs Lammy and Reed about the timing, breadth, or depth of the government's response. The second parliamentary statement does not directly mirror the structure of the RCVP report. In fact, it is hard to directly track and map the RCVP final findings and recommendations against the claims made in the two written ministerial statements, as the recommendations are sub-headed differently from the RCVP final report. Delays in and absence of action regarding RCVP findings and recommendations demonstrate a lack of a real policy response to the riots and a lack of care in communicating with and listening to riot-affected communities in a meaningful way.

Government narrative responses to its own inquiries

I turn now to a summary of the *narration* of government's official responses to its own internal post-riots inquiry in the two ministerial statements (the detail of *policies* rolled-out by government, branded as 'riots' responses are discussed in Chapters Five and Six).

Mirroring the narratives deployed by politicians in the immediate aftermath of the riots, in the first ministerial response to the findings and recommendations of the RCVP final report, Pickles declared in July 2012 '…there is one clear overriding message: the rioters were criminals. Such opportunistic criminality was not and will not be tolerated.' (Pickles, 2012).

Similarly, within the second ministerial statement of 2013 (Gov.UK, 2013), 'criminal rioters' are juxtaposed with good citizens. The introduction frames the issue as being all about, '… shocking acts of opportunistic criminality … high levels of

criminality and anti-social behaviour' (Gov.UK, 2013, p.4). In case the reader is left in any doubt about government perspectives, Section Two of the report, *Tackling the Causes*, reinforces a self-responsibilisation agenda and opens with this statement:

> … there is no excuse for the criminality of the rioters and the majority of those involved were motivated by nothing more than greed. Rioters must take full responsibility for their own actions – it is not acceptable that poverty, race and the challenging economy were used as excuses … (Gov.UK, 2013, p.15)

'Effective Justice and Policing', the largest section of the second ministerial response, begins with reference to the RCVP's use of 'Usual Suspects' and it is implied by Minister Pickles that the RCVP's use of the term provides *proof* of the number of repeat offender 'criminals' involved in the riots: '…under the theme "The Usual Suspects" the Panel's report highlights the … need to reduce crime and reoffending.' (Gov.UK, 2013, p.26-27).

This trope is repeated in the official narration of the riots, from police to politicians. It is included in the main reports responding to the 2011 riots from the RCVP, MPS, (Metropolitan Police, 2012) and the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) all of which make explicit and implicit reference to rioters as 'the usual suspects'.

Similarly, with reference to gangs, the first ministerial statement outlines anti-gang initiatives and states: 'We know that a significant proportion of young people involved in the disturbances had links with gangs' (Pickles, 2012). In contrast to the single mention by the RCVP, and the RCVP stating gangs were not a significant cause of the riots, the second ministerial statement mentions gangs in nine places and reiterates a range of pre- and post-riots 'gang' policies, including initiatives aimed at young women, in the 'Immediate Response' section of the ministerial statement (Gov.UK, 2013, p.13-14). In a paragraph without reference to statistical data or research evidence, the ministerial statement claims that: 'The riots shone a spotlight onto the devastating impact that gang and youth violence has on some communities.' (Gov.UK, 2013, p.14).

Later in the statement, gangs are referenced again, with the implication that 'anti-gangs' policies *are the same* as a policy response to the 2011 riots. Examples of this in London are cited, including Tottenham Jobcentre Plus, who are working with a boxing academy 'to engage young gang members' (Gov.UK, 2013).

In an interesting twist, a political blog site, politics.co.uk, reported in October 2012 that the Conservative Party think tank, the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), concluded in 2012 that government *gang policy since the riots* had made things worse in gang-affected areas. I have italicised this to emphasise that the riots were referenced in this document. Whilst reinforcing the narrative that the riots were connected to gangs, the CSJ criticises the removal of preventative strategies by the government.

> … nine out of ten CSJ Alliance charity respondents reported that they had not been approached to take part in any preventative work following the riots. Such a lack of engagement with those who really understand gang culture is indicative of a government being asleep at the wheel. (They Work for You, 2012)

There was no acknowledgement by Pickles of the RCVP's suggestion of the potential use of restorative justice. Neither was there any mention of the potential negative impact of punitive sentencing on individuals or riot-affected communities which had been acknowledged by the RCVP. The emphasis in both ministerial statements was on punishment – type, length, and court processes, including how such practices could be rolled out as general practice. In contrast to the RCVP report, plans to strengthen 'Community Payback' are outlined by Minister Pickles: '… to make it more demanding for offenders and to strengthen public confidence in the sentence are being implemented.' (Gov.UK, 2013, p.27)

Pickles' response to the RCVP final report contradicts RCVP findings in multiple ways yet proceeds to use the RCVP report to validate government policy. For example, in the second ministerial statement, it is implied as a 'given' that social media was used to orchestrate the riots and suggests that the RCVP final report concurred with this when it did not: 'Social media, *used to spread the riots*…' [italics my emphasis] (Gov.UK, 2013, p.7)

Pickles' selective and self-fulfilling misuses of the RCVP report is best illustrated through the example of the deployment of resilience in relation to the riots.

Re-animating resilience as an RCVP finding

In the first parliamentary statement, Pickles thanked the RCVP for their final report which he said: '…seeks to identify steps that can be taken to strengthen social and economic resilience in the aftermath of last August's riots' (Pickles, 2012).

The second parliamentary statement contains relatively little *detail* on resilience and no definition of resilience is offered. However, in common with the RCVP final report, the term is linked to 'character building'. This time there is a further reference to other government policy.

> The [RCVP] Panel's focus on character is reflected in the government's Positive for Youth statement, which stresses the importance of personal and social development and the building of resilience … (Gov.UK, 2013, p.19)

It is hard to be sure which government document this specifically refers to. The government policy paper, *Positive for Youth: a new approach to cross-government policy for young people aged 13-19*, was presented by the previous Labour Government in February 2010, and contains a 'positive youth' statement that does not mention resilience once (Cabinet Office/Department for Education, 2010).

The tone and content of the second ministerial statement introduction interprets the RCVP report as a document that supports government values and policies:

> … recommendations chime with our ambition to strengthen socially responsible attitudes, public service reform and economic resilience … (Gov.UK, 2013, p.4)

Arguably the statement reveals further the government imposed RCVP agenda and remit of the RCVP concerning 'resilience', whilst simultaneously suggesting the RCVP were investigating previously unknown causes of the riots.

> … as well as tackling the immediate issues … their role [the RCVP] was to explore the causes of the riots and how communities can be more socially and economically resilient, in order to prevent future disorder (Gov.UK, 2013, p.4).

Resilience is mentioned in the conclusion to Pickles' second parliamentary statement, and it is suggested that this acts as an antidote to anti-social behaviour (Gov.UK, 2013, p.30).

This appears to disclose a self-fulfilling prophecy, revealing that the remit of the RCVP was to report on resilience and to demonstrate how riot-affected communities needed more of it. If this was the remit, or part of the terms of reference, how meaningful or independent is it for the RCVP to re-state this as a conclusion?

Some authors have pointed out that the government's 'resilience' agenda is anything but benign. For example, Dagdeviren et al (2016) argue that the concept of resilience, if understood in isolation from the social conditions within which it may or may not arise, can mean an over-emphasis on individuals' changing circumstances they cannot necessarily control, at the expense of understanding of the structural factors that may have shaped their vulnerability. Slater (2014, 2017) argues that the emphasis on resilience is a needless political and corporate assault on the poor that needs to be understood as *the crisis*, not as a response to an economic crisis.

A resilience agenda is widely utilised in social work regarding good child development practice for example. Here, the importance of a home learning environment and community ties are linked to building resilience (NCH, 2007). However, we can still question how meaningful an undefined notion of resilience is in relation to a government response to the August 2011 riots.

In critiquing the emphasis placed on resilience by the RCVP, Valluvan et al (2013) suggest that in contrast, social and economic exclusion and the limited availability of education, employment and housing opportunities were barely mentioned in the post-riot narrative. Instead, it was individuals, communities, voluntary sector organisations and, to a lesser degree, business, that were expected to remedy outstanding grievances. Cuts to youth services, increased inaccessibility of higher education and lack of employment opportunities which had been protested by young people just months before the riots, were side-lined and silenced (discussed in Chapter Seven).

Discussion

In examining the way that the riots were narrated in public life, from initial statements by government ministers in the days during and after the riots, to the government's own riots committee, it seems there was a self-fulfilling prophecy at play. Using pre-existing ideological assumptions concerning racialised notions of a young underclass the government decided that they already knew who had caused the riots and what motivated them. In the immediate aftermath of the riots, a well-rehearsed narrative concerning Broken Britain and Big Society solutions was deployed by the leading political party of the day to wield political power (see Chapter Two). The riots were a convenient way to justify pre-planned policies to fix Broken Britain with Big Society solutions for the Conservative Party (Slater, 2014; Wallace, 2014). Evocative of Leys 'cynical state' (2006), and Slater (2014 and 2017) and Gilroy's (2011 and 2013) casting of a 'broken state' in relation to state responses to the 2011 riots, perhaps it was 'job done' for a government that had decided it knew both the causes and the solutions to dealing with the riots within days of them ending.

Wanton criminality perpetrated by troubled or troubling groups, experienced criminals, gangs, poorly parented feral youth, and welfare 'dependents' explained the 'who'. The 'why' narrative linked these groups to deviant cultural practices, values and norms in a Broken Britain where there was too much emphasis on human rights and not enough on 'resilience'. As if in symbiotic relationship, this perspective was adhered to and reinforced by the media coverage and other commentary.

This matters because the narrative closes down alternative readings of the riots and potential alternative social policies and other responses (Miller, 2019; Tyler 2013 (a)). It reinforces and compounds stigma and stigmatising practices and fails to engage with suggestions for positive changes even when these come from the government's own investigations. The stigmatising narrative of feral youth and mindless criminality, foreshadowed government policy responses, absences and omissions.

The failure of the main political opposition parties to provide a counter-narrative also matters. It left a silence in public life concerning historical, structural, economic, or political explanations or influences for the riots. Neither were these pointed to as potential causal factors within the wider context of *where* the events took place. The vacuum contributed to a hegemonic process of privileging some riots responses and readings over others. The lack of a persuasive counter party political narrative meant that there was little pressure to 'understand' the riots or the complex issues that might surround them. There was silence in party political responses to the riots regarding racialised structural inequalities, the potential impact of austerity cuts to services, and tensions in community-police relations relating to stop and search practices and deaths during police contact (including a lack of successful prosecutions relating to the deaths).

We might draw upon the notion of a 'discourse coalition' here (see discussion in Chapter Three) to explain Miliband's response to the riots. Bennett (2013) argues that Cameron and Miliband (and Miliband's New Labour predecessors, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown) shared a neo-liberal conception of class that denies the material basis for grievances and focusses on moral failure of actors through the deployment of stigmatising rhetoric. In Miliband's initial response to the 2011 riots, with its focus on innocent victims, gangs, poor parenting, and the need for punitive sentencing of rioters, there is little to separate him from Cameron, either discursively or in his suggestion of government action.

In forming a discourse coalition a 'problem' – for example the troubled or troubling rioter or family, youth as a gang, or 'the usual suspects' – is constructed, and a story is told that entails a 'solution'. The solution complements the existing ideological assumptions and actions of the discourse coalition. Each political party may use different performative utterances to appeal to their own party audiences, but the wider agenda has been set and framed and is enacted through powerful stories about the 'other'. This ensures major structural factors remain unchallenged, while the performative style differs to appear 'harder' or 'softer' to respective electoral audiences.

All leading politicians invoked the notion of an official victim, using it to enforce a vision of order where the victim is protected from the depraved bad citizen (Peacock, 2019; Sim, 2009). Peacock (2019) charts a historical process of the politicisation of victims' rights accelerated by New Labour governments which attempted to claim ideological and moral high-ground through punitive penal policy, and positioning those who disagreed with their law-and-order politics as 'anti-victim'.

Issues were excluded from the policy agenda by a process called 'the mobilisation of bias', occurring through a process of non-decision-making where certain issues are organised out of politics (Atkinson, 2000, p.215, drawing on Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, pp.948-9). Rather than opening up dialogue and learning, there was a closing down of alternative explanations of possible riots causes, that disqualified other meanings and interpretations of the riots (Diaz-Bone et al, 2008).

In Foucauldian terms (1991), the government and allies implemented a rhetorical technique of discipline and control; a technique of a *disciplinary society* that sought consent for more disciplinary policies (Foucault, 1991). Government ignored counter-narratives, including those produced within its own riots inquiry, that might have pointed to alternative riot responses including restorative justice. Instead, government approved the mass increase of 'tagging', use of custodial remand and sentencing, and use of CCTV to find rioters. These methods are discussed in Chapter Five.

The lack of a detailed and robust 'state methodological response' to the riots in the form of a public inquiry, meant there was a lack of independent analysis. Instead, the government pointed to the RCVP panel, with its pre-set terms of reference around resilience, as an independent panel. The RCVP panel and report, the largest response of the state to the riots in terms of an inquiry, failed to enter public consciousness in the way that the Scarman Inquiry did for example (Neal, 2003) and failed to provide a clear, audible reference point after the findings were published. Largely derided as inadequate in its scope, reach and remit by academics, it did not provide a new or alternative narrative (Lea and Hallsworth, 2012). In contrast, Loessberg and Koskinen (2018) reflecting on the impact and legacy of the Kerner Commission whose remit was to investigate the 1967 USA

Detroit riots, suggest that a document like the Kerner Report can play multiple roles (Kerner, 1988). These potentially include educator, informer, persuader, inspirer, platform, justifier, source of new data and a new way of thinking, and guide to policy making as well as offering a course of action (Loessberg and Koskinen, 2018 p.108). If we compare the final RCVP report to the Kerner report, the former seems woefully lacking (Lea and Hallsworth, 2012).

Overall, the lack of one systematic independent inquiry into the events of August 2011, with significant resources and community ownership, hindered rather than helped us understand why the riots occurred at this time, in this way, with this level of spread of riot events, and what concrete actions and policies pointed to by local communities might help to address these factors (including preventing further public disorder) within localities. This piecemeal approach meant that there were multiple local panels and consultations, including the RCVP, NatCen, individual local inquiry panels, and RtR empirical research (Lewis et al, 2011) amongst others being conducted within close temporal and geographical proximity.

At grassroots level, this was experienced as confusing, leading to the appearance of a 'riots industry' that had gone into gear. The delays in and absence of action regarding RCVP findings and recommendations demonstrate a lack of a real policy response to the riots and a lack of care regarding communicating with and listening to riot-affected communities in any meaningful way.

A few doctoral research participants reported that local people experienced a sense of a lack of clarity over the relationship between different panels and inquiries or what mechanisms might be in place for the inquiries to create concrete positive change for localities. Research participant 14, a former Labour Party councillor within the ruling Labour group in Tottenham at the time of the riots (and until his resignation in 2014), someone who one might expect to be on the 'inside' of local post-riots policy response discussions, reflected within a research interview:

> … we've been panelled to death right … It seemed to me that
> they had a set of solutions which they were lifting from wherever
> they worked before and just lowered them on to Tottenham …
> what is the fashionable buzzword? Resilience. There's something

called resilience theory, yeah? Ignore what people in Tottenham
say …

Overall, the lack of one systematic independent inquiry into the events of August 2011, with significant resources and community ownership, and clear relationships between local panels and a national inquiry hindered rather than helped.

Conclusion

This chapter contains a summary of immediate responses to the riots from politicians across political parties; immediate responses from the media; formal responses from government including the setting up of inquiries; formal responses from local inquiries; formal responses to inquiries from politicians; formal responses to inquiries from academics, followed by analysis of these issues in a discussion section.

This chapter has covered the hegemonic iteration of the 2011 riots in public life in the immediate riots' aftermath including the contrast between a negative focus on rioters contrasted to the framing of good victims (see Chapter Two). This was in evidence in statements from politicians representing main political parties and was reinforced in media editorials and other public commentary. Looking across these narratives, they are gendered, racialised and classed with an assignment of blame for riots put on specific types of family and community life. They invoked historical constructions of an underclass who were blamed for their apparent mindless criminality. There was a lack of a widely available counter-narrative of riots and rioters in public life as party leaders in political opposition parties largely concurred with government readings of the riots.

This impacted on the type of government official inquiry into the riots as the political representation was that it was already known what and who had caused these events. The government set the remit of the inquiry by the RCVP to focus on resilience as relating to both causes of the riots and potential responses to these events. When the RCVP contradicted other government responses to the riots, in relation to the role of gangs or in government claims that the Troubled Families Programme was an appropriate and legitimate response to the riots, the

government ignored these findings. The lack of one overarching inquiry that a public inquiry could have offered, meant smaller local panel findings did not always feed into a wider framework.

I move next to an examination beyond the narrative of the riots, to policy making related to social practices which were claimed by government to be a response to the riots. This includes an examination of how the recommendations of the RCVP report relate to specific policy responses. Chapter Five is focused on policy responses linked to the criminal justice system, anti-gang policies and the Troubled Families Programme and elaborates on the relationship between government narration of the riots and rioters, and the types of government actions and social policy roll-out.

Chapter Five – Findings: Riots Narratives and Government National Policy Response

<u>Introduction</u>

I focus here on an examination of the *content* of what the government said they would do in terms of policy and practice. I consider how these actions have been laid out in government texts, including the final RCVP report, contrasted to how they have been experienced by research participants and others. The chapter draws from the outline of how the government and other actors narrated the riots contained in Chapter Four.

This chapter comprises three parts. The first addresses some elements of discourse theory that frame how I have understood post-riots policy making and its relationship to discourse. Part Two includes examination of the criminal justice system (CJS) responses to the riots, including sentencing in riots-related criminal cases and public and policy debates surrounding the possible future use of water cannon in London. In Part Three, I examine policies directed towards perceived gang-related problems and the Troubled Families Programme (TFP). Further discussion of social policy in relation to housing and regeneration, including elements of the 2012 Welfare Reform Bill, are discussed in Chapter Six.

The emphasis in this chapter is on social policy responses aimed at the troubled or troubling citizens alluded to by politicians in riot-affected communities. These citizens were blamed for causing the riots and cast as feral, mindless, and lacking in personal responsibility.

I aim to consider whether government responses to the 2011 riots, labelled as riots responses by Minister Pickles and colleagues in government, were in fact new policies and/or to what extent programmes were re-purposed as responses to the riots, exploring relationships between government narratives and government policy.

A key feature of trying to trace a policy response to the riots, is that there was no one announcement by government of a coherent package of responses. Instead, as

outlined in Chapter Four, the more substantial government response to its own inquiry into the riots by the RCVP, was not presented until the summer of 2013, nearly two years after the riots. As Newburn et al (2018 (a)) comment in their exploration of post-riots policy concerned with gangs and troubled families: 'the light touch reply to the RCVP by Pickles indicated that there was no desire or likelihood of a policy response' (p.351).

Elements of the RCVP report are included below in order to highlight where and how the government appeared to, at best, signal that specific elements of new policies were responses to the riots and, at worst, conflate the riots with preferred and pre-planned policies with the riots.

I turn first to discourse theory and how it might help us to understand post-riots policy making.

Part One: Discourse, ideographs and post-riots policy making and practice

I am not approaching the discussion of post-riots policies as the search for facts, but rather as an attempt to illuminate some of the practices surrounding aspects of post-riot policy making, closely aligned with government riot narratives. As Atkinson suggests:

> … discourse analysis can help us to interrogate the notion of 'a policy' as presented by the state, to question if this 'policy' is actually doing what the state portrays it as doing and to begin to speculate about the 'real' intentions of policy. (Atkinson et al, 2010, p. 230)

According to Atkinson et al (2010) policy narratives are attempts to foreclose debate and prevent a 'problem' from being thought of in ways that are not congruent with the dominant discourse from which the narrative is derived.

Miller's articulation of ideographs (2012, 2019) is one way of understanding what drives policy narratives. Miller explains that the use of ordinary terms deployed in political discourse in relation to ill-defined goals, such as 'troubled citizens or 'feral youth' forms part of a search for consent for policies (Miller, 2019). Ideographs

function in a policy narrative to bring associations and imagery to reflect political commitments, normalise a world view, and justify policy action whilst marginalising other world views. Their distinguishing feature is their powerful symbolic connotations that are capable of propelling policy narratives in which they are embedded toward dominance or defeat. Eventually a winning narrative dominates and becomes institutionalised into practice and implemented via public administration. Policy is symbiotically associated with these winning narratives.

> The competition among symbolisations does not imply that the best narrative wins, only that a narrative has won for the time being. However, unsettling the established narrative is a difficult political task, particularly when the narrative has evolved into habitual institutionalised practice. Governing narratives convincingly link public policy to the discourse and rhetoric of deliberative politics. (Miller, 2012)

Identification with a narrative depends on a shared understanding within a community or referent group. Miller argues that to understand narrative subscription, to buy into, and/or give consent to a policy, is to understand the origins of discursive power as it is not just subject to logic and evidence but also to emotional investment, shared values, and group identification. The prerequisite for the latter is communities. If the ideographs are successfully deployed, the public is prepared for the punitive policies to follow.

The iteration of rioters as mindless feral criminals or troubled/troubling citizens, outlined in Chapter Four, can be viewed as ideographs. After the riots, the troubled citizens portrayed by government as constituting who rioters were and what rioters did was narrated by Conservative Party politicians who had this view of the urban poor that pre-dated their election in 2010 and the events of August 2011 (see Chapter Two). In this sense, the riots provided the perfect storyline in which to elaborate the pre-existing narrative of Britain as a broken society.

In this chapter and Chapter Six I outline how the riots were used as an opportunity to roll out long-planned policies, now branded as riots responses. This was wrapped in a narrative of self-responsibility, where the role of the state was to name, label,

chastise and punish the bad citizens, provoking rioters to take responsibility for their actions.

Wallace (2014) suggests that 2011 rioters were portrayed as and vilified for 'harming their communities' by an opportunistic government who then took the opportunity to justify a series of punitive interventions as an attempt to 'restore community'. As Newburn et al suggest, rather than responding to the riots as a new phenomenon that needed listening to, the government used the riots as a convenient policy window (2018, pp.358-359).

Next, I explore the types of responses to the riots within public life, focussing first on the penal response and the purchasing of water cannon by Mayor of London, Boris Johnson.

Part Two: Criminal Justice System (CJS) responses

Use of remand in custody and sentencing of those convicted of rioting

This discussion draws upon issues raised during public riots events; research interviews with two doctoral research participants (both of whom had direct experience of the impact of use of remand in custody and prison sentencing after the riots); and newspaper reports and academic analysis of use of custodial sentencing after the 2011 riots. I also include some memories, reflections, and published references from the RtR project in relation to interviewing defence lawyers at the time prosecutions were taking place.

Sentencing took place within the narrative context of the 'usual suspects' and 'gang members' being responsible for the riots, outlined in Chapter Four. Ignoring the RCVP's call for use of restorative justice, but mirroring the recommendations of politicians, riots-related sentencing in the immediate aftermath was on average four times the length of a conviction for the same offence if it had occurred in a non-riot time frame or geographical area. The conviction figure statistics cited by Pickles in July 2012 show that 1,968 people were found guilty of riots-related offences and were subsequently sentenced (Pickles, 2012). 1,292 people received immediate custody and their average sentence length was over four times longer than the

average sentence for similar crimes in 2010 (based on those found guilty at the magistrates' court but sentenced at any court). Those sentenced to immediate custody were given an average custodial sentence length of 16.8 months compared to an average custodial sentence length of 3.7 months for those convicted at magistrates' courts but sentenced at any court for similar offences in England and Wales in 2010.

Two-thirds of the total riots-related offences were recorded by the MPS with approximately one-third of all offences recorded committed in five local authority areas: Croydon, Manchester, Birmingham, Southwark, and Haringey. By early September 2011, these forces had arrested almost 4,000 people, with 62% arrested by the MPS (Pickles, 2012). The remanding and sentencing to custody of people said to be involved in the riots raised the prison population to record levels. On 30th September 2011 there were 846 offenders in prison for offences related to the public disorder (Gov.UK, 2011).

Between August 2011 and July 2012, more than 700 children aged 10-17 went before courts charged with riots-related offences. 218 were given custodial sentences which averaged eight months. Those convicted of riots-related offences in the youth courts, where most cases involving children are heard, were six times more likely to be given custody than those convicted by the same court for similar offences in 2010 (Gov.UK, 2011).

Newburn (2015) argues that a key distinguishing feature of the 2011 riots, 'unprecedented' within the UK, is the response of the penal state, in terms of the numbers arrested and prosecuted, length of sentences, use of remand in custody rather than remand to bail, and overall scale. Scale includes the resources and time put into locating and arresting perpetrators. In London this was done via the MPS Operation Withern, still running over eighteen months after the riots. Unusual features of the penal response to the 2011 riots included the setting up of special courts, including Sunday and all-night sittings. Notorious riots sentencing examples include a college student with no previous criminal record imprisoned for six months for stealing a £3.50 case of bottled water, and a teenager sentenced to 10 months

in prison for stealing two left-footed trainers during riots in Wolverhampton (Willett, 2012).

An under-reported case is that of James Best. In April 2013, an inquest jury heard how this former care-leaver with mental health problems, who was on remand in Wandsworth Prison for stealing a gingerbread man from a shop in Croydon in the riots, collapsed and died after exercising in the gym (Rawlinson, 2013).

> … one of the many processed speedily by the courts in the immediate aftermath of the riots … his brother said he believed that the pressure placed on the prison system by the influx of prisoners immediately after the riots, coupled with institutional failings, were behind Mr Best's death … (Rawlinson, 2013)

Two-fifths of the children in custody had no previous connection with youth offending teams, and half of under-18s brought in front of the courts on charges of rioting and looting were completely unknown to the criminal justice system (Willett, 2012). Willett, from the Howard League for Penal Reform, argued that these children faced an unusually difficult welcome, and outcomes that affected their life chances.

> First timers had to learn the vocabulary and politics of modern prisons to survive … Young people have been told they aren't welcome back to college or school … Many will leave custody far more criminally able. The criminalisation of young people involved in the riots will have unintended devastating consequences … (Willett, 2012)

Ten years on, reflecting on sentencing procedures in the aftermath of the riots, Nazir Afzal, chief crown prosecutor for the north-west at the time, states that pressures in the criminal justice system meant it failed to distinguish between repeat offenders and people 'caught up' in the riots:

> I mean 2011 was the beginning of austerity. I was tasked immediately on taking the role to reduce my budget by 25%, which meant I had to release lots of prosecutors, administrative staff. The police were doing the same, police stations were closing. So, we just had to work with the limited resources we had and that meant that we were forced to apply the same rules to everybody

and had less discretion than we would have been able to exercise otherwise. (Cited in Siddique and Wolfe-Robinson, 2011)

RtR project findings include a perceived abandonment of 'due process' during these courts, where over 1,700 people, many of them first-time offenders, faced serious charges, appearing in court within the space of a month. Some prosecutors reflected the unease of defence lawyers about the use of custodial sentences for first time offenders (Bawdon, 2011 (b)). One youth court magistrate interviewed for RtR claimed the usual 'sentencing rulebook' for children without previous convictions had been 'torn up and thrown away' (Bawdon, 2011 (a)).

Within RtR interviews, defence lawyers reflected upon a generalised chaos, where emergency conditions had implications for all in court. Staff, clients, and families were all affected by lack of access to food, drink, toilets, photocopying, paperwork, and information. They pointed out that whilst Sunday and night courts played well to media cameras as a spectacle, creating a sense of drama and 'justice being done', many of the cases prosecuted in them were, in fact, the ordinary weekend type arrests who would usually be held in custody until the Monday morning for example.

Lack of care for vulnerable prisoners was also highlighted. For example, a defence lawyer who had been defending people in night courts in London, reflected on the lack of care for vulnerable prisoners in the cells, including court jailers losing track of who was in which cell, and with what needs (Bawdon and Wolfe-Robinson, 2012).

A key point here, and one we see replicated in the approach to anti-gang policy outlined later in this chapter, relates to government remit and narrative. Government is not supposed to determine sentencing of prisoners, that is the role of judges. However, as riots-related sentences and prevalent use of remand in custody were handed out after the riots, some investigative journalism suggested the Crown Prosecution Service was issuing guidelines recommending custodial sentences. There was some inference that this may have been in response to statements by PM Cameron, as he told the House of Commons that *anyone* involved in violent disorder should expect to go to prison. The Ministry of Justice denied that it had

asked Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) to issue the advice. (Bowcott and Bates, 2011).

An illustration of what it was like to be arrested and remanded in custody during this process was given by doctoral research participant 17, a young film maker who made *Riots Reframed*, wrongfully arrested during the riots (his case was dismissed within half an hour in court), gives an account of the experience of being arrested and remanded in custody. He spent six weeks in four different prisons 'on remand' and a further six months 'on tag'[16] awaiting his trial:

> … the police station was chaos [he was there for two days] … they didn't give me bail in the first instance … [the police officer dealing with the police cell] came to get me at 12/1am and said, "you're going to court."

> … Highbury and Islington. The court was worse than the police station. It was like a factory … I was like, "I've asked you for food and you haven't given it to me" … It was Ramadan, so I had been fasting … then yeah we went to court at about 3 in the morning

> … the magistrate didn't even look at me [and he was remanded in custody] …The jailers came … We were taken to Wormwood Scrubs, about 5.30 in the morning. I remember thinking, "fucking hell, I'm driving into prison, two days ago I was touching the road.

He describes his experience 'on tag' as another more pernicious type of prison.

> … they reconfigure your personal space into the prison … when they took the tag off, I'm *still* within the prison…

Research participant 21, a Tottenham based community worker and activist, raised issues about the lack of a public narrative that says, "you might have some legitimate grievances and we are interested in assisting you to re-integrate back into your community". He challenges the notion that riots are just about the days of riot events and alludes to their ongoing legacy:

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[16] Tagging/on tag refers to an electronic monitoring process used in England and Wales to monitor curfews and conditions of a court or prison order. Tags are usually attached to the ankle. A monitoring unit or wireless base station is also installed in a place stated in a court or prison order (usually a home). A breach of conditions could mean being taken back to court or to prison.

I have three friends whose children went to prison … Some of them have just come out now [from prison] it's like a blight on their life.

[After other riots] there was a sense that even if people rioted, we want them back at work, we want to say, "You're valuable man, don't you realise you've got a future?" Now you get the sense that those people are going to be further pariah'd … so what is going to be those people's future? … bits of hopelessness really, which is not reported.

… You talk to the people that have been arrested [since the 2011 riots] about how they talk to their probation officers. [They get this], "it isn't that there was a great big social conflict and you were involved in it", it's, "why did you do this terrible thing?"

We can consider these feelings in relation to the government narration of the riots and government's methodological response in relation to the decision not to appoint a public inquiry. Lea (2011) argues that the Scarman Report (1981), the output of a public inquiry following 1980s riots in Brixton, gave those rioters some public legitimacy. The Scarman Report had drawn upon a wide number of stakeholders and concluded in part that rioters had legitimate concerns regarding racism experienced in relation to police practices and in trying to secure fair access to employment, housing, and education. After the 2011 riots, the absence of a narrative that affords any legitimacy to 'rioters' has far-reaching consequences beyond the riot or the sentencing and may form a part of a wider criminalising process. Fitzgibbon (2013) contrasts probation officers' work with rioters in the 1980s, who worked in the context of a post-Scarman narrative that cast rioters as having legitimate grievances (in other words their actions had some 'political' motivation), to those working in 2011, where they were portrayed as 'mindless criminals'. Fitzgibbon argues that probation officers working in the post-2011 riots context, were imbued with a neo-liberal self-responsibilisation narrative rather than one focused on reintegration and empathy for rioter grievances.

Punitive sentencing was justified in the deployment of punitive narratives aimed at gaining public consent for severe treatment of rioters at the time (Sim, 2012, p.27). Lamble (2013) argues that this constituted the riotous behaviour of the elite classes, who deliver legally sanctioned modes of violence while naming it as something else.

However, sentencing of prisoners was just one element of the CJS response. The potential purchase of water cannon was an issue discussed in public conversations about the riots in London (as it was geographically pertinent) as public consultations about its purchase were happening through the Mayor of London's Office at the time that I was conducting fieldwork, including research interviews.

Purchase of water cannon

This discussion draws upon unsolicited comments offered on this topic from two research participants and is contextualised with reference to police reports and other riots reportage. I include it because its merits or otherwise were being discussed at the time of fieldwork and remained one of the few issues still being debated in public life with direct reference back to the riots.

The MPS strategic review of their response to the riots, *Four Days in August*, concluded that they needed to explore new ways of responding to fast-moving disorder, and that water cannon should be considered (Metropolitan Police, 2012).

By the summer of 2014, Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, had proceeded to purchase three water cannons for the Metropolitan Police (Dodd, 2014 (a)) at a cost of £218,000. It was the first purchase of its kind by a British force outside of Northern Ireland. He bought them before the then Home Secretary, Theresa May, approved their use, justifying their purchase on the basis that it was 'in case' of mass public disorder in London that summer. Approval was given for the purchase by the Deputy Mayor for Policing. These second-hand machines purchased from Germany were later found to contain 67 faults (Dodd, 2015).

Research participant 26, a MOPAC Officer (Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, London), was positive about their water cannon purchase and their potential. The officer reflected in a doctoral research interview that:

> Another priority of MOPAC was use and purchase of water cannon.
>
> … Hugh Orde was misrepresented [during Reading the Riots and over coverage of his views] as being against use of water cannon. He used them in Northern Ireland – and he said they are

of 'limited' use, not of 'no' use. He was head of ACPO [Association of Chief Police Officers] when the request was made post-riots. Hugh Orde is one of few senior officers in UK who has experience of using them.

… It's worth having them. No-one is suggesting they are a panacea. They are the size of a large fire engine. So, some criticisms [of their unwieldy size] are not legitimate. I can understand hesitancy, and it's not our decision as to when or whether they are used – it's a police decision.

Riots were the trigger for police [to consider water cannon] – they came to us and did London consultations and found Londoners were in favour … we are a public body accountable to London. Police commanders supported it and 70% of Londoners supported and then the Evening Standard did a similar poll. The decision was not taken lightly.

In contrast, for another research participant interviewed in 2014, the public consultation on water cannon and its subsequent purchase was one of the few times the state continued to talk about riots. More than three years after the riots had taken place, they argued however that it was part of an ongoing opportunistic state tactic to avoid addressing the causes of the riots. Reflecting on attending some of the water cannon consultations with the London public, research participant 07, a young film maker, part of UK Fully Focused film collective, stated:

Nobody in the state really talks about the riots anymore. I'll tell you when the last time I heard about the riots – someone from the police talked about the riots when we was at the City Hall, for the water cannon meeting, when Mark Rowley and the top brass of the police are using the riots to try and get water cannons put in for the summer. If you [the police] don't go around killing people, then you're not going to piss people off and they're not going to burn down the thing. You don't need a water cannon.

… The death of Mark Duggan is now a justice campaign and the riots are being used to justify water cannons. It's now, "how can we [the state] use this situation to our advantage". It's not, "how can we fix this problem that this has highlighted?"

They expressed a concern that if Johnson's purchase was approved, we would see many more water cannon purchased and utilised by the police:

> … you're saying, "we only want three water cannons to come in",
> and once the law allowed one you can have 25,000, you ain't going
> to change the law once it's come in.

A year later the Home Secretary, Theresa May, argued water cannon went against principles of 'policing by consent', banned their use outside of Northern Ireland and rejected Mayor Johnson's request for approval of use (Dodd, 2015). After Boris Johnson's tenure as Mayor, the incoming Labour London mayor, Sadiq Khan, had hoped to sell the water cannon, and to use money for youth services. However, he ended up selling them for scrap at a net loss, despite trying to find a reputable buyer. They were eventually sold for £11,025 (not even covering the £12,000 bill for insuring them) in 2018 to a scrap metal and reclamations yard with a recoup of just 3.4% of the £322,834.71 spent on the vehicles since 2014, (including monies spent by Johnson to try and make them road-worthy) (BBC News Online, 2018; Blowe, 2015). The notion of further purchase with a view to their potential use in public disorder appears to have been abandoned.

Punitive sentencing of prisoners, including blanket use of 'remand in custody' and purchase of water cannon were not the only state response to the mindless criminals, usual suspects, or feral youth. Anti-gang policies and the Troubled Families Programme (TFP) planned by the Conservative Party before the riots, were rebranded as riots policy responses in the riots' aftermath.

Part Three: Anti-gang policies and the Troubled Families Programme

As PM Cameron and Coalition Government colleagues responded to the riots in the Commons and in the press in August 2011, rooted in historic notions of the poor as an underclass in 'deficit' (see Chapters Two and Four), gang membership and troubled families were offered as diagnosis of riots causes. Policies aimed at tackling these were alluded to in terms of a solution to Broken Britain and are examined in turn now.

Within this discussion of the focus on gangs and the remit of the TFP, considering what (if any) relationship is drawn by policy makers and practitioners between gangs, the TFP and the 2011 riots, I consider gangs and troubled families to be ideographs rather than facts. Other than the penal response to the riots, these two

programmes were the two largest and in the case of the latter, the most expensive, social policies alluded to by government as their responses to the riots.

Gang-talk, policy and 2011 riots

This discussion is based on academic and practitioner critique of policies directed towards perceived gang-related problems, and an assessment of the veracity and relevance of linking this issue to the 2011 riots. One research interview is cited in this discussion, 07 a young film maker, part of UK Fully Focused film collective, who expressed frustration at policies directed towards perceived gang-related problems.

The role of gangs in the 2011 riots is contested and has dominated some of the narrative and policy responses to the riots, despite being dismissed as an issue that was pertinent to understanding the riots by a range of research evidence, drawn upon in this discussion below.

The stories told about rioters affected both the types of policies rolled-out after the riots, but also, in some cases, their implementation. Government post-riots gang rhetoric is linked by some critics to being at least partly responsible for the types of CJS responses to the riots taken by the police and is linked to 'usual suspects' narratives. Ball and Drury (2012) argue that the government post 2011 riots rhetoric on gangs bolstered the notion that gang membership and gang orchestration was a central tenet of the riots, influencing who the police targeted in their initial 'raids' of potential rioter homes/premises looking for 'loot'. They show that in reality the percentage of 'known gang members' fell in the police statistics as more riot arrests were made over time, suggesting that early arrestees were not representative of rioters. Gunter (2017) argues that the 2011 riots were used by a government who drew on historic racialised notions of street gangs to animate the notion of inner-city gangs as being the cause of the riots.

Whilst the spectre of gangs in relation to the 2011 riots is covered in Chapter Four in relation to narration of the riots by politicians and surrounding the findings of the RCVP, another indicator of such responses was from Mayor of London, Boris Johnson in the immediate riot aftermath, where he said:

> A big flat rock has been flipped up and we've seen all sorts of
> creepy crawlies come out. I've just seen, you know, hundreds and
> hundreds of photofits of some of the people who have been
> arrested. Eighty-six per cent of them currently have previous
> convictions. This is an opportunity to deal with gang crime.
> (Channel 4, 2011)

I note Johnson's term 'creepy crawlies' and the phrase 'this is an opportunity' as we consider prejudices and policy plans already in motion before the riots. The 'creepy crawlies' are another ideograph, an emotive term used to invoke disgust at rioters. In common with other government responses to the riots, attention to their own words shows us their agenda – the riots were viewed as an opportunity to extend existing anti-gangs programmes.

Whilst the government may not have expressly said 'this is our response to the riots', it is implied in the conflation of gangs with riot causes within documents such as the second of Minister Pickles official responses to the final RCVP report, published in 2013, two years after the riots in a section titled 'Gangs and Youth Violence'. This response to the RCVP report is the one place where the government have anything we can point to as an indicator of policies they were linking to the riots. In this report, Pickles stated that the riots shone a spotlight onto the devastating impact that gang and youth violence has on some communities, stating that in London at least one in five of those convicted was known to be part of a street gang.

In November 2011, a report referenced by Pickles, *Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV)* (Home Office, 2011) opened with a foreword by the Home Secretary, Theresa May, that again conflated the riots with gangs:

> One thing that the riots in August did do was to bring home to the
> entire country just how serious a problem gang and youth violence
> has now become. In London, one in five of those arrested in
> connection with the riots were known gang members. We also
> know that gang members carry out half of all shootings in the
> capital and 22% of all serious violence (Home Office, 2011, p.3).

Minister for Work and Pensions and co-author of the report, Iain Duncan Smith, acknowledged that whilst numbers of rioters who were gang members may be low, anti-gangs work was now a priority. The report then painted a racialised picture of

troubled youth linked to social breakdown. A sum of £10 million was attached to EGYV initiatives aimed at reducing gang activity.

In May 2018, Amnesty International published a report, *Trapped in the Matrix: Secrecy, Stigma and Bias in the Met's Gangs Database* (Amnesty, 2018). The report was a critique of a database of suspected gang members in London which was used from the beginning of 2012. They stated that the database was operationalised within the context of the riots of August 2011 (p.1). In the report's introduction it states:

> The highly charged context for the establishment of the Gangs Matrix was the England riots of Summer 2011... In the days immediately after the riots, Prime Minister David Cameron promised a concerted, all-out war on gangs and gang culture and within six months both the Home Office and the Mayor's Office had announced flagship new anti-gang strategies, including the launch of a reconfigured Trident Gang Command in London (Amnesty, 2018, p.2)

Amnesty International condemned the associated 'traffic light system' that labels individuals as at different levels of gang engagement. It was designed as an operational level tool to provide the MPS with a method of assessing and ranking London's suspected gang members according to their 'propensity for violence'. Referred to as 'gang nominals', each is marked in a traffic-light scoring system as red, amber, or green. 'Red nominals' are those the police considered most likely to commit a violent offence; 'green nominals' pose the least risk. Amnesty concluded that this whole approach was unfit for purpose.

> Our research shows that the Gangs Matrix is based on a vague and ill-defined concept of 'the gang' that has little objective meaning and is applied inconsistently in different London boroughs … with few, if any, safeguards and little oversight (p.2) … with disproportionate impact on black boys and young men (p.3). (Amnesty, 2018)

Amnesty's report, in common with some of the academic literature cited in this thesis, affirmed the role of an ongoing focus on gangs in youth policy making which pre-dated the 2011 riots and encouraged the conflation of gangs with the 2011 riots.

The policing of 'gangs' is not new, with some Gang Units and their lists predating the national EGYV policy of 2011/12. In fact, the existence of Gangs Units and lists arguably enabled the police and government to (incorrectly) conflate 'gangs' with both the summer 2011 riots in England and wider issues of serious youth violence. (Amnesty, 2018, p. 17)

Writing in early 2019, community activist Stafford Scott, pointed out that in Haringey, the borough where the 2011 riots started, the MPS engaged with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA). The DVLA wrote to nearly all the borough's 100 'gang nominals' informing them they were suspected cannabis smokers and were required to complete a 'medical' (including providing a urine sample) or return their driving licence. Scott reflects on the anger and sense of injustice this caused amongst young people in the area.

In February 2020, the Guardian reported that hundreds of young people had been removed from the police database of gang members after claims it was discriminatory and blighting their life chances (Dodd, 2020). The Gang Matrix was found to be in breach of data protection laws and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission said it was monitoring the situation (Amnesty, 2018).

Writing directly about the policy response to the 2011 riots, Hallsworth and Brotherton (2011) sought to address what they saw as an evidence vacuum regarding what they call the 'gangland Britain' narrative deployed within official 2011 riots narratives, highlighting failure to address fundamental questions like; 'what is a gang or gang culture?' (p.4); and in what ways is gang-talk a racialised and classed narrative? (p.6) (see also Valluvan et al, 2013). As such, a focus on gangs in the riots' aftermath may have become a convenient scapegoat, obscuring critical examination of state failure and providing a vehicle for criminalisation, particularly of black and poor communities (Hallsworth and Brotherton, 2011, p.13).

Research participant 07, a young film maker, part of UK Fully Focused film collective, raised the issue of gangs in relation to government responses to the riots. He alluded to the creation of a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' regarding gangs, in an unofficial alliance between government and media (Hall et al, 1978). This echoes the critique of 'gang-talk' offered by Hallsworth and Brotherton (2011).

Research participant 07 said:

> At the end of the day, we *cause* gangs in our country. We actively create gangs, and we do this by closing down youth centres, yeah, so the young people have nowhere to go. So, you're on road with a group of four or five people and the police will arrest you and that's how they see you as well … they're black or ethnic minority or they're white working class and they've got their hoods up and they're dressed a certain way. You get pulled over and you get arrested. Or you will get stopped and searched and then that tag will be given to you because the police will see you, and let's say you're from my area, down the road there, X Street. I'm from X Street.
>
> … But say you're a group and the police arrest you on X Street. There's a group of you there on X Street and you're out of the youth centre because the youth centre has been shut down, so maybe you've come from all different areas to this community centre, but then the community centre is not there, you've got your friends from this area, you're hanging around the area. The police stop and search you, "Ah, you must be the X Street Boys …" that's a tag, that's it. Boom, that's it, you're a gang… And anyone now is an affiliate to the X Street Boys. So, we create gangs, and then we waste money trying to sort them out ... how about we stop taking money away from youth centres and giving it to other things. You know, put money into places where it is needed …

Whilst there is no claim in this thesis to capturing or offering a definitive experience of the riots or viewpoint concerning these events, I do think it is worth stating that no research participant in doctoral fieldwork (or in RtR interviews with rioters) had much time for the notion that understanding gangs might be a useful lens through which to understand the 2011 riots. Active dismissal of this notion as a racialised stigmatising discourse was given within interviews and discussed at public riots conversations (see discussion in Chapter Seven). Where gangs were mentioned, it was in relation to how this was a convenient tactic to divert attention and resources away from other potential foci for young people. In contrast, frustration and anger at punitive sentencing of rioters and the early dismissal of riots as all about gangs did figure heavily in public conversations about the riots. We might view the focus on gangs in relation to the riots as an ideograph, part of a wider stigmatising process aimed at de-legitimising any concerns young people might share collectively. This affords the promotion of dismissal of 'rioter' and/or young people's voices in relation to the

issue, with the suggestion, what do feral youth gang members know about anything? As such, it seeks to remove any moral authority from their grievances.

Most academic research on the August 2011 riots dismisses the notion that gangs are a useful lens through which to examine and understand the riots (see discussion in Chapter Four). Bridges (2012) points to policy contradictions and further potential for self-fulfilling prophecy within riots gang rhetoric, suggesting that if the gang narrative relating to rioters was accurate, the flooding of prisons after the riots might have left non-gang offenders (whether on remand or convicted) vulnerable to socialisation into 'gang culture'.

Next, I consider the policy-roll out of the Troubled Families Programme and its relationship to riot narratives.

Troubled Families Programme (TFP)

This discussion is based on academic critique of the TFP, with specific reference to trying to tease out any relationship between the TFP and the 2011 riots. I draw upon interviews with three professionals interviewed for the thesis. One is a senior practitioner briefed with supporting the roll-out of the TFP, the second is a member of the national evaluation team, briefed with conducting an overall national evaluation of the TFP, and the third is a MOPAC officer in London.

The origin of the TFP and an emphasis on co-ordinated, multiple agency partnership working across a range of services directed at 'problematised' families, can be traced to New Labour Government's public service reform agenda which stressed the importance of 'early intervention' practices (Bond-Taylor, 2014; Lambert and Crossley, 2017; Sayer, 2017). Plans to continue with a similar type of family provision were in place by the Conservative-Party-led Coalition Government well before the 2011 riot events (Crossley, 2016 (b) and 2018).

The TFP was not explicitly referenced in the 2010 Conservative Party general election manifesto, but references were made to the need to 'support families', and commitments made to honour New Labour's 'Sure Start' programme (House of Commons, 2017). 'Sure Start' was aimed at early intervention and support for

vulnerable families with early years children, subsequently cut incrementally by the Coalition and subsequent Conservative majority Governments (Stewart and Reader, 2020).

Days after the 2011 riots, in his 'fightback' speech, PM Cameron linked troubled families to the riots, acknowledging the pre-existing plans to roll out such a programme, but implied an accelerated rollout of a type of TFP underpinned by 'rocket boosters' in response to the riots:

> So, if we want to have any hope of mending our broken society, family and parenting is where we've got to start.
>
> I've been saying this for years, since before I was Prime Minister, since before I was leader of the Conservative Party.
>
> ... This has got to be right at the top of our priority list.
>
> And we need more urgent action, too, on the families that some people call 'problem', others call 'troubled'.
>
> ... It became clear to me earlier this year that – as can so often happen – those plans were being held back by bureaucracy.
>
> So even before the riots happened, I asked for an explanation.
>
> Now that the riots have happened, I will make sure that we clear away the red tape and the bureaucratic wrangling, and put rocket boosters under this programme … (Cameron, 2011 (a))

The Coalition Government's response to the RCVP final report in the first written ministerial statement to Parliament in July 2012 (Pickles, 2012) refers to a planned government social policy review aimed at 'support to parents', to address 'entrenched issues' in riots-affected communities with a stress on early intervention and 'good parenting'. More detail is provided in the second Ministerial statement of July 2013 where Minister Pickles said:

> Troubled families include those with adults out of work, children not in school and families who are committing anti-social behaviour and crime … (Pickles, 2012)

In examining the government's second response (2013) to their own inquiry into the riots by the RCVP (2011), Minister Pickles continually makes the link between the

RCVP panel's approval of the Troubled Families Programme, semantically linking the RCVP, the TFP and the 2011 riots. For example, Pickles states that there is a strong emphasis on early intervention to strengthen families and that the government were glad that the RCVP fully supported the TFP. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, a close examination of the RCVP final report does not support this claim by Pickles. The RCVP rejected the notion that the TFP was an appropriate or relevant response to the 2011 riots.

This second parliamentary statement also signposts the reader to the *Strategy for Social Justice* document, published by the government in March 2012 to tackle what they call: '… entrenched educational and social failures … which may have contributed to the mindset of rioters.' (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012, p.16)

This 'Social Justice' statement presented by the then Minister for Work and Pensions, Iain Duncan Smith, stresses changing the 'culture' of those in poverty and the need to tackle it through early intervention, an emphasis on 'work' and tackling 'a culture of worklessness' whilst also providing, '…a fair deal for the taxpayer' (p.10). Policies like the TFP are discussed in depth but there is no reference to this programme as a response to the 2011 riots, to the riots' aftermath, or to the work of the RCVP. In fact, there is no mention of the 2011 riots.

Yet in his response to the RCVP final report and when the TFP was rolled-out in late 2011, the TFP was branded as a policy response to the riots by Minister Pickles. The initial cost of the scheme, targeted at 120,000 families, was £9 million.

Whilst it is widely referred to as a flagship response to the riots, it is also acknowledged within academic critique that the actual link between the riots and the TFP is questionable: 'The TFP was the most sizeable and significant policy announcement with any link to the riots, albeit tenuously.' (Newburn et al, 2018, p. 354).

Neither of the two senior professionals interviewed for this thesis, who held (different) responsibilities for supporting the national roll-out of the TFP, referenced the riots until I asked:

What is the relationship between the TFP suggested by central government as a response to the riots and the riots themselves, and do you continue to see a trace or connection between the riots and the TFP?

Research participants 24, a senior civil servant supporting the national roll-out of the TFP, and 25, a senior member of the TFP national evaluation team, responded that whilst most local councils had some 'family intervention' projects planned and/or rolled out before August 2011 (albeit not yet branded as a government-mandated programme within a national remit), these became the national TFP after the riots. Research participant 24 commented:

The programme increased the profile and scale of pre-existing families' policy … with a universal definition of a TF but a local definition of a 'high-cost family'.

Whilst research participant 25 stated that:

The [TFP] agenda was already there but the language shifted [with the use of the term TF rather than 'families with complex needs'] which has more emotional weight – I hadn't heard that term [troubled families] used before [the riots].

It is worth noting here that the more stigmatising label of 'troubled' rather than 'complex' families, mirrors the language used in public life during and after the riots with reference to the Broken Britain discourse.

Research participant 24 suggested that there was a link between the riots and families not previously 'on the radar'. They stated that in the immediate riots' aftermath there was more urgency given to rolling out the (pre-planned) TFP, with more focus and attention on defining the eligibility criteria for the programme and a stronger emphasis on the incidence or danger of youth offending in the family. Participant 25 pointed out that addressing youth offending is a core part of TFP work and reflected that:

… there is good data sharing [between professionals rolling out the TFP] with Youth Offending Teams (YOTS) at identifying families.

However, research participant 24 reflected that in the years since the announcement of the TFP, the riots are never mentioned or referenced within policy planning and development, roll-out of the programme, or in plans for the first national evaluation. Research participant 25's national role, which included some oversight of the national evaluation three to four years on from the events of August 2011, said in a research interview that professionals involved in rolling-out, monitoring and evaluating the programme do not explicitly link practice back to the riots or invoke the riots in any rhetoric about TFP practices as:

> … riots are not a policy imperative.

Research participant 24 pointed out that the riots took place in a limited number of geographical areas, whilst TFP is a national programme:

> So, it [riot events] was never going to have resonance everywhere [for TFP].

In explaining the remit of the TFP, 24 did use the term 'resilience' which featured heavily in the RCVP report and the DSCG's response to it, although they did not relate resilience directly to any explicitly labelled post-riots practices.

> … The TFP is designed to increase resilience in families. Families report that they feel more control and [because of key worker practices] more cohesion is reported between disaffected young people and their families …

When I asked, 'what definition of resilience does the TFP work to?' 09 responded that:

> Defining resilience is difficult – local authorities have different definitions …

The absence of an easily identifiable trace of the riots within TFP practices is also reflected in the official evaluation and monitoring of the TFP. The first external national evaluation of the TFP, involving 150 local authorities, was being undertaken at the time of my research interviews (Gov.UK, 2020). I asked if there were plans to capture the riots or riots legacy in this national evaluation and the answer was 'no', but 25 did reflect that in thinking about our research conversation,

> … it would be interesting to see if there was a trace in the local
> reports from riot-affected areas.

Newburn et al make the point that government opportunism in linking the TFP to riots is illustrated by the fact that mention of the riots was dropped so quickly within official TFP discourse (2018, p. 355).

The publication of the evaluation, a complex report comprising several documents, led to criticisms of the programme and questions about further roll-out (Gov.UK, 2020). Five years on from the riots, BBC news programme *Newsnight* stated in August 2016:

> An unfavourable evaluation of the government's flagship policy
> response to the 2011 riots has been suppressed …The analysis
> found [the TFP had] "no discernible" effect on unemployment,
> truancy or criminality … Officials have told Newsnight that they
> believe it would have been published, had it been positive. (Cook,
> 2016).

Despite the criticism, a second wave of the TFP, aimed at 400,000 families and costing £900m, was rolled out in April 2015. The definition of a troubled family was expanded to include the less 'troubled', and other public services like health and housing became drawn in (Cook, 2016). Crossley (2016 (a)) suggests that at this point and as the TFP was rolled out, there was a high degree of compliance with it from Labour MPs, journalists and an industry that had grown up around it regarding conferences, workshops, with a 'how to do it' theme.

At the end of the research interviews with participants 24 and 25 I asked if they were aware of TFP criticisms (e.g. stigmatisation of families invoking historical notions of the underclass, lack of a systemic approach to tackling poverty etc) and, if so, what they thought of it. Research participant 24 reflected that:

> … the programme can become related to stigma and being the
> ambulance at the bottom of a cliff … but … it's acknowledged by
> those working in the field that TF is in its first phase and is
> currently 'reactive'.

Research participant 24 pointed out that local authorities can present the programme with a different name and do not have to present it to local communities

and families using the term 'troubled family'. They reflected that in the future, this model of whole family working, with a key worker coordinating services and communication, may become more widespread and could lead to all 'complex families' to be offered a similar whole family approach:

> [TFP provision] can be a *cheaper* [my emphasis] type of provision than an access to universal services approach, as the key worker provides one point of contact, so there is less family-diverse services contact.

In addition, they reflected that the focus on prevention and early intervention may prevent escalation of needs and reduce public costs:

> The TFP has developed [over the past 3-4 years] to incorporate more emphasis on causal factors such as domestic abuse and mental health issues as underlying drivers of more visible problems such as financial exclusion.

Overall, I have not found a convincing case presented within government documents or research interviews for the TFP as a genuinely new or nuanced response to the events of August 2011. The only trace I can find that links the riots with TFP is in PM Cameron's 'fightback' speech after the riots and in the first DCLG/Pickles ministerial statement in response to the RCVP final report. The latter incorrectly refers to the RCVP's support for the TFP as an appropriate riots response. Similarly, the second ministerial statement to the RCVP final report by Pickles ignores and misrepresents the conclusion of the RCVP report, which concluded a significant connection between TFP families, and the families of the rioters, had not been established (Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2012, p.6-7).

The ministerial statement outlines the content of the first wave of the TFP as if it were recommended by the RCVP as an appropriate and relevant policy response to the riots, stating: 'We are glad that the Panel [RCVP] fully supports the Troubled Families programme.' (Gov.UK, 2013 (a) p.16).

These findings support Jensen's (2013) and Tyler's (2013 (b)) contention that an 'underclass' discourse, of a criminal, irresponsible, 'feral' substrata of British society, including the 'feral family' after the 2011 riots, had not suddenly 'appeared' in

response to the riots but *was already there*. The neo-liberal state turned the 'troubled family' into a warning of the growing indiscipline of the contemporary 'family in crisis'; of 'poor parents' unable to keep their rioting children in sight, 'in line' and preferably indoors (Jensen, 2013).

Levitas (2012 (a)) examines the trajectory of the 'troubled families' narrative and the numbers calculated to fit this category and concludes that the figures attached to policy documents and government statements must be treated as *factoids*, rather than facts (Levitas, 2012 (a) p.4). We can see evidence of this in the Tottenham Lipton Report discussed in Chapter Four. Here three different figures are cited as amounting to 'troubled families' in the Tottenham riots' aftermath, increasing incrementally as the report unfolds.

Valluvan et al (2013) argue TFP was an opportunist move by the state to conflate a pre-existing policy with the August 2011 riots and brand it a new policy response. The government realised that those identified under its already demarcated 'troubled families' programme was not coterminous with 'rioter families'. So, in the second wave the policy was extended to so-called 'forgotten families' – those also on the margins of society but not sufficiently so to be included in the initial 120,000.

In a critique of neoliberal governance, including policies like the TFP, Slater (2011) argues that:

> … the story behind the rhetoric of a 'broken society' full of troubled families is a pure exemplar of the truncation and distortion of public understanding in respect of the ongoing articulation of poverty, social class, and space in British society.

Despite serious questions being raised about its efficacy by the national evaluation and others, in January 2020 the government announced a further £165 million for the programme ('Troubled Families Programme Gets £165m', 2020).

In the government emphasis put on problem families in post-riots rhetoric and policy making, some have focused on the specific narration of the rioters as 'trouble' or troubled (Levitas, 2012a). Here we can see a link between the way riots were narrated as 'mindless feral criminality' and social policy roll-out such as the Troubled

Families Programme. This was underpinned by the Coalition Government's understanding of poverty as premised on historic notions of problematic types of families and behaviours associated with an 'underclass' in need of specific types of government or criminal justice system interventions (Crossley (2015, 2016 (a) and (b), 2017 and 2018) and Garrett (2019).

There was no mention of TFP or use of the term 'troubled families' by any participant during attendance at post-riots public debates/conversations about the causes of the riots and the ongoing priorities. Apart from the three research interviews with Civil Servants with an explicit remit and responsibility for rolling out government policy, no other research participant approached for this thesis mentioned TFP or 'troubled families', including within research interviews. At post-riots debates and public conversations that formed part of my fieldwork, MP for Tottenham, David Lammy, was the only person to raise 'poor parenting' and 'absent dads' as a pertinent riots-related issue. However, I concede that I didn't ask direct questions about TFP within semi-structured interviews (see discussion in Chapter Three). In hindsight, I think that it would have been interesting to hear about any experiences or perspectives regarding this programme.

Discussion

A useful lens through which to interpret the contradictions raised in this chapter and to understand them in relation to the official narratives of riots laid out in Chapter Four is to consider the issue of opportunism in relation to motivation of rioters in rioting and to compare them to government responses in choosing their responses to these riot events.

If we turn to articulations of rioter motivations that come from rioters themselves, found within research data such as that generated by RtR (Lewis et al, 2011), doctoral research interviews, and some public conversations about the riots attended as part of doctoral fieldwork, the notion of opportunity was visited. In these instances, people talked about the lack of other opportunities for young people and suggested that they saw in the riots a rare opportunity, which they took. This included the opportunity to take control of the streets in response to the death of

another black person during contact with the police, in a context of historical memory of other deaths and the ongoing daily experiences of stop and search police practices. This was linked to the opportunity to take control away from the perceived biggest gang on the street – the police (Clifton, 2011 (a) and (b); Lewis et al, 2011; Newburn et al, 2016). Some viewed the riots as an opportunity to 'get free stuff' including expensive, usually unaffordable goods or basic provisions such as nappies and baby formula that were also increasingly unaffordable (McKenzie, 2015; Newburn et al, 2015; Topping and Bawden, 2011). Riots were also narrated by some rioters as opportunities to have some collective fun and sense of collective power (Jensen, 2018). For some young people in particular, the days and nights of the riots cut through and overrode postcode rivalries and the closure of street spaces available during ordinary life (Newburn et al, 2011 (b)). For others, the riots were viewed as an opportunity to fight the government – rebel against the existing system (Carter, 2011, Newburn et al, 2016).

However, these narrations of the motivations of rioters in relation to opportunity were minimised in public post-riots narrations, in favour of the negative representations of rioters by party political leaders, government and media. In this instance rioters were portrayed as criminal opportunists who took advantage of an escalating situation on the streets due to inherent criminality and greed (Slater, 2011; Valluvan et al, 2013).

Whilst the riots were cast by politicians and media as a-historical events, dislocated from racialised structural inequalities and injustices, the deployment of ideographs of rioters as troubled citizens, mindless criminals, feral youth, and creepy crawlies drew upon historical notions of an underclass (Crossley, 2016 (a) and (b); Garrett, 2019; Tyler, 2013 (b)). Through the deployment of ideographs and tropes such as 'the usual suspects', riots and rioters were used as an illustration in the storyline of an alleged pre-existing social malaise or crisis of Broken Britain, particularly attached to the young urban poor (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Jefferson, 2014 (a); Wallace, 2014).

Tyler (2013 (a)), Jensen (2013), Wallace (2014) and Slater (2016), contend that the 2011 riots were storied in public life within narrow neo-liberal scripts of criminality

and lack of personal responsibility. In a circuitous process these scripts were discursively attached to a seeking of consent (or in Miller's terms (2012) 'narrative subscription') for long-planned social policy provision which was retrospectively, and temporarily, reframed as policy responses to the riots. In this circuitous relationship, the 2011 riots were taken by government as an opportunity for PM Cameron and his coalition colleagues to justify a policy rollout that reinforced their pre-existing prejudices and plans (Slater, 2014), a policy agenda presented more than a year before the August 2011 riots at the May 2010 general election in the Conservative Party manifesto.

Ideographic representations of rioters also acted as a way of closing-down alternative explanations for rioter motivations and may have signalled a need for different policy responses from government. These alternatives might have included highlighting and addressing issues such as deaths during police contact, racist disproportionate use of force and stop and search, the type of policing of a series of anti-austerity protests, and, in particular, protests by young people aimed at challenging cuts to youth services, including EMA and student tuition fees, the impact of racialised austerity politics, all of which remained marginal within public discourse.

If the riots and rioters were all about mindless criminal activity by the usual suspects, there was no role *for the state* other than to punish this. It also suggests a useful way in which to silence other ways of reading the riots by placing no responsibility *on the state* for fuelling or causing these events to happen.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have considered in what ways the penal response to rioters, purchase of water cannon, focus on gangs and rollout of the TFP were appropriate responses to the 2011 riots and in what ways they might be considered new, genuinely reactive responses to the riots. As money has been spent, ordinary youth work, community policing and other services particularly aimed at the young have been cut back.

The government's response to the riots appears to be based on pre-existing policy goals whilst the riots appear to have been used, in the deployment of ideographs, as an opportunity to accelerate and widen these goals. This includes seeking the overt or tacit consent of the populace for these responses by semantically linking the notion of the troubled, feral, mindless rioter with the need for types of policy responses to deal with them. As such, the riots served as a useful vehicle for presenting their merits to the public in the riots' aftermath.

Underpinning the rhetorical and policy responses was a belief in Broken Britain and a good/bad binary citizenship narrative based on historic notions of an underclass. The neo-liberal solution offered in a context where all other public services were cut back, particularly those aimed at young people, involved punitive sentencing of those convicted during the riots, social policies based on 'deficit' understanding of the young urban poor as some public funds were spent on attempts to militarise police responses to public disorder through the purchase of water cannon.

The opportunistic response of the government to the riots was narrated by politicians as a necessary response to the mindless opportunism of rioters. In considering the focus on anti-gang policies and troubled families in relation to the riots, Levitas's description of the TFP as a *factoid* seems applicable to both programme areas (Levitas, 2012 (a) p.4).

Next, I turn in Chapter Six to a consideration of state responses to the 'good citizens', the official victims, including the roll-out of compensation schemes and regeneration projects.

Chapter Six – Findings: Compensation and Regeneration

Introduction

In exploring how the August 2011 England riots have been represented and responded to by a range of post-riots engaged constituencies, I wanted to understand what happened to those represented by government and media as the 'good citizens' or 'official victims'. How did they view the riots several years later and what was the relationship between official rhetoric and action regarding their post-riot circumstances?

We might view rioters who were punitively sentenced and the Duggan family as 'unofficial victims' of state responses. Government and media rhetoric delineated a (good) 'us' and (bad) 'them' narrative: the silent majority of good citizens versus feral, troubled gang culture.

In this chapter, I explore the type of government response that official victims experienced, in particular the implications of the Riots (Damages) Act, 1886, for potential claimants and those assisting them.

Further to this, I examine schemes that provided individual compensation and funds for community regeneration. This includes official announcements about state assistance for individuals and communities in the aftermath of the riots to illustrate the complex reality of tracing the funding and where it ended up. I draw on examples of how this was experienced by research participants who received compensation and their advocates. Community compensation came, in part, in the form of funded geographic regeneration plans. For Tottenham and Croydon these coalesced around the local football stadium and a new city centre shopping complex respectively. This raised contentious issues about the type of regeneration and housing planned at the time I was undertaking fieldwork.

I also consider some of the social policies affecting housing in riots-affected cities like London, with a brief reference to the Haringey Development Vehicle, a regeneration model in Tottenham that came after my fieldwork.

The findings of this chapter concur with Chapter Five findings, namely that the government response to the riots was opportunist. There is little evidence that the needs of official victims were considered more carefully than those of unofficial victims and/or rioters. Kamler and Thomson (2006, 2011) remind us that in Foucauldian forms of analysis, to understand the story being narrated we can consider what is absent, hidden, or silent in a response, as well as what is present. Within government actions aimed at official victims after the riots there are many absences and silences.

I begin with a consideration of the Riots (Damages) Act, the legal framework through which compensation and support for individuals and communities was delivered.

Riot (Damages) Act and compensation for individuals

Here I draw on four research interviews: a Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) officer, research participant 26, who supported and implemented the government's compensation scheme for official victims in London; a Labour MP in Croydon, research participant 02, who had been advocating for adequate compensation on behalf of constituents; research participant 05, a local business owner in Croydon, who became a campaigner advocating for victim support in the riots-aftermath; and an interview with a Tottenham-based resident, community worker and activist, research participant 21. Limited academic literature addresses the experiences of official victims; their experiences are more usually covered by journalists in the riot aftermath, and I cite from both types of sources here.

At the time of the August 2011 riots, the Riots (Damages) Act (RDA), which still operated under the terms and conditions of its inception in 1886, was the main source of compensation for individuals who lost homes, businesses, and stock. Posing major challenges for modern claimants, the RDA was shown to be unfit for purpose (Doern, 2013 and 2016).

The RDA posed three types of problems, largely due to its archaic parameters. Firstly, because a riot was defined as involving 10 or more people riotously assembled, looted businesses or homes could only claim compensation if they

could prove that – otherwise it was regarded as a normal theft. Secondly, compensation was on a like-for-like basis, so if a computer or TV was damaged and was three years old, compensation was the value of the original goods, not the amount it would cost to replace them in 2011. Thirdly, many cars were burnt out during the riots, but as cars largely did not exist when the act was drawn-up, there was no provision made for car damage.

Under the terms of the RDA, people and businesses could apply for compensation from their local police authority (Legislation.Gov.UK, 2020). In London, this process was overseen by the MPS which, since the introduction of police commissioners in January 2012, was replaced by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) (London.Gov.UK, 2020).

In terms of physical damage, London suffered the greatest recorded impact of the riots. Croydon had the largest number of recorded related crimes during the 'riot' period (430 in total). Croydon was also worst affected in terms of numbers of displaced households (103) and number of businesses that were disrupted (252). In London, Croydon made more claims under the terms of the RDA than any other area (Croydon Council, 2012).

Minister Pickles reassured Parliament in July 2012 that most claims had been successfully dealt with:

> Police authorities have concluded 95 per cent of all valid active uninsured claims made under the Riot (Damages) Act … approximately 95 per cent of individuals and 92 per cent of small to medium size businesses have received a pay-out from their insurer. (Pickles, 2012)

Responding to the findings of the RCVP in his second ministerial statement, Pickles stated that: 'The vast majority of individuals and businesses who suffered losses as a result of the riots last August have received a pay-out' (Gov.UK, (a), 2013, p.9).

Before considering the experience of official victims in claiming compensation, it is worth reflecting on who they were. RtR research in 2012 found many official victims were ethnic minority small business owners, including many poor individuals:

> … a lot of communities worst hit were poor, immigrant, English
> not their first language and it was hard for them to feel they could
> be heard and how to go about this [seeking compensation].
> Taylor et al, 2012)

Gilroy (2011) made a similar point in his 'Dream of Safety' speech after the riots. Reflecting on a case of a woman in Croydon who threw herself out of a window of her burning building (one of the most famous media images from the riots), Gilroy said:

> …she'd come from Poland to work in *Poundland* because that was
> a better life for her. Imagine what that means, to come from
> Poland to work in Poundland, for minimum wage, searching for a
> better life. (Gilroy, 2011)

As MPs Reed (Croydon) and Lammy (Tottenham) suggested when they raised the issue in Parliament in 2013, the financial repercussions of the riots for individuals and communities reverberated for years (see discussion in Chapter Four). Many felt there were still things to resolve when the second parliamentary statement in response to the final RCVP report was presented in July 2013. During doctoral fieldwork I found financial issues and the inadequacies of the compensation process were still a preoccupation for some.

Research participant 26, a police commissioner who worked in the Home Office during the riots with the Minister for Policing, was responsible for overseeing claims made in the riots' aftermath but was working at MOPAC when the interviews took place. He explained his perspective on some of the challenges in dealing with the Act in practice. In London, research participant 26 reported 1,638 claims for theft from premises were rejected because the claims were not seen to be 'as a result of riots' since it could not be proved they met the legal definition of 10 or more people riotously assembled. 26 also reported there were some 'heart-breaking' (his description) cases where people had lost new stuff but didn't have insurance and received relatively little real compensation:

> For many small shopkeepers their entire livelihood was in their
> stock. When that's gone, it's very hard.

Many claimants lost everything in home and business fires, including insurance documentation and receipts for goods bought. 26 stated that, MOPAC "sympathetically interpreted rules as much as they could". MOPAC made interim payments where they could and paid out based on legal advice where they could on "just enough information", to try and help those who had lost their documentation. In March 2015, 06 stated that:

> We still have 17 ongoing claims of insured people involving Croydon London Road, where large blocks were condemned, and until the building work is done we don't know costs and so on our books it doesn't look like they've been paid.

During research interviews conducted for Reading the Riots, many official victims were grappling with compensation claims. Nearly one year on from the riots, in June 2012, RtR reported that:

> Out of 4,500 compensation claims submitted to nine police forces under the Riots (Damages) Act, more than half have been rejected, leaving hundreds of people whose lives – and often livelihoods – were destroyed struggling to make ends meet (Taylor et al, 2012).

When I attended public conversations about the riots during doctoral fieldwork from the autumn of 2012, I found the same issues were impacting on riot-affected communities and these remained when I conducted doctoral research interviews in 2013/14.

Research participant 05, a campaigner for those who had lost property and business during the riots, and still campaigning for adequate justice for local claimants at the time of research interview had been a small family business-owner. Her parents died in the aftermath of the riots amid anxieties about compensation claims for the family business that she watched burn to the ground from her neighbouring flat. She gave a rich description of issues facing people in Croydon:

> The last thing that my dad had done before he died was to sign these [High Street Fund] forms … we were doing the funeral expenses and my mum was saying, "what am I going to do, because you know we've got no income, where's the insurance?" So, everything was all up in the air, she [mum] was very stressed.

The impact of these delays is evident in a paper presented to a Croydon Council Cabinet meeting in January 2012, which highlighted delays in compensation claims and the problems for claimants:

> One cause for concern has been the significant delay to the processing of claims both through the Riot (Damages) Act and commercial insurance. This is leading to a stalled recovery time frame in an already difficult economy… (Croydon Council, 2012).

The 2012 report, *Picking Up the Pieces,* by the London Assembly Budget and Performance Committee, which included evidence from small businesses on compensation problems, called for an update to Victorian-era laws on riot compensation. It also argued that poor coordination immediately after the riots, plus a lack of urgency from government and the insurance industry to settle claims, had held back the recovery process. Despite having the knowledge, resources, and skills available, the report warned that a comprehensive recovery service was not in place and many small businesses were left confused about where to look for help. They pointed out that a third of businesses had yet to receive a penny from their claim, with many relying on handouts from funding like the High Street Fund to stay afloat (London Assembly, 2012).

Research participant 02, a Croydon Labour MP who had raised compensation issues in parliament, said in a research interview:

> … Something like £299 million was claimed in damages after the riots. Around 17% of that amount has been paid out which is far smaller than the normal amount that is paid out against claims after normal loss adjustment processes. Neither the government, nor the GLA [Greater London Authority], nor the Metropolitan Police have ever adequately explained why so little has been paid out.
>
> The line they use is that 99% of cases have been dealt with and the cases are closed. Now, they may have been dealt with to the satisfaction of the government, but they haven't been dealt with to the satisfaction of the people who put in their claims.

Research participant 05, seeking compensation for her family and working on behalf of other individuals and families, expressed a feeling of abandonment in dealing with forms and systems connected to compensation claims. Many potential

claimants did not understand their rights. In relation to claiming under the Mayor's High Street fund, research participant 05 recalls problems with a lack of transparency about processes and a lack of official local support to deal with the aftermath collectively. This was particularly pertinent for small businesses on London Road in the poorest, worst-hit area of West Croydon, where many were ethnic minority owned.

> … there was a couple of public meetings … we found out there was a meeting in Croydon which was for the BID [Business Information District] and all businesses that had been affected, but we didn't know about it … when we went in everybody had had two or three meetings that we'd not known about, so they'd had three meetings.

> I think so many people were told at the very beginning that they weren't even entitled to any compensation, and they just believed it because they … had insurance and … they didn't follow it through and then they lost out.

Research participant 05 recalled facing loss-adjusters, without any guidance or support from officials:

> Somebody approached me and said, "Look we'll take your case on, you know you're not going to get anything from the government, they're not going to say it's a riot…" he said … "we'll sort it, you pay us, you sign this contract" … I think many people signed up with them at that point … they said, "no, your insurance isn't going to pay, they're not going to pay you anything because blah…" but then when we spoke to our insurance company, the insurance company said, "Well it's pretty simple, there's nothing left, so yes, we'll pay out in full." So, it was just the scaremongering tactics at that point to get you to sign up and agree. And you're talking a lot of money, I mean 10% of whatever, £300,000 is.

Croydon Labour MP, research participant 02, reflected on efforts to support residents in the riots' aftermath. He argued there was not enough support or creative interpretation of legislation to genuinely support local people to recover. (Labour were the opposition party in Croydon Council at the time of the riots and the research interview.)

> I've got constituents in my constituency who have had no compensation at all … Ms [Y] – her flat was burnt out above one of

the shops on the London Road … everything they owned was lost. She put in a modest claim for £6,000 to replace everything she'd lost. Clothes, bedding, her little boy's toys – hardly an outrageous amount – she only got £2,500 back … she's facing bankruptcy because she was under-compensated.

According to the government, that is a case that has been 'satisfactorily' dealt with.

There is little published academic research concerning the impact of the riots on 'official victims' of the 2011 riots, but Doern (2013 and 2016) offers insight through research interviews with owner/managers and highlights how her research participants experienced post-event trauma related to the response or lack of response of the state. Most reported personal losses as well as psychological/emotional costs.

… Reactions to support provided by councils and the government were mixed. In the best of cases, councils provided physical support (e.g. cleaning assistance), emotional support, financial support (business rate relief, one-off payments, loans) and information. In the less positive cases, a third of the accounts, despite promises of help, little had been provided…

… All were waiting for final pay-outs from insurers and/or the Riot (Damages) Act. (Doern, 2016)

Attempts to silence local debate compounded the sense of abandonment and lack of transparency for some 'official' victims. Some took action to find out what was going on in the aftermath and started to get actively involved in meetings. In relation to a meeting that was called on the London Road in Croydon, research participant 05 recalls:

I was new on Twitter and I didn't have many followers … so I tweeted it … anybody affected by the riots, come down … the council are holding a meeting … I had like seven followers. The middle of the afternoon … and X [Head of Equalities and Community Relations at the council] rang me and said, "Oh, we've noticed you've tweeted about this meeting, would you be kind enough to delete it because we don't want there to be an incident or a flashpoint for things?"

Reflecting on the urgency to update the RDA and to learn lessons from the 2011 riots, John Biggs, Chair of the Budget and Performance Committee London Mayor's

office, warned of the dangers of a 'hands-off' state when commenting on the draft for a new RDA Bill (Mayor of London/London Assembly, 2015).

> …a return to Victorian-era ideology of a hands-off state could have seriously undermined small businesses, which are a pillar of the capital's economy (Mayor of London/London Assembly, 2015).

The new Riot (Damages) Act was introduced in 2016. The reformed act became the Riot Compensation Act 2016 and was given royal assent on 23rd March 2016. There have been mixed views about whether the new act will make it easier or harder for future claimants (ABI.Org., 2020; Actuarial Post, 2020; BLM, 2020; Gov.UK (b), 2013).

As communities wondered what had happened to funds to regenerate their areas, there were ongoing campaigns for adequate compensation.

In Tottenham, research participant 21, a long-standing resident of Haringey, a community worker and activist, reflected that the lack of adequate compensation for individuals compounded a sense of hopelessness when the built environment had not been repaired or improved either.

> … if you're waiting on compensation then the built environment is very important, because [it] reinforces either positive or negative thoughts about yourself … when it's slightly dilapidated and it's got burnt-out things, what you have a sense of is, "I'm living in a place that's going down", do you know what I mean, and not going up; [this] on top of a recession.

What was happening to the built environment in post-riots Tottenham and Croydon during 2013 to 2015, and since then? How might we understand this in relation to 'opportunity'?

Community compensation and 'regeneration'

Here I draw on seven research interviews: a Croydon regeneration professional, research participant 01; a Labour MP in Croydon, who had been advocating for adequate compensation on behalf of constituents, research participant 02; a Croydon senior voluntary sector professional, research participant 03; a Croydon Labour Party councillor, member of the Labour opposition group in Croydon at the

time of riots and the research interview, research participant 04; a local business owner in Croydon, who became a campaigner advocating for victim support in the riots' aftermath, research participant 05; former Tottenham Labour Party councillor, research participant 14; Tottenham-based resident, community worker and activist, research participant 21; and a Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) officer, who supported and implemented the government's compensation scheme for official victims in London, research participant 26. Limited academic literature addresses the experiences of official victims; their experiences are more usually covered by journalists in the riot aftermath. I cite from both types of sources here.

Critics of regeneration funding and decision-making processes in Croydon and Tottenham were relatively accessible as potential research participants, but I also approached those being criticised – including Conservative councillors in Croydon and Labour councillors in Tottenham. I received no response to my requests. It is perhaps unsurprising in the case of Croydon since all Croydon research interviews acknowledge there is a culture of 'we don't talk about the riots anymore' (this issue is explored later in this chapter). As a result, the discussion below largely illustrates the perspective of those who were frustrated with regeneration processes and priorities in Tottenham and Croydon.

Regeneration funding was given to riot-hit communities from different central and local government budgets. In common with research participants, I found it hard to understand what happened to money given to councils, along with how consultation and 'regeneration' processes were managed. I have focused on examples from Tottenham and Croydon, the two London boroughs hardest hit by the riots.

In the RCVP final report there is no section or sub-heading dedicated to regeneration of riot hit communities. There are sub-headings and recommendations about youth unemployment and the need for 'brands' corporate responsibility (referring to young people's desire for consumer goods), but there is nothing that directly tackles the built environment, the new shopping centres subsequently planned with riots funding in Tottenham and Croydon, or what research participants referred to as 'social' regeneration. The latter included community services like youth centres.

There are however some references to local funding available in the government's response to the RCVP. Responding to the findings of the RCVP final report, Minister Pickles referred to the 'riots recovery package' (Pickles, 2012) in a one-page written response on13th July 2012. He said the package offered support for local recovery and gave a figure of £10 million to reimburse councils' immediate costs under a New Homes Bonus Payment, in addition to just under £400,000 to re-house people made homeless as a result of the riots.

In July 2013, the second written ministerial statement in response to the RCVP final report identified a range of funding streams for riot-affected communities. These included: a Recovery Scheme (for safety and clean-up); a High Street Support Fund; a Homeless Support Scheme; and a High Street Innovation Fund. Pickles stated that local authorities also provided their own funding or facilitated access to other funding. For example, the Croydon Enterprise Loan Fund provided interest-free loans up to £10,000 to affected businesses and the Tottenham Fund in Haringey raised around £50,000 and received donations of clothes and goods for displaced families.

Government financial assistance of £7.4 million for riot-hit communities was announced on 12th August 2011. This included payments to Croydon of £1,376,951 and to Haringey of £1,081,712 (HC Deb, 27th March 2012). In a written statement to Parliament by Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Robert Neill, on Tuesday 27th March 2012, detail was given about where payments had been made.

In London, post-riots regeneration funding was awarded through the Mayor's Office (Mayor of London Regeneration Fund) to areas most affected by the riots, including Tottenham and Croydon, which were awarded £25 million and £23 million respectively (Mayor of London/London Assembly, 2020):

> … the Mayor's Fund promised £70m to regenerate areas
> damaged by the riots, with Tottenham and Croydon being the
> major areas of focus (though it is unclear how much of this
> promised money has actually been paid out). (Peacock, 2014).

At the time of research interviews in early 2014, Croydon Council was a Conservative-led local authority whilst Haringey, which includes Tottenham, the site of the first riot, was a Labour authority. Research interviews and views expressed at riots events I attended showed there were similar criticisms in both localities. These focused on neo-liberal approaches to regeneration and were shared by key members of Tottenham Council and its Labour Chief Executive and the Conservative Party-led local administration in Croydon. I explore some of the detail below.

Research participants raised four inter-connected regeneration issues as key to understanding the post-riots context in Tottenham and Croydon: questions about where the money had been spent; a perceived lack of consultation with local communities and their local political representatives; frustration with lack of change in the built environment; and the backdrop of cuts to existing resources and services. I examine each of these four factors below.

Firstly, the question of where regeneration funding was spent within localities was raised by research participants including 04, a senior Labour member of the opposition party at Croydon Council at the time of the riots (Labour became the ruling party in Croydon after local council elections in May, 2014). He argued that in common with compensation payments, it was hard to know exactly where funding had been allocated:

> Over the last year, year and a half … there's increasing anger.
>
> We kept seeing Boris Johnson [then Mayor of London] pop up at regular intervals and people heard figures of £23 million being bandied around … We're an opposition party … we keep asking questions … if you take a walk down the London Road, the view down there is, "very little has changed".
>
> You ask questions in the council chamber. You write to people in the GLA [Greater London Authority] and people tell you that the money is about to come … the perception is that most of it has never really arrived, or, if it has, then it hasn't gone to perhaps where it should go. There may be people with evidence where some of it has been spent, but we're a long way short of £23 million.

… These high-profile politicians making promises – beware.

Secondly, research participants commented on a lack of transparent consultation processes about regeneration with riots-affected communities.

Research participant 02, a Labour Croydon MP, reflected:

> … they [the local Conservative Council] like to take decisions behind closed doors. They don't like to publish data or information if they can possibly avoid it. It's very hard then to hold them to account … The reason why we don't know why they've done nothing with the £23 million is because they won't tell us.

Research participant 05 felt that funds were being allocated on a political basis:

> ... they're spending money in the marginal wards. They don't have to spend it here [West Croydon]. It's quite cynical … they've been quite open about it.

In Tottenham, one might expect research participant 14, a Labour councillor during the riots for one of the wards most physically affected, to be an insider regarding post-riots decision-making. Yet he also referred to lack of transparency amongst those at the centre of local Labour politics. He reflected that after an open meeting with opposition leader Ed Miliband in Haringey in the immediate aftermath of the riot, there was silencing of dialogue within the local Labour group:

> … that was the last time anybody has ever, from government or a local council or even our senior officers, have ever asked me anything about the riot. And what then happened was, we were excluded. Most local councillors were excluded from all processes that took place.

Asked who was at the centre of decision-making, research participant 14 reflected it was the leader of the local Labour group, head of the Council, and an inner circle of favoured colleagues:

> When the *Plan for Tottenham* [local riots report containing regeneration plans] was launched, I wasn't told about it. The official launch was in the demolished area where the Carpetright building had been [burned out in the riots] and they had this photo op, holding it up [the *Plan for Tottenham* report] … X, who lived in the house backing on to the Carpetright site saw something going

> on out of her back window, thought what the hell is going on there and went around, asked what is happening …

> … what the leader did was to appoint her own handpicked commission … handpicked stooges … we weren't even told that they were having their meetings … we were told that, "no", we couldn't go to their meetings, "they weren't public" … the whole thing was a farce.

Thirdly, in addition to lack of transparency about where riots funds were going and how decisions were being made, research participants interviewed in early 2014 were still preoccupied with the lack of change.

Research participant 05, a campaigner who set up a local group of official victims who were trying to gain practical support and adequate compensation, reflected on frustration with lack of change in West Croydon, the poorest and most riot-hit area of Croydon:

> We had consultations through the Forum [set up by herself and other residents affected by the riots] … public improvements, shop front improvements, paving improvements, we had the design company, yet it seems all to have disappeared ... absolutely nothing has changed in two and a half years, so this £23 million wherever it's gone, it's not gone here [West Croydon].

> … everything's changed… and yet everything is still the same…

Research participant 03, a voluntary sector manager, whose West Croydon project has been involved in discussions about allocation of post-riots regeneration funding, juxtaposed a lack of regeneration and resources in West Croydon which were still untouched three years after the riots:

> I think those on the London Road and in the outlying districts need a regeneration project that focuses on their needs, not just the town centre's. This isn't just physical regeneration; it's got to be social regeneration.

Finally, frustration with delays in regeneration and changes to the built environment were juxtaposed with cuts in existing services by some research participants.

Research participant 05, Croydon compensation campaigner, reflected that:

> I don't think anything's addressing the causes [of the riots],
> they've cut everything to do with the youth services… they're not
> thinking ahead.

For research participant 01, a Croydon regeneration professional, 'regeneration' needs to be understood within a wider context of cuts to the welfare state and a failure to offer resources to riot-affected communities like Tottenham.

> There hasn't been regeneration … the removal of basic youth
> services, the removal of support for people remains there.

At the time doctoral research interviews were conducted, changes planned for the built environment in Croydon and Tottenham were linked to new retail 'opportunities' in Croydon Town Centre and Tottenham Hale. These included new transport links, particularly train links. There was an emphasis on bringing outsiders to the new shopping centre planned in Croydon and to the re-vamped Tottenham Hotspur Football Club and on taking local people out of the area to work elsewhere. In Tottenham, Tottenham Hale became a large rail inter-change linking the area to Cambridge, Stanstead and the Upper and Lower Lee Valley.

I turn now to three types of post-riot 'regeneration' raised by research participants: city centre regeneration in Croydon; stadium-led regeneration in Tottenham; and housing as a broader topic. I end with brief mention of the Haringey Development Vehicle, a regeneration model that post-dated my fieldwork.

Croydon: city centre retail orientated regeneration

In this section I draw on the reflections of 03, a senior voluntary sector professional in Croydon, and 01 who offers a business perspective on the regeneration of Croydon. At the time of interviews, other Croydon research participants expressed frustration at the lack of change two to three years after the riots but had a 'wait and see' approach to how the new shopping centre development would play out.

At the time of the interviews, there were regeneration plans for a new Croydon city centre shopping complex, a partnership between two companies, Hammerson and Westfield, a £1 billion pound investment.

Research participant 01, a Croydon regeneration professional, involved at a senior level with the privatised Croydon Chamber of Commerce and Croydon Business Improvement District (BIDS) (CroydonBid, 2020), outlined the planned changes and agendas from a business perspective, and presented the riots as an 'opportunity'.

At the time of the interview, Croydon BIDS Company was one of the largest in the UK. The 580 business members had an opportunity to replace the BID company every five years and the BID contract was due for renewal just after the riots. Research participant 01 suggested the riots were an opportunity to prove the value of the BID company in place at the time of the riots.

> … It's incredibly important that the BID Company demonstrates its true value to the community and to its levy-payers. If it can't, then it will go under. You can question whether without the riots the BID Company would have got through its ballot because it had an opportunity at the time [the immediate aftermath of the riots] to be able to show its pro-active abilities and its speed to support its levy-payers – it did that.

The riots also provided the opportunity to harness support for particular types of regeneration. Croydon voluntary sector professional 03 reflected in a research interview:

> … Westfield had been in the wings, but the riots provided a catalyst. Croydon had gone for many years without any investment into it.

Research participant 01 implied central Croydon regeneration rippled out to West Croydon, the poorest and most riots-affected area.

> Everything has been done to get Westfield and Hammerson in, to get them together, and to get them to launch a £1 billion scheme to re-do the town centre … like a pond with ripple effects, there will be one very big ripple that will come out from the town centre and it will hit parts of the borough as it continues to go around …
>
> … the riots were the catalyst … So yeah, it goes back to the riots.

At a 'Two years on from the riots' event (2013) with David Lammy, research participant 01 responded to Lammy's speech and focused on regeneration plans for Croydon including the following:

... Croydon is believing. The future of Croydon is amazing … I want to show you rebirth within Croydon. [Referring to the riots] … there is an image issue within Croydon … There is a renaissance in Croydon. A catalyst that's been sparked.

… We have a new building called 'Renaissance', symbolising a new beginning. A new train station, a new civic hub. Croydon has that vision. It's desperate to move forward. In two years, we've made significant strides from the riots.

It was notable how often research participant 01 used the word 'change' in the interview. He saw a change in Croydon's built environment through the Hammerson and Westfield development as positive for all stakeholders:

Our strapline is, 'All Change Croydon'…

… When you come out of West Croydon Station, now everything from the pavements, the look and feel, the concrete flower beds to the concrete buildings, to the variety of different buildings and the like, has to change and it's got to improve.

Research participant 01 told me informally at the two-year anniversary event "we don't talk about the riots anymore in Croydon". When I asked about this silence in a research interview, he developed this further. He repeatedly used the term *"looking forward"* which felt to me like a euphemism for "don't talk about the riots". I have used italics to emphasise how often this phrase occurs:

… there's certainly a pull towards *looking forward* rather than mentioning the word riot and I get that … you have a very large powerful group who want *to move forward* … But you also have to take into account that lives have been disrupted beyond belief and you have to be compassionate towards that.

… the feeling and the attitude, certainly within the business community, was actually *'looking forward'*…

… From a riots point of view, I think that when you look at Croydon Council … keen to '*look forward*', not so much looking back …

My job is to *look forward* and to see how Croydon can overcome the difficulties that it has.

… Now I'm very much *looking forward*. The BID company will never forget 2011 but we do have to look at the issues and how quickly we can affect the impact or gaps we have …

Research participant 01 was by no means the only professional in Croydon avoiding references to the riots and it seemed this was a Conservative-led council 'line' despite the fact that Croydon was the area hardest hit by the riots according to official figures and there was little local positive change in the evidence three years on when I was conducting interviews.

Trying to erase the riot events from public discourse and narrative tells a story and comes with consequences, Referring to the silence in Croydon and reluctance to use the word 'riot', voluntary sector research participant 03, reflected in a research interview on the aftermath and engagement work with young people:

> … it never pays to use euphemisms with issues like this … it's misguided to interpret any use of that word [riot] as any intention to hark back to the unfortunate events themselves. No, the point of it is, is to recognise that there were issues that came out of the riots that need addressing ...

> … if you're trying to include people in a social regeneration piece of work, don't use euphemisms, get to the point and then you might get to what's needed to address that point in a meaningful way.

When so many commentators from the right and left blamed a culture of consumerism for the riots (see Chapter Two), it seems a bit ironic that a key change offered in post-riots environments was to build more places of consumption.

Tottenham: stadium-led regeneration

Here I draw on research in Tottenham about football club politics and its relationship to post-riots regeneration agendas (Panton, 2017) and interviews with four research participants: former regeneration professional in Tottenham, research participant 15; a former Labour councillor in Tottenham, research participant 14; Haringey youth worker, research participant 12; and youth work manager, research participant 13.

In post-riots Tottenham, opportunity was knocking for developers, and Tottenham Hotspur Football Club (Spurs) at White Hart Lane and nearby station, Tottenham Hale, were also included in regeneration plans. Regeneration plans and the expansion and development of the football club's stadium at White Hart Lane were

heavily promoted in the Lipton Report (Mayor of London, 2012), outlined in the latter part of Chapter Four):

> … a major local impact, with new housing, shops and jobs, as well as a symbolic new structure of scale. This will build on the Hale Village project to create a sense of momentum for the area (p.78).

The club is praised for staying in the area and presented as central to the regeneration of Tottenham: the hub around which other public investments should be made. Alongside the football club, more shopping opportunities are billed by Lipton as a key element in regenerating Tottenham and a catalyst to attracting outsiders to the area.

An improved shopping environment is the single most likely measure to draw visitors to Tottenham. Aside from Tottenham Hale's retail park, there isn't a shopping 'draw'… (p.83)

> … The listed buildings adjacent to the stadium need to be reconsidered in light of whether they will make a positive contribution to the area and its future. In our opinion they should be demolished if an appropriately designed new building can be shown to improve the setting of the stadium. (Mayor of London, 2012, p.83)

Some research participants, argued the needs of residents in and around the site of the riots, the run-down Tottenham High Road, were being overlooked. There was scepticism about football stadium-led regeneration. The perception was that 'opportunity' was knocking for the wealthy (Wallace, 2014).

Research participant 15, a former Haringey regeneration professional, was critical of the lack of transparency by the Labour Chief Executive and their team at Haringey Council and of the latter's willingness to work with Spurs in an uncritical way, which, they argued, brought enormous benefits to the football club:

> Spurs blighted the bloody High Road for years, by buying up land, buying up shops, and boarding them up so it looked like a ghost town and then go, "Oh, you have to regenerate it". If you let something rot long enough you've got the excuse to regenerate it, to knock it all down.

> Spurs had the best riot.

> I love football and I support Spurs, but I think that the way that they are as businessmen is very, very different.

In a comparison of stadium-led regeneration in Tottenham and East Manchester, Panton (2017) found anger and cynicism about the Haringey Council and Tottenham Hotspur football club plans amongst his Tottenham research participants. He suggests that in the Lipton Report:

> The local council used the figures on deprivation, and more particularly the riots, to leverage increased funding and to argue the need for major regeneration projects in the area. (Panton, 2017, p.31)

A source of controversy and cynicism in the post-riots development era in Tottenham goes back to planning decisions by Haringey Council in September 2010, the year before the riots. Haringey Council's Planning Committee approved a series of Section 106 community infrastructure commitments (Haringey Council, 2020 (a)) for land that was part of the Spurs ground. This amounted to £16,436,000 and required half of the proposed two hundred housing units to be classified as affordable housing and priced accordingly. When Spurs challenged the Section 106 obligations, they were scaled down to £477,000 and the number of housing units was increased to 285 all of which were to be sold on the open market without affordable housing (Panton, 2017)

> When further sums totalling up to £41 million were made available in response to the riots in the area in 2011 this view was further reinforced for some people: "… Spurs were able to get advantage from the riot. Because of course they said, "we are staying, and we are committed to Tottenham", all this stuff. Because, suddenly, a bit of money tap came on. The money tap, because what are we going to do with Tottenham? (L, local resident and business owner, Tottenham, interview with author, 23.07.13 in Panton, 2017, p.186).

Research participant 14, former Tottenham Labour councillor, reflected on the approach of Spurs in the post-riot regeneration landscape:

> [Spurs] could be martyred and say, "we're staying, we're not going, we're staying to help Tottenham to regenerate. Can you

give us £28 million by the way, and we won't pay the Section 106 that was negotiated? Give us our planning permission, and everything will be lovely."

… we are going to have lots of very, very important people coming to Tottenham Hale [via] the Victoria Line [sarcastic tone]. We are going to have a vibrant night-time economy … Spurs of course want a 24-hour economy on Tottenham Hale, a different type of night-time economy to Tottenham High Road [alluding to an existing street drugs economy].

Haringey youth worker and youth work manager, research participants 12 and 13, argued the football club has bullied the council and the council was quick to acquiesce:

12: The people that run the [football] club said, "if you don't give us what we want, we'll leave … the spin now, 'we're gonna' make Tottenham a great place'.

13: The council is desperate to keep them there, which means they [the football club] can call all the shots. It's ironic as I think most of the fans were local but now very few local people support the club, not that they could afford to go anyway … I'm a Spurs fan and involved in things and hear what has gone on there. What went on with the stadium and planning permission is diabolical. They've shirked from commitments to social responsibility and investment. Affordable housing, which they were supposed to build and just haven't, and they're pilfering money from the local authority that could be going to people.

And you just think - if people knew… there would be another bloody riot.

Housing, place and 2011 Riots

In this discussion I draw on geographically informed academic critique of post-riots policy and interviews with five research participants; Haringey youth worker and youth work manager, research participants 12 and 13; former Tottenham Regeneration professional, research participant 15; former Tottenham Labour Party councillor, research participant 14; and Tottenham community worker and activist, research participant 21.

Planned housing regeneration and the proposed 'bedroom tax' were two key issues facing residents in the post-riots' aftermath. In a geographically informed

explanation of the 2011 riots, Millington (2012) reflects how inequalities in housing, particularly between renters and owners, became even more polarised with the Coalition Government's (then) proposed cap on housing benefit. The cap meant thousands of privately renting low-waged families were predicted (accurately as it turned out) to be forced to leave the capital to find cheaper accommodation (Millington, 2012).

Haringey youth workers 12 and 13 touch on what is understood by a *place* such as Tottenham in the face of divisions of wealth exemplified by the football stadium:

> 12: There is a real disconnect … you've got Tottenham and it's known for … the deprivation and the rioting, and the other is the football club. The same word but it means totally different things.

> 13: This amazing stadium cost £400 million to build and you look down another street, and there's kids fighting … So, you can understand where this anger comes from and why people are pissed off.

Research participant 14 also raised the issue of place and name, arguing that the real aim of the Lipton report and those associated with it, was to reduce public space labelled as 'Tottenham' which was viewed as bad for the developer's brand.

> Tottenham is one of those places, which gets smaller, whereas other places like Hampstead get bigger … West Hampstead, South Hampstead … everyone wants to live in Hampstead …

Research participant 14 suggested the plan to rebrand Tottenham in some ways follows the shadow of the riots and the places the riot happened. He predicted Tottenham High Road, scene of the 2011 riots, would remain 'Tottenham', but that many other public spaces would be rebranded, so they weren't associated with deprivation and the riots. They argued that an inner circle of Labour council members and developers were at the centre of decision-making and were driving the Lipton Report. The 're-branding' exercise prices out (or socially cleanses) local people and aims to attract a new type of resident:

> What you have is Stuart Lipton's Tottenham, which is the developer's Tottenham. And then you have the rioters' Tottenham, which tends to be the same … Broadwater Farm clearly is in Tottenham, although some people say, "oh, well it's

really West Green". And then there is another bunch of people who are saying … we will call this 'The Hale', so we're selling you a flat in 'The Hale'.

Research participant 14 argued the regeneration of Tottenham Hale (as opposed to riot-hit Tottenham High Road) was linked to the desire for a new 'village', free of associations with Tottenham and riots. This area was developed to please wealthy owners and consumers of football-related business and included the development of new housing, retail, and restaurant opportunities near the football ground.

Research participant 14 reflected on an attempt to rebrand place and erase memories of riots in areas targeted at a new type of Tottenham resident:

> The word Tottenham, let's forget the riots, let's expunge the memories of the riot, we have to wipe that all out … rebrand it.
>
> There was a discussion on 'Haringey Online' [a local online networking and information sharing site] someone said, "why don't we called it SoTo, South Tottenham, have a new area called SoTo."
>
> The whole thing is about rebranding – the word 'estate' is out, but the word 'village' is in. So Hale Village? This is not a village! What you have is a whole bunch of people who are looking at the map and they're thinking, "Okay, how can we benefit from this, what can we do?"
>
> … the question is, "which Tottenham do you mean?"

Longitudinal work in Tottenham by Dillon and Fanning (2012, 2013, 2015 and 2019) examines responses to the 2011 Tottenham riots within a historical analysis of regeneration and the politics of community participation in the London Borough of Haringey. They contrast Tottenham, the poorest part of the Borough of Haringey and site of the first 2011 riot event, with better-off parts and argue New Labour regeneration programmes relied on short-term funding and were not self-sustaining. Comparing the aftermath of the 1985 Broadwater Farm riot in Tottenham with the 2011 riots in Tottenham, Dillon and Fanning suggest many of the buildings looted and burned in August 2011 had been the focus of regeneration efforts since the mid-80s. Pointing to ongoing state failure, Dillon and Fanning (2019) conclude that the very localities that need community empowerment also need the most state

support. This was not forthcoming after the 2011 riots and, they argue, illustrates failure of the state to support communities most in need.

Former Haringey regeneration professional, research participant 15, elaborated on housing and community resource agendas:

> … please knock down the estate at the other side of the road because we don't want to look at all those working-class poor people. They want to knock down hundreds of homes to build a walkway … And the library, which was a million pounds spent on that from the lottery for local people to have their library. Gone. If these site allocation plans, and master plans go through.

Research participant 14, former Labour councillor in Tottenham talked about a process of social cleansing dressed up as an attempt to 'mix' the population of Tottenham:

> We will have development and we will get a new mix of people because the old mix is no good, and that's us, we're the old mix.

Research participant 14 compared this approach to Die Losung (The Solution), a poem by Bertolt Brecht that criticises the government in East Germany. It reads:

> After the uprising of June 17th
> The Secretary of the Authors' Union
> Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee
> Which said that the people
> Had forfeited the government's confidence
> And could only win it back
> By redoubled labour. Wouldn't it
> Be simpler in that case if the government
> Dissolved the people and
> Elected another?
>
> (Revolutionary Democracy, n.d.)

Research participant 14 reflected wryly on the use of this analogy in relation to Tottenham:

> … the people let down the government, so we're going to have to dissolve the people and re-elect another one. And that's what's happened. The people around here have let down the council.

Writing about the riots in a scathing reflection on these issues in relation to both New Labour and post-2010 Coalition/Conservative government practices, Hatherley (2011) argues the opposition Labour Party leader, Ed Miliband, had failed to grasp the rising levels of inequality in cities under Thatcherism and subsequent New Labour Governments:

> With his customary haplessness, Ed Miliband said during the riots that "there must be no no-go areas". But these places are nothing of the sort: they're parallel areas occupying exactly the same space (Hatherley, 2011).

Referring to a science fiction novel by China Miéville, *The City and the City*, where two cities occupy the same space, with inhabitants acting as if they do not, and behaving as if they do not know each other, Hatherley reflects on riots in London:

> … I'd often idly wonder when the riots would come, when the situation of organic delis next to pound shops, of crumbling maisonettes next to furiously speculated-on Victoriana, of artists shipped into architect-designed Brutalist towers to make them safe for Regeneration … would finally collapse in on itself (Hatherley, 2011).

A new housing policy, the 'spare room subsidy', popularly referred to as the bedroom tax, was being rolled out by government at the time of public conversations about the riots as part of austerity measures. The tax was raised in audience discussions about the riots and indicates longer term issues of feeling marginalised by central government.

The bedroom tax restricted housing benefit payments to the number of rooms required for the size of household. Implemented in April 2013, it was branded by the Coalition Government as a response to the 'problem' of under-occupation in the social housing sector and it cut housing benefit for working age social tenants seen as consuming too much housing (a 14% cut for one spare bedroom, 25% for more than one). The policy was one of numerous benefit reforms claiming to 'simplify the system', 'incentivise work' and substantially cut costs (Gibb, 2015). It formed part of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and was the precursor to the current roll-out of Universal Credit which was designed by Iain Duncan Smith and colleagues to bring

welfare benefits under one umbrella. Contentious elements of the bill include the re-assessment of disabled and sick people and their benefits (Ryan, 2019).

In his analysis of the 2011 riots and their relationship to London as a city, Millington (2012) reminds us that housing benefit caps and the 'bedroom tax' are designed to push the poor away from the city. Referring to the impact of the government's 'bedroom tax', research participant 21, community worker and activist in Tottenham touched on an example of perceived social cleansing in Tottenham:

> With housing changes taking place, you have a sense that there's a level of despair amongst people as they feel like they're being moved out … they won't be able to live in those areas anymore.

Moffatt et al (2016) examined the implementation of the 'bedroom tax', which, at the time, affected an estimated 660,000 working age social housing tenants in the UK and reduced weekly incomes by between £12 and £22. Participants in their study recounted negative impacts on mental health, family relationships and community networks. As the 'bedroom tax' increased, so did poverty and adverse effects on health, wellbeing, and social relationships within their sample community. They concluded the tax should be revoked. Greenstein et al (2016) suggest that the 'bedroom tax' impinges on family and community networks, as 'spare bedrooms' can be used by older children, grandparents, family members providing care and support, and others. This is in addition to the displacement of those who cannot afford to live locally or who are transferred to social housing sometimes hundreds of miles away from family and community networks because of a lack of suitable social housing locally. They conclude that it:

> …seems more a moralistic and punitive measure, seeking to ensure that relying on state benefits will not come without a cost, and that the poor do not enjoy comfort and stability (Greenstein et al, 2016. p.9).

Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV) and resistance

Whilst this took place after my fieldwork, I want to briefly mention the Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV) which was developed within a post-riot narrative set out in the Lipton Report (see Chapter Four). Part of regeneration plans, Haringey

Council Cabinet wanted to move most of its property to a private company. The council formed a private finance partnership with the controversial global property developer Lendlease, based in Australia. Lendlease specialises in large-scale urbanisation developments that often involve Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) with city authorities. According to Corporate Watch (Corporate Watch, 2020), Lendlease are one of former President of the USA Donald Trump's favourite building partners and are responsible for the Trump Tower buildings in New York, Washington, and Chicago. The premise of the HDV was that the council would put in public assets worth millions that included housing estates, schools, public facilities and private housing acquired through compulsory purchase orders, and Lendlease would 'redevelop' the area. Criticisms of the plans relate to both the processes and the goals involved. The Stop HDV Campaign (SHDV) accused Haringey Council of lack of proper consultation and transparency (Carr, 2018). They raised concerns about risk assessment of Lendlease, reckless use of public money and the pursuit of a classed and racialised social cleansing process that included demolition and selling-off of key estates like Broadwater Farm (site of 1985 riots and former home of Mark Duggan). This scheme was opposed by residents and subject to Judicial Review. Guardian journalist Aditya Chakrabortty (2017 (a) argued in a comment piece the HDV was unprecedented in its scale and scope, predicting that:

> … the HDV will chuck families out of their homes, rip apart local communities and shut down shops and businesses … the very first tranche of public property to go into the pot will be the entire civic heart of Haringey, including the central library and the civic headquarters. It ignores the fact that the HDV has no explicit target for social housing (Chakrabortty, 2017 (a)).

In common with opposition to the bedroom tax, the opposition to HDV was indicative of a community that felt it was being marginalised and ignored. As Brecht suggested, it might be easier to dissolve the people and elect another. Resistance to these neo-liberal housing policies was enacted by groups like Architects for Social Housing (ASH). ASH targeted many London Labour councils, like Haringey, who were pursuing neo-liberal approaches by demolishing and/or selling-off social housing. Critics say this is an assault not just on people and communities, but on the old Labour welfare state as estates and places are purged of their 'social'

origins, connections and collective memories as well as the frustrations that preceded the riots and memories of the riots themselves (Watt, 2009).

After the campaign against the HDV, Haringey's Labour Council Leader resigned. Many of her own councillors had implored the Labour Party's National Executive Council to intervene and stop the HDV. Anti-HDV campaigners won a reversal in policy, and it was abandoned in the summer of 2018 (Haringey Council, 2020, (b)).

Discussion

In responding to the 2011 riots, government could have actively addressed and compensated for the limitations of the woefully inadequate Riots (Damages) Act (1886), but it chose not to. The Coalition Government and subsequent Conservative Party administrations were committed to austerity as part of a neo-liberal programme which placed responsibility on the individual. In the relative absence of state help, local communities stepped up and gave mutual aid and support; for example, in Tottenham, people donated food and clothes for those displaced by fires during the riots.

The lack of transparency regarding riots compensation fund spending and an attempt to silence public riots discussion added another level of harm to official victims struggling to re-group in the riot aftermath.

If the notion of 'resilience' discussed in Chapter Five means anything in the context of family social policy, it appears resilience is actively undermined by government policies like the 'bedroom tax' and austerity politics. Regeneration policies that failed to provide affordable housing and the 'bedroom tax 'appeared to diminish resilience and make lives harder.

Reflecting on the post 2011 riots regeneration agendas, particularly in relation to housing and long-term residents, Peacock states the narrative of the uncritical and taken-for-granted need for change and rejuvenation is itself stigmatising and creates, 'grief, loss and atomisation…' (Peacock, 2014).

Commentators from right and left of the political spectrum pointed to the importance of shopping centres as riots sites, including Manchester City Centre and the Bullring

in Birmingham. This was narrated in relation to the alleged consumerist nature of the riots and young rioters who were allegedly driven by the desire for a new pair of trainers (see Chapter Two). Other than three related papers by authors Dillon and Fanning (2012, 2013 and 2015) that examine the history of regeneration in Tottenham, I have come across little critical analysis of new shopping centres in Tottenham and Croydon as part of post-riot regeneration plans and funding. Corporate interests appear to have led events in partnership with national and local neo-liberal governance.

Conservative (Croydon) and Labour (Tottenham) councils shared neo-liberal politics and used the riots as an opportunity to promote regeneration projects with retail at their heart in an environment where post-riots spending continued to lack transparency. We might ask: what else might the money have been spent on; what other types of development could have brought meaningful 'post-riots' regeneration; and how might local young people have been invited to participate?

At the time of the research interview in 2014 with research participant 01, a senior regeneration professional in the Croydon development, I asked:

> Q: If I come to Croydon in say three years' time, what will I find? What's the timescale we are looking at…?
>
> A: Demolition is 2015. There is a view from the Council that it will be done by 2017 – it won't, it will be 2018. So, when you come to Croydon in late 2018, yes it will be done.
>
> Q: Do you have a vision for 2018 or 2020 of what it could compare to?
>
> A: No, I would want us to be totally different. I wouldn't want us to be the same bog-standard shopping centre … we're going to be different. My hope for Croydon is that in three to four years' time, we will be very positive and enjoyable. It's not to say that's not what we are now, but we have improvements to be made.

In 2022, the Croydon Hammerson and Westfield development, far from 'moving forward', is on hold and it is unclear how or if it will proceed (London News Online, 2019 and Nazir, 2020). The (now) Labour Croydon Council was declared bankrupt for the third time in two years (Butler, 2022).

Wallace (2014) considers the post-riots space in Hackney, Tottenham and Croydon and concludes there have been dubious agendas (including privatised spaces) for previously unfashionable or unprofitable places (2014, p.19). Long-held regeneration plans were now possible and branded as 'riots' responses. Wallace cites Leader of Croydon Council, Mike Fisher, noting: 'the money will help Croydon realise many of its "ambitions" ... plans in the past that never got off the ground.' (Wallace, 2014).

Using the metaphor 'opportunity knocks', Wallace (2014) concludes that post 2011 riots regeneration in places such as Tottenham and Croydon

> … have summoned dubious agendas for previously unfashionable
> or unprofitable places … Indeed, for developers and politicians
> across London, opportunity knocked … (Wallace, 2014 p.11).

Conclusion

Whilst official victims were presented as the good citizens and the only victims of the riots in official rhetoric and media representation, it is questionable how far this concern was reflected in the support systems and policies rolled out after the riots.

Government financial compensation for individuals, families and businesses was promised to citizens who had lost property and/or were displaced during the riots. However, some research participants reported lack of transparency and a sense of abandonment in dealing with compensation processes which used out-of-date legislation and lacked flexibility (Doern, 2013 and 2016).

Official victims and their allies encountered in this research reflected on a lack of state support in their efforts to rebuild after the riots. It was a response characterised by silence and absence. Support came in the form of active suppression of debate, lack of assistance with funding applications and a culture of avoiding discourse about the riot and the events surrounding it.

Research participants raised four inter-connected regeneration issues as key to understanding the post-riots context in Tottenham and Croydon: questions about where the money had been spent; a perceived lack of consultation with local

communities and their local political representatives; frustration with lack of change in the built environment; and the backdrop of cuts to existing resources and services.

In addition, in this chapter I examined three types of post-riot 'regeneration': city centre regeneration in Croydon; stadium-led regeneration in Tottenham; and housing as a broader topic.

It appears there were efforts to erase the memory of the riots in Croydon and to erase place in Tottenham and the idea of more and bigger retail centres does not seem to have been problematised as a response to riots and their future prevention. Surely, we should question the usefulness of such responses? (Wallace 2014).

Those involved in post-riots regeneration referred to the explicit narrative in Croydon of 'we don't talk about the riots anymore'. The riots were viewed as having negative connotations for the locality, there appeared to be an active drive to 'forget' among some in the (then) Conservative-led council (De Souza, 2019). In Tottenham, attempts were made to redraw maps and boundaries with Tottenham and its association with riots squeezed into a narrower geographical area on the developer's map. The neo-liberal Labour council was criticised for secrecy and lack of oversight over the HDV development project that many locals saw as displacing largely poor and/or black and brown communities (Chakrabortty, 2017 (c) and (d) and 2018).

Techniques of neo-liberal governance involving self-responsibilisation played a part in communities being largely left to fend for themselves in the post-riot recovery. At the same time, some politicians and developers were taking the 'opportunity' to rollout lucrative plans for new developments (Wallace 2014; Newburn et al, 2018).

In the next chapter, Chapter Seven, I examine the 2011 riots in relation to student protests and other street-based activism that pre- and post-dated the 2011 riots. I also consider how issues relating to protest and riot were represented in Grime music and UK Hip-Hop. In examining these relationships, it provokes us to consider

relationships between protest and riot and to assess the impact and usefulness (or otherwise) of government rhetorical and policy responses to the 2011 riots.

Chapter Seven – Findings: Protest and Riot

Introduction

In considering how the riots have been understood and responded to by different constituencies, here I examine how some young people responded to events in close temporal proximity to the August 2011 riots (Bloom, 2012; Thörn et al, 2016). These include street protests that took place several years before and after the August 2011 riots. I focus on these protests because they show how the riots can be viewed as part of a wider 'moment' (Thörn et al, 2016). I also examine how protest and riots were reflected in UK Hip-Hop and Grime music scenes.

This chapter is divided into three parts.

Part One draws on academic readings that seek to understand riot events in relation to a series of 'urban uprisings' and 'anti-authority struggles' against forms of neo-liberal governance (Thörn et al, 2016; Slater 2016) which contested the 'right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1968, 2009).

Part Two examines events pre-dating the 2011 riots including organised street protest (Bloom, 2012; Gilroy, 2013; Hancox, 2011 (a) and (b); Ibrahim, 2014; Myers 2017; Thörn et al, 2016). These protests and the 2011 riots share some elements including some personnel and networks; the response of police; and the representation of protesters and rioters as 'feral' by government ministers. I focus on the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and student protests against its abolition, including reflections on the policing of student protests. I explore the suggestion that student protests and 2011 riots included some of the same people and/or networked youth (the latter is elaborated on in Chapter Eight).

Part Three looks at the way dominant representations of youth, protest and riot were counter-narrated and challenged through UK Hip-Hop and Grime music. The discussion begins with some theory of how we might read these musical genres in relation to protest and riot (Hancox 2012, 2017 (a), 2018; Millington 2012; Woods, 2020).

I focus first on riot theory to help us understand the relevance of protests before and after the riots and the music genres that represented the ideas circulating around these events.

Part One: 2011 riot as anti-authority struggles in the right to the city

In a comparative assessment of protests and riots in European cities, including the August 2011 riots, Thörn et al (2016) draw on Foucault's notion of 'anti-authority' struggles to define the purpose and intent of both protest and riot. Utilising Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) notion of 'processes of articulation', they seek to dissolve the distinction between these type of events. They see a series of collective street or campus-based events as actions which may be more or less goal-orientated and may or may not involve violence but are always in conflict with the state. This explains how 'moments' such as riots (or elements of them) can become part of a wider social movement. There does not need to be a concrete interaction between them (Thörn et al, 2016, p. 24).

> ... it is at best pointless, and at worst misleading, to treat phenomena such as the urban uprisings of Paris, London [referring to 2011 riots] and Stockholm as fundamentally distinct from those forms of urban collective action that may be categorised as organised, goal oriented social movement action according to the conventional criteria of social movement research. (Thörn et al, 2016, p. 334)

These anti-authority struggles are articulated by Thörn et al (2016) in relation to a struggle against neo-liberal governance of urban life. The struggles share a sense of injustice at spatialised structural inequalities linked to exclusion and displacement and enacted through housing and regeneration policies (see discussion of post-riots regeneration in Chapter Six). In this sense, they may also be understood in relation to a Lefebvrian struggle for a 'right to the city' (Lefebvre, 2017). Lefebvre narrates the citizen at the heart of the city who has a right to participate in, as well as to appropriate the city, and has the common right to use and occupy city spaces without restriction. Here the physical spaces of the city are the theatre for everyday life where we enact and develop our sense of belonging. For Lefebvre, being part of the city is not determined by ownership or wealth, but by participation in city life and

collective events. In this sense, the city is a site of struggle and contestation (Lefebvre, 2017). The phrase 'The Right to the City' has become a rallying cry and organising motif for activism such as the 'Occupy'. David Harvey's notion of 'Rebel Cities' (2012) includes the 2011 riots in this category, draws on Lefebvre to characterise spontaneous coming together when disparate groups suddenly see, if only for a fleeting moment, the possibilities of collective action to create something radically different (2013, p.xvii). Harvey argues urban space can be an incubator of ideas and social movements.

I use this idea of anti-authority struggles for the right to the city to explore protests in relation to the 2011 riots. Whilst I am sympathetic to the notion of calling all these events 'anti-authority struggles', for the sake of clarity when referring to street events outside the 2011 riots time frame, I use the word protest in contrast to riot.

Part Two: protest and riot

Protests in 2010 and 2011 that can be linked to the 2011 riots include a range of protests against cuts to student finances, Black Lives Matter campaigns and national and local campaigns against austerity politics involving specific cuts to public services. These protests included marches from A to B, sit-ins at retail outlets and university buildings and numerous town hall protests in the spring of 2011. They took place in many geographical areas including those affected by riots such as Haringey, Lewisham, Lambeth and Islington (Bloom, 2012; Ibrahim, 2014; Myers, 2017).

This discussion begins with an outline of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and student protests against its abolition and is followed by an examination of policing of a student break-away protest at Conservative Party headquarters at Millbank, London.

In this discussion of the EMA, I draw on interviews with three research participants: Haringey youth worker, research participant 12; Haringey youth worker manager, research participant 13; young co-founder of Shout-Out social media platform, research participant 09.

Whilst no research participant directly said the riots were caused by the abolition of the EMA, it was a recurrent topic at public conversations about the riots and numerous research participants raised it in their reflections.

EMA was introduced by the New Labour Government to boost the numbers of young people from poor backgrounds staying in post-16 education and was rolled out as a UK-wide allowance in 2004. It was a payment of up to £30 a week for students in low-income households to cover student costs. It was not affected by receipt of any other benefits in the household. By the time it was abolished in early 2011, 650,000 young people in England were receiving EMA: 45% of 16-18-year-olds in full-time education (BBC News Online, 2020 (a)).

Left-wing critics argued EMA was a 'sticking plaster' that masked entrenched structural inequalities. Hoskins (2017, p.28) agrees it increased participation in post-16 education by poorer young people but cautions against seeing EMA as part of a neo-liberal agenda and an 'add-on' approach to that failed to address root causes like low-pay and in-work poverty. Costing over £560m a year, including £36m to administer, right-wing critics argued EMA was wasteful. After the 2011 riots, some right-wing critics argued EMA was partly to blame for the riots because it created a 'culture of entitlement' to state support and disrespect for authority (New Statesman, 2020).

Whilst in political opposition before the 2010 general election, the Conservative Party said that they had no plans to scrap EMA. In January 2010, David Cameron said: '...scrapping them is one of those things the Labour Party keep putting out that we are [planning to do], but we're not.' (BBC News Online, 2020 (a))

Similarly, Michael Gove, Conservative Party Education Secretary in the Coalition Government (2010-14), said in March 2010: 'Ed Balls [Labour Government Chancellor] keeps saying that we are committed to scrapping the EMA. I have never said this. We won't.' (Murray, 2010)

However, in March 2011, less than a year after the May 2010 general election, the Coalition Government announced it would replace the £560m EMA scheme in England with a £180m fund for low-income learners.

Research participants 12 and 13, youth worker and youth work manager, recalled young people they worked with campaigning against youth service and EMA cuts in the Tottenham area in the year before the August 2011 riots.

> 12   they were really doing well … campaigning, meetings with senior people in local government, putting their case across … and they were just totally ignored and dismissed.

> 13   There was a campaign around the cut in EMA ... to get young people to persuade their parents that if they vote Tory, they will cut EMA which of course they did.

Distinctly different to their response to the 2011 riots, there was some dissent to the plans to abolish EMA from the Labour Party, including its leadership. Shadow Minister for Education at the time, Andy Burnham, accused Minister Gove of taking:

> … a successful policy, which improved participation, attendance and achievement in post-16 education, and [turning] it into a total shambles. (Coughlan, 2011).

When asked to reflect on the August 2011 riots in a research interview in early 2014, research participant 02, a Labour MP in Croydon, raised the subject of EMA in relation to the riots and other service cuts affecting young people.

> … young people were reacting instinctively [in the August 2011 riots] against some of the ways they've been demonised both through the media, which just seems to denigrate them, and by government targeting a lot of its cuts against them. EMA, housing benefits for young people, trebling of tuition fees - they seem to have been in the front line of the cuts. It certainly doesn't seem fair to young people … Another attack on young people ... he's [PM Cameron] pulling the rug from under their feet and they [young people] don't understand why that is. Nor do I.

Anger at a perceived lack of response to 'legitimate' protest preceded the events of August 2011 and is exemplified by research participant 09, young member and co-founder of Shout Out UK[17].

> A lot of anger from students started from then and a lot of young people started [getting involved in protest] … huge backlash by the police … distrust escalated and that had a massive impact on the [2011 August] riots.

Trade unions, students, politicians, and educational institutions launched campaigns to save EMA (Pickard, 2014). These ran alongside and overlapped with campaigns against rises in university tuition fees.

According to Myers, the abolition of EMA meant more young, poor, and black and brown further education and school students were attending student protests than if the protests had just been about university tuition fees. Student protests of 2010/11 comprised two main groups: poorer, more ethnically diverse final years school students; further education and sixth form students; and older, more 'traditional' university students (Myers, 2107).

These mixed groups of students (and in some cases lecturers, teachers, and parents), marched, conducted sit-ins, occupations, and direct actions, and/or arrived to negotiate the release of young people from police 'kettles' (a police tactic which attempts to keep protestors in a confined area until it is 'safe' to let them out). Hancox, a journalist and activist who attended many of the student protests, refers to the young age of some protesters and recalls reports of:

> … 15-year-olds 'screaming "expelliarmus!" and "expecto patronum!" at riot police' – spells used by Harry Potter to fight Voldemort (Hancox, 2011 (a), loc.503).

Reflecting on differences in age, class, and ethnicity amongst student protesters, one of Myers (2017) student alumni research participants commented:

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[17] https://www.shoutoutuk.org/

> The UCL [University College London] occupation … populated by posh white people, would go back and listen to loud classical music … drinking port and red wine .... (Myers, 2017, loc.1855).

However, Myers also comments on the anger of many at the protests, summarising some comments from EMA students:

> "EMA is the only thing that's keeping us in college. What's keeping us from doing drug deals on the street? Nothing." The interviewee was as far from the stereotype of Russell Group students and 'Lacan-reading hipsters' as one could get (Myers, 2017, loc.1412).

Policing of protest and riot

In this discussion I draw upon two interviews, one with research participant 19 who supported students arrested in protests before and after the 2011 riots, and the second with research participant 17, a young *Riots Reframed* film maker.

A key moment in the student protests took place on 10th November 2010. This planned march by National Union of Students (NUS) and University and College Union (UCU) saw 52,000 people of all ages march through London, according to NUS statistics (Lewis, et al, 2010).

A group broke off from the march and occupied the Conservative Party headquarters at Millbank, releasing a statement by text message that stated: 'This is only the beginning of the resistance to the destruction of our education system and public services' (Myers, 2017, loc.642). The breakaway was spontaneous and participants described the mood of the crowd as reminiscent of a riot, with desire for direct action and the presence of fires, flares, and anger (Myers, 2017, loc.695-706).

Media coverage of the day was dominated by a protester dropping a fire extinguisher from the building, which could have injured or killed anyone below (Myers, 2017, loc.830). The *Daily Mail* blamed anarchists (Gill, 2010) and young women (Camber et al, 2010) and lecturers were also blamed (BBC News Online, 2020 (b)).

Those present recall escalating police panic and violence (Myers, 2017, loc.729). At subsequent student protests, police collected contact details of students and used

horse charges, kettling, baton charges and pre-emptive raids of activists' houses under anti-terror legislation. Student Alfie Meadows suffered serious brain injuries and nearly died after being hit on the head by a police truncheon on 9th December 2010 while in a kettle (Myers 2017, loc.1521; Power, 2017; Sheldon and Meadows, 2017).

Foreshadowing the 2011 riots, PM Cameron referred to student protesters as 'feral thugs' and resisted a call from the Commons Select Committee for a public inquiry into policing. Recalling Cameron's response to the student protests, research participant 19, an activist who supported students arrested in protests since 2010, commented:

> I don't think that the narrative around the [2011] riots was that dissimilar from the narrative around the student protestors … very much about criminalisation … 'feral children'…

The MPS, in their report on 'lessons learned' from policing the August 2011 riots (Metropolitan Police, 2012), referenced the type and scale of public disorder events in the 12 months prior to the riots, including the student protests. They acknowledged 'kettling' might be a relevant factor in examining both the 'fuel' that led to riots and the type of lower-key policing response to the August 2011 riots. This point was absent from the RCVP report and ministerial responses.

> All [these events] attracted scrutiny with regard to the style of policing adopted … scrutiny led to concerns over police tactics and the perception of a heavy-handed approach by police.

> … The MPS would need to look back many years to a period predating the service of many serving officers to find a period of serious disorder that mirrors the past 12 months. (Metropolitan Police, 2012, p. 116)

Bloom (2012) argues student protests and other anti-austerity protests during 2010 and the *policing* of these protests was a potentially radical turning point in a trajectory that culminated in the August 2011 riots. In the spirit of self-fulfilling prophecy, Bloom suggests the kettle incensed protestors and generated a type of radical power that was in the long-term more threatening to the state than the

protest people had come to take part in, stating 'in the cage of the kettle …
something is born.' (Bloom, 2012, p.38).

The notion of the student protests as riots emerges in part due to the policing of the
protests. From inside a police kettle, Hancox (2011 (a)) reports on the playfulness of
student protestors who toyed with the idea they were involved in a riot:

> At several points, over 1,000 people stood on Westminster
> Bridge with both arms thrust upwards to the skies, palms open in
> displays of ostentatious compliance, chanting "This is not a riot!
> This is not a riot!" over and over, doing so in the direction of the
> police – yet into the void. (Hancox, 2011 (a), loc.97)

Hancox argues this politicised a generation who felt the injustice of aggressive
policing and the under-reporting in the media:

> … nothing is as poignant, or as enraging, as having your chants
> rebound off the police lines, forever echoing back and forth to the
> already converted. Seeing the gap between the media narrative
> and the reality of the kettle is a head-mangling epiphany.
> (Hancox, 2011 (a), loc.144)

In addition to heavy-handed policing of protests and foreshadowing police
responses to the August 2011 riots, the police relied on CCTV in the aftermath of
the student protests. They made appeals to the public to help them identify alleged
offenders and this resulted in the arrest of 175 people. By the August 2011 riots,
police were wary of negative publicity, particularly around the kettling of young
people. They were also experienced at using CCTV to instigate large-scale
prosecutions, and used to using public appeals, including the use of 'rogues
galleries', in partnership with media (see Chapter Four).

Mason (2017) suggests it was EMA students who went on to riot in August 2011. It
is hard to pin this to one type of person or protester and important to avoid
stereotyping. Research interviews with 'rioters' suggest a varied constituency were
present (see Lewis et al, 2011; Stott and Reicher, 2011). However, the notion that
some young people, politicised and/or incensed by the state and police response to
student protests, frustrated at the lack of change to student fees and EMA, and
angry at the financial impact on their lives, were present at, or *in networks with*,

those rioting in August 2011, subverts the notion the 2011 riots were 'all about criminality'.

Reportage and reflections on the pre-2011 street protests were often characterised by the phrase 'student riots'. For example, in an article in *The Independent* newspaper, the journalist covering Labour Party MP John McDonnell's support for student protests, uses the term 'student riots' as a given. Similarly, in his foreword to Myers' book, Mason (2017) refers to the student protests as riots, as do many of the student alumni interviewed by Myers. Some doctoral research participants also referred to the 2010/11 student protests as riots.

Crucially, for some participants at least, there were shared ideas across student and anti-austerity protests and the August 2011 riots. For research participant 17, a young *Riots Reframed* film maker, the riots were part of a student-to-riot protest or riot continuum. Present at both, he reflected on these events, also raising the spectre of the Arab Spring[18], already happening as the 2011 riots unfolded:

> There was something new emerging on the political lift … there
> was a lot of hope, a grassroots street movement building. Millbank
> riots [Millbank is discussed later in the chapter], they call them
> protests but they were riots…

Beyond the 2011 riots, there is evidence that student protester and/or rioter alumni became involved in other anti-authority struggles. Some went on to positions of influence in the Labour Party and Green movements. Others established radical social media platforms and/or produced alternative media content and continued to be politically active and/or set-up platforms for young people to challenge dominant narratives of youth, protest, and riot (Myers, 2017). This is not to suggest all student protester and rioter alumni were engaged in this way, but Myers concludes the afterlife of the student protests included a more radicalised National Union of

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[18] Arab Spring refers to a series of anti-government protests, uprisings and armed rebellions that spread across much of the Middle East and North Africa in the early 2010s. It began in Tunisia in response to corruption and economic stagnation. From Tunisia, the protests then spread to Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain.

Students (NUS) leadership, more politicised youth, and more black and brown faces at the forefront of political commentary (Myers, 2017, loc.2535).

The London Occupy protests emerged in November 2011, just weeks after the August riots. In a further contradiction to the depiction of August 2011 rioters as a-political, research participant 09, a young co-founder of Shout Out UK explained:

> We [the youth media organisation he and his peers set-up and run] did a lot of spot interviews at the launch of Occupy Democracy … roughly about 50 … between the ages of 18-22 and they were nearly all involved in the [August 2011] riots…

Another legacy is the linking up of campaigns. For example, there was student support for the Justice 4 Mark (Duggan) Campaign and the United Friends and Families Campaign, a campaign for justice for people who died during police contact. Aaron Bastani, a co-founder of youth-led social media platform, Novara Media (discussed in Chapter Eight), recalls students chanting "Who killed Mark Duggan, you killed Mark Duggan" at police after heavy-handed policing at student protests that coincided with Duggan's inquest. It was a chant repeated at many student protests of that era (Bastani, 2013; Shelly Asquith, 2013).

> … historically privileged students and graduates increasingly feel they share more with those rioters in August than the institutions to which they have historically given their tacit consent. A generation, across economic divides, is quickly learning a simple truth: that debt, austerity and wage repression necessitates police repression. (Bastani, 2013)

The election of a new leftist Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, in 2015 was a turning point for some youthful activism.

> … the class of the Millbank 2010 riot effectively became the core of the movement that would put Jeremy Corbyn into the leadership of the Labour Party … (Myers, 2017, loc.166-170).

This reflected the support Corbyn and Labour MP John McDonnell had shown for student protests (Myers, 2017). Both joined sit-down protests in solidarity with students and spoke in support of them. Corbyn and McDonnell were part of a network that included increasingly politicised young people agitating for change. In the absence of support from former Labour leader, Ed Miliband, Corbyn and

McDonnell remain the only Labour Party political support cited by student alumni as genuine allies (Myers, 2017). Corbyn condemned the actions of the police and declared:

> We are destroying the opportunities, hopes and life chances of a whole generation … I signed a pledge not to vote for a fee increase (cited in Myers, 2017, loc.1387).

Myers (2017) argues 2010/11 student protests and August 2011 riots shared a common spirit and that no party-political *leader* at the time was representing their concerns (see also Novara Media, 2020 (a)).

Youth support for Corbyn culminated at the 2017 general election, by which time he was leader of the Labour Party. As the general election exit polls predicted a major reduction in the Conservative Party's majority, Michael Segalov, alumni from the 2010/11 protests and now a journalist wrote in *The Independent*:

> The ascendancy of Corbyn as Labour leader has once again given young people a political party to get behind. It's no coincidence we've now returned to the electoral fold … It should come as no surprise, really, given where our politics formed. Just think back to 2010, and the mobilisation of students, when we were pledged false promises that ended up being left broken and forgotten, we took to the streets. What was portrayed as mindless thuggery and misplaced anger was in fact the politicisation of a generation. We learnt how to organise, how to mobilise and how to campaign for our own rights; it was clear no one else was going to do it for us. (Segalov, 2013).

After the 2017 election, political commentators, including academics, have debated if there was a 'youthquake' that voted for Corbyn, with Ehsan et al (2018) arguing voting patterns demonstrate they did so in significant numbers. Similarly, Sturgis and Jennings (2020) argue support for Corbyn led to a higher-than-average youth vote (under 25-year-olds) with a large percentage voting Labour.

As well as shared personnel, networks and ideas, a further link between the student protests and 2011 riots is found in UK Hip-Hp and Grime music, a genre overlooked in the dominant narratives of the 2011 riots.

Part Three: soundtrack to riot and protest

In this discussion I draw on interviews with two research participants: research participant 11, a young social media entrepreneur; and research participant 17, a young film maker with *Riots Reframed*. I also draw upon geographically informed analysis of the UK Hip-Hop and Grime music genres and explore their relationship to protest and riot in the context of Lefevre's 'right to the city' (Millington, 2016; Woods, 2020). In the aftermath of the August 2011 riots, some UK Grime and Hip-Hop artists were referencing the riots directly, citing the death of Mark Duggan and others and addressing a range of issues facing young people (Atfield, 2017, p.87).

In one of the few academic readings of the 2011 riots in relation to UK Hip-Hop, geographer Millington (2016), argues London Hip-Hop can be understood as a 'discursive space' that was constituted by and overlapped with the material spaces of the city. We could add UK Grime music to this (Atfield, 2017). Millington (2016) argues Hip-Hop reveals an ironic, complex, and reflexive dialogue about identity, justice, and politics that is distinctly different from the portrayal of rioter as neo-liberal consumer. He suggests Hip-Hop can be read as practicing a form of citizenship that acts against a 'masquerade democracy'. Drawing on Gilroy (1993) Millington reflects:

> … taking control of the interpretation of the riots through the antiphonic 'call and response' medium of hip-hop … in the cultural democracy of hip-hop can be found a conviviality and political inter-subjectivity – at once sober, playful, angry and ironic … for transnational, diasporic urban politics… (Millington 2016).

Akala and Kareem Dennis (aka Lowkey) produce socially conscious UK Hip-Hop. Both feature in the post-riot narrative and appear as talking heads in the film *Riots Reframed,* discussed in the next chapter. Lowkey is an activist and artist whose lyrics address global colonial and imperial injustices. Akala, winner of the Music of Black Origin rapper of the year award in 2006 and founder of the Hip-Hop Shakespeare Company[19] also challenges the narrative of British colonialism.

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[19] https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/inspired-shakespeare-part-2-hip-hop-shakespeare-company/

Lowkey's track 'Dear England', references both Mark Duggan and the range of issues discussed in riot counter-narratives outlined in the next chapter.

"Dear England" (featuring Mai Khalil)

…cut

If a policeman can kill a black man where he found him
A soldier can kill an Afghan in the mountains
A petty thief can get ransacked from his housing
While the bankers are lounging
That's my surroundings
Took land, no one in your family has heard of

...cut

Can't you figure its ways bigger than Mark Duggan

...cut

Downing Street I can find villains
Cut education, privatise prisons
Surprised by theft when it's organised,
But mass immorality is normalised

…cut

Outputs like this formed part of the public counter-narrative in the riot aftermath and illustrate how riot issues were being explored through popular culture. A young critic suggests Lowkey:

> … seamlessly intertwines the looting of imperialism, the need for social cohesion and the violent nature of the nation state into a thought-provoking account of the revolt last August (Elliott-Cooper, 2012).

The origins of Grime music can be traced to young people (often still at school) in London at the start of the millennium, who made and produced a new musical and cultural scene (Hancox, 2012, 2018; White, 2016). Grime was born in the three most deprived boroughs of London's East End: Hackney, Tower Hamlets, and Newham (White, 2014, 2016, and 2017). White's ethnographic work on Grime

reminds us that the producers are predominantly young, black, and male, but the audience is more diverse (White 2014, 2016, 2017).

> Grime sounds like where it is from … sonic origins flow through the musical practice of the black diaspora … the crew is a key component … like-minded individuals who are friends or have some kind of kinship connection … attended the same schools, grew up on the same estates… (White, 2017 (b))

> … a culture … a way of living … the way that we kind of grew up … I would have been 12 … it wasn't called Grime, it was just a sound, it was our thing … (research participant 11)

Note the emphasis on the crew – networks of friends and associates sharing ideas, skills, and experiences. It is a different representation of young people's collective behaviour to that of 'gang'.

The content and form of the Grime music scene provides a key link between protest and riot. Alongside playful, hedonistic *content* are references to gentrification, poverty, rich and poor divides, and trouble from the police (White, 2017 (b)). Whilst now much imitated and co-opted (Hancox, 2017 (b)), Grime wasn't escapist in its origin, but reflected life as its producers experienced it. In exploring Grime music in relation in to a Lefebvrian 'right to the city' (1968), Woods (2020) identifies Grime as having potential to embody and embolden 'anti-authority' struggles:

> By reclaiming the right to the city through their performances, grime artists are able to reproduce the city on their own terms. (Woods, 2020, p.296)

An example of a Grime track that represents the riots is *Open Conversation + Mark Duggan* by Wretch 32, an MC who was friends with Mark Duggan and his family (Hancox, 2018, loc.3298). The two-part track recalls Wretch's childhood growing up in Tottenham and references 'Brother Mark' [Duggan]. Extracts from Wretch's uncle, Stafford Scott, a spokesperson for the Duggan family and others who have lost loved ones in similar circumstances, are included on the track.

Grime formed part of the *soundtrack* to both 2010 and pre-riots 2011 student protests, (Hancox, 2011 (a) and (b)). Recalling the 2010/11 student protests and highlighting them as relevant to understanding the 2011 riots, several research

participants referenced *POW*, a track by Lethal Bizzle, which was described as an 'anthem for kettled youth' by one commentator (Hancox, 2011 (a) and (b)). Hancox recalls Bizzle at a student protest in the Whitehall entrance to Parliament Square in London where Bizzle addressed PM Cameron and performed a version of *POW* that spoke to the student crowd:

> … young people … clashing with riot police, trying to force their way out of the kettle … a mobile sound system … a trail of smiling young protesters following … the presence of thousands of under-18s on the protest … requests were called out, the jack swapped from one teen's MP3 player to another…
>
> [Bizzle] pretends to address David Cameron:
>
> "Who's really got the power?"
>
> "Don't dismiss us," Bizzle says …"We've got more power than you have on the youth. You're a millionaire guy in a suit, your life is good – you can't relate. These kids can relate to people like myself … [Bizzle referencing other UK Grime artists]: we're from the council estates, we lived in these places where they live, we know what it's like. We're the real prime ministers of this country." (Hancox, 2011 (b))

The *form* of Grime, its influence on young people's drive to represent protest and riot in new ways and the harnessing of new and cheap technologies to make, produce and distribute music peer-to-peer, is reflected in the setting up of new social media platforms and films. Grime influenced some young people to feel they could tell their own stories about their lives, including events like the riots (Adams, 2019; White, 2015, 2017 (a) and 2019).

Reminiscent of 1970s punk where music became accessible and young people could make and distribute it themselves, the narrative spaces of Grime and Hip-Hop and the associated Do-It-Yourself (DIY) culture that used financially and technically accessible technologies, encouraged some young people to make music, films and/or set-up new online youth-led platforms (outlined in the next chapter). The ability to make and distribute outputs and 'grow' an audience for films, podcasts, websites, online forums and magazines from a laptop at relatively low financial cost,

meant some young people could publicly challenge youth stereotypes and negative narratives. In this sense, Grime was a *modus operandi.*

Woods (2020) argues that:

> ... the effects of such processes are wide-ranging and have contributed to the development of new forms of protest, and new forms of social activism and influence. In this sense, grime is a paradigmatic example of how digital technologies enable the crossing of boundaries; they empower artists to become activists, and the transference of power from the digital to the physical domains. (Woods, 2020, p.296).

Research participant 17, whose film about the 2011 riots is discussed in the next chapter, volunteered that the UK Grime scene had influenced him to buy a camera to make and edit his first film. He did so whilst out 'on tag' as part of his 'remand in custody' during the riots. In a research interview he reflected:

> … people say it's not political … black and brown people who come from slaves, who come from like oppressed people, whose parents came here to work, who come from single parent families, who come from the ghetto, even for them to proclaim that, "look, we're doing business, we're making money just like you are, we've got this kind of class", that is politics, that is so political, that is so powerful.

Grime had a further role to play in some young people's politics in the post protest and riots' aftermath.

During the summer of 2016, the new Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, was facing a second internal attempted coup against his leadership. Corbyn's anti-Iraq war and general anti-imperialist stance combined with anti-austerity politics, chimed with some Grime artists, whilst Corbyn's and McDonnell's support for students also resonated with many of their fans. Grime artist, Novelist, tweeted support for Corbyn, "the mandem need you". Days later, Novelist joined the Labour Party. A month later, Stormzy, by then a number-one-selling artist, backed Corbyn in an interview, saying, "I dig what he says (Burtenshaw and Flip, 2017; Duggins, 2016; Matthews and Bennett, 2017). At the general election of 2017, called by Conservative PM Theresa May, Grime4Corbyn emerged as a campaign and

coalesced around young Grime and Hip-Hop artists to mobilise young people to back Corbyn (Hancox, 2017 (b)).

Akala, an informed and vocal activist who had a massive youth following, declared he'd never voted before but would vote for Corbyn and urged others to do the same. Corbyn and Grime artist JME did an interview and discussed health, housing, education and voting (Burtenshaw and Flip, 2017):

> … "do-it-yourself" culture … video of their interview began with a typically-Corbyn quote, "political change doesn't always come from politicians, does it?" (Burtenshaw and Flip, 2017).

Lowkey said of Corbyn at the time:

> … even with … problematic legacies of the Labour Party, you now have within it, wide-open ears to those struggling on the front lines, protesting for social justice. And it is for that reason I wholeheartedly support Jeremy Corbyn. (Burtenshaw and Flip, 2017).

I have cited the 2017 general election, which came six years after the riots, to demonstrate that some of the same people and practices spanned across a time trajectory that included protest, riot and party-political activity and were engaged in small and big 'p' politics. Far from the 2011 riots being 'all about criminality pure and simple', they were political elements on many levels, see Gilroy (2011), Thörn et al (2016) and Dikeç (2017).

Discussion

Why does it matter that we can see traces of political activism in some people involved in the riots that pre-dated and continued beyond the riots? I do not claim all people rioting were involved in campaigns to either keep/reinstate EMA or to highlight issues surrounding deaths during police contact, such as Mark Duggan's. However, there is evidence that *some* young people were in networks that included pre-2011 political activity including student and anti-austerity protests and in post-2011 riots political campaigns, *as well as* the 2011 riots, and many, particularly at the Tottenham and other anti-police riots, were incensed by deaths during police contact. This challenges the notion of the 2011 riots as purely a-political and a-

historical. These protests are relevant to understanding the 2011 riots for five reasons.

Firstly, they exemplify concerns by citizens prepared to show their lack of consent for government policy before the 2011 riots. In the case of student protests, they illustrate a particularly egregious issue for some young people, the loss of income and associated opportunities caused by the rise in university tuition fees and the abolition of the EMA.

Secondly, the response of the police and use of tactics like kettling in the years leading to the riots caused much antagonism between the police and those who wanted to publicly protest. The use of CCTV to prosecute protesters was also replicated in 2011 riots policing.

Thirdly, the dominance of a narrative of feral youth and mindless criminality in the political and media response to some of these events foreshadowed the 2011 riots response. It incentivised some young people to actively challenge and provide new narratives about youth, protest and riot.

Fourthly, there was anger at politicians reneging on electoral promises and a perception that the ballot box does not lead to any material changes (outlined in Part Three of this chapter). It also led to Grime artists and their fans actively campaigning and/or voting for Labour under Corbyn's leadership, through the vehicle of Grime4Corbyn, amongst others.

Finally, examination of how these events are linked may provoke a re-examination of protest and riot in relation to anti-authority struggles for the right to the city and anger at neo-liberal governance. It challenges the notion that the 2011 riots were a stand-alone event.

Grime and Hip-Hop were overlooked at the time of the 2011 riots by much of the right and left wing commentariat, which implied young people had few positive cultural forms and outlets and little interest in politics with a big or small 'p' (see Chapters Two and Four). The content of the burgeoning UK Grime and Hip-Hop scene remained either unknown or was treated within disdain amongst popular

representations of the riots. The message was missed and connections between student protesters and 2011 rioters were not made in much of the riot commentary which focused instead on deficit characterisations of young people and their 'wanting' for free stuff (see Chapter Two). Hancox (2018, loc.3143) observed after a student protest in central London how a middle-aged punk wheeled in a sound system and played 'earnest politically correct' reggae. Whilst not dismissed by the crowd, it didn't animate them either:

> … the baby boomer cannon of sixties protest rock has created a bogus assumption that political music has to brand its politics in capital letters across its forehead – or across its acoustic guitar. It's not about the content, it's about the energy and aura.
> (Hancox, 2018, Loc. 3146)

Hancox recalled a teenager who asked if he could play a few tunes. He was handed the jack, plugged the amp into his Blackberry phone and played Grime tunes. Hancox describes it as 'a new political consciousness emerging from the speakers' (2018, loc.3151). Similarly, Atfield (2017) argues Grime is political and can be read as a music of resistance with reference to the 2011 riots.

Writing about the student protests, Myers (2017) reflects that 'older generations… have lamented the death of "protest music". Yet they forget that the 2010 generation had their own.' (Myers, 2017, loc.1433).

Conclusion

In examining how the riots have been responded to by a range of constituencies, it has been important to listen to what people were saying in public conversations about the riots and in relation to other protests and shared concerns about governance (see discussion of Bassel's model of political listening, in Chapters Two and Eight).

In examining genres like Grime and UK Hip-Hop, we can see that issues raised by protest and riot were being directly represented in these forms and that these forms provided alternative spaces to develop narratives that challenged dominant representations about the riots.

In this chapter I have drawn on Thörn et al's (2016) articulation of 'anti-authority struggles' to explore that some street protests and sit-ins took place within the temporal trajectory of the 2011 riots (Bloom, 2012). This reveals some links between events like the student protests and 2011 riots in terms of personnel, shared grievances and networks. If we consider the state response to the student protests in terms of punitive policing and deployment of the narrative of feral youth by PM Cameron, we see further links. It allows us to understand the 2011 riots as a 'moment' in a process of articulation (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) and part of the staging of claims for the right to the city (Harvey, 2012; Lefebvre, 2017; Millington 2016; Woods 2020).

Grime and UK Hip-Hop told the stories of protest and riot in their content. They provided narrative spaces to stake claims to the city and a retort to government and media dominant representations of feral youth. The sensibilities of Do-It-Yourself culture in Grime, which were enabled by increasingly financially and technically accessible technologies, encouraged some young people to make music, films and/or set-up new online youth-led platforms to counter-narrate the riots (the latter are explored in Chapter Eight).

These new narrative spaces are considered in the next chapter where I apply the concepts of networked youth (Boyd, 2014) and participatory publics (Kahne, 2014) to new social media platforms and films about the riots which were produced by young people.

Chapter Eight – Findings: Counter-Narratives

Introduction

In considering responses to the 2011 riots, I explore in this chapter how dominant public narratives incensed and incentivised some young people in London to actively challenge them and produce counter-narratives, telling their own stories about youth, protest, and riot, utilising social media platforms and documentary film making.

The chapter is split into three parts. In the first part I outline theories of networked publics and networked youth (Boyd, 2014) and participatory politics (Jenkins, 2009; Kahne et al, 2014). Part Two is focused on some counter-narratives of riot with the consideration of how they might be read as examples of networked youth and participatory cultural practices. In Part Three, I examine two films made about the 2011 riots by young film makers. These young film makers screened their films at public venues to provoke dialogue about the riots. I consider how we might understand this in relation to types of networked publics (Boyd, 2014) and participatory culture (Jenkins, 2009; Kahne et al, 2014).

These counter-narratives challenge dominant narratives of riot in their content. In the practices surrounding them they also demonstrate and problematise ways of facilitating and maintaining public debate about subjects such as the 2011 riots.

I begin by exploring some key aspects of theory that may help us to understand riot counter-narratives.

Part One: Theories of networked publics and participatory culture

Boyd (2014) argues social media has enabled young people to participate in and create 'networked publics' which emerge from the intersection of people, technology, and practice. Boyd suggests that not only has social media enabled new ways of *being public* and *being in public*, but has been used to reconfigure political publics as we know them (Boyd, 2014, p.206). According to Boyd, networked publics are characterised by persistence and durability. They are visible

because the potential audience can bear witness to them. They have spreadability, since content can be shared and searched for. Publics are important, not just for enabling political action, but also for providing a way of constructing our social world. Boyd is particularly interested in what this means for teenagers and suggests that what is novel for teens is not the technology, but the public life it enables. However, in examining some responses to the 2011 riots by people in the 20-something age group (at that time), I have found Boyd's concept of networked publics a useful lens through which to understand some of the practices outlined in this chapter.

Articulating new media's facilitation of young people's participatory politics, Kahne et al (2014) focus on peer-based acts which seek to both voice and influence issues of public concern. They understand 'politics' as extending beyond electoral issues and including a wide range of individual and group activities that influence how the public sets agendas and addresses public concern. For these authors we need to extend the concept of the political by bringing culture and dissenting movements into the analysis to capture the multiple ways people engage with the public sphere outside the traditional or formal political realms. They suggest a set of cultural practices is evolving and being repurposed as political practices, particularly by the under-30s, early adopters of new media. This age group is also more likely to use digital media for political information.

Kahne et al show how communities and networks, established through daily friendship and interest-driven use of new media, can become politicised. Once politicised, they may further support more formal modes of political participation. In this way, social networks fostered through new media become sources of social and political capital. These may be combined with direct action events, live streamed through social media. They identify four core sets of practice within the current digital 'mediascape' that I apply to some practices in the discussion section of this chapter. The four practices are: circulation (by blogging, podcasting, or forwarding links); collaboration (by working with others to produce and share information via projects); creation (by producing and exchanging media through platforms like YouTube); and connection, through social media like Facebook or Twitter or other

online communities. I consider how we might apply these understandings to the practices of some young people representing the riots.

In this chapter, I refer to riot counter-narratives in the spirit of Bamberg's articulation of counter-narratives as relative; whether narratives are mastering or countering is not fixed but is contingent on context and interactive political power of the moment and place (Bamberg, 2004, Bamberg and Wipff, (2020).

Part Two: Youth-led social media and representation of protest and riot

In this discussion I draw on interviews with research participant 08, a former youth worker who supported young people's social media platforms through the social media platform Youth Media Agency; research participant 09, young co-founder of Shout Out UK social media platform, and research participant 10, young co-founder of Word on the Curb[20] social media platform. I also reflect on observations of practices by members of Novara Media, a Leftist social media platform whose forming members were 2010 student protest alumni.

Online blogs and vlogs offered space to analyse student protests and the riots outside mainstream media and they often involved people who had taken part or who knew someone who had. Many young people filmed themselves on their phones being kettled, on streets, in protests and riots and posted film footage on social media, including YouTube, some of which is captured in the first book published after the 2011 riots, *Mad Mobs and Englishmen* (Stott and Reicher, 2011). Myers suggests there was a networked sensibility fostered that said, 'we all have a right to a voice' and this was replicated and reinforced through social media (Myers, 2017, loc.1906).

By the time of the riots, some young people had already used social media to share information in real-time during street protests and to reflect on their experience of the events. Some shared the view that lessons learned included: politicians renege on pre-election promises (Ibrahim 2014, Myers 2017); peaceful protest does not necessarily lead to any changes in policy making or practices (Bloom, 2012; Gilroy,

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[20] https://www.wordonthecurb.co.uk/our-story

2011); and media coverage and party-political rhetoric about youth street activism was premised on deficit notions of youth as 'feral' (see Chapters Two and Four).

From protest to riot, young people could report and/or connect with others whilst events were happening, and they could facilitate and/or consume discussion about them afterwards.

Research participant 08, a former youth worker, and co-founder of Youth Media Agency, a platform supporting young people's new social media practices, recalled the instigation of a youth summit at the end of 2009 which was designed to tackle negative representations of young people. The summit was attended by 160 people representing 59 youth media platforms as well as representatives from organisations like Channel 4. The summit decided an organisation that would help support young people in their emergent social media platforms was needed. By July 2011, 08 had set up a youth group umbrella platform called Youth Media Agency. It was social enterprise with a youth-run steering group, where people were hired and paid as freelancers.

> ... by building, growing, and raising the profile of young people making media we start to address the imbalance of negative profiling of young people in the UK … a lot of our members have got more Twitter followers than *The Sun* [newspaper], so that is a powerful thing, but we had only kind of predicted that in 2009.

Research participants 09 and 10 represented two different social media platforms, and both were members of Youth Media Agency at the time of the interviews. Former university students influenced by 2011 August riots and the student protests, they sought to challenge negative youth narratives and set up online spaces where young people could talk about their lives.

Research participant 10 reflected in a research interview on media coverage of the 2011 riots:

> BBC that was patronising … I just thought the discussions that we were having [amongst peers] were way more interesting and far more considered and really spoke to the heart of the issue … They weren't being aired; they weren't being given any real attention by the mainstream. David Starkey got so much attention

> for what felt to me was really racist. And he is now the face and
> the voice of like, the riots?

Research participant 10 and some university peers came from riot-affected areas in London. Motivated by conversations about the riots with friends that he felt were more nuanced than racist, stereotypical media representations, a few of them set up a new online 'word' based forum aimed at under-25s and focused on audience production of filmed current affairs word pieces. He defined current affairs as newsworthy topics that young people felt were relevant to their lives, rather than party politics. The aim was to capture different viewpoints and to provide young people's 'take' on news in a fun and playful way.

Research participant 10 reflected that the August 2011 riots were formative in the decision to set up Word on the Curb (WotC) (Word on the Curb, 2020 (a) and (b)) which highlighted peer conversations within an online forum. Referring to the 2011 riots he reflected:

> … what encouraged people across the country to have this kind
> of ubiquitous sentiment of frustration and to take it out in the
> ways that they did? We just used to always say, "why aren't we
> capturing people's opinions in one place?"

> You can trace our history back to those moments. I was writing
> poetry about it and talking about how we felt, and feeling that if
> these discussions were in one space, then it would just be a lot
> more interesting …

Their first official output was in relation to Black Lives Matter (USA) and deaths from police contact.

> We started filming and gathering momentum in June 2013 … We
> just wanted people to speak on issues that were important.
> Spoken word is a way to do that … [to] really tackle some of the
> more pertinent things that are happening in society.

> It's the idea of camaraderie as well, to know that there is
> somebody else that's on your side… a space in which young
> people trust one another…

This DIY approach is not just about reaching and representing a youth audience, it is interactive and invites the audience to co-create content. WotC had a large database of contributors and sent out requests for submissions on a wide range of

current affairs topics. The team and some contributors worked with people in positions of power, such as local councillors and MPs, to try to extend the influence of young people. They also produced videos for organisations, including a young poet's piece about the Scottish Referendum for Channel 4.

Research participant 09 was inspired by the student protests and August 2011 riots and set out, with a couple of peers, to improve political literacy amongst young people. Targeted at 15- to 25-year-olds, at the time of the research interview participant 09 and peers were producing an online magazine with international scope and reach, designing and delivering political education courses and facilitating political discussions and panels for statutory and non-statutory organisations. He said they aimed to:

> … use journalism to show how things like the riots are linked with politics.

This organisation, Shout Out UK[21] described itself publicly at the time of the interview as 'politically neutral' and had diverse website content in terms of political stance. They produced numerous films on topics including activism and youth homelessness and collaborated with Channel 4 and ITN Productions to launch a youth leader debate in April 2015. They have hosted events at Parliament about topics including riots and protest.

> … we edit … factually correct … and if it's not racist, then we're happy with that … we check grammar and spelling. We don't accept articles about celebrities and sports.
>
> We have over 2,000 young writers reporting from all over the globe on a variety of issues, from Palestine to the USA, and a core readership of 60,000+ per month. (Research participant 09)

Research participant 09 suggested that journalism and getting young people to write about their views and read the views of others was an effective way to connect young people with political issues:

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[21]https://www.shoutoutuk.org/

> It's a disgrace to call ourselves a democracy when most of our
> population have absolutely no idea how the electoral system
> works: how to vote, why we should vote, how to campaign, how to
> start a protest if you want to, how to get involved in government at
> local or national level, what the hell the EU [European Union] is.

A young reporter for Shout Out wrote after the 2017 general election:

> Politics at the moment isn't fought on the front pages of national
> newspapers. If it was, [Theresa] May would have won a landslide,
> with papers like *The Sun* declaring Corbyn [a leftist leader of the
> Labour Party who succeeded Ed Miliband] a 'terrorist-sympathiser'
> and placing him inside a bin. Instead, elections are fought on
> social media, and within Facebook circles … No longer do
> younger people sit down and watch news programmes for an
> hour. (Green, 2017)

Novara Media[22] (set-up by student protest alumni in 2013) is a prominent social media platform in terms of reach. It has hosted in-depth, nuanced discussions about the riots and has been one of the few public forums to host discussions about protest and riot at key points since, including on anniversary dates of the riots. Their platform has grown to include podcasts, videos, articles, and offline events. They co-host programmes with academics and have interviewed Jeremy Corbyn, Caroline Lucas, and other UK politicians. Their core team have guested on TV news programmes like Sky News and Newsnight, where they have presented a youthful, leftist viewpoint. The team has also been published in academic publications and media. They describe their platform as aiming to:

> … tell stories and provide analysis shaped by the political
> uncertainties of the age, elevating critical perspectives you're
> unlikely to find elsewhere. Driven to build a new media for a
> different politics, our journalism is always politically committed;
> rather than seeking to moderate between two sides of a debate,
> our output actively intends to feed back into political action.
> (Novara Media, 2020 (b))

Speaking about social media and young people, James Butler, one of the co-founders of Novara Media said in a 2015 interview with Open Democracy:

> … In one way or another, it's been an essential component of
> major political flashpoints, across the spectrum, from the 2011

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[22] https://novaramedia.com/

riots through to the Scottish referendum or the Corbyn campaign. (Ramsay, 2015)

Referring to setting up Novara Media after the 2010/11 student protests and the police and media response he reflected:

> It's born out of a context of defeat … we're also engaged in a project of reconstruction … we are in the intermezzo between serious economic crises and building a political culture capable of responding better to the next one. (Ramsay, 2015)

For some other young people, making films about the 2011 riots and using social media platforms to promote them, offered alternative narratives of riot. I examine this next.

Part Three: Documentary film and networked publics

In this discussion, I draw on four research interviews with research participant 06, a creative arts educator, actor, and co-founder of UK Fully Focused Community; research participant 07, a young film maker who helped to make UK Fully Focused film *Riot from Wrong* (Riot from Wrong, 2012); research participant 05, a Croydon-campaigner for official victims seeking compensation; and research participant 17, a young film maker connected with the film, *Riots Reframed* (Riots Reframed, 2013).

I focus on two films, *Riot from Wrong* and *Riots Reframed*, that formed the substantive content of many of the public conversations about the riots. I attended both and witnessed audience interaction with the films, as well as taking part in a few of the panels that accompanied post-film debate (explained in Chapter Three).

I include ethnographic detail here of a few events attended between 2012 and 2016 which coalesced around the screening of *Riot from Wrong* and *Riots Reframed*. In doing so, I am drawing on Bassel's notion of the importance of 'political listening' as a means of engaging with conversations about the riots (Bassel, 2012, 2013 and 2017). Bassel co-organised a conference about the riots and the media in the immediate riots' aftermath and stresses the importance of illuminating the voices of those directly involved with riots within research, referring to a micropolitics which involves the importance of paying attention to narrative strategies where exchanges

can take place between those with more and less power in the field of public discourse (Bassel, 2017, pp. 19-20).

The first of these films, the 60-minute *Riot from Wrong* (RfW) (Riot from Wrong, 2012), was by youth film collective and social enterprise, UK Fully Focused, set up in 2010 by two arts educators who had tutored young people deemed 'at risk' and which has a youth steering group that takes day to-day decisions.

RfW begins with the Duggan family's story about the death of Mark Duggan and includes different perspectives on the context in which the riots emerged, including young people's experience of youth service cuts. For research participant 06, one of the founders of UK Fully Focused who grew up in Haringey, the motivation for making the film was to challenge the perceived demonisation of Mark Duggan, his family and young people.

> … the misinformation … we just wanted to give people the chance to speak their mind … why is there this uprising? Why is there this anger? Why are people fighting the police? How come they know about Mark Duggan in Manchester and Liverpool and Hackney? (Research participant 07)

Unfunded at the time, in the days after the riots they took a camera and microphone to Tottenham and the Broadwater Farm Estate (known locally as The Farm). Interviews with Mark Duggan's family and friends are intercut with interviews with youth and community workers, barristers, journalists, young people who rioted, and statistics on cuts to services in riot-affected communities. In the film we can see youth work narratives and references to themselves as a 'family'. RfW ends with a message of 'do something positive, get your education'.

> … I took the laptop down The Farm and a lot of community members come around … they all agreed that it was a good representation … we also had a screening at West Green Learning Centre, which was full … it was really hard for his [Mark Duggan's] mum to watch but at the end she said that she felt that the film gave her a little bit of hope and so for us that was like a massive thing. (Research participant 06)

RfW's official launch took place in front of a packed audience at the 400-seater Rio Cinema in Hackney at the East End Film Festival in 2012. Sensing a public appetite

to explore the issues raised by the riots, UK Fully Focused decided to take the film out to public venues to provoke conversations with audiences, rather than releasing it immediately on DVD.

> … the conversation that sparked there was amazing … anyone who wants to see RfW has to come to a screening … an opportunity for them to take part in the Q&A after and actually have these discussions. (Research participant 06)

After hundreds of screenings, including at prisons, pupil referral units, schools, universities and the UK Parliament, and discussions in the UK and internationally (including linking with BLM USA), UK Fully Focused released the film on DVD in 2013 and many organisations subsequently arranged their own screenings.

At public conversations about the riots, the whole film, or parts of it, were used to structure discussion on the issues it raised. UK Fully Focused produced a teacher pack with ideas about how to use parts of the film to facilitate discussions and activities.

An example of how the film was used to draw on and form social and community memories is seen in August 2013 on the two-year anniversary of Mark Duggan's death. UK Fully Focused organised a day at Rich Mix Community Venue in Hackney, East London. It was billed as an event where 'young people talk, and older people listen'.

The day began with a statement written by Duggan's brother, Shaun Hall. The names of people who had died during police contact were read out and there was reference to an event in Tottenham the previous evening where families and supporters commemorated and reflected on deaths during police contact. Sections of the film were shown to facilitate discussion, and this was interspersed with young people rapping, dancing, and performing poetry and 'word' presentations.

Themes from the audience included: ongoing anger at stop and search police practices; cuts to youth services including EMA; impunity for police, bankers, and politicians; and the stigmatisation of youth in public discourse. A performance poet criticised 'austerity politics' and referred to our 'Eton mess', whilst audience

members discussed how some who were kettled in student demonstrations against EMA cuts before the riots were angry and politicised by the experience and chose to get involved in the riots because 'they saw peaceful protest got them nowhere' or at least support the riots in their aftermath. The 'Bite the Ballot' campaign which promoted youth voter registration was at the event and were referenced from the main platform.

There was a strong emphasis on young people taking control of their own voice and anger at perceived negative, inaccurate representations of young people and black and brown communities by the media. There was concern about a dominant narrative focus on gangs and a lack of positive media coverage about young people. There was discussion about the lack of young people's voices in public life and the need to create a voice through social media. The closing down of opportunities for young people was discussed, with one audience member observing, "sometimes feels like the only opportunity for young people is to loot".

Another screening in Croydon illustrates how even several years after the riots a public conversation around the film was problematised and this type of remembering was viewed as a threat to 'law and order' or the state. It was organised by research participant 05, Croydon campaigner for compensation for official victims. She had spent 10 hours during the riots watching her family business burn and, alongside her friend, who had lost the contents of her home in a riot-related fire, had campaigned for adequate compensation for herself and other local official victims.

> When I saw the film, it made me cry for the first 20 minutes because it was just so powerful and then I thought, people need to see this …

Research participant 05 had organised a successful showing of RfW at the local voluntary sector forum and decided to screen it at Croydon's main concert venue. She arranged with UK Fully Focused that Carole Duggan (Mark Duggan's aunt, a spokesperson for the Duggan family at the time) would attend. She was then warned by local officials (who she did not want to name in the research interview) that Carole Duggan's presence might lead to riots. The screening, billed to be the

final public screening with the UK Fully Focused team members in attendance, coincided with the final day of Mark Duggan's inquest (in fact this was delayed). Research participant 05 recalls being told:

> … it would be a flashpoint for trouble and so they were going to have to be on high alert because Carole Duggan was coming, it was going to send out the wrong signals. I don't think they wanted the screening anyway … I was really scared, because I didn't want to be responsible for this kind of flare up again and that's what they were playing on. I thought about it and I was like, "My god, how dare they?" and then I got angry… (Research participant 05)

Carole Duggan was semantically linked to the causing of riots in the *Daily Mail* by commentator Richard Littlejohn (2014) in an example of what Tyler calls 'scum semiotics' (Tyler, 2013 (b)). Littlejohn wrote after the inquest into the death of Mark Duggan:

> Carole Duggan, with her severe 'council estate face-lift' swept-back hairdo, could have wandered off the set of Channel 4's *Benefits Street* after a session in the boozer … standing on the steps of the High Court, face contorted in hatred, right arm thrust upwards in a clenched-fist Wolfie Smith salute and screeching: "No Justice, No Peace." (Littlejohn, 2014).

The term 'no justice no peace' can be viewed as a floating signifier, open to different ascriptions of meaning (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p.110). It has links to the civil rights movement and was deployed by Martin Luther King Junior amongst others. King used it on 14th December 1967 outside a California prison where Vietnam war protesters were being held, stating:

> There can be no justice without peace and there can be no peace without justice. (Mazie, 2014)

Martin Luther King Junior was commenting on the anti-war movement (peace) and the civil rights movement (justice) and pointing out that they were mutually reinforcing efforts (Mazie, 2014). It has also been used as a conditional statement, demand, or threat (depending on one's point of view); if you don't give us justice, we won't give you peace (Zimmer, 2013).

Individuals connected to the ruling local Conservative Party in Croydon warned research participant 05, a campaigner for official victims, about inviting Carole Duggan, saying it might spark another riot. However, the event went ahead as planned, with Carole Duggan on the panel, and was a successful evening. Local councillors and MPs said they would attend. Labour leader, Ed Miliband, sent his apologies. The venue was half-full, some Labour councillors and MPs attended and there was a lively debate after the screening. However, despite booking places, no Conservative Party councillors or MPs came. This took the apparent narrative of 'we don't talk about the riots in Croydon' to another level. Research participant 05 has continued to support UK Fully Focused and to talk about the riots in public life.

UK Fully Focused have gone from this first virtually no-budget film to make numerous other films. They have also run accredited training, workshops and mentoring for other projects, including CentrePoint[23] and Youth Parliament[24], and worked with groups like Release[25] and StopWatch[26] on 'know your rights' outputs for young people. They have been featured on all national and international BBC television and radio news platforms.

The other film that formed a key part of public conversations about the riots during research fieldwork is the 60-minute *Riots Reframed* (RR) by research participant 17, a young man wrongfully arrested in the riots. Despite his case finally going to court and being dismissed within 30 minutes, he went to several prisons on remand and spent six months on tag awaiting trial. It was during this time on tag that he made his film.

The film *Riots Reframed* is a similar 'talking heads' format to RfW, juxtaposed with statistics and word pieces, however it is much more explicit in its anti-establishment and anti-imperialist narrative. In deliberate symbolism, the film maker launched the film at a community venue close to where he was wrongfully arrested. Like RfW, he took the film on tour to community and educational venues across the country and

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[23] https://centrepoint.org.uk/
[24] https://www.byc.org.uk/uk/uk-youth-parliament
[25] https://www.release.org.uk/
[26] https://www.stop-watch.org/

internationally before releasing it on DVD. He was clear about why he chose this way of putting his film into a public arena:

> Part of the strategy of running the film out [to community venues and using it as a vehicle for public conversations] is to control the politics … for me to be there to curate the panel along with the organisers … (Research participant 17)

Research participant 17 grew up on a Hackney estate (scene of 2011 riot) and went to Oxford University as an undergraduate. Although he could have focused on his background and/or wrongful arrest in the film, he made an active decision not to.

> Pairing academic voices with prisoners, with activists, with poets … ordinary people … I just want these people to speak … The media like to focus on the individual, "oh look, he went to prison *and* he went to Oxford" … It doesn't hurt them less [other prisoners] because they didn't go to Oxford or they're not educated … so I wanted to take away that kind of attention and refocus it on the people that don't necessarily have a voice…

The film includes interviews with UK-based international artists, Lowkey and Akala, and academic, Paul Gilroy, as well as word pieces from artists including Zena Edwards. The film is open about its politics and frames the riots in relation to colonialism and imperialism, drawing links between institutionally racist policing in the UK, deaths during police contact and the history of policing during colonialism. There is footage of a performance piece naming people who have died during police contact to the mantra, of 'how many more?'. Research participant 17 was clear in a doctoral research interview that he wanted to counter racialised state propaganda regarding riots-related issues, whilst producing his own form of propaganda.

> … resisting the media through the media, you know, through creating media in some way.

Contributors to his film and panel discussions suggest there is a message in the riots if people are listening. In a nuanced reading of riot *'looting'*, points are made in the film about the hypocrisy of media and political responses to the 2011 riots. For example, a contributor calls looting "a class act, you're taking back what you don't have." Artist and activist, Lowkey reflects on the messages people receive about the

importance of 'stuff' and how this is presented in the UK as "the height of human experience".

> … the car we can buy, the television, the swimming pool … when the opportunity presents itself to take things, why wouldn't you then? (S*aid by Lowkey in the film Riots from Wrong)* (Riots from Wrong, 2012)

The film includes use of the term 'Lut', a Hindi word used to describe colonial pillage that refers to taking goods from an enemy at a time of war. The point is made implicitly that Britain has plenty of experience of this. The next scene cuts to an anonymised man saying the riots were an opportunity for him to clear his debts. Another contributor says:

> Looting is a way of life for this society, for big business, for government, for everyone. If we want to talk about looting, we need to talk about it on scale, who is looting, why are they looting, and what is it doing to people?

A contributor describes how people can be sent to jail for looting nappies and water, yet no one is jailed when people loot whole continents – "this is the level of injustice we are dealing with".

In the film, Akala says:

> Britain wants to pretend or see itself as a force for moral good in the world, despite its current reality. Maybe if we go even a decade without bombing a country our pretence might even have a degree of credibility or without being one of largest arms manufacturers on the earth ... two years for stealing water, three years for inciting riot on Facebook – can you imagine if China did that? Or Iran?

Akala points out that it is young working-class people, especially *of colour*, not young Etonians, who have been problematised in media. Lowkey takes issue with the term 'mindless' used by PM Cameron and others to describe rioters, and with the dismissal of the riots as nothing to do with politics. In the film, Lowkey states: "No human being is mindless, we all have a mind, we all have a brain, and no-one does things for absolutely no reason…" (Riots Reframed, 2013).

The film facilitated discussions about topics including imperialism, racism, looting, prisons and the impunity of elites such as police officers perceived to shoot to kill, and bankers involved in the financial crash of 2008 who remained largely unprosecuted. The film emphasises the ferocity of attacks on police during the 2011 riots (including a police helicopter being shot at). It doesn't fetishise these acts but provokes the audience to consider why there was this ferocity against the police.

Research participant 17 expressed appreciation for the family and community support he received during a research interview, but also problematised the film screenings around who was able to still be interested in talking publicly about the riots in the years afterwards. His reflections illustrate racialised and classed power dynamics in creating networked publics and participatory culture.

His thoughts on seeking public debate about the 2011 riots several years after the events reveal a different layer of meaning to the terms 'the usual suspects' and 'we don't talk about the riots anymore'.

> … The radical white left loves it … the people who are really affected and involved aren't interested at all. They want to get away from it or they don't want to talk about it or they don't want their communities criminalised or they don't want their children being encouraged to riot or whatever it is because it affects them in a way in which isn't romantic, which isn't fun, which isn't like, "yeah, let's get together and have a screening or have an event," it's a bit more like … "this is sad for me, my son is in prison doing three years" or "this happened to my cousin" or whatever, you know.

> … the people that come are people that are interested in the riots from the resistance perspective, "oh, this was such an amazing event and people uprising and how can we get people to unite like that again?" … People tell other people, so I will meet people at screenings and like "Oh, this person who talked to you at the last screening told me about this" and it is pretty much what is called the converted, or the usual suspects.

Whilst the state framed the rioters as 'the usual suspects', implying repeat offenders and/or gang members, research participant 17 reminds us of another group of 'usual suspects'. These were people who often had white and/or middle-class

privilege to come to community venues to reflect on the meaning of the riots and/or cultural capital to facilitate a film event.

This raises questions about a post-riots discourse in 'community' venues and who has the will, access, time, and ability to engage with such events. These processes are inevitably connected to wider systems of power that are racialised, classed and gendered. Whilst grassroots organising can open potential for creativity and reach places mainstream avenues cannot, there are limits to it. The effort in seeking out a community event is on a different scale to accessing a TV or Netflix documentary on a screen at a venue of your choice. Research participant 17's reflections also illustrate that the lack of counter-narratives from party political actors and media matter in terms of their relative scope and reach compared to community events. In the latter, the 'usual suspects' may be a relatively small, privileged group. Research participant 17 also reflected that he used some of these privileged people to secure more venues.

Research participant 17's thoughts also add meaning to the notion 'we don't talk about the riots anymore' and is linked to the narrative I encountered in RtR fieldwork when I tried to reach rioters. It frames engaging with counter-narration as a relative privilege when others may feel shamed and/or criminalised by the riots and prison sentences and 'tag' were ongoing.

Interviewed about the film by the BBC and other media outlets, research participant 17 was approached by both about presenting his work or undertaking other work but at the point we were last in contact, had turned it all down, preferring to stay independent and working with peers to make new films.

The documentary films cited in this chapter live on beyond the staged events. Social media platforms outlined also provide ongoing spaces to challenge dominant narratives of youth, protest, and riot.

Discussion

To understand how the riots have been understood and represented by different constituencies, I have conflated different counter-narratives to illustrate the range of

youthful creative voices still talking about the riots several years later. As a relatively cheap accessible platform emerging circa 2010, social media provided the vehicle for some young people to set up alternative news sites and to produce creative responses like films to challenge the dominant representations of riots and rioters. Utilising Stuart Hall's work on how consent is won on the 'streets' (1978), Tyler (2013 (a)) points out that today the 'streets' include social media and spaces created by use of technologies. They can be understood as a site of resistance that has some overlap with the 'streets' and are not separate to protest or riot.

Making films about the riots is distinct from hosting social media platforms where the riots are revisited across different points in time. The two films that provided the vehicle for public conversations about the riots had overlapping but very different agendas. Similarly, the life experiences and personal politics of young film makers differ. Despite their differences, we might understand them in relation to Jenkins et al's (2009) concept of 'participatory culture', an aspect of politics where participation is significantly peer-based, interactive, and independent of elite-driven institutions.

Kahne et al (2014) articulate Jenkin's model in relation to social media's facilitation of young people's participatory politics – peer-based acts through which individuals and groups seek to exert both voice and influence on issues of public concern. They identify four core sets of practice within the digital 'mediascape': the ability to circulate, collaborate, create, and connect. In applying their model to counter-narrations of the 2011 riots, we can see that in terms of *circulation*, young people were blogging reviews of riots film events, podcasting in-depth discussions on the riots and legacies, forwarding links to riots-related artistic and creative content, and sharing details of the Mark Duggan inquest. They were circulating information, reviews and viewpoints concerning protest and riot. There was *collaboration* with peers and forging community partnerships and alliances. For example, the film *Riot from Wrong* was a collaboration of young people involved in the social enterprise, UK Fully Focused. Social media platforms cited in this chapter are collaborations between friends who have become peer colleagues. There were collaborations with local communities to host public conversations about the riots. They were *creating* new cultural outputs, like films which were burned to DVD and shared on YouTube,

and new online magazine formats, and they were *connecting* through social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter to bring the public together at community venues to talk about the riots.

These activities and outputs were also characterised by the key elements that Boyd (2014) argues are features of networked publics. Examples of durability and persistence of some of the post-riots' platforms include the social media platforms Shout Out UK and Novara Media discussed in this chapter. Both have continued to provide online content that includes remembering 2010/11 protests and riots to provide a forum for people to talk about politics in a broad sense. Visibility, involving the potential to attract audiences who can bear witness, applies to all the outputs described above. Examples include UK Fully Focused, who created the film *Riot from Wrong*. They now have 432,000 subscribers to their YouTube channel, have won awards for their work, and have attracted funding and partnerships. The spreadability of these outputs and the ease with which content can be shared is in evidence from the Twitter and Facebook presence of the different groups and individuals cited in this chapter. Film showings and public conversations were advertised and reviewed on social media. The film makers of *Riot from Wrong* and *Riots Reframed* took their films across the country and Europe and linked up with Black Lives Matter in the USA for example. However, as the film maker of *Riots Reframed* explained, this process was also layered by power dynamics relating to racialised and class privileges. Their *searchability* is in evidence in my own experience of searching for events that focused on the riots, several years after the events.

Bamberg (2004, pp.367-368) considers how we might resist grand narratives. He links the process of counter-narrating to the process of sense-making, an emergent rather than fixed process – narratives-in-interaction. He explains that these interactions provide the arena for new narratives to be created. In this casting of counter-narrative, it is not an oppositional process of countering a grand narrative, for example, but an exploratory process that happens co-creatively within interactive spaces where new cultural milieus are formed.

The processes surrounding the production of counter-narratives to the 2011 riots were interactive and there was an element of co-production, for example online platforms include paid and unpaid contributor content. The films RfW and RR presented different 'cuts' to public audiences at different stages in a production process that culminated in the releasing of the DVDs. This meant that the final cut of the DVD was produced by an iterative process following a series of public interactions. The film makers made active decisions to take the material to community venues and to elicit discussion on riots-related issues. This enabled them to 'grow' audiences, and invitations to show their films snowballed from one event to another. It also gave authenticity to their outputs since they were in touch with community members and community feedback.

Conclusion

In considering the diverse ways different constituencies responded to the 2011 riots, this chapter has elaborated on some 2011 riot counter-narratives which were produced by young people who sought to produce alternative readings of the riots for their peers.

Inspired by dominant narratives of feral youth from politicians and media, some young people used emerging social media platforms and newly available, relatively cheap technology that linked to media platforms (good quality cameras, for example). This is not to suggest that use of social media is unproblematic but, in this case, it provided interactive sites of resistance where youthful voices of dissent produced new stories about youth and the riots. Some of these platforms were instigated by 2010 student protest and/or 2011 riots alumni and were networked with others (Boyd, 2014).

Social media platforms provided the space and potential to reach young audiences to discuss issues that can be broadly interpreted as political (Kahne et al, 2014). These platforms also provided space and reach to advertise public conversations that coalesced around the two new films about the riots. These conversations provided new arenas to explore issues raised by riots and for film makers to interact with audiences before releasing a final cut on DVD. The processes surrounding the

use of social media and film in this chapter were interactive and could be viewed as examples of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2009).

In the next and final chapter, I draw conclusions across my findings, tracing the relationships between the different ways that the 2011 riots have been understood and represented by different groups.

Chapter Nine – Conclusion

Introduction

In this final chapter I begin by re-stating my research questions, aims and rationale and then consider the limitations of the research.

I outline the significance of the main findings and split this section into two parts. In the first part, I outline the relationships between government narrations of riots and rioters and social policy making and spell out the implications of dominant representations of riots and rioters. In the second part, I outline counter-narratives of the riots and the questions they pose in re-reading the riots.

After outlining my findings, I suggest how they underpin the original contribution of the thesis.

Research Questions and Aims

My research question was:

> How have the 2011 riots been represented and responded to by a range of post-riots engaged constituencies?

My aim was to understand the 2011 riots in relation to pre- and post-riots context from the perspective of official narratives about the riots and emerging counter-narratives.

I used the overlapping traditions of discourse and narrative analysis (Atkinson, 2000; Atkinson et al, 2010; Fairclough, 2013; Tamboukou and Livholts, 2015; Thomson, 2011) to follow riots debates. Tamboukou and Livholts (2015) outline how we can use 'discourse' to describe the choice of words or metaphors and 'narrative' to describe the bigger story being told. I drew on Bamberg's (2004) understanding of 'counter-narrative' as an exploratory process in interactive spaces where new cultural milieus are formed. This explanation helped me to understand, describe and analyse counter-narratives of the riots that were produced by some young people in London, represented through the mediums of film and new social media platforms.

I wanted to capture what the film makers and producers of new social media platforms were doing and saying, to show how the riots reverberated over time beyond the riot events themselves. I became interested in the contrast between government narration (including reasons for these types of narratives) and the alternatives offered by new 2011 riots representations. I sought to explore the relationships between the government narration of the riots and policy roll-out and the counter-narration found in new youth outputs. This provided a useful lens through which to re-read the 2011 riots and to consider them in relation to events like street protests and campaigns highlighting deaths during police contact. It brought some youthful counter-narratives into research discussion.

Methods deployed included semi-structured interviews, observation, and desk-based reading of secondary sources.

Research limitations

The research was exploratory, and I ended up with so much data from diverse research participants interviewed and themes raised at public events addressing the riots several years later that it was challenging to identify overall themes that I could meaningfully pursue. This choice was influenced by where clusters of interviews raised similar themes. For example, in Tottenham and Croydon both localities had similar processes of ongoing regeneration and I had research participant interviews in both areas raising these issues.

I am aware that if I was in the position of having interviewed say 12 rioters or youth workers or artists, it would have allowed a more straightforward comparative thematic analysis. The thesis offers a snapshot of *some* issues discussed in the riots' aftermath by those able and willing to discuss them publicly years after the riots, and, in the case of interviews, with an unknown researcher.

There were themes raised in interviews that I haven't been able to explore in this thesis. These include: the Duggan Inquest; ongoing campaigns for justice regarding deaths during police contact; the 'Arab Spring' uprisings that coincided with the 2010/11 protests and riots which were mentioned by some research participants; and an arts-based exploration of the use and form of mediums like documentary film

making. I focused on themes I thought I could develop in relation to each other, and which resonated with my background in social policy and social sciences.

I could have aimed to focus on one group of people after the riots, such as young people, however, this was not possible within the parameters of this thesis. I was not an insider living and working in riot-affected areas or co-located with others studying the riots, I had issues relating to access to research participants. Caring responsibilities meant my capacity to conduct fieldwork could be unpredictable. As a result, my findings are based on a mix of interviews with people I specifically targeted, interviews with people I met at events, and interviews that snowballed from there. As the research was conducted several years after the riots and was focused on those still talking about the riots in public life, I do not claim to represent the rioter's voice in this thesis. The research provides a snapshot of *some* issues raised by the riots and *some* new youth interpretations and representations of the riots.

I also acknowledge that young and older people who participated both in public conversations about the riots and in engaging with this research are likely to have a *range* of understandings and narratives of the riots. I pursued those who had clear stories to tell that often ran counter to official narratives. This is not to say by any means that all people attending public conversations about the riots or continuing to be interested in the riots several years later held this position. I have also conflated different counter-narratives to illustrate my point that they existed and had interesting things to contribute regarding an understanding of the riots. This isn't to suggest that they all had similar life experiences, opportunities, or personal politics.

This thesis is inevitably shaped by who I am and who I am perceived to be in relation to the riots which is racialised, classed, gendered and age based. Experience of working on the RtR project gave me some insider knowledge of the subject and connections, but lack of access to research data from the project impacted on the shape of the thesis during the first year. I also acknowledge some of the 'we don't want to talk about the riots' narrative I encountered was due to multiple factors, including a wariness of outsiders who wanted to talk to young people about riots that had had negative impacts on their lives, and might also have

included concerns about my motives, or a simple unwillingness to give up their time to engage with me. Any errors or misrepresentation of what I heard, and saw are mine.

Main findings and their significance

This discussion is split into two sections. I summarise main findings, reflecting on their significance, and signpost how this contributes to knowledge about the 2011 riots and riots' aftermaths in relation to (a) relationships between government narratives and policy choices, and (b) counter-narratives of riot.

Relationships between government narratives and policy choices

Paying attention to the language used by government actors, largely replicated by party opposition leaders at the time of the events and in the immediate aftermath, we can see the narration of rioters as mindless criminal 'opportunists' who looted goods and fought the police due to greed and inherent criminality. Rioters were framed as feral and without morality or political sensibility. This narrative was discursively linked to the historic social construction of an underclass, a group of undeserving poor people. At the 2010 general election, the Conservative Party presented a story of a Broken Britain which was characterised by troubled or troubling individuals, youth and families who needed Big Society solutions. In the absence of counter-narratives from other political parties, the Coalition Government was able to perpetuate this reading of the riots. It appeared the leaders of the main parties were in a discourse coalition.

As a result, the story of mindless feral youth became a dominant public narrative that shut down alternative readings of rioter motivations and riot events. Alternative narratives might have addressed: deaths during police contact; the policing of anti-austerity protests, particularly those by young people in response to cuts to youth services; the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and student tuition fees. There was little public conversation about the riots other than the initial criminal trials narrated to the public through rogue's gallery press coverage.

This dominant narrative played a part in the denial of the need for a public inquiry. Instead, the government appointed its own committee, the Riots Communities and Victims Panel (RCVP). The panel's key assumption was that lack of community resilience was a cause of the riots and resilience-building should be a key response. There are questions however about the definition of resilience. We might also question how far government actions promote resilience as communities faced so many cuts to public services. The final RCVP report contradicted government narratives and policy making in some ways, but the government ignored the findings and failed to implement many of the key recommendations. Government rhetoric before the riots and the RCVP final report uses the term 'the usual suspects', which implies rioters had previous criminal convictions and it was used to illustrate a pre-existing social malaise or crisis (particularly of the young urban poor).

The government used the narrative of feral, mindless rioters to justify pre-planned social policies like the Troubled Families Programme (TFP) and anti-gang policies, which were presented as riot responses. I approached government policy through the lens of Miller's articulation of ideographs (2012, 2019). Miller explains the use of ordinary terms in political discourse in relation to ill-defined goals, such as 'troubled citizens' or 'feral youth', is part of a search for policy consent (Miller, 2019). Ideographs function to bring associations and imagery to reflect political commitments, normalise a world view and justify policy action while marginalising other world views. Ideographs have powerful symbolic connotations that can propel policy narratives toward dominance or defeat. Eventually, a winning narrative dominates and becomes institutionalised into practice and implemented via public administration. Policy is symbiotically associated with these winning narratives. After the riots, Conservative Party politicians used a pre-riot narrative of Broken Britain to portray rioters. In this sense, the riots provided the perfect storyline to elaborate the pre-existing narrative of Britain as 'broken'.

In post-riots regeneration funding in Tottenham and Croydon, for example, there was a focus on new retail developments, despite the RCVP and many academics pointing to pressures of consumption as a factor in riots looting. We might ask what else could regeneration money have been spent on; what other types of

development could have contributed to 'post-riots' regeneration; and how might local young people have been invited to participate in the re-drawing of these places?

There were promises to support 'good citizens', the 'official' riots victims who had lost property and a sense of security in homes and workplaces, but in practice there was a lack of meaningful new resources for riots communities. There was a roll-out of 'austerity politics' where public services, including youth club services and youth mental health services, were cut. In the meantime, expensive policies like the TFP delivered government services based on the notion of individual and community 'deficit'. National evaluation of the TFP failed to demonstrate value for money or why it should be favoured over other types of family services. Investigations into anti-gang policies by Amnesty International demonstrated the lack of a link between gangs and the 2011 riots and the acceleration of a racist criminalising process.

Whilst the government sought to cast the rioters as opportunists lacking in genuine grievances, an examination of counter-narratives and new representations of the riots in film and on social media platforms highlights the government's cynical opportunism. As the geographer Andrew Wallace writes about the 2011 riots 'for the state, opportunity knocked' (2014). The Coalition Government took the opportunity to frame the riots as a-historical events dislocated from structural inequalities and grievances or police powers and behaviours.

With regard to the first set of findings, the thesis contributes to our understanding of the riots and their interpretation in the following ways:

This thesis sits alongside and contributes to literature that examines policy responses to the 2011 riots and provides a focus on the TFP and post-riots anti-gang policy. It concurs with authors who dispute that these responses were a robust flexible response to the riots and conclude they were based on pre-existing plans and assumptions about a racialised young urban poor rooted in notions of an underclass.

The thesis offers ways to understand government policies like the TFP and anti-gang policies as ideographs. The lack of counter-narratives or counter policies from the main political opposition parties provides an example of a discourse coalition and demonstrates the implications of a lack of robust counter-narrative in political life.

I explored the final report of the government appointed RCVP and analysed the relationship between the panel and post-riots social policy and demonstrated what happened to the report's recommendations. I also explored the processes and findings of several local riots inquiries and considered their relationship to the national inquiry. This contributes some critique of particular aspects of RCVP processes and contributes to literature that widely condemned the RCVP as an inadequate response by government in the face of the extent of five days of riots.

The experiences of 'official victims' who lost homes or businesses and a sense of security were at the forefront in some post-riots press coverage but is largely absent in academic research, with notable exceptions such as (Doern, 2013 and 2016). My fieldwork captured the perspective of some official victims and/or people who were campaigning on their behalf.

The thesis adds ethnographic detail to literature that examines how riots and post-riots politics were experienced by research participants in Tottenham and Croydon in relation to local regeneration schemes branded as 'post-riots' responses.

This thesis aligns with perspectives that see the 2011 riots as part of a conjuncture, illustrative of neo-liberal politics in crisis. The riots were articulated by an opportunist government that stitched the riots into a pre-existing narrative of a Broken Britain and punitive policies aimed at the poor. Whilst each event has a unique history and dynamic, this thesis raises themes that might resonate with understandings of opportunistic government responses to other major events since 2010, including the Covid 19 pandemic[27].

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[27] Covid 19 refers to a global pandemic of coronavirus disease that spread to the United Kingdom in late January 2020

Counter-narratives of riot

For those paying attention, youth responses to cuts in EMA, student tuition fees, police stop and search practices, and deaths during police contact *were* being expressed in UK Hip-Hop and Grime tracks. This counters the notion the riots were mindless – they were being 'considered' in these forms. However, Grime and Hip-Hop were overlooked at the time of the 2011 riots by much of the right and left wing commentariat, which implied young people had few positive cultural forms and outlets and little interest in politics with a big or small 'p' (see Chapters Two and Four). Connections between student protesters and 2011 rioters were not made in much of the riot commentary, which focused instead on deficit characterisations of young people and their 'wanting' for free stuff (see Chapter Two).

The DIY sensibilities of Grime, combined with new and increasingly financially accessible technologies, encouraged some young people to make films and/or set up new social media platforms to address issues raised by 2010/11 protests and riots. In the case of the two documentary films discussed in Chapter Eight, their presentation at public forums provided space for riot counter-narratives and debate. Social media platforms discussed in that chapter provided and continue to provide arenas for young people to tell their own stories and to debate and contest issues relevant to them. Whilst problematic at times in terms of power relations and social capital regarding who has time and resources to host and attend public events several years after the riots, these events offer examples of participatory politics where some young people use social media to participate in and create networked publics.

Those young people who offered counter-narrations of protest and riot were not just offended by negative ageist, racialised and classed portrayals by government and media, there was also an acute awareness of narrative and material realities being connected. They understood that narrative control is linked to who controls material resources and that the stories told about protests and riots affect criminal justice responses and social policies from government. They wanted to control the stories told in the hope it would lead to material changes in opportunities for young people and people affected by riots.

Aspirations included wanting to go on to shape and form a new generation of commentators providing new narratives about young people and wider civic and political issues. Some of the young people interviewed and/or observed at public forums discussing the riots form part of a new media journalism and/or social media radical commentariat.

I return to a citation in my introduction from Gilroy who asked after the riots: 'the question is, is there any politics in this country?' This brings me to Mouffe's (2000) articulation of agonism. She stresses the importance of diversity at the ballot box and the necessity of space given for conflict and opposing views in a functioning democracy, which allows us to consider the party-political context of the 2011 riots. Those objecting to government policies like cuts to services coalescing around youth found themselves in police kettles and accused of being part of a 'feral mob' by PM Cameron in the year before the riots. Liberal Democrats who presented themselves as an alternative to Conservative 'Broken Britain' narratives at the ballot box joined forces with the Conservatives in the Coalition Government after the 2010 election and rolled out further austerity measures. Some young people went on to support Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, and/or were involved in the Grime for Corbyn Campaign after his election as Labour leader in 2015.

The involvement of some young people in networks with others present at a range of events such as protests against cuts to EMA and/or 2011 riots and/or Occupy London protests allows us to subvert the notion that there was no politics in the 2011 riots or that they were nothing but mindless opportunist acts. I do not claim all rioters were politically motivated, aware of the issues surrounding deaths of black and brown people during police contact, or interested in issues raised by student protests, but the fact that *some* were at or in networks with others who were at such events does allow us to consider what might have been going on in the 2011 riots other than mindless criminal intent.

Some young people, who felt misrepresented and silenced by dominant narratives that cast riots as a-historical events dislocated from racialised and classed structural inequalities, set out to take control of the narrative. Through production of counter-narratives, 2011 riot events continue to be reread, reimagined, and re-understood.

They provide a counter-narrative to the 'usual suspects' portrayal in dominant public discourse.

With regard to these second set of findings, the thesis contributes to our understanding of the riots and their interpretation in the following ways:

I explored the proximity of the August 2011 riots to the student protests earlier that year. The thesis draws from and contributes to literature that seeks to dissolve the distinction between protest and riot in academic work (Thörn et al, 2016).

The thesis illustrates the role of Grime and new platforms provided by some young people to explore issues raised by the 2011 riots. I demonstrate that some young people were in shared networks that link the riots with pre- and post-riot protests.

Influenced by Bassel's notion of 'political listening' (Bassel 2012, 2013, 2017), I have sought to bring riots counter-narratives produced by some young people through arts and journalism into academic discussion. As such, the thesis provides a snapshot of public conversations about the riots and explores cultural counter-narrations produced in the years after.

The thesis attempts to contribute to what Tyler (2013 (a)) calls a 'storying' of the activities of 'revolting subjects'. In considering some public responses in the riots' aftermath, the thesis illustrates some young people's participatory politics (Boyd, 2014) where social media enabled some young people to participate in and create networked publics (Jenkins et al, 2009) to counter dominant representations of feral youth.

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Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet

Research Title: England Riots 2011: A narrative interpretation

Principal Investigator: Suzanne Hyde BA (Hons) MSc s.hyde2@brighton.ac.uk [currently sh340@brighton.ac.uk]

You have been invited to take part in research about the events of early August 2011.

This information sheet gives you some background information about the research, and details about how you can contact the research team.

What is the research about?

This research aims to explore the events of August 2011, in relation to the following:

- The perspectives of a variety of 'connectors' – people who work (paid or unpaid) in affected areas and/or in representing the events of August 2011 in public life.
- Connectors memories, reflections and observations about the build-up, duration and aftermath in different localities
- Specific attention to the impact of the events of 2011 on individuals and communities beyond the riots
- Considering how these events continue to be talked about or otherwise represented or ignored in public life
- Comparing 2011 to other public disorder in the UK at other points in history e.g. Brixton, Toxteth and Broadwater Farm riots of 1980's and in other countries e.g. USA in 1960's and 1990's

What does taking part involve? The interviews will:

- Typically take between one and two hours at a mutually agreed time, and will be conducted by the researcher only.
- Be held at a public venue of your choice, likely to include either your place of work or a café or other public space
- Involve a discussion about a) personal narrative re: living and working in an affected area and b) reflections, memories and observations about the build-up, duration and impact of the riots on you, the people you work with and the wider community. Particular emphasis will be placed on reflections on the **aftermath** of the events of August 2011 to date.
- Provide an opportunity to reflect. You might find yourself remembering things you had forgotten, or seeing events or relationships in a new light. Most people find this type of interview a positive experience. However, if you a reach a point in the interview that you don't want to be, we can pause, change focus, or you can interrupt or stop the interview. You are reminded that your participation is entirely voluntary. You therefore have the right to withdraw from this study at any time, without having to give an explanation. The researcher is also entitled to stop the interview at any point if it is obvious that you are becoming too distressed.
- Be recorded so that they can be transcribed fully afterwards. All recordings will be kept on a password protected audio file and will be used by the researcher for purposes of recall. Interviews will not be played publically
- Lead to a written transcript - a copy of this transcript will be sent to you. You can delete, clarify, amend or elaborate on any point at that stage, in a dialogue with the

researcher (through an agreed medium such as email, phone conversation of further meeting).

In addition:

- For confidentiality purposes you will not be identified by your own name when your interview is transcribed and presented, unless you wish to. You can also provide a combination of 'on' and 'off record' comments.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form which will be stored in a lockable drawer.
- Interview transcripts will be stored on a password protected hard drive.
- The data will be analysed solely by the researcher.

Purpose and other features of the research

This research forms part of a doctoral thesis.

The intended impact is that it will contribute to social science understandings of the events of August 2011 and their relationship to other public disorder at other times and places.

Interview data will be presented as brief excerpts with the relevant analysis; as stated above your identity will be concealed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

In some cases, stories may be presented as vignettes or case studies within the PhD thesis and possibly in published articles. This means that some or all of your story will be presented in a summary. In this instance you will be sent a draft copy of this summary and from there it will be co-created in dialogue with you.

Aspects of the research may be published in selected academic journals and presented at public forums such as seminars, lectures or conferences. In any published material your anonymity will be maintained, unless you have indicated that you are happy to have quotes attributed to you.

When the PhD is awarded, a copy of the thesis will be available on the University of Brighton's online repository.

The research has been approved by and is accountable to University of Brighton ethics committee procedures.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

If you have any concerns about the research you can contact:

Principal Investigator:

Suzanne Hyde s.hyde2@brighton.ac.uk.

Research supervisors:

Professor Peter Squires - p.a.squires@brighton.ac.uk
Proffessor John Lea - j.lea@brighton.ac.uk

Address: School of Applied Social Science, University of Brighton, Village Way, Falmer, BN1 9PH – Telephone 01273 600900

Appendix 2: Consent Form

England Riots 2011: A narrative approach
Principal Investigator: Suzanne Hyde BA (Hons) MSc

School of Applied Social Science, University of Brighton, Village Way, Falmer, BN1 9PH

Contact: s.hyde2@brighton.ac.uk [Currently sh340@brighton.ac.uk]

I confirm that:

- I have read and understood the participant information sheet

- I understand that I have been requested to participate in an interview, which will, with my permission, be recorded for transcription by the researcher.

- The researcher will send me a copy of this transcript and I can amend it at this point if I wish to

- I understand that all data, information, and my identity will be kept confidential and held confidential in any future reports or publications of and from the study. I understand that my identity will be anonymised unless I agree otherwise.

- I understand that if I disclose information during the interview that suggests anyone is at risk of future harm, then the interviewer may have to pass this information on, so the researcher cannot be held liable for not acting to prevent possible harm. Historical acts of harm that have already occurred are not covered by this and if relevant, can be discussed.

- I acknowledge that if I wish to withdraw from the study at any time I can do so without prejudice.

- I acknowledge that the researcher reserves the right to terminate an interview if I become too distressed.

- I have been told I may ask questions about the study

- This study and procedure has been fully explained to me, to my satisfaction by the researcher. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

- I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Participants Name (print): ....
Date: ……………………

Signature of Participant: ....
Date: ……………………

Statement of researcher's responsibility: I have explained the nature, purpose, procedures, benefits, and risks of this research study. I have offered to answer any questions and fully answered such questions. I believe that the participant understands my explanation and has freely given informed consent.

Signature of Researcher:.. ………………..

Date: …………………….

Xxx

Self-responsibilisation, opportunity and neo-liberal governance

In this chapter I draw upon two types of criticism of neo-liberal governance. The first relates to a self-responsibilisation agenda evident within government responses to the riots. Secondly, I draw upon authors who critique policies connected to types of regeneration schemes taking place in localities such as Tottenham and Croydon after the riots linked to the notion of opportunism raised in Chapter Five.

Kennelly (2011) argues neo-liberalism involves a 'technology of the self' which focuses on '*responsibilisation*', where citizens must take personal responsibility to self-regulate; to reduce their claims on the state. As citizens are encouraged to take more self-responsibility for all areas of their lives, governments endeavour to take less. While the government becomes further removed from accountability, citizens are increasingly cast as good citizens only if they're responsible for themselves. However, when we examine the attention to detail (or lack of it) in the support for official victims after the riots, we might consider who is actually rewarded for 'taking responsibility'.

It is useful to consider the notion of responsibility in examining what happened to official victims of the riots and in exploring some features of post-riot regeneration. Fitzgibbon et al (2013) contrast government responses to the 2011 riots to government responses to the 1980's riots. They characterise the 2011 government response as a classic neo-liberal response where an individualistic self-responsibilisation agenda had become a key driver of social policy before the August 2011 riots. Thörn et al, 2016 argue that a self-responsibilisation agenda influenced both where blame was apportioned and government actions after the riots.

At the same time, governments such as the Coalition government responding to the riots of 2011 operated within an opportunistic framework. In articulating their understanding of riots like those in London in 2011, Thörn et al (2016) read these (and other riots in Europe around the same time) as 'anti-authority uprisings', responses to specific forms of opportunistic neo-liberal governance. This type of

governance is characterised by the privileging of real estate alongside an escalation of punitive austerity politics. Experiencing escalating levels of inequality, an increasingly racialised, low waged precariat population inhabits urban spaces. According to Thörn et al (2016), regeneration programmes and policies like the 'bedroom tax' (discussed later in the chapter) lead to a form of class cleansing and displacement. Increasingly privatised forms of infrastructure are designed in part to include a lack of clear accountability, for example for new developments in the built environment (2017, pp.68-70).

Whilst governments and politicians attempt to reduce their accountability, developers and in some cases party political donors are presented with a range of opportunities. In relation to regeneration of the built environment after the riots, Wallace (2014) calls the riots response 'opportunistic' and 'entrepreneurial boosterism'.

Next, with self-responsibilisation as a technique of neo-liberal governance in mind, I examine how some official victims of the riots and their allies experienced the post-riot recovery