

U N I V E R S I T Y   O F

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L I V E R P O O L

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# **Resistance in Space: Graffiti Writers, Skateboarders and the Production of Manchester**

by

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## **STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY**

This work has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my family - my parents, Bayo and Julie, my brother and sister, Rotimi and Debbie - for their love, support and understanding throughout the years of my PhD programme.

## Abstract

The main phenomena the thesis seeks to understand are resistance and space. The aims of the thesis are theoretical and empirical. Theoretically, the thesis examines different perspectives on resistance and space and draws on them to provide useful insights on the concepts. Empirically, it explores the experiences of skateboarders and graffiti writers in Manchester. The literature on graffiti writers and skateboarders often mentions 'resistance' in relation to the activities of the two groups. Such work, however, usually does not engage in a detailed, conceptual investigation of the concept and usually assumes rather than demonstrate how the use of the concept can be justified by reference to the day-to-day activities of the two groups (see for example Ferrell 1993, 1995, Borden 2001 and Flusty 2000). This thesis aims to fill this gap.

The first chapter provides an introduction to the thesis. The second chapter explores perspectives on resistance. As the thesis progressed empirically, it became very pertinent to conceptually investigate the subject of space and this is the focus of the third chapter. The fourth chapter discusses the methodology and research design of the thesis. The necessity of demonstrating concretely what work the theoretical insights of the space chapter could do resulted in a fifth chapter on Manchester. In this chapter, Manchester as space and as the site of the empirical investigation of this thesis is explored. The sixth chapter presents themes that emerged from fieldwork with Manchester graffiti writers and skateboarders. The conclusion chapter draws together the main themes and arguments of the thesis.

One of the main arguments of the thesis is that Manchester, the site of the empirical interests of the study, can be seen as a space over which diverse groups struggle. This struggle, it is argued, is brought about by the divergent interests and visions of different groups in the city. These groups are seen as all attempting in various ways to bring about spatial realities that accord with their interests. In this multiple enactment of spatial realities some social actors have greater resources at their disposal to bring to pass their interests in Manchester as space. These are 'the powerful'. There are other 'producers of space' - the weak or the 'less powerful' - these have relatively marginal resources in appropriating Manchester's spaces. The thesis argues that skateboarders and graffiti writers fall into this category. When their interests and visions in Manchester fall foul of the interests of more powerful groups,

conflict, the thesis shows, ensues. It is in this conflict in definitions of Manchester as a resource for the enactment of interests that we find the skateboarder's and graffiti writer's resistance. The skateboarder and graffiti writer finds that to play in the city can bring him/her in conflict with the law. Subcultural members find out in the course of playing in the city that their activities are defined differently by more powerful groups. What seems to be merely play turns out to be defined as crime and 'anti-social behaviour' by groups with the backing of the law. By insisting on engaging in what may be described as 'dissident play', members set themselves in opposition and resistance to certain aspects of the governance of space in the city. The thesis also brings to prominence theoretical insights that can be found in the literature on resistance and space and provides ways of approaching the subjects that may prove useful for future work in the areas.

# Chapter One

## Introduction

This thesis aims to engage in comprehensive theoretical and empirical investigations on the subjects of resistance and space by relating these conceptual categories to the experience of graffiti writers and skateboarders in Manchester. Previous work on resistance rarely combines detailed analysis of theoretical perspectives with comprehensive first-hand empirical investigations (see Ferrell 1993, 1995, Scott 1985 and 1990 as examples of relevant prominent work with minimal theoretical engagement with resistance as a concept; for the obverse, see the important works of Foucault 1982, and de Certeau 1984).

This is one of the gaps that this thesis tries to fill. It establishes a strong nexus between “resistance”, “space” and the activities of skateboarders and graffiti writers, these two groups having been described in many studies as engaging in resistance of some kind or the other (Ferrell 1993, 1995, Borden 2001 and Flusty 2000). While there are numerous studies, empirical and theoretical, on ‘space’ (see Quilley 1999 and Flusty 2000; and Lefebvre 1991, Martins 1982 respectively), this thesis can make important useful contributions

here, in view of a distinct paucity of work that, as it were, let 'resistance' and 'space' speak to each other conceptually and at the level of detailed empirical work.

Before expanding on the contributions of this thesis, it is helpful to set it in the context of broader contemporary socio-criminological commentaries and public debate, especially those that seek to delineate and advocate certain characteristics of contemporary urban space. After doing this, this introductory chapter highlights briefly the themes that are the subject matter of subsequent chapters.

### **Tensions, struggles, and the control of transgression in the urban realm**

Sociologists and criminologists have identified the control of criminal/deviant behaviour and difference, clashes of interests, anxiety and tensions as important elements of contemporary urban landscapes and have subjected these features to detailed analyses. The various ways in which these have been formulated by criminologists with diverse concerns are indicative of how important the changes that have taken place are considered to be. According to Garland (2000: 354) late modern societies are witnessing a 'new collective experience of crime and insecurity', and no where is this more visible

than in the city. According to another prominent criminologist, anxiety over perceived deviance and criminality as well as responses to them are manifestly visible in the contemporary city: 'crime has moved from the rare, the abnormal, the offence of the marginal and the stranger, to a commonplace part of the texture of everyday life... as well as extending its anxiety into all areas of the city' (Young 1999: 122). Zukin (1995: 27) affirms that contemporary notions of the 'democratisation of space' are coextensive with concerns over physical and personal security of citizens (Hallsworth 2005: 1-3 provides a good example of a first-hand narrative that is relevant here). Sennett (1990: 129) has also, in the same vein, averred that in New York 'there is withdrawal and fear of exposure... as though all differences are as potentially explosive as those between a drug dealer and an ordinary citizen'. According to Amin and Graham (1996: 16), 'the tensions associated with the juxtaposition of difference, perceived or real (such as the fear of crime or violence, racial intolerance, uncertainty and insecurity) often put into question the very definition and usage of the phrase "urban public space"'. Attempts have been made to describe the origins of these recurrent themes of fear, crime, angst and insecurity in the works of criminologists and sociologists of the urban.

The sources of the tension, anxiety and fear palpable in the late modern city and the modes in which they result in the denial of access to 'public' spaces are intricate. It has been argued, for example, that a dimension to such exclusion may include the lived experience of crime, which sometimes results in withdrawal from public space activities, especially as a result of sexist, racist, homophobic or ageist criminal harassment (Pain 2001). Fear and anxiety can also be as a result of the tension brought about by collision with difference, leading to a guarded attitude that restricts sociality, freedom of expression and the curtailment of the diverse opportunities that the city can offer (Bannister and Fyfe 2001).

Other putative indices of the 'new omens of urban calamity' (Baeten 2001:4) aside from fear and crime have been pinpointed. As briefly alluded to earlier, criminologists (as well as leftist commentators) have also affirmed that responses to crime in the form of crime control strategies can themselves be major threats to the hope of securing harmony and diversity in the city. New policing and crime prevention tactics like zero tolerance policing (ZTP) and closed circuit television (CCTV) surveillance have been seen as 'tightening the ratchet of social control and as the forerunner of some technologically sophisticated totalitarianism' (Young 1999: 90). In response to

advocates of these innovations who argue that great reductions in crime and fear can result from tighter controls over behaviour, critics see these new techniques and technologies as ‘attempts to purify the public sphere of disorder and difference through the spatial exclusion of those groups who are judged to be deviant, imperfect and marginal in public space’ (Toon, 2000: 141).

*Countervailing conceptions of the liberatory city?*

In contrast to leftist academic commentators and criminologists, for local governments and the police, freedom in the city presupposes a more concerted, efficient effort to stifle deviance (Fyfe 2004). The countervailing assessments of crime control and punitive technologies featured in these debates highlight the divergent inferences that are drawn on what the emancipatory potential of the city is, mirroring the disputes later described in the thesis between Manchester skateboarders and graffiti writers and actors that seek to govern their activities. While CCTV and ZTP supporters see in these innovations and techniques reductions in fear and new ways of enjoying urban life, opponents envision in these new technologies and strategies a draconian ‘criminology of intolerance’ that prioritises excluding



people 'that will disrupt the smooth running of the system' (Young 1999: 46).

For example, New York Police Department (NYPD) commissioner William Bratton, during his stay in office, infamously targeted 'drunks', 'vandals' and beggars with a policy of 'Zero Tolerance Policing'. From the perspective of the policy, targeting urban deviants would help to 'reclaim the streets for "respectable, law-abiding" people and help overcome the "culture of fear"... characteristic of late modern urban environments' (Hughes, 1998: 112).

The *raison d'être* of the state's focus on what commentators see as quality of life infractions has been that 'strong and authoritative use of coercive police powers' in relation to such breaches of the law would not only reduce fear but also preclude the occurrence of more serious crimes and disorderliness in the city spaces (Innes 1999: 398; see Wilson and Kelling 1982 for a now classic enunciation of the infamous 'broken windows thesis', which lent academic credibility to this sentiment)

It is also increasingly being recognised by many sociologists of crime that a 'triumphalist discourse' which claims that crackdowns on

public order results in crime reduction that could be grounded in concrete statistical evidence is being exported beyond the shores of its origins in large US cities (Body-Gendrot 2000: 117; see also Bratton 1997: 29). For example, even by the mid 1990s top UK politicians such as Jack Straw could confidently rely on the ‘successes’ of American-style zero tolerance policing, by promising to ‘reclaim the streets for the law abiding citizen from the aggressive begging of winos, addicts and squeegee merchants’ (quoted in Bowling 1999; 532, see Dennis and Mallon 1997 and Orr 1997 for accounts of the early impacts of the adoption of ZTP beyond US jurisdictions).

Critics of reinforced social control measures in city spaces see a destruction of the ‘ballet of the street’ and ‘benign disorder’ (McLaughlin and Muncie 2000: 130; Merrifield 2000; 484) and fear the advent of an over-militarised spatial regime (Hirst 2000: 281, Hopkins-Burke 1998, Pollard 1997: 44, Body-Gendrot 2000, Greene 1999) in the new technologies of control.

For Fyfe (2004) the new approaches to deviance and crime have important consequences, especially as it relates to ‘their implications for regulating difference and deviance in the late modern city’. A kind of ‘fortress impulse’ (ibid: 44) in the design and architecture of urban

areas has become an important agenda-setting medium in the post-industrial city's landscape, the writer argues (see also Christopherson 1994 McLaughlin and Muncie 2000 and Newburn 2001). It is an impulse of suspicion and punitiveness that increasingly aims to regulate newer categories of city users and urban activities. The targeting and policing of various minor misdemeanours as part of the effort to sanitise city streets (Coleman 1998, Silverman and Della-Giustina, 2001: 950) by the 'beer and piss patrols' (Fyfe 2004: 45) of the new ZTP spatial regime has meant that a number of actions and city users have been redefined and re-described as contributors to the supposed increase in the threatening nature of urban space. This thesis later argues that this is the context in which the activities of Manchester graffiti writers and skateboarders and the criminalisation of their demeanours must be set. Those affected by new re-descriptions and reclassifications of contemporary social control strategies have included diverse city users – 'reckless' bicyclists, skateboarders, graffiti writers, street prostitutes and boombox car drivers (Hallsworth, 2005: chapters 1 and 2, shows that these social control strategies are not entirely new. History is replete with control and surveillance borne of recurring cycles of 'moral panics' Cohen 1972).

*Gaps in the literature: what about the less powerful?*

It can be noted, however, that while many commentators and criminologists have described or critiqued the 'ravanchsim' (Smith 1996) of the contemporary city, of which the NYPD's (1994) "Reclaiming the Public Spaces of New York" is the poster child; and have debated the merits and demerits of the 'zero tolerance gospel' (Shapiro 1997; see Merrifield 2000 and Bowling 1999) there is an insufficient treatment of the responses and experiences of those whose freedoms these control strategies are meant to curtail, and it is precisely in this area that this thesis may have something of significance to address. For example, the now vast literature on CCTV and the 'surveillance revolution' (Williams et al 2000: 169, see also Coleman 1998 and Mclaughlin and Muncie 2000 as well as Norris and Armstrong 1999) delineates how new surveillance and control tactics are 'bound up with urban regeneration agendas and attempts to revive the fortunes of the entrepreneurial city' (Fyfe 2004: 49) by 'managing out inappropriate behaviour in the new territories of consumption' (McCahill, 1998: 42) but rarely touches upon how control in the city is reflected and acted upon by the targets of surveillance.

In general there has been a paucity of studies such as Toon's (2000: 163), where the stated intention:

was not to collect the accounts of police officers and CCTV monitoring staff themselves on how they police teenagers in public environments, but rather to provide an account of prohibitions and constraints on activities from the point of view of the excluded.

In Toon's important study we find an account of how young people have responded to the introduction of downtown CCTV by resorting to the 'concealed interstitial spaces within, and "invisible" routeways through, the town centre' so as to 'reappropriate space for themselves' (ibid: 154).

Cultural criminology is a field that has also made some important contributions towards investigating the point of view of those normally regarded as being on the receiving end of contemporary social control strategies. The rich ethnographic research of Jeff Ferrell (especially 1993, 1995) has been of immense importance here. As stated earlier, however, while the concepts of space and resistance are implicit in cultural criminology and other work that research the powerless there is little or no attempt to sufficiently marry detailed theoretical analysis with empirical work. This thesis, therefore, contributes to the literature theoretically, as 'resistance' and 'space' are problematised throughout. It contributes empirically by illuminating

the concepts through an examination of how skateboarders and graffiti writers struggle with more powerful interests in Manchester's space. It also makes important methodological contributions by not merely interpreting the actions of skaters and graffiti writers but also understanding how these actors interpret their own actions. This, the thesis argues, is crucial in justifying any description of social actors' actions as resistant.

The specific empirical questions the thesis aims to address are now briefly examined. The first question is whether there are there good grounds for describing skateboarders and graffiti writers as resistant groups? What is the role of space in such putative resistance? Are there distinctive features that can be identified in the groups' engagement with Manchester's spaces? How are such features relevant to the issue of resistance? An important aim also is to find out how an examination of the historical and contemporary changes in Manchester may contextualise and situate the activities of skaters and graffiti writers as well as those of those who seek to control them. Another question is whether an examination of divisions and fractures within skateboarders and graffiti writers' cultures has any relevance to the themes of resistance and space. This issue is taken up in relation to gender. Also important is exploring how this study's

unusual combination of *comprehensive* theoretical analysis and attention to the minutiae of the everyday graffiti and skateboarding life contributes to the understanding of resistance as phenomena.

Chapter Two reviews and draws together theoretical insights on resistance from various academic traditions, providing a definition of resistance that subsequent work in this area may find useful. Chapter Three evaluates theories of space, linking them among other things to resistance and more specifically to the skateboarders and graffiti writers' appropriation of space. Chapter Four, in light of the earlier theoretical chapters, sets out the methodological strategies of the thesis. Chapter Five explores the enactment of diverse visions in Manchester and how recent changes have consequences for the use of city spaces by diverse actors. Chapter Six presents the accounts of graffiti writers and skateboarders and touches on how the data examined is pertinent to earlier theoretical discussions on resistance and space. Chapter Seven concludes the thesis by synthesising the theoretical, empirical and methodological insights of the thesis.

## Chapter Two

### Perspectives on Resistance

#### Introduction

Since this thesis is concerned with the day-to-day activities of Manchester graffiti writers and skateboarders and how these may be usefully understood in relation to the theoretical notions of resistance and space, it is necessary to ask what these concepts mean. This chapter, therefore, takes the first step towards the theoretical clarifications needed for this thesis. It investigates what is meant by the concept of resistance.

Some writers have argued that resistance as a concept is vague and hard to define (Sharp et al 2000). While some writers favour social and political intent (Giroux 1983: 288) in the determination of what resistance is, other writers acknowledge it as being present in mundane social life (Scott 1985). The conceptual problems that face the analysis of writers who favour social and political intent in defining resistance are that of conclusively determining whether social actors intend to resist and the possibility that those who actually effectively resist may not be deemed to be resisting because they are not politically motivated. Writers that favour 'everyday forms of



resistance' (e.g. Scott 1985, Flusty 2000), on the other hand, have the problem of certainty as to what resistance is. This is because if the concept of resistance is too broadly defined, its usefulness as a conceptual tool may be weakened. For example, it has been argued that what an observer may call resistance may simply be explained away by another as 'teen rebellion or simply rude behaviour' (Raby 2005: 159). In view of these different positions on resistance it is necessary to engage in a concrete examination of how the concept has been deployed across different theoretical traditions. This will enable the thesis to draw on significant insights from different sources in order to provide a definition of resistance that may be of help to resistance literature.

I first examine resistance as understood by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), who take a Marxist view of the resistance of working-class youth as always trying to 'win space' from the dominant middle-class culture. This is followed by an examination of resistance from the social reaction perspective of Becker (1963). Becker sees intra-group and inter-group contradictory discourses as pivotal to conceptualising resistance. Views on resistance from a Foucauldian perspective are later examined. They tend to see the operations of power and resistance as necessarily

intertwined and only to be understood relationally. Writers within this perspective also tend to emphasise resistant actions that do not *fundamentally* challenge or seek to overthrow broad power relations. Under feminist perspectives, emphasis is placed on Foucauldian feminists who argue that resistance often masquerades as capitulation and urge caution in seeing the acceptance of subjugation in women's actions. I then examine the ways cultural criminological conceptualizations of crime, which place emphasis on how post-industrial societies produce oppositional actions, explain the concept of resistance. I also examine a number of reflections by thinkers across various disciplines and theoretical traditions on what connections exist between play (and the pursuit of pleasure) and resistance.

How all these perspectives have contributed towards achieving one of this thesis' aims – a theoretically informed understanding of what resistance is – is examined at the end of this chapter. The importance and salience of Foucauldian and cultural criminological perspectives in defining resistance and empirically investigating it respectively are alluded to. These perspectives are especially helpful in understanding the activities of skateboarders and graffiti writers, whose actions have been described by some writers as resistant (Ferrell 1995, Borden

2001, Flusty 2000). The works of these writers are typical of the current approach in this area, in that the concept of resistance is deployed in relation to skateboarding and graffiti without the detailed and comprehensive investigation of the notion as is the case in this thesis. A good place to start that investigation is the Marxist understanding of resistance by the Birmingham School.

### **Marxist perspectives (centre for contemporary cultural studies)**

#### *Birmingham school, style, leisure and resistance*

In the late 1950s and early 1960s the University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), led by Richard Hogarth and Stuart Hall, started developing critical approaches towards the analyses of culture<sup>1</sup>. Their focus was on the convergence of class, gender, ethnicity and culture. In their analyses, premium was placed on the role of the media in the production of culture. The school was particularly concerned with working class resistance to, or acceptance of, capitalist social relations. They explored the potential of working class youth sub-cultures to resist within a capitalist social formation.

The Birmingham School (CCCS) exemplified and derived their theory through the examination of specific youth cultures, with the Teds, the

Mods and Rudies featuring prominently. Teds, for example, the school argued, engaged in resistance in defence of the cultural extensions of the self (e.g. dress and appearance styles) and that of the group (say, sub-cultural music tastes) when there are threats or perceived threats to them (Jefferson 1975: 82, 86). Also according to Jefferson (ibid), an examination of the context from which the bootlace tie was derived (probably from American Western movies) reveals that the Ted by his smart dressing and use of middle class cultural symbols saw himself as equal to the American streetwise gambler who had a *relatively* high social status because of his ability to shun traditional working class virtues which were 'simple, rural and hardworking' (ibid). The Ted while probably setting out to emphasise separateness from middle-class discourses, by upholding counter-discourses which were urban and hedonistic was also resisting working-class mores. This highly relational view of resistance, it can be argued, is actually in dissonance with traditional top-down Marxian approaches, with firm and clear demarcations between those who dominate and those who attempt to resist.

Also, according to some CCCS scholars, resistance can involve a simultaneous acceptance and rejection of dominant discourses. Hebdige (1975: 88), for example, describes the Mod as appropriating

the values associated with middle-class smart dressing but also inverting them. Working-class youth subcultures, according to the CCCS, always involve some rejection and violation of middle class values (Murdock and McCron 1975: 193). The rejection of schooling and school values are examples of how working class youth see education as representative of middle class values. This particular form of resistance also means future opportunities of incorporating dominant discourses are cut off at an early age (Murdock and McCron 1975: 193, Willis 1977). We are, therefore, to see the establishment of certain 19<sup>th</sup> century organisations for the youth as an effort to reach these 'escapees'. Many of these organizations had as part of their purpose the penetration of the leisure of working class youth (Murdock and McCron 1975: 193). These groups which include the Boys' Brigade, the Church Lads' Brigade, the YMCA and the Baden Powell's Boy Scouts must be seen, it is argued, attempting to mobilise working class youth for capitalist and anti-socialist interests (Murdock and McCron 1975: 193).

For Willis (1977) some working class young people were deliberately troublesome, disruptive and violent at school. This is a form of resistance and it stemmed from a rejection of school and middle class values (ibid). Qualifications and certificates were not valued and were

seen as being impractical and worthless as a way of escaping working class poverty. The possibility of social mobility for everyone who tried to do well at school was regarded as suspect (ibid). This suspicion of authority and discourses associated with authority figures was not limited to the school. Having gained at least 'partial penetration' (i.e. understanding of their socio-economic situation and its relation to capitalist interests) of their circumstances, they "withheld" their inner selves from any work (usually manual) they did and merely gave "abstract labour" (i.e. they work without any enthusiasm for or internalisation of the values of contributing to the capitalist economy) to their employers (ibid: 101). Since they kept their "inner self" separate, they sought "cultural diversions" in leisure and subcultural activities.

One of Willis's central arguments is that the resistance of the 'lads' was at once an affirmation of their agency and complicity in their subjugation. 'Partial penetration' of their circumstances meant that while they realized that social mobility was probably not feasible and too utopian their focus on manual labour and street wit made it almost impossible for them to effectively resist the social structures that militated against them. Their resistance, therefore, maintained

capitalist discourses and prepared them for a life of subordination as manual labourers (ibid).

Clarke, Hall, Jefferson and Roberts (1975) see working class culture and youth culture as always trying to 'win space' from the dominant culture. Adaptive as opposed to combative tactics may be employed (ibid); so that what at first may be termed acquiescence may only be an adaptive tactic. For example, dominant discourses upholding law and order may be accepted at an abstract level but rejected at the practical everyday level such as in the encouragement of hostile attitudes towards the police. Also, while there may be no overt attempt to abolish property relations, working class people still held very strong opinions against property interests (Clarke et al 1975: 42). Social and cultural exchanges such as disco clubbing and Saturday football matches also formed part of the resistive reaction of the working class youth. These activities fostered a group identity involving the appropriation of material and stylistic artefacts which marked out the coping mechanisms of a subordinate group (Clarke et al 1975: 47).

Clarke et al (1975: 48) emphasise the point that sub-cultural responses as resistance do not solve concrete problems. They do not remove

actual social problems faced by the subordinate but merely represent an 'imaginary relation' which may deny or help to cope with unequal social relations. For example, the Teddy Boys' adoption of middle class dress styles bridged the gap between the mostly manual and unskilled lifestyle of weekdays and the elaborate attempt at middle-class sartorial styles of the weekend. The 'Mods' in their own case coped by the 'fetishisation of consumption and style in itself' (ibid: 48). The political and economic impotence of sub-cultural resistance is a result of its almost exclusive concentration on the arena of leisure, argue Clarke et al (1975: 189). This attempt at "magical resolution" as different from addressing concrete structural problems stifled the efficaciousness of working class youth's agency. This type of ineffective resistance, the authors argue, can be contrasted to other types such as 'exclusive dealing'- whereby working class clientele have the power to withdraw patronage of services to persuade shopkeepers to do their bidding (Foster 1974, Clarke 1975: 175). A convergence of resistance in the arena of leisure as opposed to work makes sub-cultural *defusion* (the uptake of sub-cultural deviancy, styles and objects by people (usually youth) whose background, class and social circumstances do not correlate with that of the progenitors of the sub-cultural style) more likely) argue Clarke et al (1975: 190). The



Mods' emphasis on 'image' and 'style', for example, reduced their immunity to commercial and media incorporation (ibid).

*Hebdige, signification and incorporation*

Hebdige's (2002: 80) conceptualization of sub-cultural resistance emphasises the role of the dominant culture in the production of sub-cultural discourse. When sub-cultures resist, it is argued, they usually incorporate the discourse of the parent culture. In that sense, then, the production of culture is never based on completely new 'raw' material but on that which predates its existence. If this is so then sub-cultural resistance almost by definition is a partial acceptance and deployment of values and artefacts of the culture it seeks to resist because they are mere 'mutations and extensions of existing codes' (ibid: 130).

According to Hebdige sub-cultures die out or at least lose their original potency by a process of *incorporation*. This involves the appropriation of the artefacts of the resistive sub-culture (ibid: 94). This incorporation is achieved through two principal forms: the commodity form and the ideological form. The subversive qualities of Mod and Punk cultures were, for example, undermined through the appropriation of their styles by mainstream fashion industries ('commodity form incorporation'). Subculture necessarily moves in 'a

cycle of resistance and defusion' (ibid: 130) as the 'secrets' of the culture are made meaningful and transformed into not-so-exotic forms by the dominant culture. 'Ideological form incorporation' may feed on commodity form incorporation by emphasising the sameness of the resistive and dominant cultures. A culture whose members were previously considered 'folk devils' (Cohen 1972) may be redefined as being not so bad or simply an object of ridicule or jocularly therefore 'beyond any analysis' (Hebdige 2002: 97).

The dominant culture's attempt to come to grips with sub-cultural style may have two consequences. One, the media may try to negatively stereotype a style but actually bring its attention to those who suffer the same social plights that necessitated the creation of the cultural style. These people may conceive of the culture as something they can relate to and decide to adopt the deviant subculture (Clarke 1975: 186). Two, defusion may be a consequence of attempts to understand or incorporate a deviant culture rather than negatively stereotype it. This has the effect of weakening, dowsing and adulterating the original message and results in a process whereby 'a particular style is dislocated from the context and group which generated it, and taken up with a stress on those elements which

make it “a commercial proposition”, which is usually their novelty (Clarke 1975: 186- 188).

Hebdige’s understanding of subcultural resistance is essentially dialectic as the resistive culture itself usually engages in the “theft and transformation” of dominant cultures and values (Hebdige 2002: 104). This is usually done through the act of “bricolage” – the act of re-ordering of old discourses and artefacts to engender new ones. Symbols are twisted, hijacked and deliberately (mis)construed to subvert the original intentions and meanings of the dominant culture. For bricolage to be efficacious the signs used must already exist and have meaning for the new ensemble to be seen as a change (Clarke 1975: 177).

Style, for Hebdige and most of the CCCS, is semiotic (ibid: 126). Dress style serves to unify the sub-culture for resistance. It expresses the ideal qualities of the group. Semiotic style is reflected in the meaningful styles of appearance, language, music and rituals (Hebdige 2002: 114). While groups will as a general rule select objects and style that best convey their desired identity or their concerns there are also several exceptions (Clarke 1975: 179). Style for Hebdige is not always meaningful (Hebdige 2002: 117). The purpose of style may not always

be to reflect any oneness of predicament or experience but simply to shock or show difference: 'punks just like to be hated' (ibid: 117).

Hebdige accepts that there are problems associated with any hermeneutics of sub-cultural styles. Interpreting what style means as resistive, significant and affirmative of difference can be problematic:

The relationship between experience, expression and signification is therefore not a constant in subculture. It can form a unity which is either more or less organic, striving towards some ideal coherence, or more or less ruptural, reflecting the experience of breaks and contradictions (Hebdige 2002: 117).

The Teds and the Punks are apposite examples of this point, argues Hebdige (ibid). While the Teds' culture signifies coherence and makes itself amenable to interpretation, any signification is rendered almost impossible in the case of Punks whose culture is in a state of perpetual flux.

Before examining some of the criticisms that have been levelled at the CCCS, it is helpful to go over the main features of the approach once

more. For the Birmingham School, there are classes in positions of power –the middle and upper classes; structurally subordinate to them are the working classes. The former are essentially the wielders of power and the latter are the subaltern resisters. Working class youth culture always tries to ‘win space’ from middle class culture and values. Adaptive as opposed to combative techniques are sometimes at work i.e. working class youth may not challenge capitalism *per se* but merely cope with it. Cultural exchanges as exemplified by disco nights and Saturday football matches are resistant as coping mechanisms. Sub-cultural resistances exclusively focused on the arena of leisure will usually defeat their purposes. Style (e.g. dress, music, etc) is usually semiotic and reflective of sub-cultural plights and concerns. Sub-cultural resistance usually goes through periods of diffusion and ‘defusion’ i.e. resistive efficiency and impotence.

### *Criticisms*

Stanley Cohen (1972: xii), in the first edition of his famous work, *Folk Devil and Moral Panics*, criticised the CCCS’s tendency to decode style in terms of opposition and resistance only. Instances when style supports wider social discourses are not taken into consideration (ibid: xii). S. Cohen (ibid: xii) argues that subcultural style is sometimes ‘not reworked or reassembled’ but simply copied directly from “dominant commercial culture”. In the eagerness not to depict

youth as “manipulated dummies” the CCCS almost always sees the “historical development of style as internal to the group- with commercialisation and co-option as something which just happens afterwards” (ibid: xii). There is also the problem of choosing which interpretation of style is valid (ibid: xvii). The CCCS attempted, according to Cohen, to search “the forest of symbols without... any method”. Symbols are not what they may seem to mean at first glance but we are never told how the chosen interpretation is arrived at to the exclusion of others.

Cohen (ibid: xxvii- xxix) also accuses the CCCS of romanticism and bias in favour of subcultures:

Those same values of racism, sexism, chauvinism, compulsive masculinity and anti-intellectualism, the slightest traces of which are condemned in bourgeois culture, are treated with a deferential care, an exaggerated contextualization, when they appear in the subculture... “The so-called delinquent subculture has a few flashing and charming traits, but nothing in it is viable or imitable...”

McRobbie (1980: 37) also notes that mainstream CCCS work has laid emphasis “consistently on male youth cultural forms”. Young women’s activities are usually based in the family and are not main media themes as different from the publicly deviant and attention-seeking cultures of young men (McRobbie and Garber 1975: ibid). This “different resistance in a different cultural space” should have

been given attention in CCCS theory which tended to pander to the selective attention of the media, she argues (ibid).

There are important themes and questions that emerge from the themes that have been considered that are directly related to this thesis' specific interests. The CCCS approach has emphasised that subcultural practices and activities can be acts of resistance. It now remains to be seen how a detailed investigation of the activities of the social actors of this thesis (skateboarders and graffiti writers) ground describing any of their activities as reflective of resistance or the opposition of power. Another important theme from the discussion has been the Marxists' stress on asymmetrical power relations. The positing of dominance and asymmetry of resources towards affecting power relations between social actors goes into this thesis definition of resistance at the end of this chapter. The entanglement of resistance with leisure, which the CCCS approach sees as important can also guide this thesis towards investigating how, if at all, play/leisure is imbricated with resistance in the day-to-day activities of skateboarders and graffiti writers. This is taken up in Chapter Six.

Some of the criticisms of the Marxist approach of the Birmingham school are actually criticisms that any empirical study of resistance will have to come to grips with. Cohen's criticism that the Marxist's

have no account of why the chosen interpretation of sub-cultural activities is arrived at to the exclusion of others cannot be levelled at this thesis. This is because while the Birmingham School theorists, with a few exceptions, did not engage in first hand empirical study of supposed resisters, this thesis looks at the everyday activities of Manchester graffiti writers and skateboarders in a down-to-earth manner, as evidenced in Chapter Six. The point of this concrete engagement with their activities is to provide a basis for asserting that the social actors studied are resisting and also for the features of their resistance.

This thesis can also defend itself against criticisms such as McRobbie and Garber's (1975). This thesis empirically engages with young women's responses to power and has benefited from an examination of feminist perspectives theoretically, as evidenced later in this chapter and the Chapter Three. Although these critics place emphasis on young women's resistance in cultural spaces that are not dominated by the "cultures of young men", this thesis studies young women's resistance in precisely those spaces; as they are too often neglected in other studies. In Chapter Six female graffiti writers and skateboarders responses to the attitudes and surveillance of their male



counterparts are examined and form part of the account given of their resistance.

Even though this study can defend itself against criticisms such as these, their limitations must be recognised. McRobbie and Garber write as feminists concerned with the neglect of young women's experiences by male researchers, but a queer or race theorist will no doubt find gaps in these critics' research. The neglect or insufficient attention to sexuality or ethnicity may be a source of concern. Social scientists ought to acknowledge that social reality is complex and there is no possibility of studying every dimension to a social phenomenon at once. Criticisms, such as McRobbie and Garber's, can be justifiably levelled at a school such as CCCS or against criminologists or sociologists in general but probably not against particular studies. We can combine an acknowledgement of the importance of criticisms such as these with a realization that whatever slice of reality sociologists choose to study will be limited in some way or the other and not merely along the lines of gender or ethnicity. Having examined resistance from Marxist perspectives, in the next section I examine what may be called Becker's "labelling" approach and its relevance for understanding the concept.

## **Social reaction perspective**

Becker (1963: 81) views sub-cultural resistance as a kind of reaction. This type of resistance occurs as a reaction to the problems faced by a group of people who share a practice or propensity to engage in a particular practice. The problem arises as a result of the disjunction between the views of a group about its practices and that of the rest of society. The homosexual and the thief, Becker argues, in this sense are similar in that a substantial portion of society regards their activities as improper (ibid). A resistant culture ensues in this contest of definitions between the in-group and the out-group. In the case of deviance in isolation, a resistant culture cannot develop, argues Becker (ibid), as the people involved do not have the advantage of interaction through which a sub-culture may develop.

Subculture, according to Becker, will usually form counter-opinions to that of the rest of society or the dominant group. Stereotypes of the dominant or outside culture are gradually developed and nurtured. A strong sense of uniqueness, otherness and difference is encouraged (ibid: 89). This emphasis on the difference of the other may develop into a belief that the other is bad or evil (ibid: 90). This often stems from a fear that the out-group's culture will influence the culture of the in-group. In other words the formation of a subculture often does

not stop at the creation of *different discourses* valued just for their difference. This process often also involves the production of *counter-discourses*, deliberately antithetical to that of the out-group and valued for their oppositional attributes. The in-group may, according to Becker, engage in self-segregation and isolation to affirm this produced otherness (ibid: 96). This may mean physically distancing themselves as much as possible from the out-group (ibid: 97). While the in-group itself is a constructed category, any conjunction between this construction and more 'natural' categories such as ethnicity, class, or sex results in an almost automatic reinforcement of otherness (ibid: 98).

This process of production and counter-production of sub-cultural discourses is not always simple matter. The in-group deviant often sees himself or herself as pragmatically having to negotiate between the discourses of his or her subculture and those of the out-group (ibid: 91). These oscillations between the definitions of his or her group and those of the out-group do not *usually* represent even a partial acceptance of the definitions of the other. They merely amount to a practical tactic in furtherance of the discourses of the in-group (ibid). Otherness, difference and at times superiority are still

mentally affirmed but there is a realization of the impossibility of complete emancipation from the influences of the out-group.

Reactions and resistance to dominant discourses may differ within a subculture, thereby making it possible to have various strands of the culture (ibid: 91). There will normally be degrees of acceptance of the proper limits on the influence of the dominant culture on the subculture. A strand of a subculture may engage in capitulation to the extent that it may seem that many sub-cultural ideals are held only mentally and not in practice (ibid: 93). If this becomes pronounced there is a possibility of a schism that may produce an exchange of intra-cultural negative attitudes that would normally be reserved for the out-group.

Before relating some of the themes from Becker's understanding of the concept of resistance to this thesis' empirical interests it is important to go over some of the more cogent points that he makes. For Becker resistance is reactive and relational. While it is reactive, in-groups will usually also form discourses which may be seen as merely providing alternatives to out-group discourses rather than actively countervailing it as a reaction. Having said that, Becker insists these alternative discourses that seemingly do not challenge the out-group

are actually almost always oppositional in their intent. Self-segregation is a frequent tool in emphasising otherness – a concept which resistors find basic to their identity. Oscillations between in-group and out-group discourses must be seen *essentially* as a survival tactic rather than an inculcation of the out-group's discourse. Resistance's inherently relational nature makes possible resistive actions directed against discourses that do not have their source in out-group domination. Resistance may be directed against discourses within a sub-culture.

This last point can inform this thesis in being cautious not to treat groups relevant to its investigations as homogeneous groups that do not possess their own internal power-resistance relations. This is especially reflected in the way Chapter Six treats gender in the subcultures of skateboarding and graffiti writing. In that chapter female skateboarders and graffiti writers actively oppose certain views that male graffiti writers have of their activities. Also of importance for this thesis is Becker's argument that resistance occurs as a result of the differences between a group's views of its activities and other (usually more powerful) groups' views of the same activities. The question for the empirical aspects of this thesis is whether we can identify more powerful groups in Manchester whose views about

skateboarding and graffiti differ from those of graffiti writers and skateboarders. Chapters five and six show that city councillors, police officers, street wardens and private security guards have different interests in Manchester's spaces from those of skateboarders and graffiti writers. It is argued that this divergence of interests means these more powerful groups negatively evaluate and sanction certain activities of skateboarders and graffiti writers in Manchester's spaces, especially its city centre. Having shown the pertinence of a symbolic interactionist approach, the discussion in the next section focuses on Foucauldian perspectives on resistance. Here the works of Michel Foucault and writers relying on his theoretical outlook are examined in detail.

### **Foucauldian perspectives**

Foucault's conception of resistance is intertwined with his idea of power. It is almost impossible, therefore, to discuss Foucault and resistance without starting with how he conceives of power. This is what is first done in this section. Foucault's own positive thoughts on resistance, an emanation of his later work, are examined in greater detail later under the upcoming section that discusses how play relates to resistance. Many of the Foucauldian scholars whose works are

examined shortly have concerned themselves less with power and have focused on resistance.

Foucault conceives of *power as a force that is not coercive* (Foucault 1982: 789). It is a force that indirectly acts on the subject. It acts on the action of the subject or on actions which the subject is likely to carry out. A relationship of violence, Foucault argues, is qualitatively different from a relationship of power (Foucault 1982: 789). In a relationship of violence we see a force that closes the door on all possibilities:

Where the determining factors saturate the whole, there is no relationship of power; slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains. (In this case it is a question of physical relationship of constraint.) (ibid: 790).

A power relationship on the other hand is composed of two elements (ibid). First, the subject of power has to be a valid 'other' (one that is capable of acting with some degree of freedom) in the relationship. Second, and tied to the conception of a valid other, there must be an array of possible responses, counteractions or, to put it simply, resistances to the exercise of power.

Foucault qualifies this understanding of power by arguing that power relations do not exclude violence or conscious consent but that these

elements are not the fundamentals of power. What constitutes the basic principle of power is 'government' or control (ibid: 790). Some Foucauldian theorists have extended this notion that violence is marginal to power to resistance (Butz and Ripmeester 1999: 6). Resistance, according to some of these theorists, is not necessarily conflictive. This way of seeing resistance is expanded on later in the discussion.

Another fundamental element of Foucault's conceptualization of resistance is the proposition that *power is inescapable*. In a power relationship there 'are no spaces of primal liberty' (Foucault 1980: 142). For Foucault this does not imply a subject that is condemned to defeat because 'we can always modify its grip in determinate conditions and according to a precise strategy' (Foucault 1988: 123). Resistance is therefore interior to power.<sup>2</sup>

Foucault also conceives of *power as 'powers'*; a notion which, as with other features of his theory, also corresponds to a similar conception of resistance (Foucault 1982: 793; Muckelbauer 2000: 79). 'Power as powers' refers to Foucault's conception of power as not monolithic but diverse, decentralised and multi-faceted (Foucault 1982: 793). To understand power, therefore, we must pay attention to a specific



technology of power and study its peculiarities. This notion of the *locality of power* informs the notion of a *locality of resistance*. Since resistance is interior to power it is just as decentralised and diverse. In other words resistance is essentially *micro-resistance*:

In such struggles people criticise instances of power which are closest to them, those which exercise their action on individuals. They do not look for the 'chief enemy' but for the immediate enemy. Nor do they expect to find a solution to their problem at a future date (that is liberations, revolutions, end of class struggle). (Foucault 1982: 780)

The concept of *agonal resistance* is an attempt to ameliorate the problems created by Foucault's affirmation that power is inescapable. If power is inescapable, why resist? The answer from Foucauldian resistance theorists is that this type of question is based on a narrow conceptualisation of resistance (Thiele 1990, Butz and Ripmeester 1999). This narrow view assumes resisters always contemplate complete victory when engaging in resistance. It also assumes that resistance is always geared towards transcendental social change. Resistance is not always directed towards *completely* escaping the web of power but sometimes towards merely changing one's position on the web of power (Thiele 1990: 908). This is the aim of agonal resistance. Another aim of agonal resistance is fighting to affirm one's strength of character. It attempts to avoid being wiped off the discursive map (Butz and Ripmeester 1999: 12). So that: 'one acts not

because goals are attainable but because it is one's fate to struggle valiantly. One struggles because the uncontested life is deemed not worth living' (Thiele 1990: 916).

Agonal resistance may come in the form of 'off- kilter resistance' (Butz and Ripmeester 1999: 1). This resistance often involves a hybridization of dominant and resistant discourses. This type of resistance does not directly declare itself as resistant but subtly and surreptitiously circumvents power rather than engage in overt resistance. Agonal theorists of resistance maintain that resistance can never deliver complete deliverance from oppression for a number of reasons. First, directly oppositional resistance usually draws attention to the fact that resistance is happening and is so obvious that its neutralization is more likely (Butz and Ripmeester 1999: 2). Second, directly oppositional resistance and revolutionary resistance may not achieve the aim of extirpation of oppression, as a new state of affairs which these resistances are productive of may prove to be just as oppressive (Butz and Ripmeester 1999: 2).

Rather than have as its aim ultimate liberation from oppression, agonal resistance claims that its aim is to make future resistances

possible, to create conditions that make wider and more effective resistance a strong possibility (Butz and Ripmeester 1999: 2):

The ethicopolitical choice of a pragmatic agonal resistor therefore consists in a judgement as to what form of power most threatens (the possibility of) its continued resistance. The destabilization of its hegemony then becomes imperative (Thiele 1990: 918).

In summary, theorists who claim to be Foucauldian generally affirm the following. Power is a force that is *not, always*, coercive. For power to be power it must presuppose resistance. The fundamental principle cardinal to power is 'government' or *conduire des conduits* (the conducting of conduct). Resistance is a relational concept. Resistance at one point of the web of power may mean power at another. Power is inescapable. There are no good purposes served by attempting to completely escape power. We can only limit power's effect on our particular point of the web of power. Power must be conceived of as *powers*. The locality of powers should inform a similar notion of the locality of resistance. Resistance, to be efficacious, will often take the form of *micro-resistance*. I, later, further examine Foucault's conception of resistance in the section of this chapter that explores play's relation to resistance, linking his analyses and reflections to that of other thinkers examined in the same section who have commented on this alleged relation.

The discussion now turns to how we can relate the experiences of women to the concept of resistance. Feminist perspectives on resistance are examined, with a focus on Foucauldian and post-modern feminist perspectives, the critiques of these ways of seeing resistance that are explored, therefore, serve to help evaluate Foucauldian perspectives more generally. I, however, evaluate Foucauldian perspectives later in this chapter when I discuss the so-called macro-micro debate in resistance theory.

### **Post-modern feminist perspectives**

The subordination and resistance of women are conceptualised by feminists in diverse ways. In terms of the origin of female subordination, Marxist feminists look to the advent of capitalism and the concomitant exclusion of women from wage labour (Rubin 1975). Radical feminists simply state that patriarchy is the problem and that women have always been subjugated by the male sex in both public and private spheres (MacKinnon 1982). Socialist feminists try to establish a merger of both perspectives (Jaggar 1983). Post-modern feminists on the other hand affirm that no one feminist theory can explain the origins and features of gender inequality (Scott 1988). According to this approach presuppositions that power moves in one direction are suspect. Assumptions that there exists in society those

that have power and those that do not and that these are distinct separable groups are rejected.

On the subject of resistance feminists are just as divided (Fisher and Davies 1993: 8). The focus of this section of the review is the post-modern feminists or the so-called Foucauldian feminists. Their perspective has gained some ascendancy in feminism generally and as will be shown later a lot of the themes that they emphasise are directly related to the interests of this thesis. Power according to these feminists cannot always be seen as always repressive or prohibitive nor can resistance be reduced to revolution and revolt (Fisher and Davies 1993: 8). I return to feminist understanding of resistance and power again in a later section that links play, pleasure and resistance-power. There I place premium on Judith Butler and Luce Irigaray's works.

Davies (1993) illustrates her feminist conceptualization of resistance with the Western feminine beauty system. She argues that feminists have generally seen this as restraining and a product of the 'blinding effect' of patriarchy (Davies 1993: 24). Cosmetic surgery, for example, is regarded as the ultimate example of this subjugation but other 'evils' include 'leg waxing, eye-brow plucking, and the wearing of

girdles' (Davies 1993: 24). Cosmetic surgery has probably attained its paradigmatic status as an example of the constraining effect of beauty ideology because it involves intense pain, multiple side-effects and the danger of permanent maiming (ibid). Following Bordo's (1989) emphasis on the subtle ways women engage in resistance, however, Davies (1993: 25) paints a more nuanced and variegated picture of the complexities of conceptualising agency regarding cosmetic surgery. Rather than seeing women as 'cultural dopes' who are willing to bear serious pain in exchange for the affection of men, Davies (1993) affirms that cosmetic surgery can actually be empowering, for some women make their choices 'perhaps not freely, but at least knowledgeably' (ibid: 29). The beauty- repression nexus therefore is not always valid. Women can find cosmetic beauty gratifying, exciting and liberating (ibid: 30).

A nuanced conceptualisation of the beauty system is very apposite in reference to certain women who may find that financial and career prospects are intertwined with their feminine beauty, argues Davies (ibid). Some women may see themselves as having nothing to lose despite the possibilities of permanent deformity (ibid). This may be as a result of careful pros and cons calculation of cosmetic surgery and the alternative of remaining the same without surgery. For Davies

(ibid: 33) cosmetic surgery can be a courageous act that may be 'framed within a discourse of opposition' against family, friends, husbands and even surgeons. In short, we must be prepared to rethink our understanding of cosmetic surgery and conclude that at the very least it is a practice that encapsulates agency and subordination simultaneously. This is because women's 'decision may have been knowledgeable and rational, even as it reproduced a complex of power structures which construct the female body as inferior and in need of change' (ibid: 31).

For further illustrations of the post-modern feminist understanding of resistance masquerading as capitulation we can turn to Gordon's (1993: 130) analysis of the history of family violence in the USA. The work shows how in the nineteenth century many social workers were appalled at the attitudes of women victims of domestic violence. The women affirmed that social workers were naïve in thinking that domestic violence was evitable. This history, Gordon contends, ought to be interpreted carefully (ibid). This is in view of the fact that women's resistance and resistance talk varied with time and pragmatic possibilities. At times of economic dependence on marriage and the male gender, women generally did not inveigh against the violations of 'an absolute freedom from physical molestation' (Gordon 1993:

131) but emphasised to the social services the importance of their role as mothers and the indirect damage to the rest of society molestation was likely to produce. This was a kind of 'social needs talk' (ibid). When women's opportunities started to include substantial wage earning, freedom to remarry upon divorce and government aid to single mothers, new resistance talk emerged emphasising escape from domestic and marital violence altogether (ibid: 132). If we view women's resistance in the way she recommends, argues Gordon, the fact that pre-1930s American women were more likely to complain (to the social services) about their husbands' bad language and financial non-support as opposed to the prevalent wife beating suddenly makes sense.<sup>3</sup>

Clawson (1993), writing on the similar themes, has argued that women's opposition to subordination can exist in a tangle of acquiescence and resistance. She explores women's domination and resistance through the example of the rock band. A picture of the domination of women musicians is drawn by emphasising that the route to learning how to play instruments in a rock band is from the very start gendered. This route- 'the adolescent male peer group' is predicated on girls' absence (ibid: 239). Gender segregation, which is usually the norm at adolescence, plays a vital role in the ousting of



girls from social networks that may help start a rock career. This is because rock career aspirations almost always are dependent on the ability to recruit others into a band or to be oneself recruited. Even when extensive and intensive mixed sex socializing occurs sexual relations usually get in the way (ibid: 241). It is also not very helpful for women, says Clawson, that rock music is widely constructed as male and prohibitive of female entry (Chapter Six empirically pursues a similar line of discussion in relation to female graffiti writers and skateboarders).

Women's resistance is, however, shown by the fact that women rock band members may accept gender 'codings', such as the assumption that women ought to be vocalists and men players of instrument, but reject the devaluation of their gendered role (ibid: 252). Moreover, women may sometimes attempt to altogether violate gendered discourses of male and female roles in a rock band by playing instruments. Clawson's analyses, therefore, follow Foucault (1982) in the insistence that resistance is almost always contradictory and may contain simultaneously resistant and submissive elements and that we can never completely escape power.

Bordo (1993) has launched a trenchant criticism at Foucauldian feminism. She sees post-modern feminists (it is helpful to read Bordo as interchangeably criticising post-modern and Foucauldian feminism) as having misconstrued Foucault. The post-modern power-resistance terrain, Bordo argues, is one “without hills and valleys” and in the bid to delineate agency, control is to all intents and purposes forgotten, (1993: 305). Foucauldian feminism conceptualises power as the possession of particular people or groups; Foucault’s thesis could not, she argues, have been more diametrically opposed, Bordo contends. Foucault’s conception of power does not amount to the denial of domination, control and hegemonic ideologies (ibid). The fact that power can not be said to be resident in one person or social group does not imply a democratisation or levelling of the playing field.

Post-modern feminism, therefore, with its emphasis on the interconnections and nigh inseparability of resistance and power misses the important point that not acknowledging hegemonic power is just as stifling of the truth as not acknowledging resistance and agency, argues Bordo (1993: 306). Post-modern resistance with its eagerness to see agency in social life effaces the inequality of social positions (ibid: 300). Foucault’s concept of ‘discipline’ (Foucault

1977) which entails normalization and control are lost as social actions indicative of acceptance of control are dismissed as merely arbitrary and apolitical (Bordo 1993). Post-modern pluralism also attempts to stifle social critique by an over-celebration of difference and relativity (Bordo 1993: 302). Power is seen as relative and relational and the same way of seeing is extended to resistance. Any attempt to talk of cultural or social control of women is seen as totalising and scorned as denying agency; as this is seen as depicting women as 'cultural dopes', or 'passive dupes'. Pointing out the control of contemporary culture is seen as over-powering culture as a 'dominating monster' with 'homogenizing power' (ibid: 304). Also, Post-modern feminist resistance, instead of admitting to the fact of control, rather reifies and debases social actions at once as *jouissance*: seeing control-induced actions as just fun, excitement, fashion or even resistance (ibid: 306).

The post-modern feminist position can now be summarised and how its major themes have implications for the issues that are examined later in the thesis can now be examined. Post-modern and Foucauldian feminists argue that we must not see gender resistance against patriarchy as reducible to repression or prohibition. Opportunities for resistance are also not limited to revolution or

revolt. Women are rational pragmatic calculators. As such, women's resistance and resistance talk depict variations along the pragmatic possibilities of the era in question. Agency and subordination are ultimately imbricated. Resistance, therefore, often masquerades as capitulation. Resistance and power have a cardinal principle of compromise i.e. for power to be possible it must accept some limitations on its exercise and for resistance to be efficacious it must accept some power discourses or at least seemingly do so.

Apart from the fact that in Chapter Six this thesis later investigates the distinctiveness of the spatial experience of female graffiti writers and skateboarders and how this links with their resistance of the actions of certain male members of the subcultures, who they regard as purveyors of gendered norms of space, it is clear that feminist perspectives, with their examination of being 'the other' can serve any study of resistance well. Their emphasis on the socially constructed character of social realities such as gender roles resonate with one of the themes in Chapter Six. In that chapter Manchester skateboarders and graffiti writers insist that the spatial (social) realities that they face could be otherwise.

This thesis has also taken on board Bordo's critique. In this thesis, theoretically and in the analyses of fieldwork data, it has been borne in mind that power relations are essentially unequal social relations with social actors having unequal resources towards affecting them. (I explore this claim further in a later section of this chapter that examines connections between play, pleasure and unequal distributions of power resources.) This argument is not only applicable to the gender dimensions of the thesis. Chapter Six more broadly examines whether skateboarders and graffiti writers find themselves in a social relation with more powerful groups such as city councillors, police, street wardens and private security and whether it is in skateboarders and Manchester graffiti writers' rejection of the powerful's (city councillors, police officers and street crime wardens) social construction of space that their resistance lies. Similar themes of power and resistance in the everyday life of social actors are the focus of the next section. These themes are examined from the perspective of an emerging approach to criminology – cultural criminology.

### **Cultural criminological perspectives**

The various approaches examined so far have linked and explained resistance in relation to diverse issues such as class, inter-group

conflict and gender. Cultural criminology is distinctive in linking resistance to crime and transgression. Before examining this connection it is important to first explore what cultural criminology is and what its theoretical foundations are.

### *What is Cultural Criminology?*

Cultural criminology involves archiving, understanding and utilizing cultural or everyday modes of understanding, mindsets and perceptions in the study of crime (Ferrell 1999, Kane 2004: 303). It explores the criminalisation of culture and everyday life (Presdee 2000: 15). It presumes the epistemological significance of biographies, music, dance and other aspects of daily existence in understanding and theorising crime (ibid). As such the process of criminalisation, the process of decriminalisation, the consumption of crime<sup>4</sup>, criminal consumption<sup>5</sup>, the criminalisation of the consumption of crime<sup>6</sup>, the commodification of crime<sup>7</sup>, crimes of commodification<sup>8</sup>, the commodification of the consumption of crime<sup>9</sup> and the criminalisation of the commodification of crime<sup>10</sup> are principal among its interests (for a full discussion of these cultural criminological interests see Presdee 2000; Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008).

Katz (1988) is probably the most significant influence on cultural criminology. Katz (ibid) argued that mainstream criminology has

downplayed the influence of emotions, especially pleasure, in theorising crime. Mainstream criminology preoccupies itself with 'background forces'- psychological defectiveness and social upbringing- and neglects the 'seductions' and attractions of crime. These are the 'foreground' of criminality. For example, young people may find transgression and crime very appealing and thrilling if they involve the risk of getting caught by adults (ibid: 9). Personal competence is demonstrated and valorised in situations where apprehension for the crime/transgression is a real possibility but ingeniously eluded (ibid). Crime can be, therefore, an opportunity for 'characterising the self', for discovering 'usually hidden charismatic potential' (ibid: 73). Social and economic inequality, therefore, are not the only motivations for crime, pure pleasure is also a strong incentive: 'It is not the taste for Pizza that leads to the crime; the crime makes the Pizza tasty' (Katz 1988: 52). These themes of the 'seductions' of transgression and the pleasurable dimensions to crime as well as how they relate to the concept of resistance are explored empirically in Chapter Six in an examination of what Manchester skateboarders and graffiti writers do in the central spaces of the city.

Crime, then, mobilises a number of tropes in the seduction of the social actor<sup>11</sup> (ibid: 66). One such metaphor is that of sexual

intercourse. The commission of crime can have resonances with sex for the transgressor as the planning, commission and escape that crime involves bear resemblances to lust, foreplay, sexual gratification and orgasm:

The sexual reference of shoplifting by young amateurs is doubly illicit. Not only is the young shoplifter projecting into a criminal project an experience prohibited at her age, but the form of sex is illicit. The sneaky property criminal is not participating in a consensual act; the pleasure is distinctly asymmetrical. Colloquially, the thief and the vandal fuck their victims (ibid: 72).

For many cultural criminologists, the question, then, is: how does crime acquire its allure, its seductions? What forces in society bring about the seduction that is crime? Has society changed in ways that make crime more seductive, make criminals irresistibly and compulsively 'fuck their victims' (ibid)? It is in answering these questions that cultural criminologists link crime with the concept of resistance.

### *Cultural criminology and the concept of resistance*

Cultural criminology does not have a manifest perspective on resistance and its practitioners only mention the concept tangentially. Presdee (2000: 18), for example, briefly makes an undeveloped distinction between 'transgressive crime' and 'resistant crime':



Transgressive crime stands separately from resistant crime in that transgression is an act that breaks through boundaries in order to shock and stand outside of the existing rules, regulations and rhythms of the social world. To resist is both to challenge yet change from within the existing boundaries.

If one rummages through cultural criminology's rich and enlivening literature, however, one can find resistance perspectives that are as useful as those perspectives that explicitly deal with the concept. However, an understanding of cultural criminology's theoretical influences can help to contextualise its approach to resistance.

In answer to the questions raised from their reading of Katz (1988), some cultural criminologists contend that an over-rationalised late modernity, where the routine of work and everyday life ban the outburst of emotions invites resistance in the form of criminal and transgressive cultures (O'Malley and Mugford 1994: 199, Hayward 2004: 157, Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008). The 'late modern subject' is faced with the crisis of forming an identity and engaging in 'self-actualisation', as capitalism homogenises social life (Hayward 2004: 154). Certain crimes and transgressions represent a resistance, a retaliation against the 'the ontological insecurity and diminishing identity' of contemporary times. 'Self-actualisation' is sought by engaging in proscribed, destructive and marginalised activities (ibid). In support, Presdee (2000: 158) contends that:

In a powerless world, crime creates power for the individual to express their individuality. The very aesthetics of crime resides in its irrationality. This is the art in crime and in turn creates crime's seductive nature.

Hayward argues that over-control and 'hyper-banalisation' of contemporary times are responsible for increased risk-taking (2004: 163). People react to the 'culture of control'<sup>12</sup> by using crime to establish a modicum of control over their lives (Hayward 2004: 163). They seek to experience a 'controlled sense of loss of control' through voluntary risk-taking (ibid). This type of 'edgework' (Lyng 1990) is a medium of resistance of control (Hayward 2004: 164). The 'pursuit of pleasure', made an obligation because of the 'collective boredom' (Ferrell 2004: 287) that modern capitalism engenders, is in itself 'potentially antagonistic to the state' (Presdee 2000: 29). The state responds by cracking down on pleasure and this only provokes emotions of pleasure in the resistance of the crack-down and the sequence continues *ad infinitum* (Hayward 2004: 167). These oscillations between criminalisation and reactive pleasurable transgression in the context of Manchester and its graffiti writers and skateboarders are explored in Chapters Five and Six. The coercion of the law and other modes of rationalising the 'post-modern subject' are necessarily flawed and iatrogenic, as the cure is complicit in the sickness sought to be treated; the higher the risks, obstacles and

repercussions of crime the greater the seduction. Punishment and the threat of punishment contribute to the likelihood of the commission of crime:

And so we fall into a trap. Because we ignore the sensuality of crime, we believe that law and order politics can lower crime. We oppose the interactionism of crime with the claims of rational deterrence. But how can adding to the thrill of crime - since the games take on an even greater risk (and an even greater buzz of adrenaline) - reduce crime? We turn from the shady study of crime to study the offender but do not study him in his interaction (Morrison 1995: 378).

'Moral panics'<sup>13</sup>, therefore, merely increase the seduction of criminality. Youth culture is forced by the conditions of late modernity to enjoy crime and enjoy being criminalised (Presdee 2000: 114). The market, the bastion of capitalism, seeks to incorporate resistance (especially youth resistance) into its operations (Hayward 2004: 169). Parallels can be seen here with CCCS' notions of incorporation. Since youth resistance is often expressed in the form of crime and transgression, this incorporation represents a commodification of crime. Images of crime sell products faster as the post-modern subject relishes the consumption of crime and the commodification of its consumption (Hayward 2004: 169). Irrespective of class the post-modern youth is seduced by crime as we are all exposed to the over-rationalisation and 'hyper-banalisation' of everyday living (Hayward 2004: 175).

Consumer culture encourages transgression as it encourages 'perpetual dissatisfaction and a longing for the new', especially among young people who are bombarded with advertising (Hayward 2004: 175). New commodities and new experiences are sought and this leads to the enjoyment of uncontrolled and illicit experiences - 'joyriding, football hooliganism, drug use, mugging and gang membership' (Hayward 2004: 175). These activities are representative of the resistance of the ennui and nihilism that capitalism instigates through its routines and scientific rationalism. The recipe for resistance as transgression is completed by the *flâneur* that consumerism transforms the post-modern subject into. The discussion now turns to how the metaphor of carnival has been used within cultural criminology to explore the connection between transgressive activity and resistance both historically and in terms of contemporary concerns.

#### *Cultural criminology, resistance and the carnivalesque*

Drawing on Bakhtin (1941) (I discuss Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque in detail in the next section), Presdee (2000) has used 'carnival' as an analytic tool for understanding crime in 'late modernity'. Carnival signified 'indulgence, hedonism and transgression from the norm' (Presdee 2000: 35). It was a time of

celebration, sex, ritual and mockery and the Church (before the Middle Ages) sought to control it (ibid: 36). Conceived of as countervailing and disruptive of the order and ethos of the Church, it was tolerated as a time of irrationality and senselessness to be monitored and regulated (ibid: 35). Carnival represented a 'complex cultural negotiation' between the Church and the people, the Church seeking the complete proliferation of Christian values and the people contending with the complete regulation of their lives (ibid: 36). The intention of the Church was to outlaw carnival but it finally realised the popularity of the festivities and sought to merely control it. By the Middle Ages the Church had incorporated some of the less excessive traditions and rituals of carnival into its own calendar and procedures (ibid: 36). Here again echoes of the Birmingham School theme of the incorporation of resistant actions can be detected. By being seasonal and compulsorily ending before Lent, Presdee (ibid: 41) says that it can be argued that carnival 'reaffirm[ed] the supremacy of the dominant order'. Carnival also provided only an alternative of disorder to the dominant order and somewhat reinforced its rightness (ibid). Through its focus on the pleasurable, carnival stifles any real invocation to revolution (ibid: 42). Recall that the Birmingham school's social actor also reaffirms capitalism and engages only in a 'magical resolution' of the problems of their circumstances.

The ambivalence of carnival, historically and in its contemporary instantiations, is reflected in the fact that while it may serve as a means of consolidating the asymmetry of power relations, it has and can sometimes lead to genuine revolutionary moments (ibid: 43). In these cases carnival is used as an excuse for aggression and violence against the dominant order (ibid). When carnival is resistant, by its very nature it is never expressly so:

Therefore tied up in any carnival event there may be an underlying social opposition to a hegemonic position, but in the act this argument is rarely apparent. The argument of the body is foregrounded in opposition to that of the head. Ecstasy and laughter versus rationality; Dionysian versus Apollonian... It is impossible, therefore, to see carnival as a strict dialogic opposition... (ibid: 43)

To summarise and distil Presdee's argument, carnival and many forms of criminal transgression today are quite similar. While in the Middle Ages carnival was seasonal and terminal, crime today is interminable (ibid: 48) as a result of the 'routinization' and 'bureaucritization' of everyday life (Hayward 2004: ref 175). Crime, like carnival, can be a form of resistance. It is, however, not pure; crime/transgression as resistance is an admixture of the desire to indulge and challenge. Just like carnival, transgression and crime can be incorporated into mainstream activities. The dominant powers of today, like the Church, have diverse ways of excluding the perceived excesses of crime. The market and the state, for example, seek to commodify it

and make it serve their own purposes (ibid: 47). However, 'the packaged carnival never tastes as sweet' (ibid: 54) as the *ad hoc* and spontaneous one. Many of the issues raised by Presdee's metaphor of carnival – power, resistance, incorporation of resistance and the pleasurable resistance of such incorporation in Manchester's spaces – are explored in Chapters Five and Six. Some of the criticisms of cultural criminology and how the perspective's themes relate to the issues to be discussed later in the thesis can now be examined. I examine criticisms of Bakhtin's carnival concept in the next section.

### *Criticisms*

A number of criticisms have been levelled at cultural criminology. Hall and Winlow (2007: 84) claim cultural criminology advocates an ultra-relativistic cultural micro-resistance that atomizes any propensity for genuine resistance. The kind of resistance that cultural criminologists emphasise is 'eminently domesticable' by the forces of capitalism. They also criticise the romanticism that, in their view, cultural criminology retreats into, as violent, self-destructive and morally deplorable acts being reified as resistance.

Ferrell has replied to these criticisms. It is simplistic, Ferrell (2007: 94) argues, to describe cultural criminology's resistance as 'domesticable' and no more:

Resolutely organised collectivist labour movements have been animated and in many ways organized by- the deployment of shared symbols, subversive recordings, and semiotic inversions of the existing order.

He also refers to how the emergence of graffiti in the Soviet Union was essential to the exposure of the 'totalising lies of the Soviet authorities, and ultimately... organising successful resistance to them' (ibid).

On the criticism that capitalism has the ability to incorporate symbols of cultural resistance, Ferrell claims that 'a new generation of progressive activists seems well aware... that the point is ultimately not the thing itself, not the act or the image or the style but the activism that surrounds and survives it... the husk appropriated, the seeds sprouts again' (ibid). While it is retrogressive to romanticise interpersonal violence and certain forms of criminality engendered by capitalism, Ferrell contends, certain actions of the dominated that have their origins in capitalistic domination are worthy of romanticisation and the label of 'resistance':

From the Delta blues to Russian prison poetry, from the Paris Commune to anti-capitalist street theatre, there is after all a certain romance to resistance (ibid).

To summarise, cultural criminology proffers the argument that certain crimes can be a form of resistance. Capitalism routinizes daily life and makes resistance in the form of crime inevitable. The ethos of control



in capitalist society breeds a desire to seize control through pleasure and 'edgework' (voluntary, often criminal or transgressive, risk-taking; this concept is considered further under the upcoming section on play's relation to power-resistance through the work of Stephen Lyng). Given that transgression is almost always pleasurable, the state's ethos of rationality comes into conflict with the irrationality of the pursuit of pleasure. Criminalisation ensues and is resisted through more criminal pleasure-seeking, as the proscription of transgression increases its seductions. Crime, as resistance, is ambivalent and an admixture of the pursuit of pleasure and political opposition.

Cultural criminological perspectives can serve this thesis well. Their emphasis on biographies and the day-to-day activities of social actors guides this thesis to place similar emphasis methodologically in chapter four. Cultural criminology departs from mainstream criminology's preoccupation with the structural determinants of crime and instead focuses its attention on the foreground as opposed to the background of crime – its focus is on the lived seductions and attractions of crime. This resonates with the prominence given to 'play' in Chapter Six in analysing the practices of Manchester skateboarders and graffiti writers. Also this thesis takes care to allude to the structural determinants of crime only when there is sufficient

evidence to ground such allusion. They are not assumed. In this regard, Chapter Five explores how certain changes in the administration of the local state and in the governance of Manchester's central spaces contextualise the transgressive, often criminal, activities of the city's graffiti writers and skateboarders.

The thesis also takes cues from cultural criminology and investigates the particular metaphors that the social actors of this study use when they perceive 'crime' as having a relationship to seduction. It is the perceptions, experiences and meanings that the subjects bring to their 'play' that form the backbone of empirical investigations in Chapter Six.

This thesis is unaffected by Hall and Winlow's (2007) challenge to cultural criminology because while it draws on insights from cultural criminology there are important differences in its approach. Cultural criminologists typically run together descriptions and celebrations of the resistance they study. This is in contrast to this thesis' *primary* concern with correctly ascertaining the occurrence of resistance as a phenomenon and finding out what its features are. As discussed in the conclusion, chapter there is much to be said for an approach to resistance which does not conflate *description* with *prescription*. In the

next section I consider a number of authors who have written in a significant way about power and resistance's relation to play and pleasure, a theme we have already examined to some extent in the discussion so far.

### **Pleasure, play and power-resistance**

This section examines how power and resistance have been conceptualised in relation to pleasure and or play by various theorists. What insights their theories afford this thesis' attempt to understand the practices of skateboarders and graffiti writers are indicated, connections with themes that have been central to this chapter flagged. I first examine Bataille's conception and celebration of play and pleasure as that which run counter to utility, teleology, sense and reason. Transgressive eroticism and his notion of "sovereignty" help to address how play can be a form of opposition to dominant conceptions of productive or meaningful life. In Bataille we find that meaning and meaningfulness are derided and dismissed in the process of resistance. Bakhtin's work in this section also provides a way of conceiving of the relationship between play and the critique of power. His reading of Rabelais' work shows how the carnival atmosphere of the medieval period meant more than mere feasting, wining and festivities. Humour, laughter, pleasure and play during this period

were bound up with social order and its challenge. Lyng's work, as examined here, is focused on explaining the phenomenon of voluntary risk taking. His attempt at explanation makes him confront how actors, according to his analysis, playfully resist the rationalization that pervades modern societies. Through "edgework" (volitional risk taking) actors free themselves from the "iron cage" of "formal rationality" in order to enchant a world rendered devoid of the transcendent, the surreal and the magical, he argues. Butler's insights shed light on how activities such as drag and cross-dressing, sometimes regarded as playful and no more, can provide us with a way of understanding the operations of power in relation to gender. We often take these activities to be dramaturgical in the sense that they are imitative or illusory in contrast to the reality of gender. Butler offers her theory of performativity as a corrective – gender itself is dramaturgical through and through, all the way down. Although cautioning us not to assume that drag can be a paradigm for contesting power, her unmasking of gender as a fabrication, argues Butler, can help us resist violent operations of power that suppress deviant forms of sexuality and non-standard gender lives (Butler 2004). Irigaray's contribution to the themes with which this section is concerned is also in the form of critique. Sex and sexuality are more than playfulness and pleasure; they are bound up with power, she

argues. Masculine conceptions of sexuality predominate and emasculate woman and her sexual expression. The control of the female subject goes beyond the mere regulation of her sexual experience; it percolates into her conception of her subjectivity. It is clear that Irigaray sees her work as unmasking the workings of power in the arena of sex, thereby providing us with the opportunity to resist. It is, however, Foucault's contribution to this discussion that, here, has the last word on resistance. Going beyond the emphasis prominent in his early work on such themes as discipline, punishment and power, Foucault conceives of resistance in the self-creative capacities that play, pleasure and sexuality provide us. Provided we are willing to critically think about how we have been forged through the prevailing mechanisms of our society, we are able to go past the dictates of such powers to carve out spaces of freedom and self-invention. We do not escape power completely but we free our subjectivity from being a crude expression of our era. That these writers' commentaries on play are relevant in theoretically interpreting the practice of graffiti and skateboarding will be made clear as each thinker's contribution is examined in more detail.

*Bataille, resistant play and anti-reason*

The shocking, the unusually excessive, the revolting and that which contravenes the usual patterns of thought and emotion are what Bataille is interested in. He is fascinated by modes of thought and being that go beyond and exist without the supposed limits of reasonable philosophical, political and social frameworks. Not only does Bataille himself refuse to predicate his work on any type of usefulness, responsibility, productivity or the conveying of any sense, it is his aim to evoke in us a taste for the objects of his fascination – the edges and extremes of disgust, pain and laughter. As he says:

What the hearty laugh screens us from, what fetches up the bawdy jest, is the identity that exists in the utmost in pleasure and the utmost in pain: the identity between being and non-being, between the living and the death-stricken being, between the knowledge which brings one before this dazzling realization and definitive, concluding darkness ... our laughter here is absolute, going far beyond scorning ridicule of something which may perhaps be repugnant, but disgust for which digs deep under our skin ... the sight of blood, the odour of vomit, which arouse in us the dread of death, sometimes introduce us into a nauseous state which hurts more cruelly than pain (Bataille 1997: 225).

Bataille's writing also aims to dissolve any notion of meaning or texts signifying something. As Jean-Luc Nancy argues:

what matters, what thinks (at the very limits of thought if necessary) is what does not lend itself wholly to a univocal meaning and throws it off balance. Bataille never stops exposing this. Alongside all the themes he deals with, through all the questions and debates, 'Bataille' is *nothing but* a protest

against the signification of his own discourse. If he is to be read, if reading rebels straightaway against the commentary which it is, and against the understanding which it ought to be, we have to read in every line the word of the play of writing *against* meaning (Nancy 1991: 62).

Bataille, therefore, wants his work to show the absence of an author, the non-existence of a being behind the text; he wants to foreground the act of writing itself, in order to, in the process, engage in “burning, consuming meaning” (Ehrmann 1971: 45).

Apart from his challenge to the supposed limits of reasonable talk/philosophy and his rejection of the importance of meaning, Bataille also attacks all forms of conventional discourses about good and evil. If there is any notion of value, it is one in which good and evil are inextricably bonded and comprehensible only through an extreme emotion such as anguish. For example, Bataille draws on Nietzsche in his *On Nietzsche* to interpret the figure of the crucified Christ, his suffering and torment. The figure not representing, for Bataille, some apex of morality or the disclosure of selflessness or scintillating goodness but “measureless expenditures of energies”, an “exuberance of forces”, an “excess” and a “violation of the integrity of human beings”: “it is thus closer to evil than good”, he says (1997: 92). In *Literature and Evil*, Bataille (1985) expands on his thoughts on good and evil. Good is tied to frameworks, rules, order and homogeneity. Evil as value on the other is inherently excessive; it

inheres in going “as far as possible” (1985: 74). Evil represents the explosion of energies without any bounds or restrictions and grants us entry into an “acephalic universe”, a headless, pointless, non-purposive universe.

Another important notion that is relevant to this discussion of Bataille’s notion of evil is his conception of community. For Bataille, the idea of community should instigate wariness as he links it with the stifling of individual and separate existence. The very strictures, the taboos, the rules, laws and codes of conduct that community throws up are the activators, the catalysts for excess, impulsiveness and evil which seek to break the shackles of order. For Bataille, evil is linked with the “whole man”, the experience of life in its totality, the explosion of life-forces in which “consciousness requires my relation to the immense, comic, playful convulsion which is that of all men” (1997: 338). While Bataille acknowledges that a project such as his is frivolous and absurd, he relishes the fact that his life and work go beyond, are in fact against, utility, teleology, sense and reason. Against all these values and projects Bataille prefers and affirms laughter, intoxication through extreme experiences, ecstasy, the otiose and the wasteful expenditure of one’s energies.



Bataille in volume II of *The Accursed Share* discusses the importance of eroticism for this anti-rationalist stance of his. Eroticism, like excess, is emergent within systems of taboo, rejection and prohibition. Eroticism and transgression are bound up with the enactment of strict rules and cultural systems that attempt to definitively define what will count as human productivity. Through coercive homogeneity, culture proscribes the enjoyment of horror, the fixation with morbidity and death, sexuality and filth. Eroticism's disregard for boundaries is manifest in the animalistic embrace of precisely those taboos that enshrine culture's normativity, thereby, as Bataille says, "leaping into the unknown, with animality as its impetus" (1997: 251). It is precisely that aspect of human existence that "community" and "culture" neglect or reject that Bataille is interested in cultivating; the world of profanity, of the exaltation of the base and the debased, of the privileging of corporeality and the flesh. A world of attraction and lust for the "inner experience" which "places us before a nauseating void":

A void in which our being is a plenum, threatened with losing its plenitude, both desiring and fearing to lose it. As if the consciousness of plenitude demanded a state of uncertainty, of suspension. As if being itself were this exploration of all possibility, always going to the extreme and always hazardous. And so, to such stubborn defiance of impossibility, to such full desire for emptiness, there is no end but the definitive emptiness of death. (1997: 257)

It is also important to understand how Bataille's opposition to and critique of capitalism fits in with other themes in his work. For Bataille expenditures that are unproductive and strictly speaking not useful in rational economic terms are against the spirit of modern capitalism, with immense symbolic monuments and charitable donations being the vestiges of systems of thought and eras preceding capitalism. Hostile towards the luxurious and the prodigal, which are elements of feudal and patrician value systems, against which bourgeois practices developed, modern societies tend to frown at unproductive activity. This is how we can, Bataille claims, understand capitalism's opposition to wastefulness, gambling, drunkenness and sexual indulgence. Capitalist modern societies have instituted a largely uniform moral economy that places premium on useful activity, duty, sobriety and hygiene, thereby subordinating all of human life to stifling rationalization. Human life, Bataille insists, is not reducible to morality, productivity and utility. The market economy favours prudent investment as against extravagant and risky ventures (1997: 174). Careful consumptive patterns are the hallmarks of bourgeois economic formations, as they focus on consumption that "is represented by the use of the minimum necessary for the conservation of life and the continuation of individuals' productive activity in a given society" instead of consumption "represented by

so-called unproductive expenditures: luxury, mourning, war, cults, the construction of sumptuary monuments, games, spectacles, arts, perverse sexual activity ... which, at least in primitive circumstances, have no end beyond themselves” (1997: 169). Capitalism, therefore, by adhering to “a reasoning that balances *accounts*”, “has only managed to develop a universal meanness”, Bataille contends.

Bataille’s concept of “sovereignty” in his socio-economic discussions denotes a consumption that stands in sharp contradistinction to ways of consuming that are subject to ends, utility or work as prescribed by a system. His use of the word “sovereignty” is distinct from usages common in politico-legal discourses. The sovereign in Bataille consumes without any form of subordination except to momentary gratification, preferring to risk ruin and even death in order to lay claim to a status beyond subjection. Unlike the labour that Bataille associates with the average worker, the sovereign consumes without work or any willingness to labour, squandering wealth without any reinvestment or “thought for tomorrow”. The sovereign boldly and indiscriminately consumes, unlike the bourgeoisie who, Bataille says, consume in a “furtive manner” (1997: 302).

One instantiation of Bataille's "sovereign" are those that have been rejected as the waste products of capitalism – beggars, criminals, indolents, outcasts and rebels of all kinds. Their marginality, their disconnectedness may, Bataille says, furnish them an animus to reject socially favoured values. Taboos and prohibitions become targets, as they let out their energies purposelessly. "Spitting on the good" (1986: 138-139), and turning their backs against morality become for these groups – the squanderer, the thief and the depraved – desirable:

... Present-day society is a huge counterfeit, where this *truth* of wealth has underhandedly slipped into *extreme poverty*. The true luxury and real potlatch of our times falls to the poverty-stricken, that is to the individual who lies down and scoffs. A genuine luxury requires a complete contempt for riches, the sombre indifference of the individual who refuses to work, and makes his life on the one hand an infinitely ruined splendour, and on the other, a silent insult to the laborious lie of the rich. Beyond a military exploitation and a religious mystification and a capitalist misappropriation, henceforth no one can rediscover the meaning of wealth, the explosiveness that it heralds, unless it is in the splendour of rags and the sombre challenge of indifference. One might say, finally, that the lie destines life's exuberance to revolt (1997: 208).

Sidestepping the question of whether Bataille's description of capitalism was ever accurate, it can certainly be asserted that the capitalism of late modernity or "post-modern capitalism" is radically different from the type Bataille described and critiqued. Jean-Joseph Goux has plausibly cast doubt on many aspects of Bataille's representation of capitalism. The spectacles of waste, luxury and

consumption that we have come to associate with capitalism certainly give the lie to Bataille's capitalism, one that obeys strict utilitarian rules and values clear moral principles. What is profane or sacred, what is useless or useful, what is superfluous or necessary, what is frivolous or serious, have all become hard to pick out in the late modern capitalist ethos. Indeed, as Goux questions: "Is it useful or superfluous to manufacture micro-wave ovens, quartz watches, video games, or collectively, to travel to the moon and Mars, to photograph Saturn's rings etc.?" (1990: 220).

I briefly examine in what follows the relevance of Bataille's work to the interests of this thesis. Bataille's approach to resistance, it may have been noticed, is not merely an analysis of how people resist but an invitation to resist the way he does. In other words, he prescribes and not merely describes. Some of the details of his prescriptions – the rejection of reason, meaning and ethics – may be thought very objectionable and this is my evaluation of these parts of his theory. I shall not, however, be considering this here as the interests of this thesis are, luckily, primarily, descriptive. I am *primarily* interested in understanding and *describing* how actors (specifically, Manchester graffiti writers and skateboarders) resist and not really examining how they ought to resist. For this reason I am free to, and do here, read

Bataille descriptively. That means I examine what insights may be afforded us if we scrutinise the practices of skateboarders and graffiti writers with Bataille at the back of our minds. I shall briefly allude to these.

Bataille's contention that what are usually described as non-productive actions can be positively evaluated, as will be later seen in this thesis, resonates with the daily activities of skateboarders and graffiti writers. Bataille contests and rejects society's negative evaluation of his own preoccupations and interests. The question can be asked whether skateboarders and graffiti writers find themselves in a similar situation as Bataille. Are there other actors who label and describe what skaters and graffiti writers do as unimportant and not productive? Do these actors merely stop at negative evaluation or do they actively seek to control and circumscribe the practices of skaters and graffiti writers? The actors I have in mind here have been alluded to already – council officers, street wardens and police officers. This is just one example of how Bataille may help us understand in a theoretically interesting way what skaters and graffiti writers do. I shall relate his conception of sovereignty and his understanding of the situation of marginal groups – “the waste products of capitalism”, among other theoretical notions of his, to their activities in greater

detail in Chapter Six. In the next section I consider Bakhtin's reading of Rabelais novels. Bakhtin's work in many ways intersects that of Bataille. He too has emphasised the importance of corporeality, laughter and abandon in his take on resistance.

*Bakhtin, the carnivalesque and laughter as resistance*

Bakhtin is fascinated by breakdowns of all kinds, by strange mixings and the dialogue between elements of life usually considered distinct and unrelated. Rabelais' work (1955) which he draws on and interprets is itself known for its opposition to the tasteful and traditionally elegant. In Rabelais we find a melting pot of learnedness and the scatological, crudities sit along self-conscious high brow literary allusions. These particular elements of Rabelais are what Bakhtin finds attractive.

Rabelais' 1530s and Bakhtin's 1930s were themselves times that reflected literary border crossings. The usual notion of text as closed and self-contained was brought under scrutiny and subjected to challenges. In Rabelais' period literary texts were influenced by styles and topics that had their origins in medical and military manuals. In Bakhtin's period newspapers became more like novels and novels started exhibiting features thought to be characteristic of pamphlets

on the political. The problematisation of texts indicated by these changes went beyond what had been considered the norms of textual propriety.

Carnival, although it no longer has such a central role in modern times, played a crucial role in the life of members of all classes in the Renaissance. During this period some cities dedicated up to three months to the festivities associated with it. It was not the amount of time devoted to carnival though that indicates its importance but the distinctive approach and perspective to the social world that it offered. First of all carnival represented a limit to the operations and power of the Roman Catholic Church. Carnivals are not fundamentally mystical or pious: "They do not command nor do they ask for anything... All these forms are systematically placed outside the church and religiosity; they belong to a completely different sphere" (1984: 7). They also depart from the official norms of the aesthetic: "The basic carnival nucleus of this culture is a purely artistic form... and does not, generally speaking, even belong to the sphere of art at all... In reality, it is life itself... shaped according to a particular pattern of play" (ibid: 7).



Carnival did not derive its form, whether this be aesthetic or pious, from the elite knowledge of specialists; unlike ritual: “Carnival is not spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everybody participates because its very idea embraces all the people... While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws... the laws of its freedom” (ibid: 7).

Carnival represented anti-ritual, it was a celebration of the marginal and the unofficial; it highlighted blindspots. It attacked hierarchies, as embodied in legal codes and theologies, respected poetry and strict class distinctions. Carnival, say Bakhtin, is no mere holiday fun. Revelling in the world’s diversity and fluidity indicates a distinctive form of life, one that existentially orients itself to heteroglossia. Dominant powers and ideologies attempt to construct society as orderly and unified and carnival threatens this (1984: 8).

For Bakhtin, carnival laughter keeps alive change. It has a connection with agricultural and seasonal changes, “to the phases of sun and moon, to the death and renewal of vegetation and to the succession of agricultural seasons. In this succession all that is new or renews... is emphasised as a positive element expressing people’s hopes of a happier future.” Such focus on fluidity and becoming is in sharp

contrast to the official approach of premium being placed on stasis. Carnival provides the people freedom from “the oppression of such gloomy categories as ‘eternal’, ‘immovable’, ‘absolute’, ‘unchangeable’ and instead are exposed to the gay and free laughing aspect of the world, with its unfinished and open character, with the joy of change and renewal” (1984: 81,83) The feast of carnival represents a “temporary transfer to the utopian world”. It is not mere consumption but rather “a primary indestructible element of human civilisation; it may become sterile and even degenerate but cannot vanish” because it is, reminiscent of Bataille, “a liberation from all that is utilitarian, practical.”

People experience their bodies differently during carnival. They experience it as a carnivalesque body. Bakhtin’s term for a body that represents change and rejoices in sex and eating is “grotesque”. This type of body stands in contrast to the bodies that indicate stasis as represented in classical Greek marbles. The grotesque body stands for the changing, mutating, transforming, transformative flesh. It is where becoming is situated. Crucial and fundamental to this body are parts of it that:

outgro[w] its own self, transgress[s] its own limits... conceiv[e] a new second body, the bowels and the phallus... Next to the bowels and the genital organs is the mouth through which enters the world to be swallowed up... All these convexities

and orifices have a common characteristic; it is with them that the borders between one's own and other bodies and between the body and the world are breached... the grotesque image ignores the closed, smooth and impenetrable surface of the body and retains only its excrescences (sprouts, buds) and orifices, only that which leads beyond the body's limited space or into the body's depths (Bakhtin 1984: 317-318).

Just as Carnival as a whole represents intertextuality of scripts, genres, ideologies; official and unofficial, high and low, elite and common; so also does the grotesque body. The carnivalesque body foregrounds the intertextuality of nature. At the level of biology the grotesque body is a form of radical mixing.

Carnival and the grotesque attack certainty because of the premium they place on the relative and contradictory dimension to all classifications. This is why the mask is important to carnival. The mask of carnival being the aspect of Janus: "Its official, ecclesiastical face was turned to the past and sanctioned the existing order, but the face of the people of the marketplace turned to the future and laughed, conscious it was attending the funeral of the past and the present" (ibid: 81) The mask, which is the "most complex theme of folk culture ... is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with joyful relativity and the happy negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity to one's own self. The mask is related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries"

(ibid: 39-40). The mask emphasises contradiction, ambiguity and process as opposed to singularity, stasis and completion.

The official culture belonged to the Roman Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire while folk culture belonged to the people in the marketplace and carnival. Folk culture did not merely oppose official culture in the sense of attacking establishment figures and traditional notions and views in the sense of a critique of the stifling life-sapping boredom of the officialdom. Carnival and folk humour stands for fun-filled obstinacy, the common people almost automatically assume the role of the defenders of liberty. The uniqueness of carnival laughter is its “indissoluble and essential relation to freedom”. The seriousness found in class-genteel culture and the “monolithic seriousness of the Christian cult and worldview” sits well with suppression of freedom, “power, repression and authority never speak in the language of laughter” (ibid: 265).

Carnival laughter on the other hand “builds its own world in opposition to the official world, its own church versus the official church, its own state versus the official state” (ibid: 88). In the Middle Ages, high culture, as embodied in the church and its doctrines embodied a “vertical world” (ibid: 401-403). There was a fixed order

of social and political worth, and of philosophical and ethical value. The church had a drive to order, categorise and conceptualise everything. Carnival attitude, however, opposed this kind of epistemological obsession. It undermined absolutist conceptions at every level, promoting instead a joyful relativity.

A basic ingredient of carnival, insists Bakhtin, is the “free intermingling bodies”, the shameless dramatic showing off of bodily processes. Copulation, the expulsion of excrement, childbirth’s labour and the dissolution of the boundaries between the body and the outside world through free ingestion and expulsion of food are the examples Bakhtin points to. Official culture sees these bodily functions and processes as disgraceful and embarrassing and tries to control the bodies, holes, orifices and protrusions. It therefore tries to control the acts that rejoice in the body and life. The body according to this logic ought to be an “unresponsive surface [and] a flat plane...” (ibid: 347)

How could Bakhtin’s celebration of carnival be assessed? A strategy would be to critique the accuracy of his reading of Rabelais. A different strategy would be to ask if carnival did have or could have the freeing and liberating consequences which Bakhtin exuberantly asserts that it does. This is largely a historico-empirical question and

one recurring theme from historical critiques of Bakhtin is that his view of carnival as an anti-authoritarian instrument that was and could be mobilised against Church and State is too simplistic – it was in fact part and parcel of official culture. The evidence, unavailable to Bakhtin, amassed by historians on early modern European life generally counts heavily against Bakhtin’s thesis (White 1987, Burke 1978 and Davis 1975). It has been shown, for example, that carnivalesque cultural forms could not in any way be simply regarded as belonging to the people. These festive forms were the cultural property of all ranks of European society before the seventeenth century. The literate portion of the population participated in popular forms such as carnival no less than the illiterate. What distinguished them from the “illiterate masses” was their engagement with a second culture – learned and elite cultural forms. Peter Burke (1978) argues that the early modern period witnessed the elite’s gradual disengagement from popular forms of culture. In Rabelais’ sixteenth century Europe, however, widespread elite participation is beyond doubt. The plays, songs and farces performed during carnival originated from the pens of well-known powerful members of the elite (ibid). These historical facts undermine Bakhtin’s thesis, if by this is meant that carnival was a simple expression of the common folk’s resentment of power.

Carnival atmosphere also helped to bolster hierarchy and strengthen conservative in-and-out boundary making. This makes it problematic to see carnival as always a progressive force that always works to dissolve hierarchical and boundary-making norms. The Roman carnival, for example, degraded Jews, forcing them to participate in humiliating races through the streets. *Charivari*, a carnivalesque form, also functioned to remind people of communal norms about sex. Its degradations involved loud mocking songs outside individuals' houses and forcing them to sit on donkeys backwards (Dentith 1995). The inversion here did not really turn the world upside down, *a la* Bakhtin, it rather punished individuals who, in their own little ways, through their actions threatened to turn it upside down. *Charivari's* hapless victims included husbands who allowed their wives to beat them and widows and widowers who married younger partners. These were people that had to be reminded of how the norms stood, that had to have instilled in them the sense of rightness of norms that kept the world the right way up.

Bakhtin's contention that laughter "does not build stakes" is also in some sense negated by evidence on sixteenth-century France and its religious struggles. Carnavalesque activities accompanied humiliations,

violence and massacre that Protestants and Catholics unleashed on each other (Davis 1975). Indeed as Dentith (1995: 75) says:

Carnival may not be the source of ... violence, but its forms certainly accompanied it; laughter may not build stakes, but those sent to the stakes sometimes went with laughter ringing in their ears.

It is interesting to note a well-documented instance in which carnival became the focus of social struggles in the medieval period. This was the carnival at Romans in France in 1580 (Laudrie 1980). The situation involved intense class conflict in which both sides to the fight sought to use carnival forms for their own social agendas. The nobility took the occasion of carnival to reduce the partial gains of the popular side to the conflict by killing their leader while he was still in his bear gear. Apart from the fact that it seems the authorities made the most successful use of carnival, carnival forms were clearly in this case available to both sides to the conflict. Carnival could and was easily used as a means to symbolically express deeply-seated social and political animosities (Laudrie 1980). Games, competitions, feasts and processions were deployed differently by people with different social and political allegiances:

The carnival at Romans, therefore, suggests not therefore that the carnivalesque has one univocal social or political meaning, but that it provides a malleable space, in which activities and symbols can be inflected in different directions (Dentith 1995: 75; see also Stallybrass and White 1986).



Another way to read Bakhtin might be to say his version of utopianism does not see carnival as really futuristically oriented (see Dentith 1995). It does not hope for some future socialist utopia. Carnival would, according to this problematic but not altogether implausible reading, represent “a second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality and abundance” (Bakhtin 1984: 9). That carnival offers escape from “all that is humdrum and universally accepted” (Bakhtin 1984: 34) would be liberation enough, liberating people “not only from external censorship but first of all from the great interior censor” (Bakhtin 1984: 94). Even with this reading, with a different set of “goods” being claimed on behalf of carnival the verdict in each case has to rest on rigorous empirical work and not theoretical fiat. This is a main contention of this thesis, as I argue in the methodological chapter and also later in this chapter.

Relating Bakhtin’s theory to the empirical interests of this thesis, one might ask the following questions. Does skateboarding/graffiti have “one univocal social or political meaning”? If so, what might this be? If not, what implications does this have? Is skateboarding/graffiti inherently progressive/resistant? Is play inherently resistant? Are there instances when skateboarding/graffiti functions to reinforce

(gender) norms, in view of the presence of female participants in the sports? The negotiation of legal and illegal spaces is what skaters and graffiti writers have to do on an everyday basis, does Bakhtin provide us a way of seeing this activity as a form of boundary transgression, a mixing, a permeation, a kind of spatial intertextuality?

### *Lyng, play and edgework*

According to Lyng (2005), the way to explain the phenomenon of voluntary risk-taking and the sense of commonality and kinship among groups “separated by divisions of age, gender, class, race, occupation and intellectual temperament” is through the “psychic influences traceable to social and cultural forces deeply imbedded in the modern way of life” (2005: 4). Lyng, in his 1990 seminal “Edgework: a Social Psychological Analysis of Voluntary Risk Taking”, went beyond previous studies of risk taking activities by conceptualising risk taking as “a form of boundary negotiation – the exploration of ‘edges’, as it were.” Lyng’s notion of “edges” is quite variegated. It included the negotiation of boundaries as disparate as: “sanity and insanity”, “consciousness and unconsciousness” and what Lyng considers as “the most important one” – “the line separating life and death” (2005: 4). Edgework perspective drew on insights from a meagre heritage of studies on voluntary risk taking. Samuel

Klausner's *Why Man Takes Chances* (1968) was an edited volume that looked at the subject from a number of disciplinary standpoints. Goffman's essay (1967) *Where the Action is* had also noticed the growing significance of voluntary risk taking action in modern societies. Mitchell (1983) also studied a number of specific high-risk activities.

While Lyng considers it an important feature of his edgework approach of understanding voluntary risk taking the fact that it affords a "distinctively *sociological* way of making sense of" (2005: 5, emphasis is Lyng's) the practices in question, he nevertheless insists that when we ask ourselves why people are drawn to risking their lives in the absence of material rewards for doing so the answer is "the intensely seductive character of the experience itself" (2005: 5). His phenomenological methodological approach (Lyng 1986, 1990) yielded findings that showed that: "Those who venture close to the edge are attracted by embodied pleasures of such high intensities that they often have addictive consequences" (2005: 18). As he says, the challenge to the sociologist is to explain why risk taking is so seductive in contemporary social life. The edgework perspective therefore connects the lived immediate experience of risk taking to macro and structural forces.

Lyng (1990) sought to come to grips with this sociological challenge by treating edgework as a reaction to modern social life's overdetermining constraints. According to Lyng's initial study actors try to transcend institutional constraints through high-risk leisure and precarious occupations. Synthesising Marxian and Meadian ideas that bring to view the relationship between spontaneous and constrained social action, Lyng argues that edgework must be understood as intertwined with institutional factors, in that it is these that engender Marxian "alienation" and Meadian "oversocialization". Alienation and oversocialization are dealt with by actors through the acquisition of skills and the intense experiences of "self-determination and control" (2005: 5) that edgework affords.

Lyng's (2005: 21) analysis, apart from its Marx-Mead component also includes Weberian elements. Weber's insistence, for example, that an important feature of modernity is the expansion of formal rationality into every aspect of social life. Weber was interested in how the ubiquitous nature of rationality as a guiding principle in modern societies influenced the subjective experiences of modern-day actors, hence his concept of "disenchantment". This refers to the steady attrition of meaning that is caused by rationalization. The

enchantment immanent in the mystical and religious experiences of members of traditional societies and in their close contact with nature is contrasted with the “iron cage” of rationality and bureaucracy of modern societies.

No one knows for sure who will live in this cage in the future or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of ideas and ideals, or, if nether, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. For of this last stage of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has achieved a level of civilization never before achieved (Weber 1958: 182).

A lot of the experiences afforded by unanticipated and unplanned sensual realities are lost under the influence of the rationalisation that comes with modern social institution. Everyday life is, hence, over-regulated and highly predictable. Edgework activities produce challenges to everyday perceptions of time and space (Lyng 1990: 861). In these activities participants focus on being successful in achieving their aims in often precarious situations, resulting in a foregrounding of what will actually help them to “negotiate the edge”. In these situations the normal flow of events is subjectively perceived as radically altered. Time may seem to stop or pass more slowly or quickly. There is also a transformation of actors’ relationship with objects and space. There is a sense of control and mastery of “essential objects” as well as a feeling of oneness with

them. This “implosion of time and space” gives edgework activities a mystical reenchantment of actors’ world.

While many writers such as Ritzer (1999) and Campell (1987) have explained in detail how late modern consumptive patterns intertwine with voluntary risk taking and reenchantment, Lyng (2005) extends his analysis beyond consumption and commodified leisure edgework experiences (such as high risk sports) to the enchantment that takes place within the occupational sector through risk taking. While conceding that there is need for more sophisticated data gathering to defend the claim that occupational activities hold opportunities for edgework enchantment, Lyng (2005: 25), insists that we can look for evidence in the new managerial philosophies that have emerged in recent decades that advise business people and managers to embrace working near the edge and to use the risk and uncertainty inherent in business life to their advantage in the pursuit of productivity and profit. Thomas Peters’ (1987) *Thriving in Chaos*, for example, describes a world of business where organizations are in perpetual flux, challenging the images found in the “old economics”, which emphasised the predictable and rule-governed aspects of business life. In Peters’ business ideology, and those of writers of similar schools of thought, innovation, industriousness and business success are

inextricably connected to risk taking. The high-risk approaches now commonplace in business as instantiated by junk bond market and corporate take-overs and arbitrage movements of the 1980s and the internet based, “dot com” revolutions of the 1990s could also be pointed to as examples of this business phenomenon. Warren Buffett, Jeff Bezos, and Michael Milken all pioneered new investment strategies that challenged the hallowed traditional business philosophies of risk minimization and ultra-control. It was in risk taking, these opined, that the potential for large returns could be guaranteed.

While Lyng (2005: 26) recognises that it is possible to insist on a theoretical analysis that emphasises the good old entrepreneurial spirit that is supposed to have always driven capitalism – the desire to maximise profit would, according to this line of analysis, be responsible for the greater willingness nowadays to assume large risks. He sees much theoretical advantage in seeing the new attitudes to risk as an emergent personality type (in the Weberian sense). The advantage for theory is that the lived experience of the actor is connected with risk taking behaviour in diverse sectors and institutional domains in society. Such an interpretation could lead to exploring, Lyng speculates, whether actors who participate in high

risk business ventures derive motivation more from the hunt itself and less by the kill. Financial rewards may play second fiddle to the experiential nature of the activities. This would be reminiscent of Weber's insistence that the early capitalists and mercantilists were moved more by the ascetic experience than material gain. Theoretical links may be forged by linking business edgework actors' experiences with those of "adrenaline junkies", far removed from the corporate world. The radically different domains of high-risk business dealings and extreme leisure activities may be tied by the theoretical thread of the magic and seduction that is edgework. From a more criminological perspective, Lyng (ibid: 26) opines, one may also note that edgework activities in whatever domain very often involve a rejection or redrawing of normative boundaries. Illegality may make activities already permeated with the giddiness of risk even more attractive for actors. For evidence, Lyng points to the many high profile instances of corporate and business misdemeanour involving such names as Michael Milkin, Ivan Boesky as well as Enron and Worldcom.

Lyng asserts that the advantage of the edgework approach is that we are able to give at one go a Weberian structural explanation of disenchantment and reenchantment. Although more and more



portions of the social world continue to be rationalised, it is in this very process of rationalization that the seeds of the development of an opposing character type may be found. This is in agreement with O'Malley and Mugford's argument that the:

same [disenchantment/rationalizing] process separated out a world of the emotions, and delineated this in such a fashion that it appears (to actors) as the natural 'alternative', the 'other', to be resorted to by those seeking to escape from, to resist or to transcend mundane, modern rationality ... [Edgework's transcendence, its alterity] appear[s], ironically, both as necessitated and made possible by the conditions of modernity (1994: 198).

One can now ask whether some of Lyng's concepts can be of help in understanding skate and graffiti life. Questions that might be asked include whether they exhibit edgeworky features. What role does intense seduction play in skate and graffiti resistance if these activities can be understood as resistant? Can Manchester's history and space be read in terms of rationalization and the stifling of spontaneity? Are there elements of actors accounts that lend credence to a mystical reenchantment of their world? In the next discussion I shift attention from resistance and actor's agency to explore power's operation in relation to gender. How can we conceptualise power in terms of play? Judith Butler's work offers us the opportunity to understand how gender and power can be related to playful activities through her very important concept of gender performativity.

*Butler, play, power and the performativity of gender*

Butler's aim is to unsettle established ways of thinking about gender. She sought to cast aside the assumptions of obviousness that usually attend discussions about the legitimacy or otherwise of "minority gendered and sexual practices" (1999: viii). Ways of thinking, modes of being and practices rendered invalid by various conventional forms of discourse ought to be given the benefit of the doubt before their discursive dismissal, she insists (Butler 2004).

Butler's approach to the understanding of the intertwining of gender and power she describes as informed by gender's performative nature. Her notion of gender's performativity draws on, *inter alia*, Jacques Derrida's (1992) reading of Kafka's "Before the Law" in *The Trial* (1971) in which a person having a matter in the courts projects a force onto the law in expectation of a meaningful definitive disclosure of what the law is. Performativity comes in because: "The anticipation of an authoritative disclosure of meaning is the means by which that authority is attributed and installed: the anticipation conjures its object" (1999: xiv).

Butler extends this idea of the performativity of law to gender by suggesting that common suppositions that gender consists in an

“interior essence” residing in the individual end up calling into existence the very phenomenon anticipated. The discourse that posits gender as “out there” itself is not merely instrumental in bringing about gender but “ultimately produces that which it posits as outside itself” (ibid). This type of performativity is also not singular but repetitive. It is a ritual sustained through the mistaking of iterative, conventionalised cultural productions as natural and given outside of discursive practices.

What Butler wishes to contest are the “categories of true sex, discrete gender, and specific sexuality” (ibid: 164) which have been unquestioningly assumed as stable and foundational for any plausible feminist theorising and praxis. The taken-for-granted premise is that there is an identity – woman – that “precedes and prefigures the political elaboration of ... interests and epistemic point[s] of view”. This point emphasises her view that resistance always is performed within power, as the very circumscription of surfaces as “the female body” is the product of socio-political forces.

Drawing on Foucault’s conceptualization of the soul as a reality that is made manifest by its impingement on the body, Butler brings out the effects of the dominant cultural and normative constructions of

the body. Foucault had argued, in the context of punitive regimes of modern societies, that: "It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within, the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those that are punished" (1977: 29). The soul though pervasively understood and construed as residing inside or within the body makes itself known only through inscriptions *on* the body, through bodily configurations. Notions of the soul's importance and sacredness are actually projected onto, and unknowable except through, the body.

That is why Butler argues, in concurrence with Foucault, that:

The figure of the interior soul understood as "within" the body is signified through its inscription *on* the body... The effect of a structuring inner space is produced through the signification of a body as a vital and sacred enclosure... the soul is a surface signification... a figure of interior psychic space inscribed on the body as a social signification... In Foucault's terms the soul is not imprisoned by or within the body, as some Christian imagery would suggest, but "the soul is the prison of the body"(1999: 172).

In Butler, therefore, we find a conception of "the soul" that is radically social in its avoidance of individualistic and psycho-reductionist conceptions of the psychic life. This conception of the soul as principally influenced by cultural, political and disciplinary productions should, Butler insists, be extended to how gender is

produced and how its supposed reality is foisted on bodies. What is thought to be produced from the inside of bodies turns out to be given existence through prevalent discourses from the outside (i.e. the social field), without which its reality is cast in doubt. Butler, therefore, considers it part of her political practice to unhide the often violent practices from the outside through which dubious claims about the characteristics of the insides of individuals, their souls, are enacted and given an erroneous ontological description. She reinforces her theory of the performativity of the soul, and by extension gender, by arguing that:

... acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, ... Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitutes its reality... interiority is [therefore] an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, [a result of a] gender border control that differentiates the inner from the outer ... If the “cause” of desire, gesture and act can be localised within the “self” of the actor, then the political regulations and disciplinary practices which produce [an] ostensibly coherent gender are effectively displaced from view. This displacement ... onto a psychological “core” precludes an analysis of the political constitution of the gendered subject... (ibid: 173-174).

Butler, having questioned the usual ontological accounts of gender and showed them to be wanting develops arguments to scrutinise the *epistemological* status of gender categories. While gender has a reality, an

ontology, albeit one that is often misunderstood and misdescribed, we are urged to remove gender discourse from the realm of epistemology completely.

She destabilises the assumptions we make about the “reality” of gender when we say that “a man is dressed as a woman” or “a woman is dressed as a man”. She notes the different meanings we usually attach to the two parts of such phrases – we usually take the first part of the phrases to refer to the actual and the real while the second part is taken as a reference to the obverse of the real; here we seem to want to indicate that we are in the realm of the merely mimetic, the illusory, the playful and the false. When, however, the “categories through which we see” are questioned and come under attack, when they are complicated by the “variation that exists at the level of anatomic description”, by the unreliability of inferences from the sartorial style of individuals and problematised by the transience and flux brought to the body by such practices as transexuality; then the foundations upon which we have built our conception of reality are exposed as themselves ultimately illusory: “And this is the occasion in which we come to understand that what we take to be “real”, what we invoke as the naturalised knowledge of gender is, in fact, a changeable and revisable” (ibid: xxii).

Drawing on Esther Newton's (1972) analysis of drag as a form of impersonation, she argues that gender is a fabrication, a concocted type of reality. Since the practice of drag sheds light on inversions and contradictions between a supposed inner male/female and a supposed outer female/male, the effect is a challenge to the appropriateness of the discourse of truth and falsity in a realm that has been shown to be governed by fabrications and performativity such as gender. Butler avers that:

If the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fabrication and fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false... [drag shows that gender's] claims to truth contradict one another and so displace the entire enactment of gender significations from the discourse of truth and falsity (1999: 174).

Drag, cross-dressing and "the sexual stylization of butch/femme identities" (ibid: 174) are sometimes seen as problematic within feminist theory for a number of reasons, argues Butler. Drag and cross-dressing, for example, have been viewed as degrading to women, whilst butch/femme identities have been seen as uncritical appropriation of stereotypical sex roles from dominant heterosexual and gendered discourses. Drag, Butler contends, is a window through which we can see the performativity of gender by its reframing of the gender experience and upending of meanings accorded to gender.

Moving beyond a dualistic understanding of how drag destabilises gender – “the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed” – Butler introduces a tripartite schema. These are “anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance”. She argues that: “If the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of those are distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance but sex and gender, and gender and performance” (ibid: 175). By performing gender, drag shows the analyst how gender is essentially performative and not expressive of an inner self. In other words, “*in imitating gender drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency*” (ibid, emphasis is Butler’s). In drag, therefore, argues Butler, there is a pleasure, a “giddiness of the performance” which dramatises and exposes the error of widespread beliefs and convictions about the causal unity of sex and gender. In place of this form of fabricated “heterosexual coherence” (ibid) Butler shows how drag can help us see the denaturalization and contingency of the supposed unity of sex, gender and bodily acts and gestures in action.



Butler, however, insists that “drag” should not be held up as the poster child of resistance: “The discussion of drag [offered] to explain the construction and performative dimension of gender is not precisely *an example* of subversion. It would be a mistake to take it as the paradigm of subversive action or, indeed, as a model of political agency” (xxii). For Butler the resistant, agentic actions of actors are not understandable outside of power relations. The conditions of possibility of resistance are owed to relations of power and control within the social field: “political agency ... cannot be isolated from the dynamics of power from which it is wrought”, drag, therefore, cannot be an exception to this rule.

In chapter six, the empirical chapter of this thesis, I will bring fieldwork data in contact with Butler’s theory in many ways. For example, if gender is essentially performative what does this signify among Manchester’s female skateboarders and graffiti writers? Does their practice give the lie to gender essentialism? How is their uptake of space related to their performance of gender? The next section continues with the focus the relation between gender, pleasure/play and power. In Irigaray’s work women’s sexuality and its structuring by masculine concerns is the focus.

Irigaray contends that women's sexuality have been governed by norms and attitudes that see it not on its own terms or as valuable in itself but always in relation to masculine sexuality:

In these [masculine] terms, woman's erogenous zones never amount to anything but a clitoris sex that is not comparable to the noble phallic organ, or a hole-envelope that serves to sheathe and massage the penis in intercourse: a non-sex, or a masculine organ turned back upon itself, self-embracing (2000: 60).

This domination of sexuality by masculine concerns also penetrates into the very centre of female subjectivity. The very structure of feminine desire is often structured by patriarchy through an internalization of the dominant conceptions of what her pleasure-seeking ought to be directed towards. Since according to prevalent masculinist conceptions of sex, women's pleasure is parenthetical while men's sexual concerns are of greater value, the female subject:

attempts by every means available to appropriate that organ [i.e. the male sexual organ] for herself: through her somewhat servile love of the father-husband capable of giving her one; through her desire for a child penis, preferably a boy, through access to the cultural values still reserved by right to males alone and therefore always masculine, and so on. Woman lives her own desire only on the expectation that she may at last come to possess at last an equivalent of the male organ (2000: 60).

Reminiscent of Butler, Irigaray says that within the male logic of pleasure women's bodies are objects for male gaze. How women are biologically and psychically constituted is not properly linked to the possibilities of a full realization of their sexual needs. Rather it is men's psyche, their biology and their propensities that are foreground and given prominence and allowed to overrule and dominate female sexuality:

Within this logic, the predominance of the visual, and of the discrimination and individualization of form, is particularly foreign to female eroticism. Woman takes pleasure more from touching than looking, and her entry into a dominant scopic economy signifies, again, her consignment to passivity: she is to be the beautiful object of contemplation. While her body itself thus eroticised, and called to a double movement of exhibition and of chaste retreat in order to stimulate the drives of the 'subject', her sexual organs represent *the horror of nothing to see ...* Woman's genitals are simply absent, masked, sewn back up inside their 'crack' (2000: 62).

Women's ways of knowing, of being and their interests, along with their anatomies and psycho-erotic lives, have been systematically marginalised in a supposedly scientific, rational, but ultimately, sexist, masculinist culture. Echoing Butler's argument about bodies and their surfaces being sites for power relations, Irigaray shows in detail how women's bodies cannot be simply read as inert matter but as having been inscribed upon and carved by power:

This organ which has nothing to show for itself also lacks a form of its own. And if woman takes pleasure precisely

because of this incompleteness of form which allows her organ to touch itself over and over again, indefinitely, by itself, that pleasure is denied by a civilisation that privileges phallogormorphism. The value granted to the only definable form excludes the one that is in play in female autoeroticism. The *one* of form, of the individual, of the male sexual organ, of the proper name, of the proper meaning ... supplants, while separating and dividing, that contact of *at least two* (lips) which keeps woman in touch with herself, but without any possibility of distinguishing what is touching and what is touched... Whence the mystery that woman represents in a culture claiming to count everything, to number everything by units, to inventory everything as individualities. *She is neither one nor two*. Rigorously speaking, she cannot be identified either as one person, or as two. She resists all adequate definition. Further, she has no 'proper' name. And her sexual organ, which is not *one* organ, is counted as *none* (2000: 62).

Also, as in Butler, (and, as will be seen later, in Foucault), knowledge of what is to count as knowledge (epistemology) is brought into an analysis of power and not seen as outside its purview. Just as women's psychic and erotic lives are complex and have been trivialised, abused and debased by male eroticism and sexuality, their knowledge and ways of relating to the world are regarded as outside of logic and incomprehensible:

Her sexuality ... is *plural* ... woman's pleasure does not have to choose between clitoral activity and vaginal passivity, for example ... the geography of her pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is commonly imagined – in an imaginary far too narrowly focused on sameness ... 'She' is definitely other in herself. This is doubtless why she is said to be whimsical, incomprehensible, agitated, capricious ... not to mention her language, in which 'she' sets off in all directions leaving 'him' unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. Hers are contradictory words, somewhat mad from the standpoint of

reason, inaudible for whoever listens to them with ready-made grids, with a fully elaborated code in hand... It is useless, then, to trap women in the exact definition of what they mean, to make them repeat (themselves) so that they will be clear... (2000: 63-64)

Irigaray's work sensitises the researcher to how norms of women's play, pleasure and sexuality have served ultimately sexist purposes. One of the questions that will be asked in the empirical chapter that examines skate and graffiti life is whether this is borne out in the accounts female and male members of the two subcultures. Given that both groups are predominantly male, are male concerns systematically foreground? If so, how do female members respond to this? Do they resist?

It is this subject – of resistance – that the next section's discussion of Foucault returns to. How Foucauldian writers have taken up his work to develop an extensive body of theories of resistance has been examined earlier in this chapter. In the next section I look more closely at Foucault's conception of resistance and try to draw together links in his work between power, resistance and pleasure.

### *Foucault, pleasure and the resistant technologies of self*

The early Foucault placed premium on the unmasking of the diverse modes of power's operation, leading to his notion of the

“archaeologies of knowledge”. There was also a focus on panopticism in the form of discipline and punishment, leading to his genealogy of the inter-connectedness of forms of power and knowledge. The later Foucault shifted emphasis from these concerns with power’s nigh ubiquity and penetration of every facet of the social body to a concern with “technologies of the self”, an approach that placed more emphasis on the self-creative capacities of agents through the pursuit of pleasurable and ethical endeavours: “As the modern prison serves as a reference point for Foucault to work out his analytics of power, so ancient sex functions as the material around which Foucault elaborates his conception of ethics” (Davidson 1994: 114).

It is through “technologies of the self” that agents affirm their agency by inventing modes of being incapable of being completely seen as the result of the operations of power. *Some* freedom is carved out, therefore, for the social actor; the actualization and practice of such freedom consisting significantly in self-empowerment through the exploration of different modes of pleasure.

Foucault uses the ancient world as a vehicle for helping us understand how power over self might be utilised in a personal “aesthetic of existence”. What he intended to do was not a mere historical inquiry nor a crude transposition of ancient practices on contemporary ones but a critical investigation into how actors may fail to avail themselves

of opportunities for self-creation and the trial of different modes of being. He argues that practices and technologies of the self help to “reopen affective and relational virtualities” (Foucault 1997: 138).

This focus on “practices of self-formation of the subject” rather than on “coercive practices”, while not a complete departure from his stress on the role of “games of truth”, signalled the greater importance of the theme of individual liberty in his work. Foucault construed “self-formation” not as “ascetical ... not in the sense of abnegation but ... of an exercise of self upon self by which one tries to work out, to transform one’s self and to attain a certain mode of being” (Foucault 1984a: 2). *The History of Sexuality* engaged in a study of the Greco-Roman world in order to bring out how individual liberty may be brought about through “care of the self” practices that were ethical. He says:

I think with the Greeks and the Romans – and especially with the Greeks – in order to behave properly, in order to practice freedom properly, it was necessary to care for self, both in order to know one’s self ... and to improve one’s self, to surpass one’s self, to master the appetites that risk engulfing you ... One cannot care for self without knowledge. The care for self is of course knowledge of self – that is the Socratic-Platonic aspect – but it is also the knowledge of a certain number of rules of conduct or principles which are at the same time truths and regulations. That is where ethics is linked to the game of truth (Foucault 1984a: 5).

Foucault's later work, therefore, moves from punishment being placed on discipline/imprisonment to pleasure/self-fashioning, from, as Bernauer (1994: 45) says, reminiscent of Irigaray on female subjects, "the incarceration of human beings within modern systems of thought and practice which had become so intimately part of them as the very structure of being human" to forms of discipline that originate within the self in order to experiment with diverse ways of being human. Volume 2 and 3 of the *History of Sexuality* (1985, 1986b) stresses the "historical ontology of ourselves" (Foucault 1984b: 46), examining "how individuals were led to practice, on themselves and on others, a hermeneutics of desire" and the exploration of how "the practices by which individuals were led to focus their attention on themselves, to decipher, recognise, and acknowledge themselves as subjects of desire, bringing into play between themselves a certain relationship that allows them to discover, in desire, the truth of being" (Foucault 1985: 5).

There is a change in Foucault's view of the process of the production of the subject. Critique is still to be carried out genealogically; but now since there is a possibility of freedom, it will "separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking, what we are, do, or think ... It is seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the



undefined work of freedom” (Foucault 1984c: 46). This self-design, this working out of one’s liberty was at once an ethical and epistemic project as well as an “aesthetic of self”: “From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think there is only one consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art... Couldn’t everyone’s life become a work of art?” (Foucault 1984c: 350)

It must be noted, however, that Volume 1 of Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* still holds on to the vestiges of his earlier work, sexuality and its truths are still controlled by networks of power. As he argues:

Causality in the subject, the unconscious of the subject, the truth of the subject in the other who knows, the knowledge he knows unbeknown to him, all this found an opportunity to deploy itself in the discourse of sex. Not, however, by some reason of natural propensity inherent in sex itself, but by virtue of the tactics of power immanent in this discourse (Foucault 1980b: 70).

It is in Volumes 2 and 3 that we see a move to pleasure/play/knowledge from power/knowledge. Here Foucault is seeking “an ontology of a force that linked together act, pleasures and desires”, for:

it was this dynamic relationship that constituted what might be called the texture of the ethical experience of the *aphrodisia* ... [F]or Greek classical thought, this force was potentially excessive by nature and the moral question was how to confront this force, how to control it and regulate its economy in a suitable way (Foucault 1985: 43, 50).

For Foucault, therefore, somewhat reminiscent of the epistemological focus in the earlier treatment of Butler and Irigaray, Greek thought showed the possibility of subjecting thought itself to scrutiny and also exploring its relation to action, that is “those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being” (Foucault 1985: 10).

According to a prominent commentator, this is where the importance of technologies of self shows itself:

The problem with the functioning of disciplinary power is that individuals are subjected to forms of power that are very difficult to identify and almost impossible to resist. What Foucault sees as valuable about technologies of self is the possibility that an individual might be produced who is more aware of the possible effects of disciplinary procedures and so stands in a better position to resist them (Ransom 1997: 139).

These technologies provided new modes of engagement with socio-political concerns through “exploring historical constructs that would suggest new ways of engaging modern power” (Ransom 1997: 157).

For Foucault, the philosophical enterprise is hence reinterpreted as:

... movement by which – not without effort and uncertainty, dreams and illusions – one detaches oneself from what is accepted as true and seeks other rules ... The displacement and transformation of frameworks of thinking, the changing of received values and all the work that has been done to think otherwise, to do something else, to become other than one is – that, too, is philosophy (Foucault 1997: 327).

Technologies of self, therefore, for Foucault, give some expression to “the necessity of excavating our own culture in order to free space for innovation and creativity” (Foucault 1988b: 163). Philosophical critique “emerges right from the Socratic imperative: ‘Be concerned with yourself, i.e., ground yourself in liberty, through the mastery of self’” (Foucault 1984a: 20). Our action and thought become subject to reflexivity and scrutiny that would engender ways of living that are as far removed as possible from domination. Reminding us on the one hand, and Butler’s work is here consonant, that power is not completely escapable, Foucault insists on the other that some freedom and self-forging is still possible:

I don’t believe there can be a society without relations of power, if you understand them as means by which individuals try to conduct, to determine the behaviour of others. The problem is not of trying to dissolve them in the utopia of a perfectly transparent communication [as suggested by Habermas], but to give one’s self the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the *ethos*, the practice of self, which would allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination (Foucault 1984a: 18).

Having shown play, pleasure and resistance to be theoretically connected with power in this section, it is important to defend key theoretical approaches that have influenced this thesis against a number of criticisms. While I have explored resistance from a number of perspectives and the approach of this thesis is reasonably

described as an amalgam of views and insights from many theoretical traditions, by virtue of its choice of actors to study, and by virtue of the recurring emphasis on Michel Foucault's work and theorists favourably disposed to many of his stances, this thesis may be seen as part of a body of work that takes seriously the notion of "micro-resistance". In the next section I explore what this concept means for resistance theory and how it has been criticised. I defend what may be roughly called the Foucauldian paradigm within resistance theory. This perspective, as different from earlier approaches, such as the almost exclusive focus within Marxism on resistance against capitalism, posits that resistance of power by actors may take place at an everyday level, there can be micro-resistances against power. Actors can be said to engage in contestations of power that are not necessarily against broad power relations such as capitalism.

### **Foucault and the macro/micro resistance distinction**

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, it is safe to say, would have been dismayed by the list of activities that have been described as resistant or related to power in the last section. Some types of resistance that have occurred in Manchester's history and that have shaped the city's spaces later described in Chapter Five, such as riots and Victorian popular politics, would not have surprised these important social

scientists as worthy names in a roster of resistant activities. Foucault, Butler and Irigaray, however, say sex and power-resistance are linked, Bakhtin and Bataille prioritise play, laughter and festivities as ingredients of a viable opposition to power and Lyng says voluntary risk taking sports are a reaction to capitalism's rationalizing influences. This thesis also must, at least, take seriously the possibility that skate and graffiti life are enmeshed in power-resistance relations.

Is the concept of resistance not being stretched to breaking point? Some have precisely so argued and it is to their work that I now turn to justify and defend the theoretical approach of this thesis against criticisms.

If this study will be greatly influenced by Foucault's view of power-resistance, it is necessary to engage with the conceptual criticisms that have been levelled against it. I also defend, in this section, some elements of Cultural Criminology's approach to resistance. Two critical commentaries on Foucauldian conceptions of resistance are of value in bringing out the macro/micro conceptions of resistance and the debate they have engendered. They exemplify the usual criticisms that may be levelled at Foucauldian perspectives on resistance and

examining them is necessarily part of justifying this study's reliance on a broadly Foucauldian understanding of resistance.

The critical reviews are Rubin's (1996) "Defining resistance: contested interpretations of everyday acts" and "Law and everyday forms of resistance: a socio-political assessment" by McCann and March (1996). Rubin's reservations on the Foucauldian perspective on resistance criticise the works of Foucault (1980, 1982, 1988), Bourdieu (especially 1977) and de Certeau (especially 1984) as well as the works of authors who rely on their works in carrying out empirical investigations on resistance. Rubin's (1996) criticisms and McCann and March's (1996) criticisms are important because they do not merely find as inadequate particular works having a Foucauldian orientation but assert that Foucauldian ways of interpreting resistance are fundamentally flawed.

Rubin's criticisms could be summarized as follows. The Foucauldian perspective makes "large claims for small acts". It increases the risk of "political demobilization". It deploys a confused nomenclature on the subject of resistance. Resistance, *a la* Foucault, does not change power relations, it arguably reinforces it. Foucauldian theorists of resistance, according to Rubin, also refuse to engage with alternative

interpretations for the so-called resistances posited and refuse to distinguish between practices that reproduce and those that alter power. I now take a closer look at these arguments in order to determine whether 'Foucauldian resistance' might be fundamentally flawed or in need of substantial qualifications or amendments.

The Foucauldian model, argues Rubin (1996: 238), does not merely affirm that individual social actors have agency but claims that their micro-resistances affect broad power relations significantly. Against a number of works which support this proposition, Rubin (*ibid*) argues that this is an empirically doubtful claim. It can, however, be argued that Rubin is mistaken on this point. A Foucauldian conception of resistance does not have to see resisters as always acting in order to change broad power relations. In fact Foucauldian understandings of resistance *tend to* focus attention on how resisters counter the operations of power locally. Rubin's criticism is, however, still an important one in that it calls attention to a need to empirically verify any claims that micro-resistances change broad power relations. Rubin, however, seems to have closed the door on the possibility of micro-resistances ever changing broad power relations while this is merely an empirical question of whether a particular act of micro-resistance has in fact changed broad power relations.

Rubin (ibid: 239), argues, secondly, that the Foucauldian paradigm with its inordinate focus on the locality of resistances risks political demobilization of social actors for collective acts of social transformation. This, however, represents a confusion of an interpretation of the ways resisters sometimes resist with the way they always ought to resist. Suggesting that focusing on and delineating micro-resistances is indicative of the path all Foucauldian writers want resisters to take is as vacuous as suggesting that writers who focus on the penetrations of power and surveillance into everyday life are sanctioning such penetrations. Rather, the important point is why resisters sometimes choose micro-resistances in lieu of macro ones, why they choose sometimes to be surreptitious rather than confrontational. Resisters *sometimes* prefer evolution to revolution not because they have read Foucault or someone has explained de Certeau to them. A more plausible explanation would be that they are, as the Foucauldian feminist would argue, rational pragmatic calculators.

Rubin (ibid: 245) raises an important point regarding nomenclature. The Foucauldian paradigm, argues Rubin, confuses the concept of resistance by not distinguishing, through appropriate naming,



everyday resistances from collective ones. In other words, Foucauldian resistance nomenclature blurs the line between micro-resistances and macro-resistances. Everyday resistances are being equated with collective action and explicit political acts, argues Rubin. For the sake of conceptual clarity, it can be conceded that Rubin is right. In the couching of the criticism that Rubin (ibid: 245) makes, however, there are conceptual obfuscations that need scrutiny. One is the confusion of everyday resistances with individual resistances as well as the confusion of collective actions with macro-resistances (this is 'real resistance' for Rubin), as if it were merely a matter of number: "resistance involves some sort of conscious intent among a group" (ibid: 245). Collective actions can be micro-resistances just as individual resistance can be macro in the sense of countervailing against larger operations of power. Many of the collective action resistor groups that Rubin describes as macro-resistors such as "agricultural producer cooperatives" could be just about the resistance of local powers and not broad power relations such as capitalism.

Rubin also criticises the lack of differentiation between acts and practices that reproduce power and those that alter power (ibid: 242). This criticism, again, is based on a misunderstanding of the

Foucauldian resistance paradigm, at here conceived. At the heart of the Foucauldian paradigm is the argument that resistant practices can simultaneously reproduce and alter power just as power can simultaneously enforce domination and create opportunities for effective resistance (remember also Lyng and Bataille, who are not Foucauldians), regardless of the intention of resisters and power wielders. Also while Rubin places a great test in front of micro-resistance to pass as valid resistance, (the test of whether an act of micro-resistance actually changes broad power relations) he does not do the same for 'collective action' resistance. Collective action, for Rubin, counts as resistance not by virtue of being successful against power or by significantly affecting broad power relations but by simply being collective.

Rubin's most important argument is probably regarding interpretation and the dismissal of alternative interpretations of an alleged resistant act (ibid: 252). The important point regarding the Foucauldian paradigm's conception of resistance, however, is that the conceptualization of resistance should not be limited to obvious cases of resistance. Given the fact that everyday resistances, by virtue of being everyday, are conjoined with elements extraneous to the rejection of power (for example music, laughter, graffiti or

skateboarding are not *in themselves* resistant), determining an incident of the occurrence of micro-resistance is necessarily a matter of interpretation. This interpretation, however, is not divorced from rigorous empirical verification (I argue in the methodology chapter of this thesis that such verification must involve finding out the meanings actors attach to their actions). No matter how much compelling evidence is gathered it will always be insisted that there may be alternative interpretations of an alleged micro-resistant act. Is this not, however, the beauty of the Foucauldian paradigm that we are urged not to take at face value the everyday actions of social actors? Is this not the beauty of social science that the actions of social actors (the weak and not only the powerful) are not to be taken on face value but provided with interpretations? Resistance or, any other social science concept for that matter, does not always present itself to us as gifts in boxes to be unwrapped. Resistance is a concept to be interpreted as resistance by an evaluator. The Foucauldian insight (an alternative to positions insisting on the exclusive validity of so-called obvious cases of “real resistance”) is that not only easily recognisable resistances are valid cases of resistances. This insight is an admixture of the good and the bad. The good because the door is now open for social investigators to look (but not necessarily see) elsewhere (everywhere) for resistance; the bad because there is a

danger of seeing resistance everywhere (in every social action). This problem can, however, I believe be tamed through rigorous empirical work that finds out what the context of the social action is and what meanings actors attach to their action.

This discussion now addresses McCann and March's (1996: 218) criticisms: firstly, the tendency of empirical investigations relying on the concept of micro-resistance to ethically approve of (at least tacitly) morally reprehensible acts of resistance; secondly the implication that all that is in the repertoire of social actors are 'tactics and ruses'; thirdly, the doubtfulness of 'assertions of self' as being productive of psychological empowerment in the absence of real material change.

The first criticism is akin to Rubin's confusion of an interpretation of the ways resisters resist with the ways resisters should resist. When resisters resist and it involves stealing or some other so-called morally reprehensible act, the interpreter of their action, Foucauldian or not, does not have to sanction or affirm the rightness of the act. There is nothing about investigating everyday resistances that makes an affirmation of the rightness of the social actor's actions necessary. "Resistance" does not have to "connote ethical approval", which is

what the writers seem to be assuming (ibid: 218). There is nothing, for example, about a resistance study of graffiti that necessarily sanctions the so-called “graffiti vandalism”. By the same token, nothing compels social scientists studying the collective resistant actions of violent political groups to support “terrorism”.

Secondly, McCann and March (ibid: 222) question why the Foucauldian paradigm seems to imply that all social actors are left with are “ruses” and “tactics”. Foucauldian conceptualizations of resistance do not deny the use of collective or overtly confrontational actions by resisters but insist that this is not the only form of resistance that resisters use against power. Resisters use, depending on their judgement, “ruses”, “tactics”, collective actions and confrontation against local and broad operations of power.

Finally, McCann and March (ibid: 227) argue that it is unlikely that micro-resistant “assertions of self” translate into any psychological empowerment when material conditions of oppression do not change, as everyday resistance theorists affirm. This criticism is based on the assumption that resistance is *only* directed at changing material conditions and never at acquiring psychological empowerment. If the resisters’ intention in the first place was not to change their material

conditions how can the constancy of those material conditions affect psychological empowerment (See Thiele quote (1990: 908) above)?

Having adumbrated the importance of Foucauldian theses in understanding resistance and discussed their criticisms, this discussion now addresses the significance of Cultural Criminology in understanding resistance. Cultural criminology, by its implication that the criminal can be a resistor, has paved the way for a rigorous exploration of everyday resistance. Given the fact that its methodology is criminological *verstehen* (Ferrell 1997), we are able to negotiate between the meanings social actors make of their actions and the interpretations of the social scientist. Cultural criminology, therefore, complements Foucauldian theses on resistance by directing us to empirically search for resistance not just in pressure groups and politically-motivated associations but also in the streets, in the city and in (public) space (this is what is done in Chapters Five and Six of this thesis; space having been theoretically problematised in Chapter Three). This is where we might find the resistance of the criminal and the criminalised through acts of pleasure, the cooptation of their resistance by power and the resistance of such cooptation. Just like the actions of the powerful, the actions of the weak are meaningful and are not to be taken at face value. The “representations” of the

graffiti writer and the skateboarder in space are, therefore, probably impregnated with meanings other than the obvious. Among such meaningful representations we may or may not find resistance. The same is true of the representations of the powerful, the market, capitalism and the state in (public) space. Among their meaningful representations we may or may not find ideology, hegemony and power directed to control. The insight from Foucauldian and cultural criminological perspectives, however, is that the actions of the weak are no less meaningful than those of the powerful and are just as worthy of interpretations and empirical investigations. This study, of Manchester skaters and graffitiists, is now in a better position to carry out its empirical and theoretical investigations. In what follows I draw together the main arguments and themes of this thesis.

### **Summary**

This chapter started with a recognition of the definitional problems that surround the concept of resistance. One of the main motivations for exploring how the concept has been deployed in different academic traditions is to draw on insights and to flag limitations with the aim of properly grounding a definition relevant to this thesis' specific interests and one that also hopefully contributes to the concept's understanding in the wider literature.

The different ways the perspectives examined in this chapter are insightful and relevant to this thesis' interests have already been pointed out earlier but some specific emphases within the different traditions are particularly germane to formulating a viable definition of resistance. From the CCCS Marxists the importance of asymmetrical power relations stands out. To meaningfully talk of resistance it is important to have reasons for positing unequal capacities for affecting social relations. There must be the relatively powerful and the relatively powerless. The main lesson from Becker is that any definition of resistance cannot presume the homogeneity of resistant groups. Power-resistance relations go on even among putative resisters. This contention of Becker's also sits well with feminist conceptions of resistance and their focus on the different experience of women, a definition of resistance must be capable of coming to terms with both perspectives. From cultural criminology's focus on everyday lives and the tropes of social actors the importance of firmly linking resistance to the verbalisations and activities of supposed resisters can be inferred. The play section of this chapter has also shown how pleasure and playful activities may be embroiled in power-resistance. It is from Foucault's understanding of power, however, that a most penetrating and useful conception of resistance



may be derived. For Foucault power essentially involves 'government' or the 'conducting of conduct', the control or ability to control the actions of another. A definition of resistance that can be reasonably deduced from this conception of power indicates resistance has to in some way or the other oppose or limit the operation of the conducting of conduct. An empirically useful definition of resistance that is not in conflict with positive insights from all the perspectives examined could be one that sees resistance as *the act(s) of social actor(s) that are directed at limiting, ameliorating, opposing or countervailing against the effects of (an)other actor(s)' actions, the latter usually considered to have more resources at their disposal towards affecting a relation in which both parties are involved*. Having examined in this chapter the concept of resistance from different approaches to the subject, the first main theoretical task of this work has been accomplished. The next chapter also engages with theoretical understandings from a broad spectrum of sources. This time the subject matter is 'space'.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The antecedents of the CCCS's study of youth and subculture can be traced to the University of Chicago (Blackman 2005: 2). Robert Park and Ernest Burgess attempted to draw cultural maps of the city of Chicago. Their ethnography emphasised the account of social actors, mostly youth (Burgess 1923). The school also paid attention to the different socialisations, morality and understandings of community that can be found among this group. This ultimately meant that they socially and culturally contextualized crime and deviancy as opposed to seeing them as a product of psychological deficiency (Blackman 2005: 2), an approach that was not yet commonplace. 'Subculture', as a term and

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concept, later gained increased popularity following A.K Cohen's (1956) *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*. The appropriateness of the terms 'subculture' and 'lifestyles' is the subject of debate but I refrain delving into it as this would divert attention from the more basic issues this thesis wants to come to grip with. The first chapter of Bennett (2000) provides a useful overview. 'Cultures' and 'subcultures' will be used interchangeably in this thesis and they denote social actors who share attitudes, behaviour and practices that are distinctive enough to mark them as different from people who do not.

In Britain Cyril Burt (1925) had relied on Lombroso's evolutionary theory of deviance and criminality to describe 'pathological youth' who enter deviant gangs as being subcultural. By the 1960s, sociology started gaining ascendancy over psychology in the explanation of subcultures. Phil Cohen's (1972) attempt to dissociate deviancy from pathology was to later form one of the bases of the CCCS's theory of subculture. Before the CCCS the conventional view was that the British post-war economic boom had levelled social and class differences so that a 'bloodless revolution' had taken place through the increasing economic prosperity of the working-classes. Hoggart (1958, 1970) and Thompson (1980) sought to critically examine these assertions. By the 1970s, in the Birmingham School, under Stuart Hall, sophisticated Marxist analysis of subculture was made possible by English translations of Marx's early writings.

<sup>2</sup> This notion of *the interiority of resistance to power* is a source of contestation. Power as used by Foucault seems reminiscent of Thomas Hobbes' (1640: 9) statement that:

... the power of a man resisteth and hindereth the effects of the power of another: power simply is no more, but the excess of the power of one above that of another.

The conception that power and resistance are relational can be problematic, especially in the sense that Foucault uses the terms. This usage seems to imply that they are two sides of a coin. This means resistance is to power what 'left' is to 'right'. This relational conceptualization of resistance is in consonance with Jefferson's (1975: 86) description of the Teddy boys' 'resistance' of working class mores. In this very limited sense, the Birmingham School theorist is inadvertently Foucauldian. Another good example of the problem of qualitatively and logically distinguishing resistance from power (this is also a problem of the interchangeable nature the concepts can acquire) is Bottomore's (1966: 40) statement that:

... the upper class in Britain has been able to *resist*... attacks upon its economic interests, and that in this sense of having the *power* to defend its interests it has maintained itself...

While non-Foucauldian theorists are very likely to assert that what is at work here is a confusion of semantic similarities with real life qualitative differences between the concepts of resistance and power; therefore smacking of structuralism; Foucauldian theorists would explain this away as a lucky coincidence of semantics and ontology; in other words just as resistance and power can be and are used interchangeably in academic and everyday language, they are also ontologically indistinguishable. Barbalet (1985: 538) maintains that resistance is qualitatively different from power because the social resources deployed in the case of the latter are different from those deployed in the former. The agents in a power resistance set of relations are qualitatively different.

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Power relations, Barbalet agrees with Marx, are not between interchangeable individuals but between a worker and a capitalist or between a farmer and a landlord (Marx 1966: 87). Resistance therefore, according to Barbalet is not power deployed against power but 'the efficacious influence of those subordinate to power' (Barbalet 1985: 542). The solution that can be offered in this thesis is to argue that a simple distinction can be made to clarify these conceptual difficulties. This entails describing power as dominant power relative to (an)other power(s) and resistance as power marginal relative to (an)other power(s) where power simply denotes the social resources available to social actors. This is because from a strictly formal sociological point of view social actors simply use the social resources at their disposal to actualise their interests. When social actors' interests conflict with that of other social actors the decision as to who is resisting can be simply made by empirically inspecting who has greater resources towards affecting the social relation both parties are involved in. The party with greater social resources is the powerful and exploits 'power' to influence the relation. The party with lesser resources is the less powerful social actor and exploits 'resistance' to influence the relation.

<sup>3</sup> In 1910 a woman who was permanently crippled through her husband's beating only complained about his financial non-support (Gordon 1993: 131). Women's emphasis on non-support and bad language before their children was a tactic that can be seen as rational upon close examination of the legal and cultural milieu that nineteenth century women lived in (*ibid*). Evidence of personal mistreatment not coupled with evidence of mistreatment of children was at the time a chink in the armour of a claim before the social services (*ibid*). Social workers by virtue of their social position were expected to defend values associated with child rearing. Also in practice non-support was more criminalised by the courts and the social services than the physical abuse of women by their husbands, with the likelihood of conviction for physical abuse notoriously low (*ibid*). For Gordon (*ibid*: 133) women's agency is proved incontrovertibly, in view of the near complete disappearance of non-support claims during the Great Depression and its substitution with women's claims of entitlement of freedom from male violence. Women instead of launching a direct attack on male authority chose to indirectly limit its painful effects on them. Based on these analyses Gordon urges us to conclude that there was no society past or present in which women 'so internalised their inferiority... that they did not try to improve their situation' (*ibid*).

<sup>4</sup> This can mean the reification of crime as an object to be consumed in and of itself. Crime becomes a sport, a commodity to be enjoyed and relished. See Katz (1988).

<sup>5</sup> This can imply the consumption of that which is deemed criminal e.g. the possession and consumption of hard drugs.

<sup>6</sup> An example is the recent criminalisation of the possession of violent pornography (Home Office 2006).

<sup>7</sup> We are, for example, bombarded with television adverts glorifying crime and movies excusing it.

<sup>8</sup> The commodification of crime itself becomes criminal upon criminalisation of the commodification of crime.

<sup>9</sup> Here the fact that crime is being consumed is itself a commodity that is consumed as, for example, newspapers and the other media make us alive to the fact that the viewing of child pornography may be on the increase or that there are internet sites dedicated to broadcasting 'happy slapping'.

<sup>10</sup> Whether it is the banning and or censoring of violent video games or graphic gangster rap lyrics the criminalisation of the commodification of crime is not waning (Hayward 2004).

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<sup>11</sup> Other metaphors and analytic tools that Katz finds helpful include: 'the self and its boundaries', 'ludic', 'the defilement of the sacred', 'sexual intercourse' and 'the existential interdependence of deviance and charisma' (1988).

<sup>12</sup> The term does not belong to a cultural criminologist. It is Garland's (2001).

<sup>13</sup> The phrase is S Cohen's (1972), who is not a cultural criminologist.

## Chapter Three

### Perspectives on space

#### Introduction

This chapter examines a number of perspectives on 'space'. In doing this, having examined resistance in the last chapter, the thesis takes the next step towards the theoretical clarifications needed for illuminating the activities of Manchester skateboarders and graffiti writers. This is why, in line with the empirical aims of this study, the emphasis of the chapter is on 'urban space'. Neo-Marxist perspectives, the first theoretical cluster examined, centre on the works of Henri Lefebvre, Manuel Castells and other writers in what may be broadly described as the neo-Marxist tradition. For Lefebvre (1991) we need to move beyond a common sense understanding of space as a mere empty container waiting to be filled with objects and architecture. Space is a site of warring ideologies and interests, with dominant capitalistic interests attempting to suppress and stifle out other interests. The examination of feminist perspectives focuses on understandings of space as a site of patriarchy and hierarchy. For the feminists there is less concern about the abstract ontology of space as a constitutive power, which is an important preoccupation of Lefebvre's. Feminist perspectives on space presume at the very outset

that space is a vibrant arena of social action and not a mere receptacle for physical objects. For some of the feminist writers discussed, at the heart of binaries such as 'public versus private space' and 'public versus private spheres' lies the socially and ideologically constructed position of women. In the examination of literature that discuss 'social justice, play and the politics of the city', there is a discussion of works that link theory and practice in order to exemplify the conflicts that seem intrinsic in the conflicting understandings and appreciation of the urban. Here utopian conceptions of the city and visions linked to the uptake of urban spaces for the promotion of profit and exchange are illustrative. The discussion also explores space with a focus on groups as diverse as the Situationists, Critical Mass, activists, skateboarders and the homeless. It includes Fran Tonkiss's important (2005) commentary on city space. According to the writer, the city is circumscribed but not overwhelmed by power; it therefore affords us a site to study power and its resistance simultaneously. The main themes that have emerged are summarised and connected with this thesis' empirical interests in the everyday activities of skateboarders and graffiti writers at the end of the chapter. I start the exploration of what the concept of space consists in with the neo-Marxist approaches of the following section.

## Neo-Marxist perspectives

Everywhere people are realising that spatial relations are also social relations (Lefebvre 1979: 291).

This section examines perspectives that challenge a decoupling of space from the social. The main authors examined are Henri Lefebvre and Manuel Castells. While there are divergences in these two main positions, we are ultimately urged to reject an understanding of space as an entity that is simply out there, divorced from human actions, ideologies and interests. Space, according to Lefebvre, is not merely a container. Space plays an important role in the constitution of the social world. Space, therefore, 'public' or 'private', is imbricated with the political and the economical. Political systems, capitalism for example, stand or fall, according to their ability to survive through space (Lefebvre 1991). Everyday life can only be understood by an appreciation of the role of space in its production. Space is not simply an inheritance from the natural world but an ongoing project of conflicting human interests (ibid). Since space is not just a receptacle, 'people fight not only over a piece of turf, but about the sort of reality it constitutes' (Molotch 1993: 888).

One of Lefebvre's most important arguments in the *Production of Space* is that a common sense understanding of space should be discarded.

This understanding of space, Lefebvre argues, is epitomised in the 'scientific'/Newtonian conceptualization of space. This approach sees space as predating its contents. In other words, space is seen an 'empty container' waiting to be filled with things (Molotch (ibid); Lefebvre 1993: 888). This is the 'absolute' conception of space. According to this Newtonian approach, space or *absolute space* has no fundamental role in social and political relations, the spatial is separate and distinct from the social. In affirming that space is not merely a receptacle that can be filled up, Lefebvre relies on Leibniz's conception of space as being inseparable from and being determined by matter<sup>1</sup>. In fact Lefebvre treats any conception of space that does not place premium on its sociality as fetish and ideological:

The ideologically dominant tendency divides space up into parts and parcels...

It bases its image of the forces occupying space on the idea that space is a passive receptacle. Thus, instead of uncovering the social relationships (including class relationships) that are latent in spaces, instead of concentrating our attention on the production of space and the social relationships inherent to it-relationships which introduce specific contradictions into production, so echoing the contradiction between private ownership of the means of production and the social character of the productive forces- we fall into the trap of treating space as space 'in itself', as space as such. We come to think in terms of spatiality, and so fetishise space in a way reminiscent of the old fetishism of commodities, where the trap lay in exchange, and the error was to consider 'things' in isolation, as 'things in themselves' (1991: 90).



To understand space as a social relation we must, argues Lefebvre, understand its different strata. These are: 'spatial practices', 'representations of space' and 'representational spaces'. Spatial practices are the practical day-to-day interactions in space. Lefebvre's example of spatial practices is 'the daily life of a tenant in a government subsidised high rise housing project' (Lefebvre 1991: 38). Representations of space refer to the knowledge forms that are connected to institutions interested in spatial order. Planners, architects and engineers deploy this type of knowledge. Representations of space are linked with 'scientific' rationality and the foregrounding of the physical at the expense of the social. *Simpliciter*, according to this type of knowledge, capital matters more than people, houses more than homes and the physical and mental are superior to the emotional and the social. Representations of space foster 'an abstract space of pure mathematical figures and verbal messages- manifested in the design of offices organisational rules and symbols... and ... on the... all too material, and therefore indifferent space consisting of the flows of labour money (and) information' (Zhang's 2006 commentary on Lefebvre, p 219). Representational spaces are linked to understandings that favour the corporeal, the imaginary, spontaneous and the non-hegemonic. Representational spaces allow for the formation of alternative forms of socio-spatial

organisations and the transmutation of spatial organisation to disorganisation. Resistance, disorder and struggles are linked to representational spaces. Representational spaces can also simply imply spaces which stand for a:

clash between a consumption of space which produces surplus value and one which produces only enjoyment- and is therefore 'unproductive'. It is a clash, in other words, between capitalist 'utilisiers' and community 'users' (Lefebvre 1991: 359-360).

For Lefebvre representational space is important because:

it speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or: square, church, graveyard. It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations, and thus immediately implies time. Consequently it may be qualified in various ways: it may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic (ibid: 42).

A full understanding of space is impossible without an integration of the different levels of spatial ontology in spatial analyses: 'each time one of these categories is used independently of the others, hence reductively, it serves some homogenizing strategy', Lefebvre argues (1991: 369). The multifaceted nature of spatiality means that the conceptual triad is operational at all times. Concrete situations and empirical detail must always be used to analyse the dynamics of space:

Spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces contribute in different ways to the production of space according to their qualities and attributes, according to the

society or mode of production in question, and according to the historical period (ibid: 46).

For Lefebvre space may be described as the 'presupposition, medium and product of the social relations of capitalism' (Lefebvre 1991: 369; see Gottdiener 1985: xv for almost exactly the same sentiments). In agreement Brenner (1997: 140) affirms that 'each new form of space, each new form of political power, introduces its own particular way of partitioning space, its own particular administrative classification of discourses about space and about things and people in space'. This, for Lefebvrian scholars, means that space is a site of political struggles and resistance. Space is a political instrument for social control as well as an arena that may be appropriated for subaltern struggles and resistances. While Marxist understanding of space is better than absolute conceptions of space in that it does not see space as neutral but symbolic, Lefebvre argues (infra), that it, however, usually involves a mere analysis of the 'operation of economic laws in space'. This places an inordinate emphasis on products inside space as different from the 'production of space'. While space produces, it also is being produced i.e. 'it is at once a precondition and a result of social superstructures' (Lefebvre 1991: 73); struggles and contradictions in space cannot be seen as merely symptomatic of a more fundamental economic struggle. These relations are also fundamentally spatial.

The state is seen as always homogenizing and fragmenting space simultaneously for the production of 'abstract space' (Lefebvre 1991: 81). Abstract space refers to 'administratively controlled and policed space' (Lefebvre 1991: 288). This control and policing is ultimately the work of the state. Use value, Lefebvre argues, resists 'the generalisations of exchange and exchange value in a capitalist economy under the authority of a homogenising state' (Lefebvre 1979: 291). The preponderance of private capitalist forces in the contemporary control of space may be seen as a logical extension and update of Lefebvre. Neo-liberal homogenization and control of space emphasize exchange (i.e. economic) values while resistive appreciation of space places premium on use (i.e. creative, artistic and social) values.

Abstract space is also 'dominated space' as space is 'transformed and mediated by technology' and by the state's interest in building infrastructures for the circulation of capital (Lefebvre 1991: 164-5). This process requires control and domination of space resulting in a 'dominated space' which is 'usually closed, sterilized and emptied out' (ibid). There is, however, another space in Lefebvre's schema which militates against the intentions of the designers of 'abstract and

dominated space'. This is 'appropriated space'- this values social life and activities not necessarily tied to exchange or economic values. The history of space is essentially the history of these two forms of space and their interminable opposition to one another. Lefebvre argues that appropriated space is subjugated to the dictates of dominated space and there needs to be a change in spatial relations that will allow 'appropriated space' to 'achieve dominion over domination' (ibid).

Abstract space has three basic tendencies: fragmentation, homogenization and 'hierarchization' (Lefebvre 2003: 210).

Fragmentation involves the division of space into elements amenable to exchange and privatisation:

specializations... (such as architecture, economics, geography and law)... divide space among them and act on its truncated parts, setting up mental barriers and practico-social frontiers. The ideologically dominant tendency divides up space into parts and parcels in accordance with the social division of labour (ibid).

Abstract space homogenises in that it foists similarity and exchangeability on spaces. Homogenization takes the form of enforced uniformity on processes and activities in space for the facilitation of modern governance and economy. Lefebvre is not so much arguing that diversity has been completely extirpated in modern

space as that the goal of abstract space is simultaneous fragmentation and homogenization: 'abstract space is not homogeneous; it simply has homogeneity as its goal, its orientation, its lens' (Lefebvre 1991; 287). In fact the homogeneity imposed on space is an invitation to rebel and rebellion does occur (Lefebvre 1979). Homogenization through abstract space is made possible by three formants: the geometric, the optical and the phallic formants. In the case of the geometric formant, a mathematical Newtonian/Euclidean conceptualization of space is relied upon for the 'construction' of spatial reality and imagination. This fosters the incorrect notion that space is mere space and no critical elaboration or exploration of its imbrication with violence, oppression, domination and obliteration of diversity is needed. In other words a common sense understanding of space as merely a container is fostered by the geometric formant. The optical formant is facilitative of homogenization through an over-reliance on visualization and the optical. This encourages a 'scientific' emphasis on the written, the abstract and metonymic as different from the corporeal and the lived. In this spatial schema the optical is preferred to the tactile, the olfactory and auditory. The phallic formant signifies the use of brute and physical force. This is a Lefebvorean metaphor for 'masculine' aggression. It implies the readiness of spatial governors to crush spatial dissent and any

reminder of the impossibility of absolute spatial control. Violence is, argues Lefebvre, an important tool that capitalism uses to maintain its interest (Lefebvre 1991: 11). 'Hierarchization' of space involves the creation of orders of spatial importance according to economic, technological, administrative and political imperatives. This creates 'centres' and 'peripheries' of economy, administration, politics and information. The state, with its power to delineate spatial infrastructure, is significantly complicit in this process of 'hierarchization'.

One of Lefebvre's central averments in the *Production of Space* is the 'trial by space' thesis. According to Lefebvre, classes, ideas and movements must produce space or risk obliteration or irrelevance. Trial by space is 'an ordeal which is the modern world's answer to the judgement of God or the classical conception of fate' (Lefebvre 1991: 416). According to Lefebvre, 'groups, classes or fractions of classes cannot constitute themselves, or recognise one another as 'subjects' unless they generate (or produce) a space' (ibid). A social relation/mode of production such as capitalism is therefore a very spatial project:

What has happened is that capitalism has found itself able to attenuate (if not resolve) its internal contradictions for a century, and consequently, in the hundred years since the

writing of *Capital*, it has succeeded in achieving 'growth'. We cannot calculate at what price, but we know the means: *by occupying space, by producing a space* (1976: 21, emphasis in original).

'Trial by space' is twofold: Lefebvre is at once asserting the ability of dominant orders/systems, such as capitalism, to attempt to spatially stifle out any interests, order or logic that do not conform to any of their central tendencies- exchange and consumption; and also the possibility of a decapitation of established capitalism and other orders towards the creation of new ones. Brenner (1997: 152) concurs with Lefebvre: 'the viability of all transformative political strategies depends crucially upon their ability to produce, appropriate and organise social space' because space is a site of winning interests and ideologies as well as losing interests and ideologies. If there is indeed a perennial trial by space of ideas, Lefebvre contends, then 'a counter-gaze' can 'insert itself into spatial reality' in order to challenge dominant perspectives (Lefebvre 1991: 382). Lefebvre calls for opposition and rebellion against state and capitalist spatial discourses and actions (ibid).

Lefebvre has come under attack for many reasons and the following discussion examines criticisms levelled against his work. Premium will be especially placed on Unwin's critique (2000) in a thorough, albeit vituperatively titled, article: '*A waste of space? Towards a critique of the*



*social production of space...*' Lefebvre is accused of extreme obscurantism in his presentation style: 'Why is it that complex arguments tend to be privileged over the simple? ... Language itself is a form of power' (Unwin 2000; see Gottdiener 1985: 157 for further complaints about Lefebvre's far-from perspicuous style). These complaints are not altogether groundless; and indeed Lefebvre's conceptual categories can be unnecessarily repetitive, circular, conflictual and rather confusing upon an initial encounter. 'Absolute space' is so similar to 'abstract space' at times that the reader's first impression is that they may be synonyms only to be dissuaded by a more nuanced use of the concepts. Also 'representational space', can only be understood to mean representational politics of space against 'abstract space' (the latter concept only intelligible, if it is assumed that it is in reference to the control of space by state and capitalist agents).

A second objection, objectionable and suspect, is voiced against Lefebvre: that he overemphasises the sociality of space at the expense of its materiality. While Lefebvre is careful not to specify that notions of mental or abstract space are not useful, argues Unwin, he nevertheless puts forward a new way of seeing space. This approach of Lefebvre's, complains Unwin, would seem to imply that there are many different and valid conceptions of space, whilst undermining

the notion of space understood by 'physical geographers' and 'physical scientists' 'who continue to find value and meaning in their traditional formulations of space' (Unwin 2000: 20). It is submitted that this criticism panders to conservatism and an acceptance of 'traditional formulations' and common-sense understandings of space. It is therefore downright reactionary. The force of Lefebvre's approach to space is linked with its radical rejection of the superiority of a non-normative, positivistic and 'scientific' understanding of space. This is the critique; not to see space as merely physical space but also social space. Lefebvre himself recognises the simultaneous materiality and sociality (hence ideology-laden character) of space:

Social space can never escape its basic duality, even though triadic determining factors may sometimes override and incorporate its binary or dual nature, for the way in which it presents itself and the way in which it is represented are different. Is not social space always, and simultaneously, both a *field of action* (offering its extension to the deployment of projects and practical intentions) and a *basis of action* (a set of places whence energies derive and whither energies are directed)? Is it not at once *actual* (given) and *potential* (locus of possibilities)? Is it not at once *quantitative* (measurable by means of units of measurement) and *qualitative* (as concrete extension where unreplenished energies run out, where distance is measured in terms of fatigue or in terms of time needed for activity)? (Lefebvre 1991, 191)

Lefebvre is also criticised for privileging 'space' over 'space-time'.

Unwin's criticism in this regard is complex but it boils down to the assertion that Lefebvre is so concerned with 'space' that he has

neglected 'things' (it is best to read Unwin as meaning 'people' by 'things') that exist in 'space-time' (a locale, a particular place?). Unwin (2000: 23) laments:

... people never get a mention. It is not women, men and children to whom violence is meted out, it is not the voices of humans being slaughtered that cry out, it is not the pleading of a parent whose child is being violated that we hear, it is not the stench of mass graves being opened up that we smell, it is not the sound of exploding warheads that reaches our ears - it is 'space' against which violence is directed.

Unwin therefore at once accuses Lefebvre of 'over-socialising' space (as discussed in his criticism above) and 'under-socialising' it. This polemic inconsistency can be set aside for a focus on the last criticism. It suggests that Lefebvre theorises a dehumanised, atemporal treatment of space. This is an unfortunate reading of Lefebvre. It mistakes Lefebvre's obscurantist abstractions (rightly criticised above) for a lack of human interest. Based on Lefebvre's work, this criticism is illegitimate. It suggests that Lefebvre's preoccupation is with ideas and not people. This scarcely holds water generally; neither does it with specific reference to Lefebvre. It reinforces the ill-justified notion thorough-going theorising is necessarily conservative. It is safe to assume that Lefebvre is urging actual people to rebel against and challenge dominant interests that presume the rightness of abstract/absolute space? Lefebvre is not asking socialist ideas to fight capitalist ideas! The discussion turns to

exploring another approach that also engages with how Marxist themes are useful for understanding space. This is Castells' critique of Lefebvre and a different yet similar conception of space

### *Castells' critique*

Early Castells conception of space is, in some respects, similar to Lefebvre's. For him space is, at least in part, the material product of the social; space is 'determined by the productive forces and the relations of production that stem from them' (1977: 123). For Castells, however, a theory of space consists in a theory of social organisation in relation to space: 'There is no specific theory of space, but quite simply a deployment and specification of the theory of social structure, in order to account for the characteristics of the particular social form, space, and of its articulation with other, historically given, forces and processes' (ibid: 124).

Contrary to Lefebvre, who wanted a theoretical socio-spatial praxis, Castells relies on a structuralist conception of space to assert that: 'To analyze space as an expression of the social structure amounts, therefore, to studying its shaping by elements of the economic system, the political system and the ideological system, and by their combinations and the social practices that derived from them' (1977:

126). Castells differed from Lefebvre in that he applied [Althusser's (1970)] EPI model to the 'urban system'. While Althusser applied the EPI to the whole of society Castells sought to apply it to a smaller part of the 'social order'- the 'urban system'. The EPI model consisted of an analysis of the world based on a schema of *economics, politics and ideology*. According to this framework, the capitalist order contains within it analogous sub-systems such as the 'urban system'. Principally, Castells argued that if the capitalist order can be analysed according to EPI so can the homologous urban system. Castells wanted to analyse the 'specific articulation of the instances of a social structure within a (spatial) unit of the reproduction of labor power' (1977: 237).

Space, contra Lefebvre, Castells argues, cannot be seen as an ideological unit; neither can it be said to underpin the nature of any given social order. It is the economic structure from the EPI model that links most strongly with any viable theory of space. It does not help to characterise spatial organization of capitalism as a product of political processes; emphasis must be placed on the economy:

And this is no accident, for it is as if the spatial units were defined in each society according to the dominant instance, characteristic of the mode of production, politico-judicial in feudalism, economics in capitalism. (Castells 1977: 235)

Castells' emphasis shifted from a specifically spatial analysis to an analysis of urban problems. Urban problems such as those that relate to "housing, education, health, culture, commerce, transportation, etc" (1978: 3) are connected to the problem of 'collective consumption'.

Castells is not the only Marxist to have dismissed the need for a separate spatial analytic. Many Marxists have generally favoured a political and economic analysis of social relations foisted upon space:

Implicit in this debate is the assumption that the spatial organization of societies derives from more general features of their historical development, and, more specifically, from the evolution of productive forces and the associated division of labour. In this problematic, there is no room left for an independent theorization of the spatial organization of societies, as this is conceptualized as the mere territorial projection of the social relations, particularly of the social relations of production, and of their reflection in consciousness (Martins 1982: 162).

Lefebvre's argument for an emphasis on space should not be seen as divorced from political economy, but it also should not be reduced to it or other considerations such as class. Lefebvre argues that an 'explosion of spaces' is occurring because of specifically spatial struggles. These can not be reduced to class struggles; one has to see it as the claiming of space by multiple class actors, institutions and groups:

Neither capitalism nor the state can maintain the chaotic, contradictory space they have produced. We witness, at all levels, this explosion of space. At the level of the immediate and the lived, space is exploding on all sides, whether this be living space, personal space, scholastic space, prison space, army space, or hospital space. Everywhere, people are realizing that spatial relations are also social relations. At the level of cities, we see not only the explosion of the historical city but also that of all administrative frameworks in which they had wanted to enclose the urban phenomenon. At the level of regions, the peripheries are fighting for their autonomy or for a certain degree of independence... Finally, at the international level, not only the actions of the so-called supranational companies, but also those of the great world strategies, prepare for and render inevitable new explosions of space. (1979: 290).<sup>2</sup>

Hence, urban planning argues Lefebvre is an ideological veil through which government deceives the people that it intervenes in space for their benefit; the production of space is actually symmetrical with non-universal interests. The most repressive tool in the hand of the government, in its bid to stifle social space and everyday life is urban planning:

It is worth remembering that the urban has no worse enemy than urban planning and '*urbanisme*' which is capitalism's and the state's strategic instrument for the manipulation of fragmented urban reality and the production of controlled space (1973: 15).

Apart from the critique just examined, Castells (1977: 92) also accuses Lefebvre, his former teacher, of Eldorado urban anarchism and not attacking the real structures of domination in society- Lefebvre's stance to all intents and purposes was:

a rather elegant way of speaking of the end of the proletariat and leads to the attempt actually to ground a new political strategy not on the basis of the structures of domination, but on the alienation of everyday life (1977: 92).

Castells argued in *The Urban Question* that Lefebvre fetishised (urban) space (and can therefore be bracketed with the Chicago School in his approach), granting the city significance that it did not possess; as if space was somehow independent of capitalist structures: “There is no specific theory of space, but quite simply a deployment and specification of the theory of social structure...” (Castells 1977: 124). For him ‘space, like time, is a physical quantity that tells us nothing about social relations (ibid: 442).

Other writers and Marxists have, however, attacked Castells for treating space as a mere container for social relations (Saunders 1981, Soja 1980). Others, still, that he commits the same sin as Lefebvre (see Harloe 1976: 21). Castells seems to have recanted in his later works. For example, he says “Space is not a reflection of society, it is society” (1983). He also later affirmed that a new socio-spatial dialectic is taking place (2000: 14).

While admitting the danger of decoupling an analysis of space from other considerations, the conclusion we should come to is that while there is some focus in Lefebvre’s work on capitalist attempts at the



domination of space; his brilliance is manifested in power being grasped at a heightened abstraction so that it is not just capitalism that is the subject of critique but whatever form domination and the stifling of 'everyday life' comes in.

### *Soja and 'spatiality'*

Another important neo-Marxist conception of space is that of Edward Soja (1989). For Soja there are two illusions that we ought to avoid in thinking about space: the 'illusion of opaqueness' and the 'illusion of transparency'. The illusion of opaqueness emphasises only the materiality of space; space is seen as nothing but dead, fixed unmovable, unchanging; a Cartesian and measurable entity. With the illusion of transparency, space is completely dematerialised and abstracted; this prevents a 'concrete abstraction' of space in which the emotions and lives of human beings in places and times have a role (ibid: 7).

Soja supports Lefebvre on the socio-spatial dialectic against his anti-spatial Marxist opponents (ibid: 77). According to Soja there is no contradiction between the social (class relations, for example) and the spatial. 'Space-to-class' homologues can be exemplified, asserts Soja, in the partitioning of the spatial into the dominant and the peripheral

under capitalism; ultimately the spatial and the social are 'dialectically inseparable' (ibid: 78). This notion of space imbricated with social relations Soja terms 'spatiality'. Soja follows Lefebvre in asserting that space is not removed from ideology or politics. The seeming formality and 'givenness' of space is itself a result of space being colonised and suffused with ideologies about the naturalness of dominant contemporary social constructions (ibid: 80).

Soja argues that Marxist analyses are limited to economic reductionism when the socio-spatial dialectic is broken. Space, in these kinds of anti-spatial Marxist schemas, is just another element of the superstructural that may be read off the substructural (ibid: 87). An understanding of the inexorable nexus of the spatial and the social spotlights other aspects of power/domination that may remain hidden, Soja insists. With this kind of understanding, class struggle stands alongside other struggles made visible by an emphasis on the imbrication of the spatial and the social: the struggles of the female, the young and the ethnically minoritised (ibid: 92). The issues examined so far by Lefebvre, Castells and Soja have also been the subject matter of much work in cultural geography. In the next section I look at how the concept of 'landscape' has been used to

shed light on themes similar to those examined so far, especially in Don Mitchell's work.

### *Landscape and social relations*

Mitchell uses the concept of 'landscape' in many senses. An important usage of the concept in his analyses is that of landscape as 'the broad sweep- or the general look- of a... place' as well as 'the solid form of the built environment' (Mitchell 2000: 99). W J T Mitchell (1994: 1) has also examined the complicated usages and meanings of landscape:

Landscape is a natural scene mediated by culture. It is both represented and presented space, both signifier and a signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and a commodity in the package.

According to Berger (1972), landscape is simultaneously a 'way of seeing' and a place, both a lived relation and a sensibility. Other writers have seen 'landscape' varyingly as a text, a symbolic system by which people make sense of the world; for other writers landscape is produced space, carved out space, a portion of the earth that has been transmuted by social actors in interaction (see Domosh 1996; Duncan 1990; Meinig 1979 for the diverse ways that landscape has been conceptualised in the literature)<sup>3</sup>.

For Mitchell it is important not to see landscape as simply static- 'as if it passively represents some history or another' (2000: 93). It is important, he argues, to see landscape as active in the constitution of histories, serving as a kind of emblem or symbol for what the people who live in a geographical location want and desire or for the interests of those who have a stake in the production and maintenance of the landscape. Landscape can also be seen 'as a solid dead weight' (ibid: 93), whose seemingly inert nature is actually deceptive in that it paves the way for social change this way and not that. Landscape, according to this conception, is both *a work* and something that *does work* (ibid). It is *a work* in that it is a result of people's labour and represents the diverse injustices, dreams and desires of the social system in which it is produced. It does work in the sense that it is causal in the developments that can take place in a location (see the exploration of similar themes in relation to Manchester's history in Chapter Five). Mitchell's account of landscape as a work is reminiscent of Harvey's extrapolation of the Marxist concept of 'dead labour'. For David Harvey (1982) the built environment of a location is 'dead labour', that is labour solidified in a particular form hence important in explaining the constraints on how living labour (the work and toil of working people) is developed and deployed.

The official version of the history of a particular location, according to Mitchell (*ibid*), will usually cohere with the distribution of power among those who inhabit the place. The sanctioned knowledge of the landscape as well as the moralities and norms to be upheld there will be a feature of which social group is able to back up its wishes with effective means of social control. Geography is often imbricated with issues of power, class, ethnicity and social control. ‘The way the history of [a] city is to be scripted and the meanings that are to be most strongly attached to [a] landscape’ (Mitchell 2000: 97) are dictated by the powerful. The official description of a particular landscape also reflects the powerful financial and economic interests of particular groups. What is known or accepted as correct or accurate knowledge of landscape will therefore often reflect power differentials. So, for example, an account of what goes on in a landscape may hide or deliberately unhide certain events or activities with a view to securing the patronage of investors (*ibid*; see also Chapter Five of this thesis on Manchester’s regeneration). Indeed as Mitchell contends ‘the question, of course, is precisely whose and what history (whose “ethic and spirit”) can and will be preserved in the landscape’ (*ibid*: 98).

Since landscape is inextricably connected with social relations, we must, 'get a sense of politics of landscape production' (2000: 99). Given that 'landscapes are produced through specifiable social relations' Mitchell affirms 'the relations of production and the resulting product can be studied' (ibid). Landscape will usually embody 'a form of ideology'; 'a way of carefully selecting and representing the world so as to give it a particular meaning'. As a feature of the social relations of a people 'landscape is thus an important ingredient in constructing consent and identity- in organizing a receptive audience- for the projects and desires of powerful social interests' (ibid: 100). Issues relating to the construction of consent and dissent by divergent interests in Manchester are the foci of portions of chapters five and six of this thesis.

In view of the dialectic between the representation of landscape and the production of the built form, meanings are circulated and developed for both things. Hence it is possible to examine how different groups of social actors make a particular landscape mean something. It is therefore possible to find out how those meanings are developed or made to 'stick':

...how particular social meanings become “concretized”- in the very cement, bricks, and steel of the landscape- and therefore become an important agent in the social reproduction of social relations ...how particular produced landscapes... make ideology concrete and difficult to challenge. The very built form of a place can have the effect of solidifying particular notions about how the world is structured and works. Landscape therefore becomes an essential ingredient for structuring the material social relations that make up the social world (Mitchell 2000: 100).

Mitchell’s contention (2000: 100) that since social actors are the ones that make landscapes mean something ‘landscape meaning is contested every step of the way’ is particularly germane to what is explored later in this thesis. The contest of definitions and meanings between skateboarders and graffiti writers on the one hand; and police, wardens, private security guards and city councillors on the other are the focus of Chapter Six, where the findings of empirical work on the meaning-making activities of graffiti writers and skateboarders are explored.

It is necessary to recount some of the fundamental lessons that have been learnt in this section, especially those that are relevant to the empirical interests of this thesis. As a thesis having as one of its primary focus the subject of resistance, the neo-Marxist/Lefebvrian contention that space is better understood as a site of conflict, a conflict between disparate visions and interests is of fundamental

importance. To posit conflicts as constitutive of space is to make room for an empirical investigation of how different social actors in different groups bring to bear the resources at their disposal towards the enactment of such spatial conflicts. In other words, and in relation to the empirical aspects of this thesis, how do Manchester graffiti writers and skateboarders fight over the type of reality that Manchester as space can constitute? What particular 'spatial practices', to borrow Lefebvre's (1991) concept, do skateboarders and graffiti writers use in order to carve out and create 'representational spaces'? - spaces that can represent their visions and interests in Manchester and its city centre. What help, in terms of the theoretical and empirical concerns of this thesis, can be rendered by Mitchell's concept of landscape and Lefebvre's notion of 'abstract space' i.e. administratively controlled and policed space? Can these concepts be useful in understanding how 'the powerful' – city councillors, private companies and the police - produce space in Manchester? What role if any can recent regenerative efforts in the city play in the production of landscape and 'abstract space'? Are there other social actors, apart from skateboarders and graffiti writers in Manchester's present and past that can be reasonably said to exemplify the production of 'appropriated space', that is space that values activities not primarily tied to exchange value? All these issues and questions are the primary



concerns of the later chapters of this thesis, especially chapters five and six. In the next section I examine how feminists have conceptualised the nexus between women, space and gender ideologies.

### **Feminist perspectives**

Within feminist perspectives on space there is a tendency to explore the forms in which the design of urban and suburban landscapes are bound up with the allotment of gender roles to women in pre-modern, modern and post-modern societies (Mitchell 2000, Rose 1993, Bondi and Domosh 1998). Debates within feminism often focus inquiry on the imbrications of gendered roles and spaces with the rise of industrial capitalism. Questions raised include asking why women are/were relatively 'entrapped' (Nelson 1986) in certain spaces. In consequence feminist perspectives on space usually attempt to examine the social and geographic structures that delimit the spatial realities that women are able to experience. In this regard, the denaturalization of the 'natural orders of things' and an exposure of the prevalence of social constructions of women's roles and their supposed 'natural' affinity with certain spaces have become primary aims of many feminist theorists of space (Mitchell 2000: 201). Other theorisations have also had as their empirical springboards the

contemporary impacts of certain spaces such as the shopping mall or suburbia (Nelson 1986, England 1993).

### *Gendered modes of production and gendered spaces*

Historically, the 'entrapment' of women in the domestic sphere has been linked with transformed notions of domesticity associated with the rise of bourgeois culture in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Lerner 1980). Bourgeois ideologies proposing the naturalness of the link between women and domesticity became preponderant and were supported by academia (ibid). Even so, Rock et al (1980) argue, there were academic and political voices which contended with these mainstream gendered ideologies although typically they failed to understand how the ideologies were engendered by economic and political factors under capitalism. According to McDowell (1983), patriarchal ideologies intersected the organisation and production of domestic labour under the emerging class system of early capitalism. While bourgeois ideologies of female domesticity might have removed many middle class women from the public sphere of employment outside the home and provided them with a relatively 'leisurely' existence, their working class counterparts had to cope with arduous paid employment (ibid) and domesticity, the latter combination being reinforced as the societal ideal in bourgeois media (Mitchell 2000). The separation of the public and private spheres

along gender lines meant that the conditions for capitalist accumulation and reproduction of labour were bolstered in more than one regard (ibid). By specialising women in the process of biological reproduction (and the upbringing of children) and barring them from influential participation in public sphere activities of the reproduction of labour power, the politico-economic subjugation and sequestration of women in the privatised spaces of the home made increased capitalist accumulation and 'surplus value' possible, especially taking into consideration that domestic work was unpaid (Mitchell 2000). One effect of the reinforcement of domesticity and the private sphere was the coding of public spaces as masculine, resulting in the naturalization and demarcation of public/private spaces and spheres along gender lines. Bourgeois-democratic notions of public inclusiveness restrictively defined the 'public', curtailing women, the poor and the foreign (Sallie Marston 1990, Mitchell 2000). Women's citizenship, tied to their ability to engage in discourse that constituted the public sphere, was fundamentally stifled.

Staheli (1996), however, has argued against seeing only disadvantage in constraints on women's public citizenship and public politics. This is because these restraints have encouraged the nurturing of alternative citizenships and politics in private spheres and spaces.

Social theorists, Staheli argues, mistake the content of an action with the material space in which it occurs: public actions, it is assumed must take place in public and private actions in private. The degree of 'publicity' of an action is not a mere function of its space: 'there is no necessary reason why actions intended to affect broad economic, social or political relations must be taken in public spaces' (1996: 609).

Not all feminists have been willing to place a lot of emphasis on any supposed silver lining. Grosz (1995), for example, insists that men have essentially built a world for themselves and have significantly taken up 'social space', merely conceding to women the secondary role of 'guardians' of space (especially the private space of the home). The effect is that women are essentially confined and contained within a space 'which they did not build, which indeed was not built for them', (ibid: 55) resulting paradoxically in 'a homelessness within the very home itself'. The circumscription of women's physical space, Grosz argues, cannot be divorced from the circumscription of women in men's conceptual world (see Chapter Six for the relevance of this point to female participation in skateboarding and graffiti). To challenge one is necessarily to challenge the other and battles will

have to be fought in both arenas. The space of the city and the streets and that of the mind are inextricably connected.

Rose (1993: 34-5) agrees with Grosz:

A universal experience for women...is that physical mobility is circumscribed by our gender and by the enemies of our gender. This is one of the ways they seek to make us know their hatred and respect it. This holds throughout the world for women and literally we are not to move about in the world freely. If we do then we have to understand that that we must pay for it with our bodies. That is the threat. They don't ask you what you are doing in the street, they rape you and mutilate your body to let you remember your place. You have no rightful place in public.

The crux of the message is that space as a site of women's regulation is inextricably linked with gender as category of control. The task of feminists of space is therefore to simultaneously denaturalise gender and deconstruct space. This is why Linda Nicholson (1986) affirms that it was not so much the case that women were debarred from public spaces and completely confined to the private space of the home as that they were governed by certain norms that were imbricated by their construction as 'women':

The spatial division separating the inner sphere of the home from the outside world had, however, a symbolic significance that did not correspond directly with the spatial division. Certain out of home activities, such as visiting with or ministering to the needs of kin or community or taking part in the affairs of church or charitable organizations, were also permitted to women. Thus the separation is more adequately

understood as a separation between two worlds governed by different norms and values (ibid: 43).

It is argued also within feminist literature that the historical split between the private sphere of the home and the increasingly public spaces of production resulted in a reduction of the social power of women, as the vital public sites of production were physically inaccessible to them (Bondi and Domosh 1998). This is not to say that the social relations of the medieval period can be seen as not creating problems for women and the spaces they could occupy. What can be argued, the authors aver, is that 'private space' as we know it now was not applicable to the women of that time. 'Domestic spaces' in the medieval period were sites of vast economic and social activities that were not reproductive of lopsided gender relations in any significant manner (ibid). At the inception of capitalism, however, Bondi and Domosh (1998) argue, a number of activities directly related to production were increasingly removed from domestic space, a good example, they say, is the brewing industry.

Domestic space became a site of male power, preserving the pre-capitalist values of power by virtue of kinship as opposed to economic power, even as the public space of the emergent capitalist system were being increasingly constituted in contrast to the private

spaces of the home. Ideology, Bondi and Domosh (1998) maintain, played an important role in the association of gender roles with public and private spaces. The new bourgeois system installed a dichotomised value system. On the one hand the space of the home was associated with kinship, deference, 'love', family and nurturance. On the other, we have the space/sphere of the state, the economy, governed under notions of law, fraternity, egalitarianism and labour. The alignment of the 'home' with women and the 'equal' public space with men relied on the shift of the main form of domination from class to gender (ibid).<sup>4</sup>

This constriction of women's space and the gendered regulation of their movements were different according to the class they belonged to (ibid). The identity of the nineteenth century middle class woman was tied around consumption and the maintenance of culture and religion. Whilst the freedom of working class women was less governed by notions of appropriateness or femininity that governed the lives of their richer counterparts (e.g. middle class women were not meant to be seen eating or drinking in public spaces), their subordinated economic and social status circumscribed their ability to participate fully in public space. Whilst streets, parks and other public spaces were 'public' in the nineteenth century in that they were

indeed controlled by non-private interests, 'public' was defined in gendered ways excluding certain sections of the population, especially women.

### *Women and contemporary spatial relations*

Other feminist writers have sought to emphasise the current spatiality of womanhood. The main thrust of feminist critique on gender and contemporary space is that the space of women is as defined by power relations as it was historically. Space is symbolic of the cultural allocation of realms and the enactment of gendered spatial boundaries (Rendell 2000: 102). Power relations are, therefore, from the very start inscribed 'in built space' (ibid). Women's status defines and is defined continuously by the space that they occupy. The patterning of the physical environment suggests that 'space is produced and productive of gender relations' (ibid). The gendering of space is not restricted to its gendered constriction or occupation; representations in words and images of spaces are themselves gendered:

Descriptions of gendered space make use of words and images which have cultural association with particular genders to invoke comparisons to the biological body- soft, curvaceous interiors are connected with women and phallic towers with men. (Rendell 2000: 103)

Similar to literature analysing the capitalist history of women's space, work discussing women's contemporary spatiality also problematises



the 'separation of the spheres' (ibid) as a deliberately hierarchical system that subordinates 'women's space' of the home to the realm of material production that is the city. This patriarchal and capitalist ideology splits the private and the public, women and men as well as production and reproduction (ibid: 103). However, the separation of the spheres thesis itself has been challenged as a conceptual tool. Pollock (2000) argues that it is not a true representation of the gendered configuration of space. The deconstruction of space, Pollock contends, will have to move beyond a binary logic of the separate spheres thesis. This would expose how, regardless of women's presence or participation in any space/sphere, there are attempts to subordinate them and their contributions. It would also pave the way for an exploration of women's agency.

Torre has also (1996:140) criticised the tendency of current feminist works on space to exclusively focus on the rise of bourgeois femininity in 19<sup>th</sup> century industrialised cities. Women she argues are depicted as passive recipients of male power and male gaze. This absence of the female 'engaged subject' is usually interspersed, argues Torre, with a few female subjects who are seen at best as distinct exceptions to the rule, 'female bohemians' who are not part of the general female population that accept men's cultural and political

colonisation. This way of seeing, argues Torre (ibid), pushes women's current individual and collective struggles to transform urban spaces to the background and fails to engage with women's defiant appropriation of public spaces that are symbolic of gender domination and exclusion (see Chapter Six for an exploration of the female graffiti writer and skateboarder's resistant uptake of space). For example, women, argues Torres (ibid), are very creative in their spatial resistance in their negotiation of anti-protest laws, as illustrated by Argentinean women's occupation of space as a political demonstration against war.

The crucial lessons of this section can now be adumbrated and related to the specific interests of the investigative aspects of this thesis. Feminist perspectives on space are in many ways continuous with neo-Marxists perspectives. For feminists, especially but not exclusively those of Marxist leanings, spatial relations are also gender relations. This can easily be reconciled with neo-Marxist concerns with identifying actual social actors and how the governance and production of space can be related to their visions and interests. While the neo-Marxists are concerned with delineating the production of space with this general schema, feminists have placed premium on how this schema may reveal the social position of

women. For feminists different groups and social actors have different stakes and interests in space and the history of space can show the systematic marginalisation and the 'writing off' of the interests of women in space. Feminist writers therefore affirm that space is a veritable site of power. They have also emphasised that while the systematic marginalisation of women and their interests is discoverable in space, space can also reveal women's counter-production of space i.e. women's resistance of the 'writing off' of their interests.

Empirical questions in later chapters that are germane to the interests of this thesis can be easily reconciled with the themes just outlined. It can be asked: do subcultures have homogeneous spatial experiences that completely cut across gender lines or are the experiences of women graffiti writers and female skateboarders sufficiently distinct? What insights regarding resistance can a study of female graffiti writers and skateboarders yield? How can this resistance be related to the production of space within the subcultures? Does fieldwork data provide a vehicle for exploring the intersections between notions of feminine appropriateness, commented upon by feminist theorists of space, and the day-to-day spatial practices of female graffiti writers and female skateboarders? These are all questions that are explored in

detail by the examination of fieldwork data in Chapter Six. The next section draws on a number of traditions to explore how the city has been variously conceptualised the central themes are the question of emancipation, social justice and the resistant qualities of city spaces.

### **Social justice, play and the politics of the city**

This section continues with the themes that have been central to this chapter: the notion of space, its utility for the present study and how resistance is explicable in spatial terms. I first engage in a discussion of how the city both affords the opportunity for different marginalised groups to experience the freedoms denied them in other spaces but also explore aspects of city rule that seems to have implications opposed to this. I then conclude with an examination of the role of play in resistance against forms of urban governance deemed repressive by marginal social actors. This last point, as well the ones before it, about the nexus between play, resistance, urban spaces and social justice, cohere with the themes later given prominence through fieldwork in chapters that come later in the thesis.

*Utopia, the politics of space and the emancipatory potential of the city*

The city space has always been central to utopian conceptions of self-realization, democracy and tolerance. The old German saying that states that the 'city air makes men free' (*Stadtluft macht frei*) refers to how living in the city, for those lucky to have such an opportunity, implied liberation from the feudal master-servant relation of the Medieval period. Other conceptions of the city space as being potentially for liberation, civilisation and democracy also featured in antiquity (Mumford 1995: 21). There are also averments in the Western Christian tradition of the potentiality of the city for emancipation. Brigham Young and the Mormons, the Puritan founders of Boston and the Massachussets Colony, the radical poet William Blake, were all hopeful that the city could be a New Jerusalem (Lees 2004a).

In spite of the antiquity of notions of the liberatory nature of city life and space, modern and contemporary thought about how emancipation and the city are linked largely emerged with the transition from capitalism and rapid urbanization. As Williams (1983: 56) observes, 'the city as a really distinctive order of settlement, implying a whole different way of life, [was] not fully established, with its modern implications, until the early nineteenth century'. This is

when 'city' as a concept becomes distinguishable from particular city spaces or types of settlement. While depicted in romantic and pastoral art as a kind of alienating severance from the natural world and communal life, the urban was also seen as a crucial escape from the whims and caprices of nature; city life and city spaces were a testament to the taming of nature (Lees 2004a and Gandy 2004).

Some of these conceptualizations of 'city' have linked it with freedom and progress. According to Lees (2004a: 5), much discussion of the liberatory potential of the city has been focused not so much on 'the quality of particular places and urban environments' than on the city itself, as abstraction, and the 'emancipatory potential of all cities'. It is therefore a discussion that has been doubly utopian both in the sense of being about no place in particular and being about the ideal rather than an existing one.

Louis Wirth (1938: 192), for example, contended that the inception of urbanization fostered a fresh 'way of life' based on the ideals of the enlightenment:

The [city's] juxtaposition of divergent personalities and modes of life tends to produce a relativistic perspective and a sense of toleration of difference which may be regarded as prerequisites for rationality and which lead toward the secularization of life.

Sennett, in a not dissimilar also insisted that:

A city isn't just a place to live, to shop, go out and have kids play. It's a place that implicates how one derives one's ethics, how one develops one's sense of justice, how one learns to talk with and learn from people who are unlike oneself, which is how human being becomes human (1989: 83).

Various writers on the urban have emphasised images of corporeal abandon and the "eroticism of city life, in the broad sense of our attraction to others, the pleasure and excitement of being drawn out of one's secure routine to encounter the novel, the strange, the surprising" (Sandercock 1998: 210). Guy Debord and the Situationists, later examined in greater detail, also saw the city as a site of experimentation with new ways of being in the urban realm (1994). They sought to destabilise urban structures as part of play and serious critique. This ideal of the flaneur, however, has been questioned by feminists. The street is a space of terror not freedom for women, some feminists argue. Janet Wolff (1985), for example, stresses that the flaneur's freedom is usually that of men. Wilson (1992) and other feminists, however, have seen a lot of potential in the notion of the flaneur in gaining for women the pleasures and possibilities currently denied them in the city. One of the points, here latent, relating to how the meaning of space can differ from group to group is important for this thesis and is explored in my examination of how Manchester contextualises the resistance of skaters and graffiti writers

in Chapter Five as well as in Chapter Six's mapping of the ways skaters and graffiti writers attach meaning differently from more powerful groups. In the latter chapter I also examine more specifically divergent conceptions of space between female skaters and graffiti writers and their male counterparts.

While utopian conceptions of the urban are no longer novel in that some reflections on them now seem trivial (Lees 2004), the modern dichotomy between country and city (Williams 1975) are still influential in contemporary social thought on the qualities of city life. Elizabeth Wilson, for instance, argues that 'the distinction between town and country, the provinces and the metropolis is less stark than formerly... rural life is arguably still even more restrictive and lacking in opportunity for the poor (of both sexes) than life in the cities' (2001: 67).

Radical socialist writers have also been influential among those insistent on the 'emancipatory trajectory of urbanization' (Short 1991: 41-3). Karl Marx, modernist par excellence that he was, believed that capitalism had within it the seeds of its destruction. The city played a crucial dual role in his schema. The city could be viewed as a broken up and partitioned material space that was as a whole reflective of



capitalist interests in imposing discipline and work on the working classes for the promotion of exchange value and profit. Urban experience was therefore isolating and alienating. On the other hand, the city was seen by Marx and Engels as the theatre of history's great march and progressive move:

The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life (Marx and Engels, 1968: 39).

The 'idiocy of rural life' was a source of dissatisfaction among 'the metropolitan socialists of Europe' (Williams 1975: 50) who for some time saw in the city the radical forms of association that they hoped could bring about a better future. While the industrialised world of the city tended to dissolve family bonds and traditional forms of togetherness and cooperation thereby promoting individualism, loneliness and detachment, Marx and Engels (1968) nevertheless saw in the life of the city the possibilities of emancipatory forms of togetherness that could harmonise and solidify relationships between diverse people and help them see common ground in their class position. These notions of the city as at once constraining and liberating are brought together later in this thesis through the narratives of skateboarders and graffiti writers.

This binary and contradictory feature of the city as at once progressive and liberatory but also complicit in social ills has also been noticed by writers in other traditions. Urbanization and the city, Robert Park, an important figure in founding the Chicago School, argued, could at once emancipate and destabilise:

the peasant who comes to the city to work and live, is ... emancipated from the control of ancestral custom but, at the same time, he is no longer backed by the collective wisdom of the peasant community (1952: 24).

Williams (1975: 187) also avers that the optimism-engendering insight into the potentialities of 'new kinds of possible order, new kinds of human unity in the transforming experience of the city, appeared significantly, in the same shock of recognition of a new dimension' of the disorientating, dislocating dimension to the urban which meant that:

the objectively uniting and liberating forces were seen in the same activity as the forces of threat, confusion and loss of identity. And this is how, through the next century and a half, the increasingly dominant fact of the city was to be both paradoxically and alternatively interpreted (*ibid*).

Feminists have picked up on the Marxist identification of the city with freedom and progress and the country with conservative restraints, albeit channelling these themes in a different direction.

Betty Friedan (1963) critiqued the domesticity and privacy of suburban space as a stultifying goal for women in her book *The Feminine Mystique*. Echoing the disdain for the uninspiring acceptance of one's station in life of the *Organization Man* (Whyte 1956), Friedan's critique meshed with and bolstered the hopes of many women seeking to be liberated from what they considered to be patriarchal roles of mother and housewife through equal opportunity employment and the penetration of male sites, spheres and spaces in the city. Feminists have argued that urban life was pivotal to the rise of feminist politics and the overthrow of stifling notions of femininity that can be seen as vestiges of the Victorian period (Stansell 1987; Walkowitz 1992). The 'New Woman' (Wilson 1991) could only be made reality through the economic independence and the sexual freedom that the city promised, argued the 'second wave feminists'.

The liberties and changes in psyche that could be brought about through women's penetration of the urban realm, which are the subject of portions of chapter six's empirical examination of female participants in graffiti and skateboarding, were also central to some modernist novels:

It is with modernism that women's fiction truly enters and lays claim to the city, thereby claiming new possibilities for women's autonomy... [the city is] ... the site of women's most

transgressive and subversive fictions throughout the century, as a place where family constraints can be cast off and new freedoms explored, as a place where the knowledge acquired through urban experience not only brings changed perceptions of identity, but inescapably situates the individual within social order (Heron 1993: 2)

Miriam Henderson is, for example, a 'New Woman' that rejected the male order and found out new ways of being that city life could afford her in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*.

Later feminist works have, however, challenged the simple dichotomy of the emancipatory city and the oppressive pastoral life (Spigel 1992). When such simplistic dichotomy does not presume a Western urban landscape, particularly an Anglo-American one, Jennifer Robinson argues (2004), it too often conflates the differential capacities of women of different class origins to appropriate the supposed new freedoms and opportunities offered by the city (see also Hanson and Pratt 1995). Other feminists maintain, however, that while qualifications here and there may be appropriate suburban ideals 'acted ideologically to debase and delegitimize the pleasures and possibilities of urban life' (Wilson 1991: 46)

It is not only feminists and Marxists that have seen the city as a source of inspiration for the social changes hoped for. Gays, lesbians, anti-racists and many academic commentators see in the city a space

of tolerance and diversity in which alternative and counter-lifestyles may be realised (prominent works include Wilson 1991, Fincher and Jacobs 1998, Keith and Pile 1993, Amin, Massey and Thrift 2000 and Sandercock 1998). Identity politics theorists base their hope for multicultural lifestyles in city spaces of 'unassimilated otherness' and a 'vision of social relations affirming group difference' (Iris Marion Young 1990).

Some cultural geographers have also extended utopian visions of the urban in order to problematise anthropocentric notions of citizenship in contemporary conceptions of the city (Philo and Wilbert, 2000; Wolch and Emel, 1998). One of the main questions posed by the literature is whether idealizations of city life may be extended in view of the presence of animals in urban areas. According to Whatmore (2003: 156), the incorporation of animals into dreams of the cosmopolitan city does not merely extend the "liberal figure of the individual rights-bearing person wholesale to a range of non-human creatures" it also undermines anthropomorphic classifications altogether and affirms a critique that could usher in serious debates about a more expensive, post-humanist ethics of being.

Having sketched in detail the diverse forms of utopianism projected onto the idea of the city, it is necessary to describe in more detail how control and constraints on many actors are a prominent feature of urban spaces. After all it is not only leftist utopians and academics that are interested in the appropriation of the spaces of the city. Indeed, it is precisely because the city is the object of contradictory and opposed visions that this thesis is able to talk of the resistance of those with lesser capacities to facilitate the enactment of their own interests. This is why Lees (2004b), whilst agreeing with positions such as Harvey's (2000) that the important task is that of realizing a dialectic between the utopia of the city as liberatory and the actual social processes that can be found in urban spaces, argues that an important part of such effort is mapping the heterogeneous ideals at play in the notion of the city as emancipatory. This point is of importance in the discussion of the next section but also comes up again in subsequent chapters. Portions of Chapters Five and Six, for example, delineate the divergent and opposed views of Manchester at the level of the city in general and among skateboarders and graffiti writers themselves. The discussion that follows, however, starts with an examination of certain conceptions of the urban that emanate from more powerful social groups and are necessarily relevant to the subject of freedom in the city of less powerful actors.

### *City rule and (dis)empowerment*

Echoing Lefebvre (1991) and Mitchell (2000), contemporary forms of urbanism, argues Lees (2004a: 7), tend to prioritise the discourse of the expert and the technocrat, serving to disempower ordinary urban dwellers and discourage their contributions to activities that map their futures. Prioritised powerful discourses now increasingly stress the city's alleged diverse and livable potential by superficially aligning itself with leftist critics of urbanism.

A case in point here is Jane Jacobs' critique of the 'sacking of cities' as instantiated by supposedly reclamatory and ideological urban renewal:

The tolerance, the room for great differences among neighbours- differences that often go far deeper than differences in colour- which are possible and normal in intensely urban life, but which are so foreign to suburbs and pseudo-suburbs, are possible and normal only when streets of great cities have built-in equipment allowing strangers to dwell in peace together on civilized but essentially dignified and reserved terms (Jacobs 1972: 83).

The street could function, argued Jacobs, as a site for salutary disorganization and dynamic interactions:

"City areas with flourishing diversity sprout strange and unpredictable uses and peculiar scenes. But this is not a drawback of diversity. This is the point... of it... and one of the mission of cities" (1972: 250-51).

As it turns out, Jacobs vision and the 'playful disco-socialist' (Lees 2004: 14) tactics of the Reclaim the Streets Movement and similar groups have actually been a strong source of inspiration for various contemporary inner city gentrifiers (ibid). Serious questions may be asked as to the motivation and effect of such celebration of the playful and the 'diverse' by 'place-imagers' (ibid). As some writers have already noted, there is a strong possibility that such engagement with 'diversity' through 'renewal' and regeneration may actually be ill-motivated and appropriative (May 1996, Mellor 2002). They may also end up destroying the diverse creativity that was their source of inspiration in the first place (Merrifield 2000).

In this regard, the subject of spatial regulation informed by 'renewal' and regeneration has also been commented upon by Mitchell (1995). He shows how the 'diversity' that is usually taken as the springboard of many regenerative interventions in the city is actually very limited and has repressive implications. The regulation of the urban environment can, and many times takes, a class and status dimension, Mitchell (1995) maintains. The homeless, for example, can be at the receiving end of a number of spatial regulations designed to reduce the visibility of extreme poverty in cities of advanced capitalist societies (ibid). Regardless of the actual risks or levels of criminality



of targeted groups, the constriction of their space is always deemed important in order to secure the business patronage of more affluent groups, in whose interests notions of 'safety' and 'cleanliness' are affirmed. In other words the (supposed) perceptions of safety of the affluent are foreground at the expense of the citizenship and spatial inclusion of the homeless and destitute. Mitchell (1995: 125) sees a collision of two understandings of space, a theme later expanded on in the context of Manchester in Chapters Five and Six. Activists, skateboarders, graffiti artists, young people and the homeless prefer 'a vision of space marked by free interaction and the absence of coercion by powerful institutions' (ibid). This perception of space contrasts radically with that of local governments, city councils and town planners: 'theirs was one of open space for recreation and entertainment, subject to usage by an appropriate public that is allowed in' (ibid). An appropriate public, according to this vision of the urban, is one consisting of money-spending individuals that have learnt the proper demeanours appropriate to spaces and actively identified with them.

In response to this status quo, Mitchell (1995) argues that a critical politics of space is central to democratic politics in general. The marginalisation of indices of poverty and recidivist politics as

represented by the control of the homeless and activists detracted from any claim to democracy and diversity. This marginalisation often results in the criminalisation of activities deemed out of synch with dominant understandings of spatial appropriateness and propriety.

Exemplifying with the homeless, Mitchell (ibid: 118) affirms:

Homeless people are in a double bind. For them, socially legitimated private space does not exist, and they are denied access to public space and public activity by capitalist society which is anchored in private property and privacy. For those who are *always* in the public, private activities must necessarily be carried out publicly. When public space thus becomes a place of seemingly illegitimate behaviour, our notions about what public space is supposed to be are thrown into doubt (emphasis in original).

Hence the mere spatiality of actions and behaviour determine their criminalisation, as authorities clamp down on the homeless going to bathroom, drinking, sleeping and making love in public. This normalization and control of the deviant, as Coleman (2005) avers, shuns any appraisal of the complicity of the capitalist economy in the destitution of the homeless.

In an era in which electronic spaces are being privileged as sites of supposedly democratic politics, Mitchell (1995:123) affirms that the importance of insisting on the representation of marginalised groups becomes even more pertinent. 'The migration of the public sphere into electronic media' argues Mitchell (ibid), renders marginalised

groups even more invisible. For Mitchell, there is a need to stress the necessity of material public spaces as electronic spaces are not only spaces of ultra-control but owned and operated for the procurement of profit. The squeezing out of other imaginations of space is a result of a battle of 'opposing ideologies': space as space of order and space as space of unmediated (socio-political) communion.

The themes of social justice and space have been pursued by another commentator. For Fran Tonkiss (2005) politics as a social relation is necessarily practised in space. Space is not only a site for politics but the object of political struggles. The city space is therefore not only a realm in which politics as a social relation of power takes place; it is also a space over which political struggles are enacted. Who can control, have access to and be represented in urban spaces are important questions in an analysis of the modern city space (ibid: 60). Power and resistance are sociological phenomena difficult to observe. A sociological examination of space, however, gives power away (ibid). An important way for the powerful to exercise power is to occupy space and to control it: 'architecture makes... power legible' (ibid: 60). Reminiscent of Lefebvre, Tonkiss insists that space affords power political, legal and economic materialization.

An understanding of urban space as a site of power is incomplete, according to Tonkiss, for it is necessary to understand urban space also as a site of veritable opposition and resistance:

For one thing, the citadels of official power- the government building, the central bank, the presidential palace, the ministry of defence, the security or intelligence headquarters- also can become targets of protest and opposition (ibid: 60).

Cities are productive of resistances which politicise urban spaces because of the social and special resources they offer. The public space of the city-‘streets, squares, parks, bridges’- provide, argues Tonkiss, informal fora for alternative and dissident politics. Cities bring together diverse modes of mobilization and information dissemination that are necessary for politicisation and political action (ibid: 65).

Just as (political) power is ‘in’ and ‘over’ city space, the city is not merely the ‘setting’ but also the ‘stakes’ of resistance (ibid: 63). Urban resistance takes place in the realm of the urban but is also concerned with ‘the character, freedoms and control of urban space’: ‘urban space is the object of political agency and its medium’ (ibid). Public space exclusion and policing, argues Tonkiss, are therefore reflective of larger contests for the equality of marginal(ised) groups. These controls of space range from officially sanctioned restrictions of

access to informal constraints such as women's fear of sexual crime in the city: 'the street works differently depending on who is standing in it' (ibid; 72); throwing into relief, she argues, the ideal of public/urban space as a space of equal access ungrounded in concrete reality. The control of public space can be brought about through the utilization of the 'semiotics of exclusion' or forceful and militarised denial of access. In the case of the semiotics of exclusion, 'codes of distinction' warn off the underclass, the black and the poor female (ibid: 74-75). The latter process involves the protection of wealth and the wealthy from the perceived dangers of the poor. Through surveillance and (private) security class apartheid is enacted, whilst the police aggressively criminalise and maintain order among the poor (ibid).

The next section continues with themes of control, surveillance and exclusion but the focus is on the resistance of these social processes within the urban realm. Play, it is argued, can be a weapon in the hands of those interested in challenging the disempowering effects of city rule. Chapter Six, a presentation of themes that emerged from the field, returns to the subject of play by examining its role in Manchester skateboarders and graffiti writers' contestation of the constriction of their activities.

### *Play, resistance and the city*

For members of the Situationist International<sup>5</sup> (or SI hereinafter) the city was ambivalent, a simultaneous site of control and playful emancipation (Debord 1981/1956)<sup>6</sup>. The Situationists attempted to transform everyday existence by exploring the lived possibilities of the city whilst being aware of the circumscription of space by powerful social and political forces. On the one hand they understood space to be a site of suppression and domination by the powerful, whose power relied on repression. On the other, they appreciated the possibilities of escape from alienation and the production of spaces of play.

According to the SI, “unitary urbanism”, a term of description for their political action, was based on the theoretico-political insight that to change everyday life there is also a need to change spatial relations (ibid). According to Debord (1994), the urban environment has been colonised and appropriated by dominant interests so that urbanism was not reflective of sociality or play. Instead the urban environment was seen as isolationist. It was “the technology of separation itself” (ibid: 113). The SI endeavoured to invent new games in order to affirm the right to urban freedom and challenge the carving out of

space for capitalist interest: “The Situationist game is distinguished from the classic conception of games by its radical negation of the element of competition and of separation from everyday life... it implies taking a stand in favour of what will bring about the future reign of freedom and play” (Debord (1994: 113). Games and play were, therefore, an important resource for Debord and the Situationists to disrupt the urban terrain through the exploration of freedoms. *Derive*, or critical drift around city spaces, involved not only studying the limitations and constraints on freedom in the city but also a critique of such restraints through playful experimentation (LI 1996)<sup>7</sup>.

Contemporary spatial commentators, such as Harvey (2000), have affirmed that the Situationist subversion of dominant understandings of space, with their emphasis on pleasure, imagination and creative politics is still relevant to any spatial justice agenda. Play, especially in the city, also according to Stevens (2004), is the opposite of ‘instrumental purpose’. Unlike actions directed towards the procurement of instrumental rewards, play *ipso facto*, is pleasurable. Not being under the normal regulative regime of everyday life, people are free to choose to what extent they are willing to be involved. This freedom from obligations makes play attuned to fluidity and change.

Play can also have its own special rules and regimes. As such it can be seen as an escape from conventional roles and routines. In the city, play necessarily brings one into encounters with people of different orientations and outlook, necessitating forms of social engagements outside one's normal social matrix (Stevens 2004).

For Stevens (2004: 139), play and freedom are linked through the 'expressive, affective and perceptual powers' of the corporeal. The processes of exploration, adventure and creativity involved in play are important for the enactment of spatial freedom. Simulation as a type of play involves 'the abandonment of one's place in the world' and the constitution of other identities. Play, in public space, can come into conflict with other uses of the urban environment, especially those related to more instrumental purposes (Stevens 2004). Critical Mass<sup>8</sup>, for example, 'is a critique of the idea that human movement should be functional' (ibid: 142). Play itself can be a critique of power in public space. The cyclists by their emphasis on play and the corporeal are engaging in conflict whilst drawing attention away from physical confrontation or obvious politics:

In this competition, social relations of play are intertwined with relations of power. Play itself takes part in the struggle over the freedoms available in urban society. The definition of appropriate behaviour in urban social space is constantly being reshaped and reinscribed by such playful practices (ibid: 143).



Public space is essential for encountering difference and freeing oneself, through chance encounters, 'from the security and conventionality of ... everyday social experience' (ibid: 148). According to Stevens (2004: 149), public and urban spaces are usually associated with 'diversity, intensity and irrepressible dynamism', as the strict order and homogeneity encountered in other over-rationalised spaces are subordinated. Expression as opposed to repression is the norm and there is an opportunity to question strong values such as industry and rationality, making possible the enactment of spontaneous deviance. Some activities are at odds with the intended use of public space. The creative and exploratory use of space by skateboarders, for example, is not restricted to the spatial engagement that the authorities have in mind but only by the speculative and imaginative vivacity of these alternative appreciators of the urban (Stevens 2004: 151; see also Chapter Six). Spatial regulatory norms injected into the very fabric of urban architecture, for example, rough concrete for skaters, anti-vandal walls for graffiti writers, merely invite increased attempts at creativity because these urban users are in search of a challenge in the first place: 'people in the city are busy trying to be free' (Stevens 2004: 154).

The last discussion has served as further demonstration of how space can be of theoretical and empirical importance for a study of resistance and its basic themes can now be directly related to the thesis' theoretical and empirical interests. It has been shown how the governance and regulation of spaces in the cities of advanced capitalist societies can represent a conflict of interest between the 'governors' of such spaces and certain groups. For local authorities in modern cities, the circumscription of the spaces of activists, skateboarders, graffiti writers, young people and the homeless is justified in the name of the notions of safety, cleanliness, securing the free flow of private business and regeneration while the groups whose spaces are regulated have diametrically opposed values of free interaction and play. This delineation of the conflictual visions of the modern city is relevant to the clarification of empirical and theoretical issues germane to thesis' aims, as resistance is necessarily relational, usually involving the divergence of interests and uneven power. It has also been useful in a clearer identification of the major players in the production of contemporary Manchester and the relevance of their activities to the thesis' aims. Chapter Five, for example, shows that as a city undergoing regeneration, attention to the outlook of spaces is brought to the fore in Manchester through the activities of police officers, street wardens and city council officers. In Chapter Six their

interests are counterposed to those of skateboarders and graffiti writers who constitute the empirical focus of this study. The contention that 'play' is imbricated in the struggle for freedom is also the subject of empirical exploration in the same chapter. How and in what specific ways 'play' overlaps with opposition to the regulation of urban space in the activities of graffiti writers and skateboarders is an important theme in the chapter. I next briefly pull together the main arguments of this chapter and link them with issues explored later in the thesis.

## Summary

The discussion in this chapter has recognised that space, sociologically, is better conceived as an arena of social definitions, actions and constructions. An alternative view, recommending itself on space being a mere receptacle for physical objects, has been shown to be problematic. As a site of alternative politics and regulation, ('public'/urban) space can be seen as a site of conflicting visions and understandings as to the purposes and uses of spatial architecture. This way of seeing space is instructive for this thesis and assumes greater relevance in Chapter Six. Skateboarders and graffiti artists are presented in that chapter as having a radically different vision of the urban from its regulators. In that chapter it is argued

that the resistance of skateboarders and graffiti writers is hardly explicable without recourse to the problem of space. While authorities envision the city as a place for the procurement of profit from individuals with pre-formed identities that are deemed in consonance with organised and regulated space, skaters and graffiti writers whose experiences are discussed in Chapter Six see it as a site of enactment of diverse forms of play and a place of discovery. While spatial regulators conceive of space and its uses as unproblematic and obvious, skateboarders and graffiti artists see it as a site for the discovery of new, unmediated and unobvious uses. This chapter has also stressed that spatial matters are also necessarily social justice matters. If space is not simply material but also ideological, then dominant notions regarding what counts as 'defacement', 'vandalism' and 'appropriate use' are put to the test by skateboarders and graffiti writers, whose activities can be said to help sociologically problematise these notions. A *prima facie* case for exploring 'resistance' empirically through the activities of skateboarders and graffiti writers, therefore, becomes pertinent. The next chapter engages in a methodological discussion of how this can be done.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> See Alexander's (1956) *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*

<sup>2</sup> It is probably better to see Lefebvre's comments against the backdrop of a view of the 1970's as a period of vibrant political activism; otherwise his depiction of people's responses to capitalist appropriation of space may, to an observer today, sound ultra-agentic and romantic.

<sup>3</sup> In the very vast literature on landscape, prominent have been Zukin 1991, Barrell 1980, Cosgrove and Daniels 1988, Williams 1973, Wilson 1991, Daniels 1993, Pugh 1990, Bender 1993 and Bermingham 1987

<sup>4</sup> This is a contestable proposition. It can never be argued, however, that gender was/is not a veritable category of domination.

<sup>5</sup> A group of international political agitators established in the late 1950's. They challenged the use of public space through the invention of urban games and theoretically aligned themselves with Marx's dialectical materialism.

<sup>6</sup> Arguably the most prominent figure among the Situationists. His 1968 *The society of spectacle* attempted a Marxist critical theory grounding for the groups urban practice.

<sup>7</sup> The LI was a forerunner group to the Situationists with similar aspirations.

<sup>8</sup> Critical mass is an event involving many cyclists taking to the streets *en masse*. The nature of its 'protest' remains unclear as participants deny that it is a formal protest in order to evade police notification. It is also 'notoriously' leaderless and spontaneous in its approach to 'direct action'.

## Chapter Four

### Research design and methodology

#### Introduction

In this chapter methodological issues that were pertinent to the execution of this study are examined. The type of data that was required to achieve the aims of the research is discussed. As already alluded to in the introductory chapter, the broad foci of this study are an examination of the theoretical notions of resistance and space and an exploration of to what extent these are capable of illuminating the daily life of Manchester skateboarders and graffiti writers.

A number of specific empirical questions, in light of the theoretical discussions of previous chapters, are germane to this thesis. First, are there good grounds to describe skateboarders and graffiti writers as resistant groups? What is the role of space in such putative resistance? Do other elements (such as play), identified in the course of research into the everyday experience of skateboarders and graffiti writers, play any role in the groups' production of space. How are such features of the groups' life relevant to the issue of resistance? Another question is whether an examination of divisions and fractures within skateboarders and graffiti writers' cultures has any relevance to the

themes of resistance and space. This issue is taken up in relation to gender. Also important is exploring how this study's unusual combination of *comprehensive* theoretical analysis and attention to the minutiae of the everyday graffiti and skateboarding life contributes to the understanding of resistance as phenomena.

The outline of this chapter is as follows. Firstly, given that resistance as phenomena is necessarily relational, I discuss the rationale for the empirical focus on skateboarders and graffiti writers as opposed to an inclusion of police officers, street crime wardens and city councillors in the first-hand gathering of data. I subsequently use the methodological perspectives advocated within, albeit not exclusive to, cultural criminology as a vehicle for highlighting important methodological themes that were important in carrying out this research- such as what type of data was needed for this type of research. I then give an overview of issues relating to access to research sites and respondents, preparatory to the main empirical investigations. Considerations relating to sampling are next considered and they are followed by an examination of relevant methodological strategies.

Research methods are described with a view to examining their suitability for thesis' aims. There follows a discussion of practical

methodological issues such as field notes and recall. The last two sections are devoted to a discussion of how the data was analysed and the ethical issues of relevance to the study.

To recapitulate, this study is a theoretical and empirical work on resistance and space. It attempts to bridge the gap between the theoretical and the empirical by emphasising the meaning-making activities of social actors from 'below'. I start the methodological discussions of this chapter by examining the justifications for directing first-hand research at the experiences of graffiti writers and skateboarders.

### **Methodologically privileging the less powerful?**

Given the aims of this research, theoretically and empirically, the emphasis is on the objects of surveillance and control as opposed to the putative surveillers, or in the specific idiom of this thesis, 'the less powerful' as different from 'the powerful'. This means that methodologically the focus of the empirical aspect of this research was on graffiti writers and skateboarders who use the streets of Manchester in what the authorities consider to be deviant ways. They are the ones that were observed and interviewed. It might still be argued, however, that since resistance is relational in that there have



to be resisters and those against whom resistant actions are directed such a focus is unduly restrictive and requires fuller justification. The reasons for the 'bottom-up approach' of this thesis, therefore, need to be clarified.

The first point to make in this regard is that it is not the case that research was conducted with a view to privileging the vision of any stratum of the surveillance hierarchy- the putative surveiller as opposed to the surveilled<sup>1</sup>, the powerful as different from the less powerful. A 'top-bottom' sociological exploration of surveillance/control and its resistance is just as important as a 'bottom-up' one. Social research, like scientific experiments, however, is a necessarily a 'closed system' (Bhaskar 1979). Therefore, while in the formulation of theories social scientists ought to take cognisance of the whole 'social habitat' of actors, research can only analyse slices and pieces of social life at any one time. Another rationale for the delimitation of the fieldwork part of this research to 'the surveilled' was the recognition that a strong focus on one stratum of the power-resistance hierarchy was more likely to enrich insights because of the greater exploratory depth that could ensue. In other words, while the breadth of the study could have been increased by interviewing and observing skateboarders and graffiti writers as well as such groups as

the police, street crime wardens and city council officials, a focus on skateboarders and graffiti writers increased the depth of insights into their day-to-day activities which after all is the primary concern of a work on resistance and resisters such as this.

Another consideration pertinent as regards who to study is that cultural criminology, a field which this study has been influenced by, has been accused of being biased and not scientific, political and not analytical and this challenge needs to be answered by this thesis.

O'Brien (2005: 5) accuses Ferrell (1996) of privileging the account of graffitiists over that of those who crack down on them:

If the perpetration of graffiti warrants such detailed and celebratory empirical attention- if the aesthetic, interactional and sensual qualities of doing graffiti are deemed necessary to a critical criminological project- why does not the same requirement apply to those who resist the writers and motivate themselves to produce alternative aesthetic motifs in the same urban environments?

Becker (1967), it can be contended, has successfully addressed this problem. The social world is infinite and there is no good reason to assume that research can completely study all sides or strata of any phenomenon at once (ibid). This means an attempt to paint a complete 'balanced picture' is an exercise in futility right from the start: 'we can never have a 'balanced picture' until we have studied all of society simultaneously. I do not propose to hold my breath until that happy day' (ibid: 247).

If one considers the scenario that Becker (ibid: 246) uses to explain his point, that of a researcher in a prison setting, it immediately becomes clear that painting a balanced picture (in the sense implied in Becker's quote below) is hard to accomplish:

Thus if a prison administrator is angered because we take the complaints of his inmates seriously, we may feel that we can get around that and get a more balanced picture by interviewing him and his associates. If we do, we may then write a report which his superiors will respond to with cries of 'bias.' They, in their turn, will say that we have not presented a balanced picture, because we have not looked at *their* side of it. And we may worry that what they say is true... By pursuing this seemingly simple solution, we arrive at a problem of infinite regress.... If we question the superiors of the prison administrator, a state department of corrections or prisons, they will complain of the governor and the legislature. And if we go to the governor and legislature, they will complain of lobbyists, party machines, the public and the newspapers (Becker 1967: 246-7, emphasis in original).

The choice of which side of a phenomenon to study, therefore, is one which every researcher has to make and, as argued above, pragmatic reasons have foreground any pro- subordinate political orientation in focusing on skateboarders and graffitists, as different from, say, the police or street crime wardens in the primary data gathering aspects of this study.

It must be noted, however, that it is not the case that the motivations, interests and visions of social actors, described as ‘the powerful’ (e.g. police and city council officers) in chapter five are left unexamined. While first-hand data gathering on them is not the focus of the empirical aspects of this study, their interests and actions in Manchester’s spaces serve to contextualise those of skateboarders and graffiti writers, which are in fact the main concern of the thesis. This contextualisation is one of the aims of chapter five. That chapter explores, by drawing on empirically-informed sociological commentary on Manchester, the ways that the visions of ‘the powerful’ have contributed towards producing and maintaining ‘public space’ in present-day Manchester. The chapter describes how various sections of the local powerful produce Manchester by examining the history of the city’s spaces and how they have come to bear the characteristics they do. This is done by exploring how the current visions and interests of the city council and the police have come about and have been enacted.

Another reason for foregrounding the experience of skaters and graffiti writers is that one of the central arguments of this study is that the perceptions and outlook of the less powerful are *essential*, and not merely parenthetical, to studying resistance. Criminologists and

sociologists of crime, when they focus on power asymmetries, have placed a lot of emphasis on interpreting the actions of the powerful and the less powerful. When studying the less powerful, however, there is a distinct tendency to assume rather than demonstrate how 'the powerless' interpret their actions. This study moved beyond the traditional approach of merely making sense of the position of the 'less powerful' to understanding the meanings actors attach to their actions. The interpretations made and meanings attached by research respondents to their actions are important for the formulation of sociological knowledge, while not being always reducible to them. More importantly, they are ineliminable though not sufficient in grounding any researcher's claim to have found resistance. Barnes has succinctly put the more general point:

Sociological theory piggy-backs on members' own knowledge in developing concepts and categories: the intersubjectively sustained categories of everyday knowledge of society are the prototypes for sociological theoretical categories, and much of the work required to sustain agreed applications for the theoretical categories is actually done by participants not theorists. Those... orderly features of society studied by ... theorists should be recognized as being constituted as and through knowledge of the participants in the society in question. And it should be recognized further that the concepts and categories employed by... theorists are... in a sense parasitic upon those of participants themselves (1995: 224).

Having explained the basis of the focus on graffiti writers and skaters, the next issue to discuss is whether cultural criminology, a field that

shares some of the concerns of this thesis, affords crucial methodological insights that helped the process of data collection.

### **Qualitative methods and cultural criminology**

This thesis draws upon cultural criminology's insights but is not determined by the perspective. This body of work is particularly useful because it favours the voice of the 'transgressor' and advocates the use of qualitative methods through which the researcher can understand how the 'criminal'/deviant sees his/her actions.

Cultural criminology is also concerned with understanding the intersections between crime/transgression and culture (Hayward and Young 2004: 259; Ferrell et al 2008). The concrete experience of crime through emotions: pleasure, pain, humiliation, terror, fear, fearlessness and hatred are thought to be worthy of scrutiny. It explores the meanings actors make of their daily actions and the ways they react to the meanings other social actors make of their actions. This type of criminology attempts to understand the constructions of the 'criminal' as well as that of the 'criminaliser' 'constructions upwards and constructions downwards' (Hayward and Young 2004: 259).

Cultural criminology deems qualitative methods invaluable to the study of the intersections between culture and crime. The use of the methods, according to cultural criminologists (ibid), is not based on an assumption of the existence of just one construction of deviance, transgression or crime but on the fluid and malleable nature of these concepts according to the position and location of the interpreter or that of his/her social group. Qualitative methods such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews are easily reconcilable with the 'double hermeneutic' (Giddens<sup>2</sup> 1984). The 'double hermeneutic' is an acceptance of the ability of the 'object' of study (social actors) to construct social reality. The knowledge produced from qualitative social research, according to this concept, is an end product of the constructions of, not just the social scientist, but also the social actor. The interpretations and meanings people make of their lives are constructions that are separate from, but not necessarily opposed to, that of the social scientist.

Participant observation, which can involve immersing oneself in the milieu of social actors, is a good way of understanding the lived experience of people and therefore of immense significance to cultural criminology. Having respondents fill in questionnaires and tick boxes will never *completely* fulfil the aim of cultural criminology

(see Young 2004) to explore what deviance and transgression tastes or feels like:

Slogging through the mundane, with its routines and boring lags, is still the best way to prepare for understanding extraordinary circumstances and to establish relationships of trust that can lead, in turn to dialogue and collaborative social (ex)change (Kane 2004: 306).

This sentiment guided this thesis in many ways, resulting in immersion in the milieu of skateboarders and graffiti writers. This involved, for example, attendance at graffiti festivals and exhibitions, going to skateboarders' formal meetings and competitions and doing some legal skateboarding. Apart from these forms of engagement with the way of life of the two groups, being questioned by and witnessing 'hassles/crackdowns' by street wardens during participant observation, watching skate and graffiti videos in the company of graffiti writers and skateboarders, attending court proceedings with graffiti writers and being allowed to observe at barrister briefings all helped to gain vital insights into the workings of the world of the social actors studied.

The methodology of cultural criminology, therefore, is the 'methodology of attentiveness' (Hayward and Young 2004: 268), of 'criminological *verstehen*' (Ferrell 1997). It hearkens to the 'invocation to be true to subject- without either romanticism or the generation of



pathology' (Hayward and Young 2004: 268). Social actors are studied in their 'habitat' and the meanings they make of their actions understood in the context of their experience. Cultural criminology, therefore, points to grounding the understanding of skateboarders and graffiti artists' perceptions of actions in a detailed study of their activities and perceptions.

The perspective is insightful for this study as it attempts to counterpose the meanings actors make of their actions and situations to that of other social actors. This means the study could explore the conflictual definitions between graffiti writers and skateboarders and local authorities in Manchester. This piece of research, inspired by the methodology of cultural criminology, therefore, (see also Blumer's (1969) interactionist perspective for similar methodological prescriptions in sociology), enquired whether it is through divergent definitions and meanings, as between members of the subcultures and the local powerful, that resistance is enacted (Chapter Six). Since cultural criminology contends that social actors themselves have views about their actions and situation, the path was paved for the study not to merely provide interpretations for the actions of subcultural members but to intimately link such interpretations with members' verbalisations of their own situation. Before saying how

data needed for this thesis was gathered and examining in more details the methods used, it is helpful to address the issue of what the kinds of evidence were deemed important to ground the investigative aspects the study. I sought evidence that could shed light on whether skateboarders and graffiti writers seek to oppose the actions of the powerful in Manchester. Evidence that refused to accept as final the authority of the powerful in Manchester's spaces was considered important.

Also germane was whether they used spatial architectures, not only in alternative ways not envisaged by planners and city councillors, but also with a view to demonstrating the impossibility of complete control of their activities. Considered pertinent also was whether members developed and encouraged among themselves, discourses that evaluate the powerful's actions as unjustified and countenanced the carrying out of actions pursuant to such evaluations. As to resistance within the groups themselves, evidence that there are real differences that contribute towards intra-group schisms; and that oppositional discourses and actions were developed and engaged in to limit or inveigh against sub-groups deemed to be more powerful and perceived to unjustifiably wield power was of the essence. This last point is exemplified in chapter six with the experience of female

graffiti writers and skateboarders, a minority group within the cultures of skateboarding and graffiti.

In the upcoming sections I examine in detail the principal methodological tools that were used for this thesis: semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The discussion draws on number of works on qualitative methodology to bring out the specific concerns of this thesis. After examining the two main methods that were used for the study, there is a brief discussion explaining why certain qualitative methods were not used. Before proceeding to these discussions I first examine how research sites and respondents were accessed as well as the sampling strategies that guided research.

### **Approaching the field: the issue of 'access'**

Access refers to the various dimensions of the researcher being able to collect relevant data from individuals, institutions or settings. As Flick (2005: 57) rightly notes, willingness on the part of respondents to partake in the research can be an important access problem. At the beginning of this research, gaining the confidence of respondents and the social actors observed was crucial. Initially, some respondents were wary and would give very short answers. As many potential respondents knew more about the research through contact with

established skateboarders, skate shop owners and respected graffiti writers; and word spread about the focus of the research, access to interviewees and observation sites eased considerably.

As I discuss in greater detail later, park managers are important gatekeepers to skate parks as research sites and a good relationship with them was pivotal to the collection of data. I enjoyed a good relationship with the skate park managers/workers and this no doubt contributed to the relatively easy access to data sites and individuals. Good transport links between my residence in Manchester and the skate park also meant that data collection at various times of the day was not problematic.

Watching skate videos at skate shops also meant that informal discussions about skateboarding could be initiated in a relaxed atmosphere. As a stronger relationship was established with many skateboarders I was offered skateboards for practice and invited to watch the latest skate videos or sometimes invited to special winter skating events.

More generally, documentary sources ( for example, skate and graffiti magazines, zines, photographs, skate DVDs, graffiti DVDs and

internet forum discussion pages) were not only important in terms of access and as a way of initiating relationships that made research much easier and effective, they were also important in themselves as a research method. Information that was gathered from these sources informed interview questions and sparked interests in participant observation of certain events (see Mahoney 1997 for a methodological discussion of this point). I was, for example, able to keep abreast of skate competitions and graffiti events and their venues through internet forum discussion pages. Another advantage was that documentary sources are relatively unobtrusive and afforded me an alternative opportunity to learn about the lifestyles of the groups, with many documentary sources one realises that members are actively telling their own stories regardless of the interests of researchers. The stories that skateboarders and graffiti writers tell one another as different from what they tell researchers in interview situations are another avenue into the worlds of the groups.

Apart from watching videos with skateboarders and graffiti writers, 'hanging out' at skate shops and attending graffiti festivals helped to assure respondents that I was really interested in their ways of life. Showing interest and asking questions about every facet of the lifestyles of skaters and graffiti writers, even when I suspected

members would deem them naïve might have also given my respondents confidence to respondents that I was genuinely interested in the cultures and given them the confidence to answer fundamental and sometimes potentially incriminating questions. For example, many skateboarders and graffiti writers were interested in discussing many technical details of their day-to-day activities, say, assembling a skateboard or the right shade of paint, I always paid attention and asked questions as I conjectured this was important for developing friendships and relationships even though I knew these discussions were quite tangential to the central purposes of my research. I also dressed as casually as possible but never tried to imitate the sartorial styles of the groups as this might seem too self-conscious and spark suspicions.

My own modest familiarity with hip hop and other forms of popular culture may have also stood me in good stead. I could, for example, contribute to some arguments over the dominance of US rap over UK rap music or request that the skate shopkeeper play a particular CD in the background while I chatted with graffiti writers and skateboarders. This was often met with smiles and ice breaker comments by respondents who would typically say “yes, that’s one of my favourite lyricists too.”

Given how wary and suspicious skaters and graffiti writers are of authority figures, being a 'young black male' may have eased access to both subcultures, even though members were mostly white. It is possible that an older researcher would have found some access obstacles very difficult, albeit not completely insurmountable, in this type of research.

I gained access to female skateboarders through an older 'girl skater' and my contacts snowballed from then on. My initial contact with the older skateboarder made getting advice about the particular parks and skate spots that female skaters frequented easier. I was also able to, for the same reason, attend exclusively female skate competitions.

I assured respondents that I was only doing my research as part of 'a long Uni homework' which usually led to the question of 'how long'? My answer often elicited amazement: 'You are going to study skateboarders and graffiti writers for four years?!' My interviewees were often interested in knowing more about my research beyond the specific questions I asked them and I tried to keep my explanations as simple as possible- 'I'm interested in how you and other skateboarders/graffiti writers understand and *respond* to surveillance,

police in the city. I also want to know how you use the city the way you do.' This is in sharp contrast with discussions I had with fellow PhD students and academics, which elicited a lot of helpful pieces of advice - 'Surely, Stephen, you don't bring up Lefebvre and Foucault in your interviews!' In the next section the discussion turns the relevance of sampling considerations to the methodology of this study.

### **Sampling**

Sampling, when interpreted as 'what', 'where' and 'when' to interview or observe, is just as important in qualitative research as in quantitative studies (Hancock 2001: 35). For this study, the questions relating to sampling revolved around where to interview skateboarders and graffiti writers of the many places where they may be found in the city. Why was one site preferred to another? The question of whether interviewing/observing at particular times had some effects on data gathered was also important. 'Who to interview/observe', seemingly straightforward in this study of graffiti writers and skateboarders, became important once it was recognised that the set 'skateboarders and graffiti writers in the city' consists of several subsets depending on theoretical orientations and research



aims. In a study in which gender is central, for example, finding female skateboarders automatically becomes a sampling issue. Where intra-cultural dynamics is fundamental to a research agenda, whether punk or hip hop skateboarders or graffiti writers are being observed or interviewed becomes a vital sampling issue. For this thesis, in order to address the one of the research questions of this thesis which asks whether an examination of gender divisions and fractures within skateboarders and graffiti writers' cultures has any relevance to the themes of resistance and space the inclusion of female participants in graffiti and skateboarding became an important sampling issue.

As regards more general sampling issues, especially in the case of skateboarders, interviews and observation sometimes started at skate parks and these sites were generative of other sites i.e. other places to which park skaters referred the interviewer. Skateboarders, for example, referred me to spaces near the city hall where city council offices are situated and many other skating sites such as the space surrounding the Urbis Museum at Cathedral Gardens in the city centre.

'When to interview/observe' was methodologically and practically important as skateboarders and graffiti writers, most of whom are

young, are usually involved in education, training or some other preoccupation that necessarily restricts when they can participate in the activities of the cultures. Some skate parks, 'city centre skate park', only open after three pm on week days (when skateboarders are back from school/college). It was always better to go to the skate parks and street skating spots during normal school hours and outside of those hours in order not to miss any data that could be gathered during these periods. Also, doing graffiti observation involved going to certain places where graffiti writers are known to hang out, for example paint and skate shops. Finding out where they usually hang out from interviews was helpful in getting in touch with potential respondents beyond those introduced through snowballing.

Sampling strategies can evolve during the whole research process (Hancock 2001: 36). It was therefore considered preferable to be open-minded on sampling as new theoretical and empirical questions emerged together with the initial ones. Sampling, it can be argued, is present in every phase or aspect of the research process (Flick 2005: 61). Intersections of considerations such as adherence to ethical guidelines, pragmatic concerns and sampling meant that very young skateboarders were not included in samples, as discussed under ethics below.

Snowball sampling, an important strategy during the empirical research, involves respondents introducing other potential respondents to the researcher. At the early stages of this research, graffiti writers and skateboarders introduced me to other graffiti writers and skateboarders. Apart from being a sampling strategy, snowball sampling also helped to build a good relationship between the respondents and me, as skaters and graffiti writers were much less suspicious when contacted this way. There were some problems with gaining the trust of members of the two groups under study, especially graffiti writers early on in the study. Once a small number of graffiti writers had been interviewed, however, it became much easier to interview others as word about the investigative interests of the study spread widely among members of the graffiti community. For example, a graffiti writer said the following in an interview:

‘People are talking about what you’re doing. I guess what they are first concerned about is “who the fuck is this guy asking questions about [graffiti] writers? Where is he from? What’s his problem? What does he want?” I guess what people like about what you’re doing is you’re interested in what writers experience everyday and not asking the old boring questions the others ask, like “is it art or crime?”, as if that’s the only thing that matters.’

Breakthrough with interviewees within the graffiti community did not come straightaway and initially a few promises to show up at cafes for interviews were not kept. By frequenting graffiti writers' hang outs in Manchester such as skate shops, paint shops, exhibitions and graffiti festivals, contacts within the graffiti community grew and these contacts also provided links with further contacts. Gaining the confidence of many graffiti writers resulted in being invited to graffiti events and being given mobile phone numbers of potential interviewees.

The concept of primary and secondary selection, as espoused by Morse (1998:73), has also been important for this study. Primary selection, in relation to this study, may be described as the selection of certain 'cases' (e.g. respondents) based on their capacity to yield significant and relevant data towards an understanding of the research themes. In the case of research respondents, they would normally possess special knowledge or experience that could yield valuable data. They would also possess the capacity to reflect and articulate opinions in a coherent manner and be willing to participate in the study. As regards secondary selection, staying with the example of respondents to interviews, the above criteria will only be partly fulfilled but the respondents will be willing to participate in the

research process. According to Morse (1998: 73), as much as possible, the first group of respondents are to be considered of higher value in data collection (interviews) and analysis (transcription and interpretation, for example).

This study utilised the principle of primary selection with caution. The skate park managers occupy special positions in the skating community and liaise with the city council not only regarding skating but other street sports in the city. At the exploratory stage of this research one of them provided valuable information regarding the history of skateboarding in the city, the history of his skate park as well as the inception of the ban on skating in the city centre. Aside from this, his educational background as a university graduate meant he readily identified with the research process and was intuitive to my needs as a researcher- unsolicited, he offered to email the skate park's statistics and photographs. An active skateboarder and supporter of the rights of skaters to skate in public spaces, the skate park manager deserves special attention as regards data collection, for example, interviews, help with snowball sampling and suggestions about sites in the city where participant observation can be done. He also is a veritable gatekeeper. All these details point to a more than *prima facie* case for 'primarily selecting' the skate park manager. The same can be

said of many skate shop owners in the city centre who are also skateboarders or former skateboarders ('skater-shop owners'). Care was taken, however, not to privilege the accounts of 'established skateboarders' at the expense of 'ordinary skaters'. There was no over-reliance on the account of 'the primarily selected' which would have affected the reliability of data. There was, instead, a conscious attempt to include the account of 'ordinary skaters' throughout the fieldwork. The theoretical insights from 'Foucauldian resistance' in chapter two, which have been influential in this thesis arguably require such an inclusion, if power is everywhere; even among resisters. The upcoming discussions address in more detail the specific methods used in gathering data, starting with the semi-structured interview.

### **The Semi-structured Interview**

One of the principal methods used by this study is the semi-structured interview. Different types of interviews are used by researchers depending on the situation. The structured interview follows a set of questions rigidly while the unstructured interview is the opposite and has little or no structure (Lofland et al 2006: 17-18). In the case of the unstructured interview, the researcher has a theme in mind and asks questions to explore those themes. The

respondent's answers are usually used as springboards for more questions. This type of interview is especially suitable in exploratory research where the researcher has little knowledge of the subject or where little or no literature exists (Mahoney 1997). The semi-structured interview is in the middle of the continuum of structured interviews and unstructured interviews. It would, therefore, not be without any structure as in the case of the unstructured interview; neither would it have the rigidity of the structured interview. The semi-structured interview method has been preferred in this study to other interview methods because it allows for the spontaneous reaction of the interviewer to the answers of the respondents. The interviewer can, as a result, explore unanticipated issues arising from the respondent's replies. The semi-structured interview usually involves the use of a list of issues to be discussed that guide the interview. This keeps it more systematic than the unstructured interview. The use of semi-structured interviews presumes that the respondent can make meaning of their social action and that of others, a methodological point of importance to this thesis. It also presumes that the respondent has more than superficial knowledge of the issues raised in the interview. Relationships and trust are, therefore, important for the successful use of semi-structured interviews, if respondents are to reveal the meanings of their social

world. In the conduct of this research, once trust was gained the respondents were more spontaneous in directing me to other sources and means of gathering data. For example, some graffiti writers invited me to witness their trial in court after interviews with them. On some occasions some graffiti writers were also willing to let me be an observer as they discussed their cases with their barristers. One respondent was interviewed close to the period of his trial and was subsequently convicted and sent to prison on charges of criminal damage relating to doing illegal graffiti. Once his appeal was successful and he was released from prison, he sent me a mobile phone text message to let me know about his release. This level of trust can only be gained by respecting respondents' point of view and by allowing the respondents to talk freely about their day-to-day experiences.

Another factor that facilitated the successful gathering of data during interviews was the willingness of to do interviews in sites and places suitable to the respondents. Many respondents, for example, had to be interviewed while they were en route to a destination- at the back of buses, on skateboards on the way to a skate park or skating spot. Interviews were also conducted in the basements of skate shops or at the back of vans or inside cars owned by respondents. This



unorthodox approach to the selection of interview sites does not, however, mean that I was not cognisant of safety issues throughout the conduct of the research, as I discuss under ethics below.

An important dimension to the semi-structured interview is the group interview. Where an interviewer gathers data through the semi-structured method with more than one person at once, it is important to be aware of its boons and banes (Hancock 2001: 33). This was of especial significance for this study, as skateboarders and graffitiists often move through the city centre in groups and it was sometimes helpful to initiate conversations and interviews with them as a group rather than attempt to get a private interview straightaway with each one of them. They sometimes preferred to be interviewed in twos and threes instead of being interviewed on a one-to-one basis. That an interviewee might prefer not to divulge some information or express certain opinions in the presence of his or her 'crew members' could not be ruled out. This means group interviews in some circumstances might have favoured the gathering of views that are dominant within the groups to the detriment of countervailing ones. As a counterpoint, group interviews were a means of getting a good picture of the diversity of opinions on a subject which graffitiists and skateboarders had divergent opinions. An interview with two

skateboarders, for example, revealed that there were varying levels of toleration for other street sport participants. One of the interviewees held the view that BMX riders damaged public property and are the source of the troubles that skateboarders have with the city council and the police, as young city users are usually considered guilty by association. The second respondent begged to disagree and affirmed that BMX'ers did not damage public property any more than skateboarders.

The primary role of group interviews was, however, to complement one-to-one interviews. Initially respondents were met in a group and asked about graffiti and skateboarding as a group. One-to-one interviews on the same day or at some other time were then arranged and conducted. The fact that the respondent had met the interviewer as part of a group earlier might have been responsible for the openness of some respondents at one-to-one interviews, as s(he) was now aware of my intentions and research interests.

An important issue that must be mentioned before the discussion moves to observation as a research method is that of how I came to the conclusion that enough respondents had been interviewed. My approach to this issue was pragmatic and straightforward- further

formal interviews were stopped when no significant information bearing on the investigative interests of the thesis was any longer being elicited. This was an indication that all relevant ground had been covered. Fifty-one *formal* interviews, i.e. excluding informal chats and conversations, were conducted. Thirty-five skateboarders were interviewed, thirty of whom were male and five of whom were female. Sixteen graffiti writers were interviewed, fourteen of whom are male and two of whom are female. Only 5 female skateboarders and 2 female graffiti writers could be interviewed for the study. The main reason for this is that female participants were harder to contact, being a very small minority in the two cultures.

## **Observation**

Observation involves the firsthand gathering of data on social action and actors in their everyday life for the purpose of research (Lofland et al 2006: 17). Observation as a research method is problematic as regards nomenclature. 'Participant observation' can refer to all forms of research observation. When it does, it can be divided into two major types: active participant observation and passive participant observation (Johnson, Avenarius and Weatherford, 2006). The first type of participant observation describes a situation where the

researcher actively participates in the social situation being explored. In the case of the second, he or she refrains from participation and merely observes. 'Participant observation', described along these lines, is based on the notion that social actors are 'participants' (willing or 'unwilling', conscious or unconscious) in the research process and that the researcher observes the 'participants' actively or passively.

The term 'participant observation' can also simply mean observation that is participant (Flick 2005: 134) (i.e. active as opposed to passive). Non-participant observation will, in this case, be its antonym. The nomenclature approach used in this study is that of 'observation' as a research method involving all kinds of research observation and being divisible into two major types: active observation and passive observation.

Active observation in this study involved doing some legal skateboarding. Other forms of active observation for the study involved watching graffiti and skateboard videos with members (an important part of the subcultural activities of these two groups), and participating in events such as skate competitions and graffiti festivals. Passive observation involves detailed observation without recourse to actual participation in the actions of the social actors. For

this study, active observation was reserved only for aspects of skateboarding and graffiti that are not illegal. Skating, for example, is banned in most of Manchester's city centre hence active observation in the city centre was excluded, an issue explored further under discussion on ethics.

Research observation enables the researcher to record the behaviour and interactions of social actors as they would normally occur. This means that the researcher has to gain the confidence and trust of social actors. Active observation in the case of skateboarding and graffiti is definitely a way to gain the confidence of skateboarders and graffitiists. Some skateboarders detest 'walkboarders' (those who hang around skaters without doing any skating themselves). Active observation, however, has the disadvantage of limiting 'the observational perspective' of the observer as note taking and some other forms of recording data are almost impossible to do when engaging in active observation. A researcher cannot, for example, do a lot of data recording whilst skateboarding. Indeed as Bergman (1985 quoted in Flick 2005: 308) affirms:

We have only very limited competence of remembering and reproducing amorphous incidents of an actual social event. The participant observer thus has no other choice than to note the social occurrences which he was witness to mainly in a typifying, resuming, and reconstructive fashion.

A combination of active and passive observation was used in this study. Active observation enabled me to familiarise myself with the subcultures while passive observation facilitated on the spot non-electronic recording of data. My fieldwork experience indicates that there is a blurred line between active and passive observation. Many skateboarders, for example, rested between spurts of skating to watch other skaters and were willing to chat with me only after doing some skating. Chats were at once a participation in the sub-cultural life of skateboarding (active observation), as skateboarders and graffiti writers spend a lot of time talking about skating and graffiti ; and they were also semi-structured interviews (when I took notes) and sometimes easily turned into passive observation when I stopped chatting and just observed and took notes.

Observations can offer the researcher opportunity to verify data gathered through other sources such as interviews and documents (Mahoney 1997). The context of the social actions of social actors is more likely to be fully understood through the use of observation because it can exist in a 'natural' and largely 'unmediated' setting. By being largely uncontrolled, observation makes the recording of unanticipated data likely. Observation, however, does have a few disadvantages. The presence of a researcher in the natural milieu of

the social actor is bound to have some effect, infinitesimal or significant, on their actions. Social actors may refrain from doing what they would normally do if the researcher was not around or simply be very conscious of his/her presence. A good example to illustrate this point occurred when a male skateboarder made an obscene gesture to a young woman passing by and another skateboarder quickly pointed out to me that I should not generalise from this behaviour because skateboarders were normally well behaved. This effect of the researcher's presence, however, did not affect the validity of the research as a whole since it relied on other data sources apart from observation, such as graffiti writers and skateboarders' records of themselves through various electronic media such as skate videos.

It has also been argued that research observation is based on the notion that 'interviews and narratives' make accounts of 'practices' known, not the actual practices themselves (Flick 2005: 134). Observation, therefore, according to Flick (2005: 134), helps to 'untangle' accounts of practices from actual practices. If Flick's argument here refers to such straightforward and trivial instances as, say, a researcher verifying whether skateboarders actually drink as much alcohol whilst watching skate videos as they claimed they do in

their research interviews then there can be little contention that this is true. Observation can in such cases distinguish accounts of practices from practices themselves. Flick, however, seems to be saying more than this. Although some ambiguity precludes a definitive reading, what is being advocated might be a position lending support to the idea that there is a 'neutral' account of social reality and practices that can be made by the observer or the social scientist. Implicit in this position is the notion that the account of the social scientist is somehow not an account or interpretation of practices but an unproblematic mirror of the reality of practices. In the main, however, research observation, yields *an* account of practices and is not *the* account of practices. It is also doubtful that practices can be easily divulged from the meaning they make to social scientists and social actors. A less problematic justification for observation is that it simply provides the researcher with an opportunity to develop a report of social action that is empirically reputable by placing it in firm relation to the account of members and what can actually be perceived. The reality being studied includes the account of members. The social scientist's descriptions will reflect the theoretical resources of the academic tradition that s/he is drawing on, that tradition itself and the descriptions typical to it being continually changed through



studies of the accounts of social actors and their actions (Schutz and Luckmann 1973, Giddens 1984).

Two principal qualitative methods were left out of the methodology of this study: focus groups and the structured interview. The focus group is a method that combines features of participant observation and interviews (Mahoney 1997). The method presumes the uniqueness of data derivable from group interactions (Kitzinger 1994: 103). The language used by the respondents in the discussion as well as their demeanour is thought to offer a lot of data that can not be derived from interviews and participant observation. A focus group would usually comprise a gathering of eight to twelve people chosen by the researcher because they share common characteristics related to the subject to be studied (Oates 2000: 187). Focus groups are especially useful for project evaluation. Outcomes, impacts and new ideas may be identified and generated easily through this method. Focus groups were not deemed relevant to the methodology of this study because semi-structured interviews with skateboarders and graffiti artists will in some cases involve talking to more than one person. These semi-structured interviews/conversations come short of a proper focus group but retain its essential quality of group interaction. Not every skateboarder and graffiti writer is willing to talk

to a researcher individually. Nor is it the case that they are very interested in congregating in sufficient numbers to be participants in a semi-formal chat that an ideal focus group would entail. The semi-structured *group* interview helped towards being able to gather data not only from one-to-one interviews but also from small groups.

The reasons for excluding structured interviews have been partly alluded to earlier. Structured interviews do not possess enough flexibility to do a study of the lives of skateboarders and graffitiists. Data are restricted to the parameters and schema of the researcher, thereby stifling the gathering of data that may yield unexpected insights, a restriction unwelcome in a study such as this that places emphasis on the accounts and verbalisations of members. The discussion next turns to the subject of field notes and issues encountered in their use.

### **Field notes and recall**

Relevant to both semi-structured interviews and observation is the issue of recall. In a bottom-up study of skateboarders and graffiti writers, note-taking was not always possible. While doing *active* observation with skateboarders and graffitiists it was impossible to take notes and the use of electronic forms of recording activities such

as tape or video recorders was ruled out in this study for ethical reasons, as I discuss below. Attentiveness to detail and recall had to be relied upon in order to write *ex post facto* notes. It was not, for example, possible to take notes while skateboarders commuted on their skateboards to and from skate parks but valuable discussions took place during these periods that were later recorded in field notes. Where notes could be taken, a pen and a notebook were used. Data gathered by these means was recorded as soon as possible afterwards, usually within hours, in order to maximise recall.

Regarding observation, there is also the issue of whether to use 'structured protocol sheets' or normal field notes (Flick 2005: 140). The former utilise structured schemes and frameworks reminiscent of the structured interview. Like the structured interview, it has the danger of excluding the gathering of unanticipated data (ibid). Field notes, like semi-structured interviews, were preferable and were used in this research because unanticipated data could be gathered more easily in this way. I now discuss how data gathered for research was analysed.

## Analysis

Qualitative data analysis usually involves the flagging of emergent themes, reflections on the themes and can include rigorous data collection to confirm or disconfirm them. Phenomena are evaluated based on indicators that justify or falsify tentative hypotheses (Hancock 2001: 42). This thematic or conceptual analysis may involve the exploration of concepts and theses from existing theories or a test of the researcher's own hypotheses formulated prior to or during the research process. Field notes are of especial importance in this regard. They can be used to make tentative conclusions, comment on concepts and ideas from existing theoretical frameworks and the sociologist's ideas (ibid: 43). The validation of hypotheses can involve respondent or participant confirmation. It is, however, not reducible to it (ibid). However, as noted earlier, for any study which has the notion of resistance as one of its primary preoccupation, the behaviour of the social actor is not the only important issue. Another crucial element is the social actor's intention which will usually be known through observation of her behaviour that is coupled with reflections on her verbalisations. The researcher's own reflections on data, therefore, regardless of the social actor's verbalisation, play a vital role in the formulation of conceptual categories and conclusions.

This is precisely why the thesis emphasises 'space' and 'play' as important concepts in Chapters Five and Chapter Six.

The availability of computer software packages for qualitative analyses (such as N.VIVO and NUDIST) can make the process of analysis faster and more efficient. These software packages work by a system of coding, flagging and categorisation. It can be noted, however, that in a study dedicated to the unravelling of subtle meanings, undertones and embedded constructions such as the present one, software packages could divorce data from their context thereby making the loss of unobvious meanings more likely. By manually noting and reflecting on emergent themes it was possible for me to assess the authenticity of concepts, indices and categories in relation to the data gathered during the fieldwork and afterwards.

Germane to the process of analysis is the issue of validity. Notions of validity will vary depending on the type of project (Winter 2000). Where a project is designed to make generalisable assertions, 'external validity' becomes important i.e. the validity of the piece of research not only rests on whether it measures correctly the population in its sample but also whether its results can be generalised to other populations (ibid). This study does not attempt to do this kind of

generalisation; this kind of analytic test of validity is therefore not applicable to it. A more appropriate description of the kind of validity relevant to this study is 'internal validity' (ibid). This generally relates to whether there is sufficient evidence to back up the results of the research. In a research such as this in which the interpretation of data is important, it is necessary to engage with the issue of validity by considering the plausibility of other interpretations other than the ones that the researcher is convinced best capture the workings of the phenomena being analysed. This was done by examining the coherence of alternative approaches that can be found in the literature or by *temporarily* abandoning the favoured or accepted interpretation. Ultimately, in this regard, I thought it was important that whatever analytic conclusion I came to must be strongly supported and plausible in light of the verbalisations and observations from the fieldwork. 'Internal validity' should not give the impression that this thesis work was an island onto itself. In fact, whether my analyses cohered with or departed from work that had been done on similar themes was of the essence analytically. In many cases, as will be clear in Chapter Six, I noticed coherence while in others divergence was the case. I discuss next what ethical issues were thought relevant to the thesis.

## **Ethics**

Some of the ethical considerations identified in this study can be divided into moral, legal and personal safety issues. As regards ethico-moral considerations, pertinent concerns include those that have been flagged 'ethical' by the British Sociological Association and ethical issues I personally deemed of especial relevance to this thesis. A feature present in both types of considerations was that there was no force of law and strictly speaking there was some freedom as to which course of action to take. In the case of guidelines proffered by the British Sociological Association (BSA), ethical principles had the effect of demi-laws. Ethical 'rules' formulated by the BSA are, however, intentionally vague and are merely a set of ethical concerns a researcher should be alive to (British Sociological Association 2002: 1). This makes ethical considerations under this genus uncertain and very contingent. It can be averred, however, that the result of my reflections on the relevant ethical considerations happily coincides with BSA 2002 guidelines. This thesis went through a postgraduate upgrade committee twice. The committee looked into all facets of the thesis, examining any ethical considerations thought to be germane.

The age of the respondents in a research of this kind is important, as narratives sometimes included accounts of ‘criminality’ and ‘anti-social behaviour’. For the purpose of this research, in the absence of any definition of ‘a child’ by the BSA, a child (a person incapable of giving full consent except when conjoined with parental consent) is a person under the age of sixteen. This is a widely accepted age for transition into young adulthood. By this definition, no children were respondents in this thesis. As the BSA advises, ‘it is better to err on the side of caution’ (British Sociological Association 2002: 6).

Confidentiality and anonymity also fall under the genus of moral/ethical considerations that this research was alive to. They are, arguably, legal issues as well, especially in relation to the Data Protection Act (1998). This law will be considered later under the legal aspect of the discussion. The study benefited from respondents being forthcoming with frank responses when they were assured that their responses are confidential and anonymous. It was considered a moral imperative to treat their responses as such. All necessary steps were taken to protect participants’ interests in this regard. Responses admitting to ‘anti-social behaviour’ and ‘grave illegality’ were elicited due to the nature of the study hence anonymity in the writing up of the results of data collected was vital to protecting the interests of



respondents. This involved the use of pseudonyms for respondents, as reflected in chapter six. There was also no electronic or digital recording of interviews.

The ethics of observation in public and semi-public spaces were also important. I endeavoured to inform skateboarders and graffiti writers that they were being observed. However, the argument that 'participants' are likely to change their behaviour if aware that they are being watched (Flick 2005: 136) has the counterpoint that skateboarders and graffiti writers *expect* to be watched in public spaces anyway and are always bearing this in mind when they engage in their sub-cultural activities but that it would probably be in the interests of researchers to state that observation is being conducted rather than be found out. Skateboarding is a subculture with a strong focus on showing off one's skills (Chapter Six, see also Flusty 2000). Being seen is integral to the activities of skateboarders. Graffiti writers also do not mind being watched when doing *legal* graffiti (Chapter Six; see also Ferrell 1993, 1995, Snyder 2009).

As a rule, potentially permanent records of skateboarding and graffiti activities were always backed up with the express consent of those to whom those records refer. This was not always possible in the case of

graffiti. It is reasonable to take it for granted that records of publicly available graffiti can be made, subject to sufficient anonymity where relevant. Graffiti writers themselves take delight in their publicly available work being seen and photographed by other people.

It was also important to be alive to the fact that in carrying out data collection there might be breaches of the law. Every effort was made to avoid breaches of the law relating to illegal skating and graffiti. This meant, for example, that I could not participate in skating in the Manchester city centre since skating is illegal there. This decision is, however, not to be taken as agreement with the rightness of any law but as a practical step towards preventing any disruptions to the research process<sup>3</sup>. I have also familiarised myself with portions of the Data Protection Act (1998) relevant to the research process, especially the eight principles of data protection and the relevant provisos.

Health and safety considerations are very pertinent to this piece of research. Valuable data had to be gathered in 'dangerous places' and 'dangerous times' and it was pertinent to be aware of issues relating to my safety as a researcher safety and the safety of participants. Public and private spaces that I deemed potentially unsafe ('dangerous

places') were only entered upon serious reflection. I only entered such spaces accompanied by a trusted individual. When it was thought to be necessary for personal safety, I refrained from gathering data after dark in some research sites. Personal safety ruled out direct observation in some instances and data had to be gathered by some other means such as interviews. Skateboarding and graffiti present health and safety issues *ipso facto*. Skateboarders have been known to get injured while skating, ranging from minor to major injuries to the head from a terrible falls. Several of my skateboard respondents nursed some injury or the other and others had been transported from skate spots by ambulance in the past. Graffiti also has the problem of inhalation of noxious fumes from paint as a potential health hazard. Special safeguards that some skateboarders and graffiti writers took in order to protect themselves, such as the use of helmets, elbow pads and masks were employed when deemed necessary during conducting *active* observation. The final section draws together the major methodological points of this chapter.

### Summary

The nature of this research influenced the credence placed on qualitative methods of research. I averred that some of the methodological insights of cultural criminology are especially suited

to this study and that certain qualitative methods were more important than others in its execution, namely semi-structured interviews, participant observation and the use of documentary sources. A discussion of access, sampling and ethics also revealed that, as in any piece of research, there were obstacles to the execution of the research but that by using the methodological strategies outlined in this chapter, the fieldwork part of the study was accomplished successfully. The next chapter sets the scene for the empirical themes of chapter six. It examines changes that have taken place in the research sites of the thesis.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> This is contra to what is found in certain Feminist standpoint theories. Haraway (1988: 105), for example, asserts that ‘...the standpoints of the subjugated are not ‘innocent’ positions. On the contrary, they are preferred because in principle they are least likely to allow denial of the critical and interpretive core of all knowledge... ‘Subjugated’ standpoints are preferred because they seem to promise more adequate, sustained, objective, transforming accounts of the world.’

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Giddens is not a cultural criminologist. His concept of ‘double hermeneutic’ is germane here nevertheless.

<sup>3</sup> Ferrell (1995), for example, reports his arrest and trial on charges of graffiti vandalism while doing active participant observation in Denver’s rail yards and alleys.

## Chapter 5

### Manchester, Regeneration and the Production of Urban Space

#### Introduction

Since one of the aims of this thesis is an investigation of how the concept of ‘resistance’ can be usefully deployed in relation to the activities of Manchester’s graffiti writers and skateboarders, a chapter that charts the changing nature of urban space in Manchester such as this sets the scene for the primary empirical and investigative interests of the thesis in the next chapter. The discussions in this chapter do not only historicise but also contextualise the impacts of changes in social and spatial control in the research sites of the study (see Hallsworth (2005: 6, 13-48) for the importance of historical contextualisation in criminology). These have predominantly, but not exclusively, been areas such as Castlefield, Cathedral Gardens, Mancunian Way, Fallowfield (near Rusholme and Moss Side); all areas in or surrounding the city centre. The present chapter therefore complements the next, which focuses on how skateboarders and graffiti writers produce space.

I chart the changes that have taken place in Manchester and how the city has come to bear the characteristics that it does. The narrative includes the city’s 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century history and later focuses on

the redevelopments that are taking place at the present time. The chapter especially focuses on changes that have affected the governance of Manchester's spaces, these are the changes that are directly related to this thesis's empirical and theoretical interests. I, therefore, among other things, describe how 'the powerful' in Manchester produce space. Throughout this chapter and the rest of the thesis the notion of 'the powerful' is used pragmatically. It is used to denote social actors that are considered as having significantly greater resources at their disposal towards affecting a social relation that involves other actors whose resources may be described in converse terms. This description of 'the powerful' draws on the definition of resistance already offered in Chapter Two and on the discussion of Foucault's conception of power. "The powerful", for the purposes of this thesis, specifically refers to city council officers, the police, street wardens and private security officers. These are the social actors that skateboarders and graffiti writers encounter in their production of space.

The chapter also contrasts the production of the space of "the powerful" and that of some alternative producers of space in Manchester's recent history. The interests and visions of "the powerful" and the role of law enforcement agents in the production

of spaces are main themes that run through the chapter. The discussion fleshes out the key theoretical insights of the notion of the “production of space” by linking it with the idea of social justice and resistance. The production of Manchester is used to connote the necessity of making, creating and fashioning Manchester after specific and identifiable actor interests i.e. the visions and interests in Manchester of particular groups. This notion of Manchester as being produced after certain interests brings to the fore the necessity of verifying whether groups struggle over the production of the city. To rely on Lefebvre in seeing Manchester this way has crucial methodological and theoretical implications for this thesis. It means that, in empirically exploring resistance in Chapter Six, the emphasis is on asking whether groups contend over the production of Manchester and identifying particular interests that may be said to be part of the contest over the realities that Manchester’s city spaces can represent. Relying on empirically-informed sociological commentaries on contemporary Manchester, the discussion includes the effects of Manchester’s bid for mega-sporting events, governance and reconstruction after the IRA bomb explosion, public-private business partnerships and the effects of Manchester’s newly-found economic path on the city’s disadvantaged. All these events and others are commented upon as examples of how Manchester’s spaces are

objects of interest for different groups. In the same vein the chapter also includes a discussion of the policing of riots and disturbances in 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Manchester, attempts to contest police power, the uptake of space by working class protesters and radicals in Manchester's history, the emergence of Manchester's gay village and non-entrepreneurial city regenerators, the (police) surveillance of homosexual space in the city and the aggressive civilising tactics of certain parts of working class Manchester through the law-and-order politics of anti-social behaviour orders. These are shown to be examples of productions and counter-productions of space by various types of powerful and alternative producers of space. The links between police governance of space in contemporary Manchester and recent regenerative and entrepreneurial visions are made. I start the discussion with the interconnections between Manchester's socio-economic characteristics, space and its governance.

### **'Glamchester': Regeneration and the Powerful Production of Manchester**

Manchester city centre, one of the primary research sites of this thesis, is arguably the financial heart of Northern England. Tall buildings (see Fig. 5.1), modern bridges, a sophisticated tram system



and other newly constructed facilities testify to the city's status as one of the fastest changing and regenerating areas in Britain. There is a fountain area on Fountain Street at the city centre that also doubles as an ice rink in the winter. Skateboarders are known to occasionally congregate near the fountain to chat about skateboarding and to practise their skills. Their favourite skating spot, however, is the paved area around Urbis Museum at Cathedral Gardens in the city centre. Small crowds of young people can usually be seen congregating in Fountain Street or moving through it to the nearby Market Street and other parts of the city centre. The police are ever present on horseback or in mobile caravan-like stations to move on or arrest any law-breakers. The streets around the fountain are lined with restaurants, hotels, shopping stores and high street outlets. To the north of the fountain is Tib Street an area known for its alterity. It had a history of prostitution but is now no more than a denizen for graffiti writers and all types of unorthodox artists. The walls of the street are full of colourful graffiti and there are many skate shops here where graffiti writers can congregate safely and buy paint (skate shops seem to be a chief source of paint for graffiti writers). This area of the city centre is a far cry from the luxury apartments and high-rise offices that much of the city centre is associated with. The buildings here are not particularly modern yet it seems 'squalor' is not

particularly descriptive of them. It seems to pride itself in its difference and provides an alternative experience for a visitor to Manchester's city centre, while being at its very heart. From the older and artistically decorated buildings of Tib Street the Manchester Arndale is visible. It is Manchester city centre's largest shopping mall. All the major retail outlets are represented in it and not far from it is the famous Printworks, a popular cinema complex. Theatres, galleries, lush restaurants, delicatessens and cafes dot the 21<sup>st</sup> century Manchester city centre.



Figure 5.1 Modern high-rise buildings like this now dominate Manchester city centre<sup>1</sup>.

Of course, neither Manchester nor its city centre has always been like this. As the world's first industrial city, Manchester in many ways epitomises the experiences of many British cities' economic acceleration, deceleration and resurgence. Dubbed 'Cottonopolis' in earlier times for its 18<sup>th</sup> century industrial scale cotton production (Mellor 2002), which accounted for half of the British GNP at the time, its economic buoyancy did not last. From the 1850s to the 1930s, Manchester witnessed a rapid decline in textile employment, with the almost complete collapse of the cotton industry by the 1950s (Williams 1996). From the 1990s, however, central and inner urban areas of Manchester have been undergoing revitalisation leading to the explosion of industries, mostly cultural service, and the provision of residential facilities as the population increases. The discussion now turns to a more detailed examination of how Manchester has come to acquire its present economic and social outlook.

Having ancient Roman origins, and having become a fairly big city by the medieval period, Manchester by the 18<sup>th</sup> century had become a key British city. Between 1750 and 1850 it emerged as an important world city and was a 'symbol of new ways of working and living' (Williams 2003: 53). Manchester's socio-economic distinctiveness was facilitated by machine-based manufacture of cotton. The emergence

of the cotton industry turned residential areas situated at the city's core into vibrant commercial quarters. The city increasingly represented the unravelling of new economic forces and social phenomena. For example there emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 'Manchester men', the very first glimpses of the representatives of a new social class- the bourgeoisie. 'Manchester's men' were elite businessmen that worked behind the scenes of formal political activity and provided impetus for international *laissez faire* economic activities. They played their part in the emergence of Britain in the century as the most economically advanced country of the world.

Manchester's economic boom had a dark underside though- the social brutalization of the poor, the preponderance of overcrowding and ill health were as much a feature of 19<sup>th</sup> century Manchester as its commercial banking and modern transportation (ibid, 54). Friedrich Engels, one of the most prominent social scientists of the period, recorded the many ill-effects of the capitalist mode of production in many of the 'great towns' of England, most especially Manchester:

... these workers have no property whatsoever of their own, and live wholly upon wages, which usually go from hand to mouth. Society, composed wholly of atoms, does not trouble itself about them; leaves them to care for themselves and their families, yet supplies them no means of doing this in an efficient and permanent manner. Every working-man, even the best, is therefore constantly exposed to loss of work and food, that is to death by starvation, and many perish in this way. The

dwelling of the workers are everywhere badly planned, badly built, and kept in the worst condition, badly ventilated, damp, and unwholesome. The inhabitants are confined to the smallest possible space, and at least one family usually sleeps in each room. (Engels 2001: 141)

*Laissez faire* economics, argued Engels, unequivocally enriched some but also demeaned, degraded and physically deformed others:

The [Factory Inquiry of 1833] Commissioners mention a crowd of cripples who appeared before them, who clearly owed their distortion to the long working hours. This distortion usually consists of a curving of the spinal column and legs. . . I have seldom traversed Manchester without meeting three or four . . . [cripples], suffering from precisely the same distortions of the spinal columns and legs . . . and I have often been able to observe them closely. I know one personally who . . . got into this condition in Mr. Douglas's factory in Pendleton, an establishment which enjoys an unenviable notoriety among the operatives by reason of the former long working periods continued night after night. It is evident, at a glance, whence the distortions of these cripples come, they all look exactly alike. The knees are bent inward and backwards, the ankles deformed and thick, and the spinal column often bent forwards or to one side. . . . (Engels 2001: 237-239)

Despite the impoverishment that came hand-in-hand with the capitalist expansion of Manchester, the city's population increased as it diversified its manufacturing economy while retaining the cotton industry as its main economic driving force. By 1880 an essentially modern city had evolved as the core of a metropolis, with emerging cotton towns surrounding it to give further impetus to its development (ibid). Manchester's ship canal opened in 1894 and so also did the world's first major industrial estate in 1905 (ibid). The

city expanded outwards even further as its residential districts began to be replaced by warehouses and commercial infrastructure. Migration to South Manchester's suburbs increased in pace as railway lines were introduced.

The metropolitan governance of Manchester, hard to achieve initially (Williams 1996), was increasingly decentralised as the suburbs grew in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As they morphed into local governments in their own rights, the inner cities declined and much of inner area housing became defined as 'slum properties' and were the focus of policy makers' concern (Harrison 1981). The city began to fall into economic decline as its textile industry and employment reduced. The industry's employment halved between the world wars as the exportation of cotton fell to a fifth of pre-world war one era. Between the late 1930s and the 1950s mill production finally collapsed. The costs of this economic collapse were attenuated by Manchester's early diversification but the surrounding towns that had become focused on single industries bore the real brunt of the economic downturn. Journey to work transportation linkages became of increased importance as labour from the smaller spinning towns was attracted to the better-off core, ensuring further urbanisation and integration of the labour market (Williams 2003: 55).

The optimism in some quarters that Manchester would transform its economic downturn to form the basis for a technologically advanced conurbation with premium service facilities proved ill-founded by the late 1960s and the 1970s (ibid) - the city's fortunes only continued to plummet (Peck and Emmerich 1992, quoted in Williams 2003). From the 1960s through to the 1980s the city's economy suffered from the effects of diminished levels of commercial and industrial investment. In this post-industrial milieu, unemployment, advanced social marginality and a general loss of morale became the defining characteristics of the city (Giordano and Twomey 2002).

In the next discussion struggles within one section of the local powerful in 1980's Manchester- the city council- is discussed. The discussion, inspired by Lefebvre (1991: 73) notions of struggles and contradictions in space, emphasises how different groups within the city council (especially its left and its right), with their very different interests and ideas of what spatial realities ought to be enacted, contend with each other for control over the political mechanisms that can dictate Manchester's economic, social and hence spatial path. The discussion therefore paves the way for later arguments that affirm that what is seen in Manchester's spaces today must be



understood as a product of contests between conflicting human interests in the city. This notion of conflicts between groups over space, as made clear in the next chapter, is important for understanding the story of resistance of skateboarders and graffiti writers.

### *Struggles among 'the powerful'?*

A recent turning point that had vast economic and political implications for Manchester was the rise of Thatcherism in the 1980s. The result was a shift in Manchester politics; and the local Labour party and city council's loss of confidence in their ability to steer the city along leftist lines. There were splits within Manchester's Labour party as conflicts arose around the appropriate responses to Thatcher's public sector cuts (Williams 2003: 58). Some left-wing radicals within the party were expelled. This resulted in the expelled radicals forging contacts with grass root groups and cultural movements (the so-called 'Rainbow Alliance Strategy'). During this period 13 expelled rebels sustained a four-year struggle against the city council over spending cuts- (the 'Manchester Fight Back Campaign') (ibid). Before the unravelling of the local Labour party, the city council had attempted, between 1985 and 1987, to steer Manchester along municipal socialist lines (Randall 1995, Williams 2003: 59), and had earned itself a reputation with the Conservative

central government as 'one of the lunatic authorities' (Robson 2002: 35). Socialist rebels thrived and placed a disturbing emphasis, from the point of view of the Conservatives at least, on 'Defending Jobs, Improving Services' (ibid).

The struggle for power between Manchester's 'new urban left' and the 'old right' meant, however, that it was difficult to initially go beyond the conservatism of the previous administration (ibid). Initially, the city council's administration featured more centralisation and elite-based decision making as it sought to cope with the policy consequences of the collapse of welfarism and mobilise opposition against Thatcherism. It decided against competing with other cities in the name of solidarity against capitalism. It also set up a number of community initiatives and supported minority social groups (Williams 2003: 59). The city council also sought to assert its credibility as a socialist-inclined city council by attempting to redefine the economic direction of the city through re-classifying the private sector as the enemy (Quilley 1999).

Gradually, however, socialist rhetoric became more equivocal as the local government's public statements swung between economic levelling and the modernisation of the local economy (Williams 2003:

59). Assertions about local economic sovereignty increasingly sounded hollow and less bold as the effects of the economic restructuring that was taking place began to be felt (MCC 1984). The still-birth of 'municipal socialism' was justified by the need to solve Manchester's intransigent problems- the lack of new jobs and a rather limited skill base which was regarded as being in dire need of modernisation. The justifications were also coupled with the assessment that the problems could not be solved without the help of old foes- private capital and the Conservative central government.

An explanatory factor for the failure of attempts to structure Manchester along leftist-socialist lines in the early 1980s was the reduction of the potency of city councils through changes in their administrative status by Margaret Thatcher in 1985 (Williams 2003). They, including Manchester's city council, were forced to depend more and more on the fiduciary controls of the central government. They were, as a consequence, very limited in their ability to simply rely on older sources of revenue. Increasingly they relied on public-private partnerships in order to execute revitalisation<sup>2</sup>.

After Labour's defeat at the 1987 national elections, the city quietly dropped socialist slogans and embraced the politics of 'making it

happen' (Williams 2003: 60). By the early 1990s the same radicals who had taken pleasure in ousting the previous local leadership under the banner of working class activism economically allied themselves with John Major and unleashed entrepreneurialism and private–public business partnership on Manchester (ibid; see Fig. 5.2). Manchester's transformation, in spite of its oppositional political culture stereotype, was not a clear-cut dramatic change from recalcitrance to acquiescence, it has been argued. In fact, as Quilley (1998) contends, the city council and the private sector had been in some kind of partnership since the 1980s; the juggling of radical rhetoric and attracting investment to the city was well under way before it became obviously so. However, Manchester's image, since the mid 1990s, definitely has been that of a city eager to regenerate, revitalise and modernise almost as if to make up for lost time (ibid).



Figure 5.2 Attracting and keeping private business are of the essence in Manchester's new regeneration agenda.

Manchester City Council, like any other UK city council, now has a mix of revenue sources. Tax revenue still continues to be important but increasingly private enterprise cash, national government funding, public donations, grant applications to Quangos have become prominent sources of money. City councils themselves, Manchester's included, also now engage in entrepreneurial activities to generate money for redevelopment (Hetherington 2007: 634). Many city councils are increasingly competing with other city councils, leading to emphasis on prestige infrastructure and place-imaging (i.e. concerted efforts to brand and market a town or city) to attract investment. Manchester City Council is seen as one of the emerging winners in the current milieu of symbolic economy that emphasises culture, tourism and modern entertainments (ibid).

The discussion has examined struggles among the powerful (especially the different segments of the city council) over Manchester as space. The discursive contests between the left and the right of the city council paint a picture that emphasises the non-homogeneous nature of those that decide what should happen in Manchester's city spaces. It can also be seen as lending credence to one of the arguments of chapter three that space is a site of diverse and often

conflicting values and interests. The entrepreneurial Manchester described in the next focus of the discussion can then be understood, in consonance with Lefebvre (1991), as the product of conflicts over what spatial realities may be enacted in Manchester.

*Regeneration and the enactment of the visions and interests of 'the powerful'*

What the next discussion aims to achieve is first briefly outlined before the details of its arguments are examined. The issues examined involve how aspects of Manchester's recent regenerative effort relate to the thesis' interests in the governance, production and counter-production of space.

What has been described by commentators on Manchester as the 'Manchester model' of regeneration, involving among other things a 'business-leisure' agenda of providing entertainment (see Fig. 5.3) and relaxation facilities for the relatively affluent, is linked in to the interests of certain segments of the local powerful. These, mainly, are pro-regeneration government officials and private business groups. The discussion, relying on sociological commentaries on the visions and interests of these groups, observes that the enactment of pro-regeneration interests actually excludes other interests. The interests

of alternative producers of space, in consonance with Lefebvre (1991), are systematically marginalised in order to enact interests more firmly linked with the city's economic revitalisation and private business expansion. This has involved exiling alternative producers of space such as graffiti writers and skateboarders with a view to 'claiming back' the 'dysfunctional' urban spaces they hitherto laid claim to. These basic themes are fleshed out in what follows.

Manchester's recent regeneration and revitalisation have involved the addition of various new elements to the physical environment. The provision of a tram system, introduction of a large shopping mall (The Trafford Centre), theatres and galleries (the Lowry Centre and the Imperial War Museum) are examples. New facilities have been added to the formerly regional airport so that it has become a major international airport. There has been a rebuilding of old industrial parts of the city through the heritage industry (Degen 2003). Loft conversions, lush city centre apartments, cafes, waterside developments, restaurants and delicatessens now dot the regenerating Manchester landscape (Hetherington 2007: 632). International sport competitions have also been causes and effects of the regenerative effort. Examples include the failed Olympic bid and the hosting of the 2002 Commonwealth Games (ibid). These two mega-sporting



events have especially been facilitative of the construction of ultra-modern sports facilities such as the prestige stadium of the Manchester City Football Club. The city, a melting pot from the days of the industrial revolution, is now even more ethnically diverse and has large populations of Afro-Caribbean, Chinese, Jewish and South Asian people. It has one of the fastest growing student populations in the UK and is home to the most successful football club since the formation of the premier league- Manchester United- the most internationally recognised and branded football club in the world (Hetherington 2007: 632).

Since the late 1990s and the early 2000s, the 'Manchester model' of regeneration, which has been taken up by other cities, could be easily recognised by any avid observer of British regeneration politics (Robson 2002). The model is simple. A supposedly autonomous delivery body, an example is the New East Manchester Limited, attractive to businesses because of its private sector outlook, aims to deliver regeneration through co-opting private partners. In reality this model is contradictory at its core: it attracts private investment through a skin deep private-sector ethos but is composed essentially of seconded officers from council departments with more than a minimal involvement of top local politicians (ibid: 39). In the next discussion I examine in detail the effects that Manchester's

regeneration is having in terms of social control and the policing of 'misdemeanour' in certain areas of the city. I , in other words, look at what Lefebvre (1991: 288) calls the production of abstract space or "dominated space".

*Manchester, regeneration and social justice: place imaging, 'civilising' tactics and the politics of 'anti-social behaviour'*

The social blindness of Manchester's renewal has been commented on by Mellor (2002: 216; see also Hetherington 2007). The emphasis, she argues, is on regeneration directed to revamp and modernise to the detriment of community involvement. This 'business-leisure agenda' provides bars, bistros, boutiques and balls which are of little use to the disempowered poor. The symbolic economy of place imaging and representation that now seems indispensable to any modern city's economic success (Zukin 1982, 1995) is a result of what David Harvey (1989) has described as shifts in urban rule. The shift, he argues, is from 'managerialism' to 'entrepreneurialism'. This 'new urban entrepreneurialism' is based on public-private partnerships that focus on place-imaging to the detriment of the alleviation of negative social conditions, elements which are all present in Manchester's regeneration. Regeneration, directed at addressing Manchester's decline, has emphasised nostalgia about the city's past as well as the

promotion of modernisation. The city's heritage has been foreground, especially as the cradle of the industrial revolution, and as one of the most prominent cities founded by traders (Mellor 2002: 217). This explains why the city's Roman fort has been reconstructed and also why its old passenger station, the oldest in the world, and its warehouses have been turned into an imposing industrial museum (Mellor 2002: 217).

Mellor also worries that certain changes brought about by regeneration in a number of places in Manchester's city centre indicate exclusion of the poor, the young and the marginal (see Figs. 5.3 and 5.4). This is of course in line with Lefebvre's (1991) contention that once we stop seeing space simply as an empty container, the door is open to elaborating space's connection with oppression, repression and the stifling of diversity. Craftspeople, alternative traders and young people used to be able to gather in the area now known as 'The Triangle'. Reminiscent of Lefebvre's (1991) notion of 'abstract space', it is now no longer a space of alterity but of expensive, forbidding merchandising (Mellor 2002: 231). Manchester's regeneration entrepreneurs claim to create new jobs for the betterment of all. The facts tell a different story, contends Mellor. The few skilled and managerial jobs created are overwhelmingly

dominated by a white middle class workforce and regardless of skills and qualifications residents of the inner city and 'those who are categorised as black' (Mellor 2002: 232) are precluded from these types of employment. The enactment of 'Glamchester' is seen to necessitate improving quality by exclusion on the basis of class, 'style' and accent. Even in the retail and leisure sectors, infamous for their low wages, 'rough labour' is not terribly welcome. 'Glamchester' is not solving the problems of Manchester, Mellor insists - a glossed city centre has little relation to the endemic problems of inner city Manchester. 'Glamchester' is also 'exiling' certain users of city spaces: skateboarders are excluded, day-time drinking in the open is banned and the visibility of the ultra-poor is deemed embarrassing and punishable (Mellor 2002: 234).

Other issues germane to Manchester's regeneration and its consequences for social justice have been identified. One such is the link between the recent 'renewal' and the policing of certain neighbourhoods in the city, a case in point being parts of East Manchester. The following discussion, drawing on Ward (2003) and other commentators, examines the links between regeneration and policing in Manchester. I also later examine how the use of anti-social

behaviour orders has meshed with the general control mechanisms in the regenerating city.



**Figure 5.3 Street Wardens.** Regeneration has been linked to the increased regulation of city centre spaces.



**Figure 5.4** The police and street wardens join forces to ensure city centre users adhere to regulations.

Parts of the city, such as East Manchester, have conspicuously lagged behind in the roll out of regeneration. As the local elite's desire 'to play Olympic Games' grew, so did the focus of regeneration on the city centre, ensuring that East Manchester's plight worsened (Cochrane et al 1996, Ward 2003: 121). While East Manchester's turn on the list of roll-out regeneration eventually came, peculiar urban politics associated with its redevelopment began to emerge. As an area known for scoring badly on every index of deprivation, with many of the 'better off' residents only managing to get by on low-waged and precarious employment (ibid 120-1), there have been efforts by the state to 'civilise' members of the community so that the area 'melds with other local examples of entrepreneurial urbanism'. *Operation Excalibur*, labelled 'a police war on crime' (Ward 2003: 121) by the local press, is an example of civilising linked to the focus brought on the area by the regenerative effort. A year long police campaign aimed at 'benefiting' this part of Manchester 'in the long term not just for the Commonwealth Games' (Manchester Evening News 2001) began in 2000, it involved the entering of 50 houses and the arrests of 34 suspects. Despite the intensity of police effort and the length of time expended on it, it emerged that only 'a quantity of drugs' and two firearms were seized during the campaign (ibid). This,



however, did not stop the police and the representatives of the local state from declaring victory in the 'war' (ibid, 122). This aggressive policing of East Manchester, touted as against 'the worst and most frequent offenders', involved warning residents that the 'new scheme' may involve up to five visits per week by the police (ibid: 122). Coupled with a very physical policing strategy, residents were further responsabilised by being informed that they were expected to produce lists of those living alongside them who they thought were involved in criminality. Apart from trying to get residents to surveil each other, the authorities hardened their talk of a crackdown against 'inappropriate behaviour' and increased threats of eviction from social housing and the denial of welfare entitlements (ibid).

Manchester's strict enforcement policies in implementing policies such as this became evident soon after new powers of the Housing Act 1996 bolstered the position of council landlords. The city's 'Neighbourhood Nuisance Strategy Team' took the opportunity to bring injunctions against 'unruly tenants'. Efforts were later made to ensure that it was not only council tenants that felt the brunt of the new dispensation. The remit of Team's services was extended to include troubled mixed tenure neighbourhoods as well. In Manchester, the thousands of housing law injunctions overwhelm the

city's more publicised ASBOs (Burney 2005: 124), which I later link with 'renewal' efforts).

The local press played its part in promoting this civilising of East Manchester (ibid, 122). The usual behaviour of locals was discussed in medical metaphors that associated it with illness. The indication was that for something 'positive' like regeneration to take root in the area, it was necessary for the residents to amend their ways. The residents needed to be reminded, it was thought, that the blessings being showered on them required a modicum of sacrifice: 'Let's not forget that millions of pounds are being poured into the areas as one of biggest ever regeneration programmes is implemented' (Manchester Evening News 22 March 2001, 8 quoted in Ward 2003: 122). The redevelopment of East Manchester was only feasible, it was argued (ibid), after the physical removal of 'disorderly individuals' through relocation or imprisonment. The neglect and decay of the area was after all, it was contended (ibid), the product of the continued misdemeanour of these individuals. For Ward (ibid, 125) there are clear links between contemporary modes of regeneration and efforts to civilise certain individuals and communities, especially those whose activities are deemed incongruent with the new spatial regimes being brought about. Regulation of behaviour is deemed to

be justified as long as it is seen to foster the accrual of economic benefits for dominant interests. This raises questions about what the proper role of regeneration should be and what ought to be permissible as its consequences; for as Begg (2002) has argued, a feature of regeneration in East Manchester, (and probably everywhere else in the post-industrial world) has been emphasis on development quantifiable in economic terms as opposed to social progress in terms of quality of life.

Apart from *Operation Excalibur* and forms of control linked with housing, the politics of 'antisocial behaviour orders' has also been crucial in the reinforcement of social (especially spatial) control in regenerating Manchester. The confidence with which ASBOs are deployed in rhetoric and implementation belies its elasticity as a concept. Neither legal scholars nor criminologists have been able to attach anything close to a precise sense to the notion of 'anti-social behaviour', raising suspicions whether it is not better to see it as a 'net-widening, mesh-thinning' (Cohen 1985) facility for bringing within the purview of control acts and behaviour that make for a politics of law and order window-dressing (Burney 2005). Section 1 of the Crime and Disorder Act defines anti-social behaviour as demeanour that 'has caused or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress' to persons other than members of the perpetrator's

immediate household, the last clause being a vestige of concerns with social housing which initially gave rise to the law.

Whilst anti-social behaviour orders became a nationwide phenomenon through clause 1 of the Crime and Disorder Bill (1997) which brought into the statute books the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), a number of particularities have emerged in Manchester (Burney 2005: 197), bolstering the regenerative impulse and the control as well constriction of space in the city.

With strong legal teams servicing housing departments and experienced in securing the application of enforcement orders on tenants, keen senior police officers and local authority officers, Manchester is a part of the country that represents a stout enforcement-driven policy orientation on 'disorderly conduct'. It is without doubt an area that can boast of issuing more ASBOs than most parts of the UK (Burney 2005 123). The city's paradigmatic status was cemented when Tony Blair, coming back from summer vacation in 2004, held up Manchester as a model city for other authorities to follow (Manchester Evening News 2004). The activist enthusiasm of Bill Pitt, a prominent Manchester housing enforcer, who was despatched to other parts of the country by the Home

Office to reveal the mysteries of Manchester's 'success', with the eerily fascinating title of 'Anti-Social Behaviour Ambassador' also shows that Manchester is not simply another big city when it comes to law and order politics (Manchester City Council 2005).

The role of the police in the growth of ASBOs in Manchester is unequivocal. This is despite the fact that the processing of the orders are done by the city's legal department hence making invisible the influence of Greater Manchester constabulary. Officers experienced in Manchester's ASBO bureaucracy have been known to take up posts in surrounding towns, and on finding limited use of the orders, endeavoured to promote the ASBO gospel. The police availed themselves of the post-conviction ASBO facility that became available towards the end of 2002, and by the end of 2004 most ASBOs in Manchester came from this source (Burney 2005: 123).

#### *Manchester's politics of space and games*

Another factor can be seen as linked to Manchester's regeneration was its bid to host the Olympic Games. The following is a discussion of how the bid impacted the city politically, economically and spatially. Although Manchester lost the bid to host the Olympic Games in 1996 and 2000, it was claimed by the supporters of

regeneration in the city that the Games were never the primary motivation. What mattered were, it was argued, 'economic self-confidence' and regeneration. The bid, win or lose, was no more than a launching pad for steering the city's future in the preferred economic path (Cochrane, Peck and Tickell 2002: 97). For Cochrane, et al (ibid) the inclusion of residents in decision making about the bid was not very important to the authorities. Local people, they argued, had little or nothing to say in the bid process or the changes it brought about. Those who wielded any clout were the so-called 'Manchester mafia', reminiscent of the 'Manchester men' of old, are an all-male group of entrepreneurs who, when not in the different committees that matter, have extremely strong links in the local governance of the city to outvote any councillors minded to make leftist noises (ibid, 99). The Olympic bid paved the way, the authors argue, for fundamental shifts in the governance of Manchester. The private sector strengthened and organised itself, having learnt a few lessons from the dark, shadowy politics of Olympic bidding (ibid, 99-100). Locating itself within and outside the local state, it has been able to bring about 'Glamchester' and marry its entrepreneurial needs with that of the city. The Olympics, so the argument went, were to provide facilities and infrastructure for Mancunians by a trickle-down process.

Jobs, services and education were to improve because of the infrastructural and economic changes brought about by the bid.

Local opposition to the Games were indirectly stifled by strategic mendacity, the Cochrane et al (ibid) argue. Olympic money, proponents contended, was 'new cash' and no costs were to be incurred on the part of the city as a result of the bid. In fact public money had to be siphoned towards the bid in many ways (Cochrane, et al: 110). Aside from costs at the local level, talk of 'new money' was a veritable sleight of hands- the Olympic bid was fundamentally aimed at the generation of cash grants from the government at the national level. Essentially, 'new money' was public funding re-routed towards transmuting and re-imaging Manchester towards bringing about the invigoration of state-subsidised private business. The Olympic bidding process as a whole helped to steer Manchester's politics towards being 'pragmatic, goal-oriented and business-friendly' (ibid: 115).

*The IRA bomb and the 'explosion' of entrepreneurial space*

In this discussion I link the IRA bombing of Manchester to the rapid appropriation of space for entrepreneurial interests. This 'explosion' and vigorous uptake of Manchester's spaces, it is argued, had

important consequences for 'public space' and the subsequent trajectory of public sphere discourse in the city.

It has been estimated that the cost of rebuilding the massive explosion of 15 June 1996 was £500 million (Holden 2002). The IRA bombing was quickly seen, in some quarters, as an opportunity in disguise. It was opined by officials of the local state and private business that instead of emphasising the devastation engendered by the explosion it was better to see the incident in terms of the opportunity it presented for urban regeneration (Holden 2002: 133-4). This shift in reaction to the bombing, representing a 'politics of opportunity', has been described by Holden (ibid) as important to the city's restructuring of private-public partnership<sup>3</sup> as it impinged on local revitalisation. Not long after the bomb, imagined threats of another type took centre stage- the loss of trade to other economic spaces and the unsure nature of financial support from national government and insurance companies. These, as source of concern, coupled with entrepreneurial salivation over the prospects of 'genuine improvements' became the discursive focus of the local powerful (Holden 2002:135).



According to Holden (2002), the enactment of new visions of urban space, a necessarily slow and piecemeal process in normal times, was expedited after the bomb. The opportunity to transform the city's spatial outlook by not only erecting static infrastructure, in the form of desired architecture, but also designing the modes of access (transportation) to new and refurbished built environments was immediately seen as a rare opportunity by private-public business partners. It is in the light of this that one must understand the fact that by two weeks after the explosions institutional and policy arrangements for rebuilding Manchester had been earnestly set in motion<sup>4</sup>.

Not long after that, arrangements at a discursive level began in the form of a televised public debate on Manchester's revitalisation after the bomb. Holden (2002) argues that right from the outset the debate was never a proper consultation about the fundamental questions of revitalisation or the propriety of the self-designated roles of the entrepreneurs and urban planners. The discussions were guided as much as possible towards the technicalities of redesign (Holden 2002: 138), quite analogous to the debates that might be expected in a politician's campaign committee: the end is never in doubt or up for debate, only the means are proper subjects of discussion. Overall the

debate had the character of an *ex post facto* show: 'the real decision-making... had been undertaken by the city elite' (ibid); 'interesting' decisions left to the 'masses' included the unanimous declaration that the old Arndale Shopping Centre was too 'old school' and that supposedly dysfunctional spaces should be claimed back and made 'pleasant' in order to attract more 'pleasant people' (ibid).

The bomb put an end to the days of most nineteenth century buildings in the city centre and effected the same change with regards to second hand clothing shops, sex shops as well as tattoo and piercing parlours that were in the vicinity of middle class workplaces, such as the financial and insurance companies at the core of the city centre. Regeneration, however, had begun long before the bomb went off (Hetherington 2007: 633). The bomb must be seen, therefore, has just one of the many important factors that co-produced regeneration in Manchester.

This subsection has contributed a number of themes towards the chapter's aim of explicating the production of Manchester. It has been observed that Manchester's recent history has been one dominated by entrepreneurial visions and interests which prioritise glamour and have resulted in the non-democratic production of space

by sections of the local powerful. Reminiscent of Mitchell's (1995) contention that spatial productions are ideological through and through; this has been exemplified by the marginalisation of alternative producers of space, especially since the more recent regenerative efforts. This contextualises the themes in the next chapter which will focus on how graffiti writers and skateboarders in the city respond to these changes in space in their daily activities. In the next section I look at two important periods in Manchester's history that can be used to flesh out the themes of power, space and resistance.

### **Radical Manchester: power, policing, popular protests and riots**

In this section I want to use two periods in Manchester's history to bring out the themes of policing, power, resistance and space that have been central to this chapter and thesis. In this discussion, I, reminiscent somewhat of the themes in Chapter Two about the macro-micro resistance distinction, look at a number of oppositions to power in Manchester's history that are usually regarded as typical examples of traditional forms of resistance – dissidence having class, race and ethnicity as their foci.

The specific foci of the first part of the discussion are 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century popular uprisings and political radicalism in Manchester. The section tells the story of food riots, trade unionism, Chartism and the authority's crackdown on these forms of popular activism. I hope to bring out through the discussion Lefebvre's (1991), and Mitchell's (1995) arguments that the production of space usually involves a collision of two or more divergent understandings of space.

The second part of the discussion shows how contemporary concerns with the policing of regenerating Manchester are foreshadowed by unease with "community policing" in 1980s Manchester. The riots and public unrests of that period, the response to these by the city's police administration and the determination of a newly elected leftist city council to responsabilise the police help to give flesh to the theoretical bones of this thesis – power, resistance and space.

*Power, class and space: policing, resistance and Victorian popular radicalism*

The mechanisation of key industries in the 18<sup>th</sup> century England gave rise to the formation of trade associations (Kidd 1993: 81; see also Fraser 1976). Trade associations were part of a number of 18<sup>th</sup> century forms of popular politics alongside food riots, the radicalisation of 'church and king politics', the rise of radical

reformism, Chartism and women's suffrage. Manchester played a central role in these resistances and served as a melting pot for those disillusioned with the economic and political order (Taylor 1995, Pickering 1995).

18<sup>th</sup> century Manchester witnessed a number of food riots (Scola 1992). For example, in July 1795 a number of women and boys gathered in Market Place, Manchester to quarrel with shopkeepers and flour dealers. The violent incident, involving the smashing of windows of warehouses and homes, had to be stopped by armed soldiers. Several women gathered the next morning near Ancoats, undeterred by the bodily injury suffered by some people the day earlier. They seized food, distributed it and then scattered the rest (Kidd 1993). Although this was not an uncommon incident in 1790s Manchester, food riots, generally, were violently suppressed and largely unsuccessful. It was soon realised by many working class agitators and activists that improvement in the standard of living would have to be accomplished by other means: by unionism and campaigns for higher wages rather than attempting to influence the price of bread through riots (ibid: 82).

Working class change of tactics from riots to unionism did not, however, always abate official opposition. The Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 were intended to control Manchester trade unions in particular. Union leaders were arrested and imprisoned and the military was always ready to suppress strikes. Some workers, in this climate of antagonism, were transported as punishment (ibid: 82). Manchester union activists led the way when the militant spinners' unions were formed in the 1790s. Although the unions were illegal, Manchester spinners sustained two pay strikes in a month in 1795. Several union leaders were arrested and imprisoned, employers declared that no union members were to be employed under any circumstances and took full advantage of the Combination Acts. In spite of opposition from the authorities and capitalists, Manchester's illegal unions were successful and forced the employers to pay higher rates than anywhere else in Lancashire (Kidd 1993: 83). Manchester spinners' later attempts to help other spinners in Lancashire raise their pay to Manchester rates ultimately failed; the former themselves soon had to fend off wage reductions and by 1810 spinners' union success was drawing too a close.

While there were a number of strikes that were successful, there were also many defeats and violent attacks by the authorities on trade

unions. This led some Manchester working class people to help form popular radical societies and associations (Taylor 1995, Pickering 1995). Spurred on by the success of the French Revolution, from the 1790s onwards, Manchester played a big part in political radicalism and this increased the fears of the aristocratic elite (ibid: 88). The city also became a centre for radical protest as the sale of Thomas Paine's Rights of Man soared in the 1790's (Kidd 1993: 88). By 1817 there were about 40 radical groups in the Manchester area with as many as 8000 members and many new police officers had to be enrolled to deal with the many public meetings (ibid: 90).

On 28 March 1817 the police raided a meeting in Ardwick that was deemed to be planning the execution of the 'Ardwick plot'. 'The plot', rumoured to involve the support of London radicals, was intended to start an uprising in Manchester that would ignite similar disturbances everywhere. Plans were said to include luring the military out of barracks and securing arms and ammunition, the houses of certain influential figures were to be burnt down and prisoners, political or otherwise, were to be liberated from the prisons. Whilst the plot may or may not have been widely supported among Manchester activists, it served to confirm Manchester as a problem city and a denizen for 'outrageous' radicals in the minds of the establishment. The 'plot' was

crushed before it could be carried out but reaction to the 'plot' and the audacity of the initial 'plot' popularised the formation and joining of dissent groups in Manchester and surrounding towns. Radical women's groups arose and successful attempts were made to radicalise some Sunday school teachers. *Manchester Observer* was also started in 1818 and published radical campaigns among the working class (Kidd 1993: 91).

In 1819 a number of political reform meetings were held in Manchester and surrounding towns. St Peter's Field was one of the more popular venues, with meetings attracting as many as 8,000 congregants. The meetings proclaimed that "the only source of all legitimate power is in the people" and that "all Governments, not immediately from and accountable to the people, are usurpations and ought to be resisted and destroyed" (Kidd 1993: 91). This French and American Revolution-inspired dicta of political justice was meant to indicate that the Prince Regent had to pay the political price of regular elections and universal suffrage. The most famous of such gatherings, that of 16 August 1819, has entered history books as the 'Peterloo Massacre' (Read 1958, Hudson 1919, McKeiver 2009). It serves in many ways to emphasise the city's history of powerful control of space and the resistance of subaltern actors. Tipped off



that the military were engaging in drills with pikes and firearms with the intention of disrupting the gathering; well-known political activists warned against teasing any soldiers or police officers, so as to forestall any violent confrontations. Protesters were to come to the protest “armed with no weapon but that of self-approving conscience” (Kidd 1993: 91). Hordes of women, men and children, therefore, came to Manchester on that fateful day carrying nothing but protest banners. It soon became clear, however, that the protest was not going to be an ordinary one nor would its surveillance and policing. Top military officers enlisted the support of the Manchester and Cheshire Yeomanry – a middle class group consisting of merchants, shopkeepers, publicans and manufacturers – to help soldiers surveil and ‘keep the peace’ on the day. Manchester magistrates, alarmed by the military’s plans and by what they foresaw as the makings of a bloody class battle, declared the protest a danger to the city and decided to have leading activists arrested. As an armed bourgeois group, the Yeomanry eagerly participated in the attempted arrests, definitively confirming the class dimension to agitations in 19<sup>th</sup> Manchester (Taylor 1995, Pickering 1995, Scola 1992). This confirms Tonkiss’ (2005:75) argument that when the “semiotics of exclusion” fail the powerful are always ready to resort to the forceful, violent and militarised denial of access to space. The ensuing melee

resulted in 11 deaths and hundreds of injured protesters (Kidd 1993: 94; see also Kidd 2006). Continuing with the same themes of policing, power and resistance in Manchester, I next discuss how “community policing” became an issue of concern amidst the riots, disturbances and unrest of 1980s Manchester.

*Whose city? Whose space? Whose police? Policing riots and contesting police power in 1980s Manchester*

In the 1980s there were extensive public debates about police accountability in the UK (Jefferson and Grimshaw 1984). The riots in major UK cities in 1981 set the tone for complaints and concerns over the day-to-day wielding of police powers (Waddington 1992). Consent to community policing that had earlier been assumed uncritically became the focus of debates (Kettle and Hodges 1982). The political establishment was especially impelled to problematise this assumed consensus by the disturbances of the 1980s in Manchester.

While the problematisation of consent to community police work was in many respects a UK-wide issue, Manchester’s experience of unease about police activities had its own specificities. In Manchester, for example, whilst actual police excess and brutality played a role in calls

for police accountability, as was the case in the rest of the country, other significant catalysts played a part in campaigns against local policing strategies and calls for progressive changes to community policing. These were largely the controversial pronouncements of the Greater Manchester Police chief James Anderton and the specific disdainful police culture his administration fostered (McLaughlin 1994: 35).

Echoing Don Mitchell's (1995, 2000) contention that space is always invested with ideologies, a number of beliefs about the community underlay Anderton's police administration. First, it was believed that there was a "traditional and unique partnership between the community and its police force". This relationship was comparable to what obtained "in a well conducted family where there is complete trust and confidence and an absence of any kind of deception whatsoever" (Annual Report, 1979, xiv, quoted in McLaughlin 1994: 35). To qualify as "respectable people" and members of "the community" individuals must unreservedly and unqualifiedly support police work and the law of the land (*ibid*, 36). Second, as far as the Chief Constable was concerned, the police was accountable to the community and the police committee (Annual Report 1979, viii quoted in McLaughlin 1994: 36), as long as the committee did not take

it upon itself to interfere in operational matters and recognised the ground rules laid down by the Police Act. Third, the Chief Constable insisted that there was a conspiracy to destabilise the relationship between the community and the police. Fourthly, policing inner city Manchester, as Lefebvre might say – producing in it a “controlled space”, was, according to the police chief, an impossible task. The Chief Constable was nostalgic about the good old days “when life was rather less complicated” (Anderton 1985 quoted in Mclaughlin 1994 36). He was concerned that inner city Manchester was peopled by “a dispirited and trammelled populace” and that the neighbourhoods were blighted by moral decline, unemployment, multicultural values and criminal activities that actively involved most if not all of these communities.

Saving the exception of the most “unreachable” communities of inner Manchester, therefore, to support the community was to support the police, as the police was one with the community and acted to protect the community intuitively and inherently. Conversely to criticise the police was a giveaway that the critic was probably not of the community and was opposed to its interests (ibid, 37). Mclaughlin (ibid) argues that the police chief’s well known beliefs about community policing provided an ideological context for routine

police work in Manchester. Such day-to-day policing of Manchester exhibited, according to Mclaughlin, a “gentle touch” and an “iron fist”. The following is a delineation of both sides to Anderton’s police administration and its effect on community policing in Manchester, starting with the “gentler side” to the Chief’s Constable’s policing philosophy.

In the mid 1970s an up-and-running Community Contact department was established with a twin focus on young people and “ethnic minorities”. Arguably the best resourced and most innovative of its time, the Community Contact department, organised police-run youth clubs, summer adventure playgrounds, soccer competitions and work experience programmes. The Chief Constable’s philosophy that the police should concentrate on young people, especially those of the inner city, who were, according to him, easily led into crime and anti-social activities, impacted police work on the ground, even though it seemed to go against the statements he made about these “unreachable” communities. Manchester police officers were encouraged to see themselves as compensators for the “inadequate” backgrounds of deprived young people and male officers could in some cases take the role of father figures (ibid, 37-8). The Community Contact department also functioned to counter the work

of “anti-establishment” youth groups whose practices did not prioritise what the police prioritised – the inculcation of discipline and order in youth.

While the police were interested in fostering relations with ethnic minority community groups, because, so the argument went, “as a result of language barriers and lack of understanding, problems arise in which the police are involved” (ibid, 39); they made it clear that they would not liaise, consult or engage in any way with politically motivated groups. In both foci on youth and ethnic minorities, the police as a matter of principle excluded groups who were thought to assume that the problems of young people, blacks and ethnic minorities stemmed from cultural differences. As far as the Chief Constable and the police force were concerned these individuals and groups were part of a conspiracy to discredit the police chief and the Greater Manchester Police (ibid: 39). Demands for accountability were at best misguided and probably part of an attempt to bring the police under political control.

While in some very limited sense, it could be said that Anderton’s administration exhibited a gentle touch in its treatment of ethnic

minorities and young people, as exemplified by the discussion above, it was actually notorious for its iron fist in the policing of Manchester. By 1980 the force could boast of the most sophisticated and expensive surveillance and computer system in the country. It coupled this with a hard line war-against-crime discourse (ibid: 39). Also, an elite paramilitary police group (Tactical Aid Group) composed initially of seventy-two officers was the source of a multitude of complaints and controversy. Without public knowledge, the group had been trained and authorised to use hand weapons and they subsequently carried out crackdown raids on prostitution, illicit drinking, gay clubbing and pornography. A number of incidents serve to exemplify the controversial aspects of some of Anderton's policing approach. Before the winter of 1977, for example, paramilitary anti-terrorist police sealed off the Collyhurst area of North Manchester for some clandestine operations and "manoeuvres". The police committee and the residents of the area were not informed of the operations and were denied any information despite complaints and protestations. The Greater Manchester Police's "facilitation" of fascist marches in parts of Greater Manchester with substantial ethnic minority populations was also the source of controversy (ibid: 40). It was decried in some quarters that the police could fund the protection of National Front marches, require and secure

reinforcements from nine other forces but not adequately protect victims of racist attacks that lived in the areas where the marches were held. In the same period, Manchester's police force was increasingly being attacked by critics as engaging in arbitrary stops, searches and arrests, corruption, drug dealing and the cruel use of illegal weapons. According to some writers, certain parts of Manchester with high black populations such as Moss Side were inordinately victimised (Humphrey and John 1972). Specific police stations were known to specialise in various types of police misconduct and victimisation of particular groups. One of two very notorious stations specialised in beating up juveniles, another (Stretford station) was notorious for 'nigger bashing', with Irish immigrants suffering not very dissimilar fates in the hands of officers (Race Today 1985 quoted in McLaughlin 1994: 41). The experiences of these groups definitely confirm Tonkiss' (2005: 72) argument that the "street works differently depending on who is standing in it".

The controversy over police accountability went into a new phase in May 1981 when a Labour administration dedicated to calling for police accountability took control of the county council. The new administration quickly asserted itself in many ways. The Chief Constable was publicly warned that henceforth his administration



would come under scrutiny and disciplinary actions could be taken against him personally. The police budget was cut and the funds were reallocated to other council services the new Labour administration felt had borne the burnt of Thatcherite cuts (ibid 56).

Not very long after the inception of the new labour administration, however, Moss Side exploded in riots (Kettle and Hodges 1982). Shops were looted and torched. About 2,000 people gathered outside Moss Side police station and attacked it. Nearby shops were not spared. Around the same time there were serious disturbances in Salford, Clayton and Rusholme. The riots started on 8<sup>th</sup> July and officially ended 11 July 1981. The police met with the “elders” of the various ethnic groups in Moss Side but refused to meet with any youth representatives. A group of young blacks demanded access to the meetings, claiming to be representatives of the black youth of Moss side but were dismissed on the grounds that the police could, procedurally, only meet with the “elders of the community” (ibid: 46). Despite the meetings with the “elders” disturbances continued. The police and Anderton justified their subsequent shift from a soft approach to a more hard line approach by the fact that the disturbances after the consultations proved the elders could not influence the younger rioters. Earlier defined as “a case very simply of

arson and serious looting”, the riots were redefined as urban guerrilla warfare against the police (ibid, 46). Downtown Manchester was secured against rioters with extra personnel carriers coupled with mass arrests and mobile charge centres. Having learnt lessons from similar riots in Bristol, London and Liverpool (Waddington 1992), Manchester police decided not to employ a defensive strategy but to go on the offensive in their production of “controlled space” (Lefebvre 1991) – police vans knocked several black and white youth to the ground, officers kicked rioters to the ground and swarmed the shopping and housing area forcefully pinning youth to the wall before arresting them (Kettle and Hodges 1982).

As the disturbances came under control, Anderton and the police had to battle vociferous calls for a public inquiry. A city council sponsored inquiry composed of figures from ethnic minority groups and youth organisations, the Hytner Inquiry, was formed (ibid). Boycotted by many Moss Side organisations and youth work project representatives on the grounds of lack of proper consultation, the Inquiry’s proceedings lacked the intended effect of galvanising the affected communities. The Chief Constable stressed that he would not allow any officers to give any evidence or be subjected to any questioning before the inquiry (McLaughlin 1994, 51). The Inquiry

stressed that there were deep feelings of resentment of the police and the young were especially victimised on a daily basis both verbally and physically. The Chief Constable was also enjoined to take seriously the allegations of racial abuse by police officers (ibid, see also Cashmore 2003).

Although many critics of the police boycotted the Inquiry because of its alleged lack of mandate, they nevertheless saw the report as a confirmation of the accusations they had levelled against the police. Some groups, however, saw the Inquiry as an outright sham. The Moss Side Defence Committee, a residents' group, for example, stated that "the Hytner Report doesn't give us the confidence to believe that any future official inquiry will unearth the reality of policing in Moss Side". The group also affirmed that it would not work or cooperate with the police in any way whatsoever (McLaughlin 1994: 53). Police-community relations in Moss Side and Manchester did not really improve after the inquiry. A youth worker was arrested and charged and the police accused youth workers in general of providing safe havens for young criminals. It was also alleged by some people that there were revenge raids and harassment in the riot areas as soon as the news crews and journalists had departed (ibid).

Dissatisfaction with the Hytner report and concerns regarding ongoing street confrontations with Manchester police gave rise to an independent police monitoring group, marking the end of this phase in the power struggle between youth, community groups and the city council on the one hand and the Chief Constable's police administration on the other. Composed mostly of youth and community workers, the "Youth and Allied Workers' Police Monitoring Group" asserted its professional right to disagree with the police and the Chief Constable (ibid, 54). It also called for significant changes in the balance of power between community-youth groups and the police. As more local groups expressed their support for youth workers, the Greater Manchester Council agreed to set up a working group to scrutinise police activities in relation to youth and community. As the local leftist Labour administration stabilised itself in power it unfolded comprehensive programmes to assure police accountability. The 1964 Police Act was utilised in full to force the Chief Constable to be accountable to elected officials of the community. There was also to be increased community representation and participation in liaison committees. The city council stated that it supported the "Youth and Allied Workers'

Police Monitoring Group” to strategically oppose police initiatives and to work without harassment (ibid, 56).

This section has examined what may come under the label of “macro” or modern resistance, as different from “micro” or postmodern resistance. In the next section I discuss a number of ways that diverse groups have appropriated Manchester’s spaces in an “everyday”, “micro” or postmodern manner, in anticipation of next chapters’ discussion of skateboarders and graffiti writers’ space uptake.

### **‘Madchester’: Alternative Appropriations of Manchester**

The discussion aims to highlight alternative, non-dominant productions of Manchester’s spaces, in line with Lefebvre’s (1991) notion of “appropriated space”. It is shown how diverse marginal groups have sought to bring to pass alternative realities in Manchester’s spaces. Drawing on Taylor, Evans and Fraser (1996) and other prominent commentators on the city, the discussion starts by briefly charting the emergence of the gay village in the Manchester city centre and then moves on to its policing as a space of alterity. It is demonstrated how the history of Manchester and its regeneration are not simply that of the currently dominant government-supported

entrepreneurial production of space but also of marginal and alternative producers and regenerators. This, it is argued, does not in any way diminish the importance of the increasing dominance of larger commercial appropriators and producers of space whose actions in recent times have tended to exclude as much as possible alternative visions of urban spatiality. These broad themes are now explored more comprehensively, starting with the controversy surrounding the emergence of the Manchester gay village.

### *Producing gay space*

In the late 1980s and early 1990s London businesses recognised what came to be known as the 'pink pound'- the alleged superior spending power of gay men to that of the average straight man (Guardian 25 August 1993 quoted in Taylor et al 1996: 181). They set up entertainment and leisure venues to cater for gay men, not always out of any special concern for human rights but cold pragmatic business calculation; and it largely paid off (ibid). Manchester was, however, almost a decade ahead of London and most UK cities in this regard (Taylor, et al 1996: 181). It had a thriving gay scene that was able to claim parts of the city centre for itself as the 'gay village' (see Fig. 5.5). As a compact, bustling area, it gave Manchester gays a place they could call their own (ibid: 181).

In the 1980s the gay village grew from a number of pubs in Chorlton Street, an area known for prostitution before it became a place for Manchester gays. Gay venues were initially scattered all over Manchester and there were 'cottages' (public toilets where men could go and meet each other for sexual intercourse) which catered for 'illicit' pleasures. The gay village, however, quickly became a one-stop shop as an arena of expression of gay lifestyle and sexuality- by the mid 1980s the Manchester gay clientele<sup>5</sup> could only be catered for by clubs in the village area with the exception of one (ibid).



**Figure 5.5** Canal Street is arguably the best known part of the Manchester gay village.

Gays in Manchester witnessed an especially stringent clampdown on their culture under James Anderton's police administration in the late 1970s. Within a few years of his becoming Chief Constable, police raids were common in gay clubs, culminating in a number of



prosecutions including one in which some people were charged with 'licentious dancing' (Taylor, et al 1996: 184,341). Some sections of the Manchester student community spearheaded an outcry that forced the police to lighten the burden on Manchester gays. True periods of relative peace were only ushered in by left wing success in local elections. Funding for the gay village was reinstated, prompting anti-gay campaigns in the local press. In June 1991 Anderton resigned from his post and gay-police relations became more conciliatory. By 1993 Manchester had its first police inspector whose role was to exclusively cater to gay and lesbian issues in response to robberies and 'queer bashing' (assaults predicated on the victim's homosexual identity) in the village. The newly appointed officer discountenanced any strong commitment to homosexual-human rights by insisting his appointment was a pragmatic issue and no 'surrender to pink power' (ibid). In general, argue Taylor, et al (1996: 184), police attitudes to the gay community paralleled their disposition towards women and their night-time public space victimisation- the onus was on gays to discipline themselves to minimise attacks and insults. Hence, even in a space gays took for granted as 'an area for us' (ibid: 181) their use of space was in many ways controlled.

*Alternative people, alternative regeneration and alternative spaces*

The effects of the appropriation of Manchester's urban space by other alternative producers of space, in their production of "representational spaces" (Lefebvre 1991), have also been the subject of extended and insightful discussion by Allen (2007). The following discussion uses Allen's work, together with other relevant material, as a vehicle for describing the impact of some forms of alternative regeneration and production of space in Manchester's recent history. The discussion will show that dominant regenerative visions linked to private-public business coalitions are only a part of the diverse human interests in the regeneration of the city's spaces.

Urban entrepreneurs that are taking credit for Manchester's revitalisation are in fact late comers in the city's recent regeneration history, argues Allen, and there is good reason to believe their brand of regeneration is not as socially progressive in comparison to that of 'organic entrepreneurs' and the 'counterculturalists'<sup>6</sup> (Allen 2007) of the early days of Manchester's recent renewal. For Allen (ibid, 667) Manchester city centre living and its revitalisation arose out of a combination of 'organic entrepreneurialism' and 'counterculturalism'. The 'organic entrepreneurs' that initiated the redevelopment of Manchester city centre were usually part-time developers with limited

capital. These entrepreneurs had 'gut feelings' about the positive aspects of redeveloping the depreciated spaces of the city centre as a result of their exposure to the 'countercultural' side of the city. They saw the aesthetic potential of 'Madchester' and 'Gaychester'. With degrees in fields such as architecture and experience in property development in the form of 'countercultural' bars and shops, they began to convert old property into residential facilities. For these developers, shoddiness was not a revitalisation turn-off but an incentive to invest their alternative *habitus* on abandoned city spaces. For the 'organic entrepreneurs' there was no strict separation between 'use value' and 'exchange value'. As a result, the maximisation of profit was not the only reason to establish bars, restaurants or shops, there was also a desire to create a friendly atmosphere for friends, associates and people with similar *habitus*. This is in sharp contradistinction to larger commercial ventures supported by the local state, for them profit is prioritised and personal lifestyle is hardly ever on the list.

Manchester's initial stimulus for revitalisation was, therefore, provided by 'mavericks and misfits', argues Allen (ibid 670-1, see also Haslam, 1999; Milestone, 1996). Large portions of depreciating land and property, a testimony to Manchester's merchandise, mill and

factory glory days of the past, were, for example, appropriated by 'pop bohemians' who wanted to create a cultural environment that suited their interests (Milestone 1996). Other examples also include the founding of the *Hacienda* and the band *New Order*- an old warehouse was converted into a vibrant rave club which attracted other '24 hour party people' from other cities such as London, Newcastle and Leeds (Haslam, 1999). The 'countercultural' upsurge was followed by the growth of the 'gay village' which came into prominence in the 1980s, as small scale business people began to convert old warehouses into 'gay bars' (Williams 2003). Manchester gays and lesbians were also one of the first people to appropriate apartments strategically in the city centre (Quilley 2002, Milestone 1996). They were strongly attracted to the city centre as a place where they could 'come out' as opposed to the suburbs where most of them had grown up.

In possession of modest economic capital, these and other self-styled 'natural pioneers' had enormous cultural capital as middle class 'alternative people'. They were usually made up of artists, designers, academics and architects. Their reasons for settling in Manchester were in many ways different, if not opposed, to the shiny building projects that were to later begin to colonise city centre space.

Although they came for the 'underground side of things', like any late modern cultural development, Manchester's 'alternative people' were not very immune to the appropriation of the cultural industry (Peck and Ward 2002: 4). The city council initially cracked down on countercultural production and consumption but later increased its tolerance of dance clubs and the gay village (Quilley 2002, Herbert and Deas, 2000).

As Manchester's regeneration has expanded, with big commercial property investors taking over, only the very wealthy such as Premier League footballers are able to acquire and occupy property in certain parts of the city centre. Groups like Allen's 'city centre tourists', if they are able to buy and occupy at all, are usually left with 'bland, boring, no frills' property (Allen 2007: 679). Young service sector working professionals and 'city centre tourists', usually first time buyers, are getting increasingly pushed out of the housing market. In an almost complete reversal of initial city centre property acquisition trends, only very few buyers intend to live in their property; investors have over flooded the Manchester city centre property market by their speed at offering to buy and their immense spending clout. Younger families and 'city centre tourists' are no match for big investors who seem to have realised there is just as much money to

make from sale of property to students and ASDA workers as there is to Premier League footballers, ultimately making new city apartments more 'bland', more debased than before (ibid: 679).

The reduced availability of city centre property is also leading some 'volume developers' to shift their entrepreneurial focus elsewhere—inner urban Manchester and Salford (ibid, 679). This 'inner-urbanisation' is changing the class configuration of these inner city areas. The entrepreneurial shift of focus means even Hulme and Moss Side can now boast of lush residential facilities. As places out of the city centre but close enough, the marketing tactics now involve disconnecting apartments and facilities in inner city areas from their actual locations and connecting them with the city centre (ibid, 680). Allen (ibid, 681) argues that 'inner-urbanisation' is not all salubrious. Inner urban areas may not derive sufficient benefits from the revitalisation occasioned by the building of luxurious residential facilities as they are not connected in any way to local businesses and shops but are repeatedly linked with city centre amenities. Thorough regeneration, Allen argues, requires that the cultural and economic interests of the newly arrived middle class be located in the inner city. Also in circumstances such as presently obtain, involving more and more single young professionals taking up residence in inner city

Manchester, resentment is the more likely the corollary as opposed to integration or inter-class camaraderie , Allen argues (ibid).

This section has examined literature whose focus has been on the enactment of spatial realities that may be said to be *in some respects* different or even oppositional to the ones currently dominant in Manchester. From the emergence of the gay village to Allen's 'counterculturalists', it has been shown that non-dominant spatial realities can be brought to pass in Manchester. It remains to be seen how the day-to-day activities of skateboarders and graffiti writers may be said to be part of the same counter-production of space in Manchester. Can we find resistance in the non-convergence of interests between the spatial regulators of regenerating Manchester and subcultural members? The next chapter is largely dedicated to examining these issues. It is time to briefly draw the links between the various themes of this chapter in preparation for the next.

### Summary

There are a number of issues that have been raised which are of direct importance to the empirical interests of this thesis- an exploration of the day-to-day activities of graffiti writers and skateboarders in Manchester. It has been shown that the city centre,

together with most of Manchester, is the object of different visions by different groups. The interests of city planners, commercial entrepreneurs, city councillors and the police are not always in consonance with that of Allen's 'counterculturalists', for example. What is seen in regenerating Manchester today has also been shown to have a history- that of the conflict between diverse human interests over what realities ought to come to pass in Manchester's spaces. The control of space that this engenders has been alluded to. The discussion, for example, has depicted the police as a group having interests in the regulation of spatial realities that are enacted in Manchester's spaces. The control of "anti-social behaviour", it has been insisted, is non-insular in that it is entangled with and reflective of wider interests of diverse segments of the local powerful in ensuring that Manchester is conducive to regeneration. While 'entrepreneurial Manchester' has prevailed in its conflict with "socialist Manchester", thereby ushering in the regulation of individuals and groups thought not to be acting in concert with the new spatial regime entailed by Manchester's new economic path, it was argued that the dominance of local-government supported production of space by private businesses must not be considered the only production of space taking place in Manchester. While not dominant, there have been other producers of space, macro and



micro, who have sought and enacted alternative spatial realities in Manchester. The purpose of the next chapter is to examine the experiences of graffiti writers and skateboarders and enquire whether in their own production of spaces of play there are conflicts and struggles with more powerful producers of space and their agents. In the next chapter this will involve a thematic presentation of the experiences of graffiti writers and skateboarders in Manchester.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> All photographs were taken by me.

<sup>2</sup> This trend has been solidified since Blair's 'new Labour' ethos (Hetherington 2007: 634).

<sup>3</sup> The Manchester city council's ability to generate money from the private sector was miniscule and it found itself relying more and more on central government as source of funding for post-bomb rebuilding. It was more constrained by its partnership with the private sector in other ways- it found it hard to advocate popular interests such as those of the small traders increasingly mistreated as a result of the reconstruction melee (Holden 2002: 148-9).

<sup>4</sup> Of course in reality Manchester's powerful producers of space move faster. A regeneration officer is quoted in Holden (2002: 136) as saying: 'The bomb went off on Saturday; I was seconded at 8.30 on the Sunday morning'.

<sup>5</sup> Although the area now known as the gay village was almost exclusively known for its prostitution and general 'seediness', it has been brightened up in defiance of the urban stereotype of sexual sites. While the area's revitalisation is firmly linked with gay entrepreneurialism, so called fake gay businessmen have been cashing in and have seized the opportunity to establish businesses to cater for the vibrant, mostly gay clientele, to the consternation of the 'real' gays (Taylor, et al: 185).

<sup>6</sup> There are three types of Manchester city centre dwellers that have been pivotal to the city's renewal, according to the writer. The first are the 'counterculturalists'; they were the self-styled '24-hour Manchester party people'. They tended to associate themselves with the countercultural production and consumption that took off in earnest in Manchester by the 1970s and 1980s. Gays and lesbians, whose sexual and demeanour preferences are marginalised were members of this group. There are also the 'successful agers', later arrivals in the Manchester city centre, whose interests in the city centre are very different. This group, in their fifties and sixties, have moved/are moving into the city centre area in order to engage in the consumption of certain cultural facilities including theatre, opera, classical music and restaurants. These cultural facilities have been promoted by the city council since the early and mid 1990s as part of its aim of downtown regeneration. The third group are motivated by the 'apparently postmodern desire to experience and sample living at the heart of things'. They are the 'city centre tourists', who are only seemingly postmodern whilst being authentically 'experimental' in that they tend to have a traditional, conservative outlook indicated by their usual decision to eventually move to the suburbs. (Allen 2006: 675).



## Chapter 6

### Counter-production of space: play, resistance and Manchester skateboarders and graffiti writers

#### Introduction

This chapter picks up on the previous chapter's focus on the features of Manchester's spaces by examining the findings of fieldwork research on the day-to-day activities of Manchester graffiti writers and skateboarders. If graffiti writers and skateboarders' interests clash with that of city councillors, private business and the police, what does this mean for this thesis' examination of the concept of resistance? What nuances and details emerge from exploring the narratives of 'less powerful' groups such as graffiti writers and skateboarders and what lessons can be learnt about the key theoretical categories of space and resistance from such accounts? These are the major questions this chapter will attempt to answer. The discussion starts with the structure of both subcultures. In this part of the discussion I examine what being a graffiti writer and skateboarder means and what types of activities are typically engaged in. Then I look at the importance of play as a motivation to use the city in both groups. This leads to an examination of how play brings members into conflict with other producers of space. How skateboarders and graffiti writers engage with powerful actors with

opposed orientations to urban space such as police officers, city councillors and street wardens is examined. I finally look at different understandings of space among skateboarders and graffiti writers, with a focus on the role of gender in this regard. The chapter now engages in a thematic presentation of fieldwork data, starting with the types of activities a skateboarder or graffiti writer engages in whilst in the city.

## **Playing in the City**

### *The structure of subcultural play*

One of the principal aims of the skateboarder's play in the city is to perform tricks with the skateboard. A simple trick is 'the wheelie' which consists in the skater using only two of the four wheels of the skateboard. For this trick either the front two wheels or the back wheels may be used. To perform another trick 'the slalom' the skateboarder jumps high from one strong fixture (some fearless skateboarders are not particularly concerned about the strength of the fixtures they use) to another one not faraway. Something close to the trick is also performed by lying brave onlookers (usually other skateboarders) in a crouched position while a skater high-jumps over them one after the other. There are also many other specifically aerial tricks ('the ollie' is an example). Whilst doing tricks in the air, the aim of the skateboarder is to somehow be in the air without letting go of

the skateboard. This can be achieved by holding onto it or by (more stylishly) applying leg pressure on the board so that it does not fly off. There are other tricks that are closer to *terra firma* such as ‘grinds’ and ‘slides’, the performance of which require the skater to pay more attention to things on the ground (see also Borden 2001, Davis 1999; and Davis and Phillips 2004).

For the graffiti writer the aim is to stylishly write and or draw on walls and other fixtures of the physical environment that are conducive to this aim. Graffiti writers, therefore, write not only walls but also on dustbins, electric boxes, phone booths, cars, boards and pavements (see fig 6.1). The ‘tag’ is a (usually quick) stylish rendering of the graffiti writer’s name on a wall or some other surface. The more tags a graffiti writer has the better known s/he is in the subculture. There is also the ‘throw up’, usually written in more than one dimension; it is usually a larger more elaborate rendering of the tag often with more colour (see fig 6.2). The masterpiece or simply ‘piece’ is larger, more elaborate than the ‘throw up’ and consumes more time and energy. A graffiti writer can spend several hours working on a piece (see Ferrell 1993, 1995, Phillips 1999 and Snyder 2009 for a more detailed treatment of different types of graffiti).

Graffiti writers draw on various sources of inspiration for their work

– from events in their lives to personal relationships, from popular culture and media advertisements to high art:

You get your style from everywhere. I'm personally not into very intellectual stuff and all that. I get my ideas from different sources. You can see something on the telly or in a movie that you like and you put into your [graffiti] piece. Some people are really into comic book stuff. It's anything really. You do something on a beautiful woman if you're into that or you can put your favourite brand of fags in it. (Ed, male graffiti writer)

I'm into putting Japanese signs in my work. Other people do other things. Some of my friends' styles are so macho. Everything for them is so straight and sharp. The arrows and everything in their work is so strong and macho. My style is quite feminine and that's why girls like my stuff. They can relate to it. (Rash, male graffiti writer)

You put what's going on in your own life into your work. If it's a relationship you can put it in and keep it to yourself and not let anybody know or just tell your girl about it so that she's the only one in your posse that really knows what some things mean. You know what I mean? Some people put characters from their favourite movies or their childhood heroes into it. You can put superman into it or whatever; it depends on you. (Myth, male graffiti writer)



**Fig. 6.1 Crew name. Fame for the crew is as important as fame for the individual graffiti writer.**



Fig. 6.2 A 'throw up' on the walls of the University of Manchester



Apart from the activities that may be said to be central to the subcultures, just discussed, there are also other activities that are important to skateboarders and graffiti writers, such as watching subcultural videos. A lot of time is spent watching, making, discussing and arguing about videos, especially those of other graffiti writers and skateboarders. In fact the tricks practiced by the skateboarder and the graffiti done by the graffiti writer has usually been influenced if not completely inspired by what he/she has seen on a skate or graffiti video. The following statements exemplify what most members think of videos:

...We spend a lot of time watching videos. I've got my own personal collection. When I see a skater on a video do many tricks then I'm like 'I want to do that too, where can I do that? ...' (Luke, male skateboarder)

...When we watch someone doing tricks in LA under a bridge or in a dry pool or something, I'm thinking 'where in Manchester is like that? Maybe I could do that in Manchester...' (Dan, male skateboarder)

...It's good to watch graf videos. You can see how the best of the best do their thing then you can compare your style with theirs and improve. It's also good for motivation to go out and just do it. Sometimes you're like I'm not sure I can do this or do that but when you see a crew from another part of the world doing what you have always dreamed to do without any fear and also filming it, then you're like saying to yourself 'stop being such a girl, get on with it!'... (Myth, male graffiti writer)

Skate and graffiti videos are watched at home, on the internet or in a skate shop. Skate and graffiti videos can be bought at skate shops, downloaded for free on the internet or borrowed from other members. In Manchester some graffiti writers watch graffiti videos in skate shops, a place where one might wrongly suppose that what is on offer are only skate products. The skate shop, for both graffiti writers and skateboarders, is an important arena for play, meeting people with similar interests, and discussing the goings on in the local subcultural scene. It is also a place to debate worldwide subcultural news and happenings. Above all it is a place to meet without fear of interference from authorities. The following quotations are illustrative.

...This [skate shop] is a chill out place for us. You can hang out and talk about skateboarding, watch videos, plan a skate trip, everything. You can also meet new people, swap skate photos and go out to do more skating from there... (Alex, male skateboarder)

We [graffiti writers] hang out in skate shops because many shops sell paints. We can also stop the skate videos and play some real hardcore graf videos... (Rash, male graffiti writer)

Skate shops are a good spot to buy stuff and chill out without being harassed but I think the cops know about this. They must know since they know a lot of things that are difficult to know like many details about us. But skate shops are still good for watching and buying graf videos, graf shirts, magazines and caps [graffiti can spray nozzles]. (Aba, male graffiti writer)

Making videos (as different from watching them) and taking photographs of subcultural activities are also important for many members. Members recognise that any potentially permanent records of play, especially if it is illegal, can actually amount to playing into the hands of those who wish to regulate the activities of skateboarders and graffiti writers, as I show below. Apart from the pleasure experienced from making records of skating and graffiti writing, there are also very important utilitarian reasons for doing so:

...It's exciting making videos of you and your friends doing graf. It's a good idea these days when they clean it off so quickly and all your work is gone in minutes. It can be very frustrating, that's why videos are good; at least you can watch it over and over again and post it on the internet... (Barb, female graffiti writer)

If you say 'I did this and I did that' then people are going to say 'where is it?', if you say 'it's been cleaned off' you get that look from some people like 'yeah, yeah, of course'. That's why you've got to have the videos so they know it's for real, that you climbed the barbed wire fence, that you really did it... (Oslo, male graffiti writer)

...There's no point saying 'I did those hard tricks last night at Urbis when you'd all gone home, I wish you were there'. Trust skaters to say 'can you do it now?' If you say 'I don't always get it right' then they'll doubt you; but if you've got it on video, maybe a friend was recording it or something then you've got the evidence and they'll have to shut up... (Luke, male skateboarder)

Similar themes to those pursued here have been addressed by Ferrell, Milovanovic and Lyng (2001). They address BASE jumpers' "mediated practices" including, among other equipment, the use of

helmet-mounted and body-mounted video cameras. Some of their conclusions are similar to some of my findings above – they find that video documentation is bound up with the negotiation of status within the subculture studied.

### *For the Love of Name and Fame*

The last point also links with another related theme which is that *a part* of the motivation for play and making records of subcultural play is fame and or acceptance within the subculture (see also Phillips 1999, Lachmann 1988, Snyder 2009), where this is already achieved in some measure, loss of face or the consolidation of acceptance remains important. The following quote serves to exemplify these sentiments among members:

As a writer you want to be known all over the city not just in one small area or where you live, you want to be known all over the world actually. So you've got to do a lot of work so people know who you are, that you are around, so they know your name... (Pluto, male graffiti writer)

You've got to skate abroad and meet skaters from all over Europe and elsewhere. It's good to see all those popular skate spots on videos but when you're actually there that's the real deal. You meet people, get their autographs and if you're popular, people also want to get yours because they've seen you on the videos and they know that's the guy on the smashing videos from Manchester. (Luke, male skateboarder)

Although skateboarders sometimes practise their tricks privately, it is widely recognised that it is important to do it in the context of acceptance among peers. A respondent was very forthright:

...Let's face it skateboarding is about showing off. The whole point is about letting people know that you can do it even though it is so hard to do... (John, male skateboarder)

There is also a concern to be seen as having a strong character and not being discouraged by failure:

When you do some really difficult tricks then they know this guy's good, they know you're brave and can try anything... you don't want to fall down and not pick yourself up again and skate. If you do that then people will know you're not up for it... (Dan, male skateboarder)

Since graffiti tags can be a ticket to fame and prestige within the subculture painting over someone's tag or indicating in any way that the author of the tag or throw-up lacks style is deemed disrespectful and can initiate serious confrontations.

Your tag is you. So many people don't know my real name. That's who you are. If people are writing stuff about your tag then that's you. If it's good then you're happy because people recognise your work and what you're into. If it's bad then it's really a big deal sometimes like you can start a fight that way or get crews dissing [disrespecting] each other till kingdom come. (Kolo, male graffiti writer)

It's like some toy writers [inexperienced graffiti writers] start to paint over your work to start a fight so people can know that there's a new kid on the block, to get easy fame without the hard work. It makes me laugh but sometimes I'm angry that some people don't want to wake up in the morning and do the

difficult things but just want to diss an established writer. (Ed, male graffiti writer)

Halsey and Young's (2006) research is consonant with many aspects of the discussion above. They find that "fame (attaining the status or identity of a king) is in many instances important" among graffiti writers (ibid: 278). They also note that "taking pleasure in publicity about one's activities and desire for affirmation by one's peers" important in graffiti (ibid: 281).

### *Friendships and Escape from Ennui*

While members have other forms of play available to them apart from skateboarding and graffiti, it seems these activities are seen as helping to cope with boredom more than other alternatives available (see also Flusty 2000). Having skater friends and going out skating can make time pass quickly:

...I began to skateboard a couple of years ago. I was very bored back then so I started hanging out a lot more with a few of my mates who were skateboarders; and that's how it all started... when you're skating you forget everything and you just lose yourself... (Adam, male skateboarder)

When I'm not working and find things a bit boring then graf helps. It makes life more exciting and interesting. Whether you do it on your own or with friends there's always a buzz... (Ed, male graffiti writer)

Also more generally, the two subcultures are oriented towards play, pleasure and fraternising. Making friends, going to parties and going on road trips are as much part of skateboarding and graffiti as the skating tricks and graffiti 'throw ups':

...graffiti gives you everything. You get girls; you get friends and do many things together. We watch videos, smoke weed, go to parties, concerts, drink and talk about graffiti videos. (Rash, male graffiti writer)

I don't know why people think and say skaters are anti-social. Skating is the opposite it is not anti-social at all. It is about having fun and chilling out with people you get on with. Most of the time we are just trying to have a nice time. (Alex, male skateboarder)

Graffiti writers, especially think trust is an important element in choosing who to do graffiti with or discuss the details of their work with, which is understandable in view of the fact that far more than skateboarding graffiti is considered very criminal.

When you belong to a crew you've got everything. It's your own small posse. You are with people you like and people who like you, people you get along with and who listen to your kind of music. You respect them and they give you respect back. You look out for them and you are sure they'll also do the same for you. You share paint and ideas and you can trust them with secrets about your work. (Rash, male graffiti writer)

You can belong to many crews like on the surface but not really be deep in those crews but you usually have your real crew, real friends. This type of crew is not about the name so people can say 'you know he writes with this popular crew or that famous crew'. This is about people you are down with; they know what you're about. (Myth, male graffiti writer)

*Play as motivator to use the city*

Apart from escaping boredom and making friends, interviews, participant observation and other forms of immersion in the two subcultures brought to the fore the importance of the desire to play *in the city*. Asked what attracted them to skateboarding and or graffiti, almost all respondents mentioned the playful dimension of the subcultures. The following data from the field will typify how most respondents describe why and how they got involved in the subcultures:

Some people were into graf where I live. I didn't get it at first but when I got to know them and started hanging out with them I found out it was quite exciting so I started hooking up with other writers in my area and other parts of town; and that's how I got into graf. (Myth, male graffiti writer)

SY: So why did you start skating; why do you think most skaters started?

Andy (male skateboarder): I started because some of my mates were doing it and said they had a good time. I wanted to try it out. Some people started skating because their older brothers and their friends were skating and they wanted to join in the fun.

SY: Do some people start skating because they want to be rebellious?

Andy: (laughing slightly) I don't think many people started skating because of that. For me and for most people I know it was really because skating was such fun.



What prompted the participation of most subcultural members, therefore, was not the desire to be rebellious or even to contest the governance of urban space. Andy's response is representative of that of most respondents whether they are graffiti writers or skateboarders. That members of these groups craved membership of the subcultures because they were unusually predisposed to recalcitrance or had it in mind from the outset to engage in resistance is also another proposition to be wary of. The overwhelming motivation to become a skateboarder or graffiti writer seems to be the desire to participate in play in the city with friends and schoolmates. It is also important to note that the role of play in sustaining the interests of most skateboarders and graffiti writers cannot be seen as an initial motivation that is later taken over by other motivations. Play must be seen as important throughout a skateboarder and graffiti writer's 'career', even when financial considerations come to play, such as making a career from skateboarding. This sometimes involves being sponsored by a skate company or having deals with skate magazines (see also Ferrell 1995 and Halsey and Young 2006, Lachmann 1988 for the possibilities of a career in graffiti). According to Alex, a skateboarder:

I do need the money. Don't get me wrong and I feel lucky to be sponsored and to be able to get free skating stuff but I really do it because I enjoy it.

What usually starts as a desire to engage in play with a group in the city later metamorphoses into an 'addiction' to skateboarding and graffiti as favourite forms of play. In fact 'addiction' to graffiti and skating as forms of play becomes strong that it usually ceases to be a mere participation in *group* activity although it many times involves this element. It also becomes a *personal* way of expressing the self and a special and enjoyable way of passing time. This is exemplified in the following conversation:

SY: So do you skate a lot with a particular group or are you happy to skate with any skaters you find in a good spot?

Luke (male skateboarder): I skate with my friends many times. We call each other and go out to skate together or just meet at a good spot for skating. Urbis<sup>1</sup> is very popular. I also skate on my own and I enjoy it. Sometimes I don't really want to skate with anybody, especially when I just want to enjoy myself.

A graffiti writer in the following dialogue confirms that the point is also true of graffiti writers.

SY: Do you always do graffiti with the same group?

Myth: Yes, that is very important for safety and security.

SY: What do you mean?

Myth: It's mostly because you don't know who to trust and it's better to trust people you know very well. It's also good to have someone on the look out for the police and security guards.

SY: So you never do graffiti alone?

Myth: I do it alone many times and many [graffiti] writers write alone too. I go alone on holidays so I can do graf abroad.

While the importance of play in joining the subcultures must be brought to the fore, the point must not be pressed too far. Some subcultural members were motivated to become participants by considerations other than expressive, corporeal play:

SY: Why and how did you start skating?

Lisa: There was this guy who I fancied and he was a skater so I started skateboarding too...<sup>2</sup>

My finding that play plays an important role in graffiti and skateboarding is reminiscent of Halsey and Young's (2006: 276) insistence that "graffiti is, overwhelmingly, about pleasure and desire in the act of writing". It also confirms, as will be seen later, Katz' (1988) and Lyng's (1986, 1990 and 2005) emphasis on emotions being important in theorising crime.

### *Changed Perceptions of Self and Space*

The desire to play with a group of skaters or to playfully hang out with graffiti writers as a catalyst for subcultural membership must be understood as, in some respects, qualitatively different from the type of play that later sustains the interest of the skateboarder or graffiti writer when membership has been attained. Initially, little or

moderate fascination with the techniques that go into enacting these specific forms of play is a reason for desiring to be a member. Later on, the acquisition of subcultural skills, deep enculturation into the ways of the two lifestyles bring about a 'gestalt switch' of some sorts, a kind of cognitive re-orientation:

'I feel as if I'm very different now. I used to be like everybody else now skateboarding is my life. I just wanted to hang out with my friends but now it's more than that. I see myself as a skater and everybody sees me that way. I take my board with me everywhere I go. I think about skateboarding all the time, I talk about it, even dream about it. Life is now about skating.'  
(Adam, male skateboarder)

'Graf is my life. Almost everything I do is related to graffiti. I got into other arts because of graffiti. I get into trouble because of graffiti. If I ever make anything of my life I think it will be in graffiti.' (Rash, male graffiti writer)

Before membership in the subcultures and at the early stages of their 'careers', to skaters, a park bench is for sitting and handrails are there to help go up and down stairs. All of this changes later on:

SY: Tell me how Manchester skateboarders tend to think of the city.

Ed: ...The city council and the street crime wardens think a bench is for sitting down but we think there are many exciting things that can be done with a bench, we can do many tricks on a bench or a ledge...

All space, objects in spaces, are, after enculturation into the skating and graffiti lifestyles, usually seen through the eyes of a dedicated and competent member of the subcultures and opportunities are always sought out to play:

It's almost as if I never stop thinking about skating... even when I'm out with my girlfriend I'm looking out for good spots for skating. (Dan, male skateboarder)

A similar theme emerged from the following interview:

SY: Tell me how graffiti writers think about the city, how they see it and use it.

Oslo: ...I personally tend to look all over the city walls, looking for how a good piece [graffiti] would look on them. Even when I don't have any paint and I'm not ready to do anything I'm still thinking about it, planning about how to escape just in case I decide to do it. I guess it's the same for other [graffiti] writers. It's easy to spot a graffiti writer in the city centre if you are one yourself. (Chuckles) It's the way they glance at the walls and try to hide it...

These points about the qualitative changes in how objects in the city are experienced differently by skaters and graffiti writers resonates with Lyng's (1990: 861) argument about edgework activities helping to re-enchant the actor's world and there being a transformation of the actor's relation to objects and space.

Before moving to a discussion of the two subcultures and their relation to the spaces of Manchester (especially its city centre) it is necessary to briefly summarise the points that have been made in this section and how it will contribute to the aims of the thesis. In this section it has been seen that the fundamental orientation of the two groups being studied is play. The subcultures are entered not because of a desire to challenge the control of space but in order to seek

opportunities for more mundane desires such as friendship and play, members' orientation to the city and objects in the city is informed, almost always by a desire to play. The city centre is, especially, seen in terms of the opportunities it provides to carry out subcultural play.

What has been affirmed in this section is the priority of play in understanding members' use of space. To assert the priority of play is not to deny that members actually rebel against the control of space, which is the focus of the next section. What the data here demonstrates is that in order to understand members' challenge of the control of space it is also important to understand one of the primary ways members orient themselves to space; this is play. This means this discussion has set the scene for the next – an exploration of CCCS' insight that play/leisure can mesh with resistance.

Whyte (1973) and Gehl (1996) provide useful treatment of the uses and meanings attached to space by skateboarders along the same lines as above. Borden (2001) is also very helpful on these themes. Halsey and Young (2006: 283), in consonance with findings here, find that “writers see the landscape as a series of surfaces waiting to be written on”.

So far the focus has been on what may be described as the “internal story” of skateboarders and graffiti writers’ appropriation of city spaces, the discussion now turns to how, in producing space, the two groups come into conflict with powerful interests in Manchester.

## **Graffiti, Skateboarding and the Production of Alternative Space**

### *Clashes with Authority*

In relations of power-resistance there is usually a bone of contention, an object of struggle, that which an observer can pick out as central to the divergence of attitudes and opinions. In the case of graffiti writers and skateboarders the contests of definitions and interests centre on space, the uses that appertain to it, what objects may legitimately be used in it, what actions may be properly performed in it and the nature and limits of experiences that are permissible in it (Figs 6.3 and 6. 4). For skateboarders and graffiti writers, the regulations relating to spaces in Manchester that directly and indirectly impinge on their activities could be otherwise:

It’s not like this everywhere you know. The police don’t come after you everywhere like they do in this country. I do [graffiti on] trains and walls in Eastern Europe and I get away with it. That’s why I’ve got to save up money and go again. (Aba, male graffiti writer)

In Barcelona and France life is not so hard for the street skater. The streets of Barcelona seem to be made for skateboarding and people skate with not as much hassle as one gets here. (Chanel, female skateboarder)

You see what you'll never see in the UK abroad. In the Czech Republic you see tall buildings covered with giant [graffiti] pieces and you're like 'wow'. You can still do trains there and get away with it easily. That's why many British guys are travelling a lot these days to bomb [do graffiti murals] and bring back the photos. Prague and the rest of Eastern Europe are quite good at the moment. (Kolo, male graffiti writer)



Fig 6.3 City council's stance on skateboarding in the city centre as punishable<sup>3</sup>





**Fig 6.4** A skater-owned shop: as can be seen on the sign, skateboarders disagree with the city council's definition of their activities in space.

Most of the city centre is officially off limits for skateboarders. There is, however, a particular part of the city centre that street skaters and representatives of the authorities such as the police and street crime wardens seem to always clash- the concrete space around the Urbis Museum in Cathedral Gardens, near the Printworks entertainment complex (see figs. 6.5 and 6.6). It is the most sought-after city centre space by skateboarders, BMX riders and a number of illegal drug users and, with CCTV cameras overlooking the area, it is also one of the most surveilled. Street wardens are not usually very far away and there are signs everywhere indicating the ban on skateboarding, rollerblading and ball games and the fines accompanying breaches. The steps and walls in the area have marks that show they have been skated on many times. Conflicts with street wardens and complaints by shop owners and office users about the presence of skateboarders in the area are common. A skateboarder was recently penalised with an anti-social behaviour order for skateboarding at 'Urbis'. 'ASBO Jake'<sup>4</sup>, it is rumoured, still violates the order with impunity and can be seen skateboarding at the same place with a hooded shirt and cap to hide his face from the video cameras at odd hours of the day. It was impossible to get an interview with 'ASBO Jake'; not only was he very elusive, other skateboarders doubted, in interviews with them, that he

would be willing to talk. They themselves were, however, willing to

comment on Jake's situation:

It is just shit that he should be slammed with an ASBO for skateboarding. The council is now really taking the piss... (Dan, male skateboarder)

It's as if skateboarding is a crime. It is not a crime. I know he ['ASBO Jake'] can be over the top. If it was me and I had been warned many times I would find somewhere else to skate for some time before coming back but he just does it [...] as if he can't breathe without skating there. But the council are wrong to use an ASBO. We [skateboarders] could be doing worse things you know but we don't. (Ed, male skateboarder)



**Fig. 6.5 Community Support Officer monitors the spaces around 'Urbis', where skateboarders are known to skate illegally.**



**Fig. 6.6** Skateboarders' paradise: the concrete space outside the Urbis Museum is an illegal skating spot.

From the above statements we find a source of conflict between skateboarders and law enforcement agents. Skateboarders refuse official interpretations of their activities in spaces where skateboarding is illegal. While the authorities would like to delimit the spaces where play can be legitimately engaged in, skateboarders would like to discover for themselves the suitability of spaces for play. Another issue important for the analysis of space in relation to skateboarding and graffiti is the notion of “criminal damage” (see figs 6.7 and 6.8). Skateboarders reject official discourses about the “damage” they cause to public property:

... If I wasn't a skater I still wouldn't have problems with skateboarding. We don't really do anything wrong. The police say we damaged the statues in the city centre and that the steps are bad because of the skating but you only see small dents after many years of skating so I think they are wrong...  
(Frank, male skateboarder)

Similar points were made by a graffiti writer:

...We actually make the city more colourful. We don't vandalise it. The places most of us go are places that have been neglected, so we beautify it. Why do people want a dull city?...  
(Kolo, male graffiti writer)

Apart from confrontations between skateboarders, graffiti writers and law enforcement officials, clashes with private security also serve to solidify the importance of space to the resistance of skateboarders.

Private security guards are sometimes seen as more of a threat by skateboarders than police officers and street wardens:

... Security officers are one of our worst enemies. I don't know of other cities but in Manchester they seem to be very nasty. They tried to pin me against the wall with their car for skating on their premises and I had to jump on the bonnet. (Ed, male skateboarder)

... Some security officers can be very mean. They have shouted abuses at me and some of my friends have been in fights with them... (Gerrard, male skateboarder)



Fig. 6.7 Skateboarders claim their play does little or no damage to city centre statues.





Fig. 6.8 Graffiti on the wall of the BBC on Oxford Road near the city centre.

Jeff Ferrell (1993) reads graffiti writers' activities as anarchist resistance to property and authority. He says "a careful examination of graffiti writing has shown that it constitutes a form of anarchist resistance to political and economic authority" (1993: 187). The cultural criminologist also says "graffiti writing certainly constitutes a visceral resistance to the constraints of private property, law and corporate art" (1993: 172). Graffiti writers he says are "engaging in 'direct action' against authorities" (ibid). I do not think this agrees with findings elsewhere (see for example Halsey and Young 2006) and I think Ferrell's own data can be easily pressed against his analysis. Ferrell's emphasis on conflicts between graffiti writers and authorities remain insightful, nonetheless. Unfortunately he fails to spatialise these conflicts as this is where the case for any talk of widespread resistance within graffiti communities is strongest and better supported. There is certainly no shortage of evidence that indicates that skaters and graffiti writers through their activities critique "how particular social meanings become "concretized"- in the very cement, bricks, and steel of the landscape" (Mitchell 2000: 100). (Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee 1998; and Borden 1998b provide useful treatments of conflicts over uses of space. Economic uses are opposed to "unproductive uses", rather reminiscent of Bataille 1997. There are also useful discussions of conflicts between

building owners and business managers on the one hand and groups such as teenagers and the homeless on the other.) Such resistance, however, cannot be described as anarchist or anti-capitalist. *Widespread* resistance within graffiti is micro not macro resistance and assumptions to the contrary usually tend to give general significance to isolated cases such as that of Bristol graffiti writer Banksy. I return to this point later under the section “Are graffitists and skaters macro resisters?” as well as in the conclusion chapter. Another difference between this thesis and Ferrell’s important work is that while Ferrell sees resistance as linked with graffiti writers’ “relative powerlessness and marginality” this point is not emphasised and one might want to say that Ferrell deploys the concept of resistance while being insufficiently curious about its conceptual and theoretical meaning. I have already asserted the value of problematising resistance as a concept in Chapter Two.

### *Pragmatic Anti-surveillance and Aversion of Control*

Often participants in potentially illegal and criminal activities, many skateboarders and graffiti writers have developed a number of practical strategies and competences (see Marx, GT 2002, 2003 and 2005; and Toon 2000 for examples of avoidance/resistance of surveillance; see also Hallsworth’s (2005: 5-6) critique of the tendency

not to appreciate the skilfulness that goes into being a successful street criminal<sup>5</sup>) to skate and do graffiti against the wishes of the authorities:

... It is better to go out [to do graffiti] in groups but you have to trust the people you're with. I only trust the members of my crew and nobody else. It's getting serious now I can't afford to be caught ... (Barb, female graffiti writer)

... You cover your face from the cameras; hoods, scarves and caps. That's the way not to get caught. You don't want to end up in police files. But they probably know you anyway but don't yet have enough evidence to come after you ... (Tosh, male graffiti writer)

Many skateboarders and graffiti writers make sure that they do not have any incriminating material on them whilst skating or doing graffiti. Attempts are also made to reduce the likelihood of being identified if accosted by authority figures:

... I never have my student ID or anything with my name or anything like that on me when I skate. When redcoats [street crime wardens] ask for my name I just lie and give them a fake address. But you can't lie to a cop, they have more gadgets and they can check if you are lying. I gave a cop a fake phone number and he warned me that I was making things worse so I gave him my house number and he called my house and asked my mum if she knew me and if I was her son! (John, male skateboarder)

Members are also cognisant of the importance of timing their actions accurately as well as making plans based on the information they have about those that would regulate their use of space.

... We know the redcoats [street wardens] go home at 5pm so that's the time to do more skating and not to bother too much about being thrown off. (Gerrard, male skateboarder)

It's about planning, isn't? You plan and wait and watch the cops and the guards. You know their movement and their timetables, when they want to relax, when they go on breaks, when they can't be bothered, then you pick the right time and attack [i.e. quickly do graffiti]. (Myth, male graffiti writer)

Spreading information quickly on the whereabouts of police officers and other spatial opponents as well as constant vigilance is also thought to be of the essence:

People [skateboarders] use the internet to let their mates know where the security guards and the cops are getting strict... we send tips to each other on when it's safe to skate in certain spots for people who have never been there, to let them know where the cameras are and other things... (Barb, female skateboarder)

You've got to wear hoods to cover your face from the cameras. You never know who is taking photos as well, some cops are pretending to be tourists, so you have to be aware of what's going on around you. (Kolo, male graffiti writer)

Even when it might seem that graffiti writers have let their guards down and are swapping or doing graffiti where they might be easily caught, the obverse is usually the case as strategies, tactics and a dose of suspicion are almost always being employed to evade surveillers:

A trick is to do graf when people are not likely to be looking. That's the thrill, people are all around you but they can't be bothered. A Friday night is perfect for that, especially when people are knackered and drunk, you can paint right under their noses and nobody will say 'what are you trying to do there?' (Rash, male graffiti writer)

Using the internet can be good for [graffiti] writers but it can also be dangerous, especially with this URL thing that the police can use to trace you. What can I say, it's good and it's bad at the same time. It's good to be able to upload photos and videos and have graf writers from Australia or something reply and say how good your work is. But you also know the police are watching and going online pretending to be graf writers wanting to meet up and all that shit. If you're caught that way it just looks bad on you like a proper school boy error (Oslo, male graffiti writer).

Graffiti writers do not merely pride themselves on their style or artistic abilities, it is also important to be a good strategist, to plan ahead and find ways of outwitting the police. To be a successful in illegal graffiti, members cannot afford to let their work leave a trail that makes the work of the police easier:

You want to tag not only near where you live. You want to do it all over the city. Sometimes that's a bit dangerous because the police are not stupid. If they see a particular tag in an area a lot then they'll be thinking- "well, maybe he lives in this area" (Aba, male graffiti writer)

Where do we plan to bomb [do graffiti in] the city? We could chill out in a coffee shop or use one of the rooms in one of the skate shops and plan how to go about it. We consider where the police and security guards may be, who will be on the look out, where we will hide before we hit the trains or whatever. You've got to have a proper strategy. They make plans about us so we can't afford not to have a plan ourselves. (Kolo, male graffiti writer)

We sometimes use little restaurants like the one we're in right now; choose a corner and bring out the sketch books and graf photos. That's the time to share ideas about what you did the last time you were out bombing [doing graffiti] the city. You can plan to do it together with people you trust or just listen to

the tips and how people planned to escape the last time they were out for the time you're going to be on your own. (Ed, male graffiti writer)

Ferrell's (1995) article on graffiti writers' resistance is a very good treatment of the practical ways writers evade and counter surveillance in the city.

### *Skate and Graffiti Code of Conduct?*

Given that, as earlier alluded to, most of the troubles skaters and graffiti writers have with the authorities stem from their use of the city, the appropriateness of their activities in space has been the subject of reflection among members. It seems some members have explicit ethics on what spaces are acceptable for play while others are more guided by pragmatic concerns such as whether the particular space is amenable to the kind of play desired:

Some people don't give a shit about where they write [graffiti] but I do. I don't write on nice buildings or on cars. I prefer buildings no one is using or that looks like it will have to be knocked down anyway. Some writers think everything is fair game. If it's a wall and they can get away with it then they'll do it (Kolo, male graffiti writer).

I tend not to write [graffiti] on the walls of small shops because they can't afford to clean it. I write on the walls of bigger stores because they can afford to clean it, so fuck them if they don't like it (Rash, male graffiti writer) (see fig 6.9 for graffiti on private residence).

Some members are concerned about the negative image that skateboarders might be reinforcing if there are no rules at all about

the appropriateness of spaces or concern for the welfare of the city users.

You've got to be respectful and let people pass when you're skating. You don't want to scare the old women. But some people don't give a fuck about that, as if skateboarding is about being a trouble-maker (Chanel, female skateboarder).

There is no need to have too many rules about it, [skateboarding] you know. People that don't like it can get lost. We were skating in this church yard the other day and some people were looking at us like we had done something really bad. Cemeteries, church yards anywhere that's good for skating is all right and I don't know what all the fuss is about (Dan, male skateboarder).





**Fig 6.9 Graffiti on a Moss Side resident's wall**

Skaters and graffiti writers' ambiguity about the ethics of space contrasts with the visions of space of those that govern their activities. The regulators of space seem to, on the whole, have clear distinctions and demarcations that they would like both groups to respect. Skateboarders and graffiti writers' attitudes and responses to this 'carving up' of space is the subject of the next discussion.

For a discussion of graffiti writers' code of conduct see Halsey and Young (2006: 297) who insist that "the overwhelming majority of writers conceive their activities to be governed by stringent ethical limits"

*Desire for Autonomy and Suspicion of 'Legal Space'*

While the desire to play in the city is not specific to skateboarders and graffiti writers, as many city space users engage in one form of entertainment or the other and derive pleasure from watching others play, skateboarders, graffiti writers and a few other groups may be distinctive in strenuously seeking autonomy with respect to their manner of play . In many urban areas, and Manchester is no exception, the authorities would prefer city users to use space in circumscribed ways or they may prefer or force uses which yield some revenue on them. In many ways this official distinction between prescribed and proscribed play, legal and illegal spaces of play are realities that skateboarders and graffiti writers continually grapple with. Members of both groups are aware of legal, illegal and 'semi-legal' spaces of play. To skate in a city council-owned skate park is legal and skateboarders *sometimes* have to pay a fee:

I don't want to pay to skate. It's as simple as that. It's like being ripped off and I'm not the only one that thinks so. (Ed, male skateboarder)

There is Plattfields park where you can go and just skate without paying but you don't always want to go that far when you can skate on the streets (Adam, male skateboarder) (see fig 6.10).

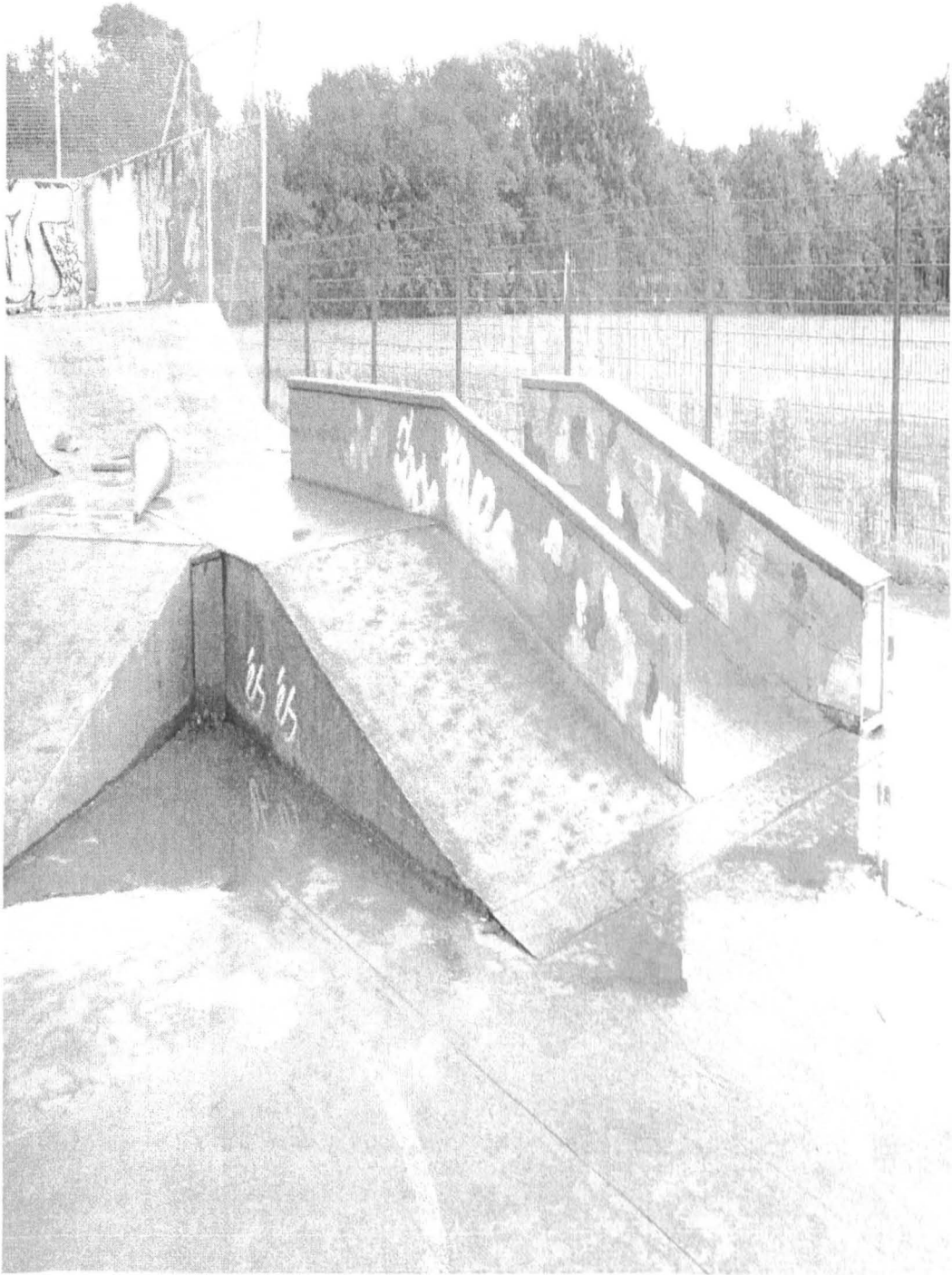
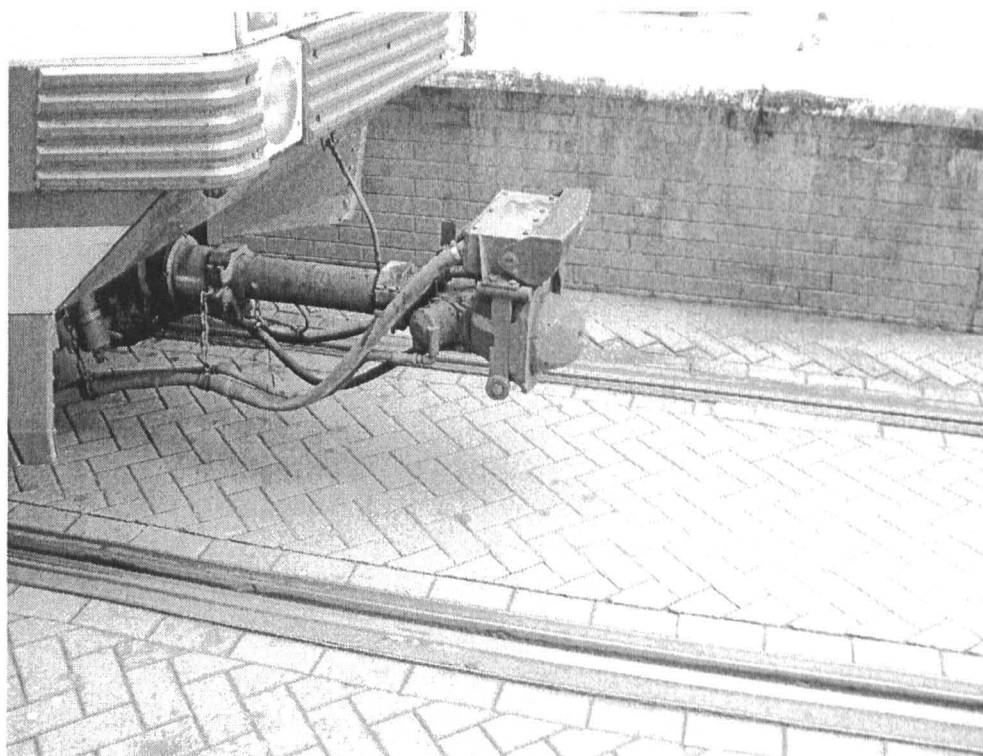


Fig. 6.10 Plattfields skate park in Rusholme, Manchester.



**Fig. 6.11 Dangerous play:** I observed some skateboarders hang onto iron bars of trams such as this, ‘dancing’ on their skateboards as the tram travelled around the city.



**Fig. 6.12 A police van in the city centre:** the daring graffiti writer’s target.

For graffiti writers legal play involves writing on legal walls (I am not aware of any legal graffiti walls in Manchester<sup>6</sup>) or within art studios. Some graffiti writers find some (cruel) irony in the distinction between legal and illegal spaces of play after being on the wrong side of the law:

I got put inside [prison] because of my graffiti... It's a laugh that I could take graffiti lessons inside even though I was in prison for graf... (Pluto, male graffiti writer)

...One minute you can be getting art commissions from the city council the next you're in court for damaging public property... that's the strange life of [graffiti] writers... (Tosh, male graffiti writer)

In the quotes and analyses above regarding legal skateboarding and graffiti the importance of space in analysing the conflicts skateboarders and graffiti writers have with agents of the state and private business comes to the fore. It is not play itself whether in the form of graffiti or skateboarding that is disapproved of, it is play in spaces not approved for such play, disobedient or dissident play is the problem not play *per se*. There are skate parks funded by the city council, the most popular of which is under the Mancunian Bridge (known by many names including 'City Centre Skate Park' and 'Mancunian Way Skate Park'). Here skateboarders can gather to skate and discuss skating without harassment. Skateboarders have to pay a token (three pounds at the time of fieldwork) to register to skate and

there are skateboards for rent as well as some other skating items such as shoes for sale. This seems to be where most learners in Manchester start their skating before venturing out for the more adventurous illegal street skating in the city centre. The park is also used for skateboarding contests that sometimes involve skateboarders and teams from outside the city. For many skateboarders, the skate park has its advantages but is an unattractive skating site (see figs. 6.10, 6.6):

People come to Manchester from all over the UK and Europe to skate. They do not come to skate in a park. They come because of the street skating (Sergei, male Russian skateboarder).

The skate park is too small. You need to skate on stuff not made for skating anyway. That is when skating is exciting, then you can surprise yourself that you can do it; you can also surprise your skate friends. (Ed, male skateboarder)

Skating is not only about skating in a park. It's also about skating in the city centre, on many things and in the streets. When I see something and I don't know if I can skate on it I try to find out. Park or no park we will skate in the streets. They can build an American [-style] skate plaza if they [city council] want, some skaters will still prefer the streets (Adam, male skateboarder) (see fig 6.6).

In skaters' alternative vision of the urban, the whole city is a skate park and not some officially designated portion of it. Suspensions also abound that skate parks are a ploy to stop type of skating skateboarders consider as 'real':

...The real skateboarding is in the streets, man. Doing tricks on steps and on walls, that's the fun. We can ride on small fences in the streets and the city centre. You can't do that at the Pump Cage [City Centre Skate Park] (Luke, male skateboarder).

... I know it sounds funny but this whole skate park idea is actually anti-skating... They want us to skateboard in big cages and stop there... (Gerrard, male skateboarder)

A few skateboarders have more positive things to say about skate parks although they recognise the need for improving the facilities:

The skate park is good but it's too small. You can chill out with friends and also skate just outside it. A bigger one would be better, with more funding and stuff. It's good because you can chill out and watch other people skate while you are resting or just listen to some music with friends or watch skate videos on their mobile phones (Alex, male skateboarder).

This skate park is good especially when you're still learning and not yet confident... you may find guys who want to help you or you can watch and learn or just chill out with friends... (Lisa, female skateboarder).

The issues that have been central to the discussion of this section reinforce the importance of space to the narratives and daily experiences of skateboarders and graffiti writers. It has been shown that both groups are engaged in opposition and conflict with other actors with different views on how the spaces of Manchester are to be used. In Lefebvre's (1991: 359) idiom one might say that skaters and graffiti writers' "representational spaces" collide with the authorities "representations of space". By evading and thwarting the

surveillant practices of police and wardens, graffiti writers and skateboarders display their opposed norms of space, ways of seeing the city that undermine some other visions of the urban. This confirms Becker's (1963) thesis that resistance is usually bound up with differences between a group's views of its activities and other (usually more powerful) groups' views of the same activities. Skaters and graffiti writers seem to be agreeing with Foucault when he says that "one detaches oneself from what is accepted as true and seeks other rules" (1997: 327) Skaters and graffiti artists' resistance is also manifest in their rejection of the circumscription of their activities through distinctions and demarcations that foist suitability for play, legality and illegality on portions of Manchester. It is also now clear that cultural criminologists are right in arguing that certain forms of crime and transgression are a form of resistance to control and power (Presdee 2000).

Press (1997) is a useful discussion of the inception of Manchester city centre skate ban; Owens (1999) more generally discusses curfew laws and skateboard prohibitions. Butler (1997), Wilson (1997); Wooley and Johns (2001) all have discussed similar issues to what have been central to this section, especially heavy-handed crackdowns on skateboarders' use of urban spaces. Oc and Tiesdell (1997) provide



useful discussion of the discursive regulation, as opposed to actual practices, of skateboarding – stereotypes of skateboarding as “social incivility” and “public disorder or nuisance” are major strengths of the discussion. Childress (1999), Owens (2001) and Thompson (1998) agree with the finding here of skateboarders’ rejection of skate parks in preference for “natural terrains” in city centres. Wooley and Johns (2001) argue that “accessibility, trickability, sociability and compatibility” are criteria that influence the popularity of spaces with skateboarders. Before asking specific questions about how gender relates to graffiti and skateboarding cultures, I want explore a question of general significance for the thesis, in light of my critique of arguments in the macro-micro debate – are graffiti writers and skateboarders macro resisters or micro resisters?

*Are graffitiists and skaters macro-resisters?*

The discussion in Chapter Two of the macro-micro resistance distinction has already made it clear that conceptually this thesis is on firm ground to ask whether skateboarders and graffiti writers resist power. This can be done without necessarily implying that their resistance is macro or one of the forms of resistance traditionally understood as such before the wider appreciation of Foucault’s take on power and resistance. It is still helpful, however, to very briefly

return to this theme. What is the class constitution of Manchester graffitiists and skaters? Do the biographies of skaters and graffitiists in the city show any type of macro-political consciousness? Did the orientation of either communities change subsequent to being treated as suspect groups by the authorities?

Skateboarders and graffiti writers come from diverse class backgrounds and parts of the city. It is, however, possible that there are slight skews towards middle class participation and working class participation in skateboarding and graffiti respectively. Ed, for example, is a white male graffiti writer from a "lower middle class" background; his parents are teachers, and he is from Stretford. He was doing his "A" levels when he was contacted and picked up graffiti through a friend. He is not especially interested in political issues. Myth, a black male graffiti writer, is from a middle class background, his father is a lecturer and his mother is a registered nurse. They are both originally from West Africa. He is a university student, whose interest in graffiti was sparked by listening to hip hop music. He is also not especially interested in the political, if this means interest in such matters as anti-capitalism. Dan, a white male skateboarder, from working class background, whose father is deceased and mother is store assistant, stopped formal education

after “O” levels and picked up skateboarding through school friends. He also is not especially interested in the political. Barb, a white female graffiti writer from a working class family (her father is a postman and her mother is a carer) is a university student. She picked up graffiti when her boyfriend recruited her into his crew and never indicated anything to incline me to think she was a very politically-minded person.

Did skaters and graffiti writers’ orientation change after becoming a member of a suspect community? The answer is that the changes in orientation seem to be along the lines already indicated in the previous discussion – willingness to assert their “right” to use urban spaces, rejection of official norms of space, challenges to the partitioning of spaces into legal and illegal portions. This is, however, a long way from providing evidence of the *widespread* presence of macro-resistant attitudes within the two groups. Graffiti writers and skateboarders *mostly* rejected the constrictions of their spaces and no more. If the foregoing is true, how can it be reconciled with high profile graffiti writers such as Bristol’s anti-capitalist Banksy? The answer is that what has been shown is simply that doing graffiti or skateboarding is in itself not necessarily an act of resistance, micro or macro. Empirical work is always needed to understand the context of

the action and the meaning being attached to it by actors. In the case of Manchester's graffitiists and skaters I have indicated that attention to the context of their actions and the meanings they attach to what they do negates any plausible evaluation of their activities as macro-resistance against capitalism. Like Bataille's (1997) resistance, we simply do not have sufficient evidence to assert that their "spatial texts" have any "loftier" aim than to engage in play and oppose the constriction of their spaces of play. Pretty much like Bataille's (1997: 169, 208) playfulness and opposition to utility and "grand" ends their resistance is in this sense "sovereign". Foucault's (1982: 780) "locality of resistance" thesis seems to be, at least for most graffiti writers and skateboarders, applicable here. I would also like to make a bolder claim – studies of skateboarders and graffiti writers have not established a widespread nexus between these actors' activities and macro-resistance (Snyder 2009, Halsey and Young 2006 and Flusty 2000)<sup>7</sup>. Contests in space can be spatial and no more. Subcultures like skateboarding and graffiti where participants do not come from one single class background pose problems for Clarke, Jefferson and Roberts (1975) Marxist thesis about youth culture always trying to win space from dominant middle class culture. Actors do not have to have in mind the overthrow or taming of capitalism when they engage in struggles in space (Lefebvre 1991: 73). Lefebvre was right.

The next set of themes looks at the internal relations within the subcultures by examining the experiences of female graffiti writers and skateboarders. The focus of the discussion will be the distinctiveness and nuances that can be found in the spatial experience of female members and how their resistance may be characterised.

### **Gender, space, graffiti and skateboarding**

It has been indicated so far that play in space is the primary way that the resistance of skateboarders and graffiti writers is enacted. It has been shown that crime wardens, police officers and private security guards surveil and regulate skateboarders and graffiti writers in order to remove the challenge to official visions of space. These arguments have treated skateboarders and graffiti writers as homogeneous groups and have implied that the story of resistance told so far would be largely true of most members of the groups. It remains to be seen whether there are important differences in the spatial experience of within these groups and this is the subject that will now be examined in relation to female graffiti writers and skateboarders. The foci of the discussion here are reminiscent of many of the themes examined under feminist perspectives on space and resistance that were helpful

tools for conceptual clarification in chapters two and four. Contra, McRobbie and Garber (1975) and McRobbie (1980: 37) who advocate studying women and girls' "different resistance in a different cultural space", I explore women's resistance in putative male spaces.

The first point to make regarding female graffiti writers and skateboarders is that the accounts explored so far -of play, space, resistance and surveillance- are all largely true of female members of the two groups. The resistance of female members of the two groups, like that of male members, is enacted through play in Manchester's city spaces. As their vision of space differs from that of 'the powerful', they too are subjected in the same way to surveillance and control which they find ways of resisting. The spatial experience and story of resistance of female members of both groups are, however, different in that they face surveillance and control not only from the out-groups- private security, crime wardens and the police- but also from the in-group- male members of the two cultures. This monitoring from the in-group is qualitatively different from that of the out-group. The female graffiti writer and skateboarder is not surveilled by use of sophisticated equipment by her male counterparts neither is she barred outright from male spaces of play. The control of her space is rather more subtle and a product of what she is

thought to be naturally capable of or what she ought to be interested in (see also Beal 1996). For example, it seems that the female graffiti writer must prove her physical fitness beyond doubt to male graffiti writers otherwise the opposite is usually assumed:

If you want to do graf then you have to be strong, be out in the dark and in the cold; you have to run and not to get caught, you run faster than police dogs, climb walls... girls are not up for that... (Kolo, male graffiti writer)

Many guys think graf is not for girls. They think you can't climb walls or do a piece in a very difficult place... (Barb, female graffiti writer)

Male skateboarders' sentiments were not very different from their male graffiti counterparts:

... skateboarding means playing in the air, getting injured, having broken bones and being taken away for surgery and coming back after you recover for more [skateboarding]. How many girls can do that? (Paul, male skateboarder)

I think it's down to natural differences between boys and girls. They [girls] tend not to like getting dirty or falling to the ground and things like that and that's what happens when you skate (Adam, male skateboarder).

'Girl skaters', as they are known and have self-described themselves to me, and female graffiti writers are not only from a social group deemed physically incapable of being successful participants in these cultures, their prowess and skilfulness, even when they become members, are also constantly denied or held in doubt:

... A girl skater told me of all the tricks she could do. She's quite good but I'm surprised she can do all those things even I can't do. I think she's lying... (Gerrard, male skateboarder)

It can sometimes be very irritating... they [male skateboarders] stop and watch you do some tricks; then they clap and say "you're very good you know, *for a girl*". I can beat many of them in a skate competition! (Helen, female skateboarder)

... I've never met a girl that's a graffiti writer. I've heard about some girls that are into graf but I've not met them. I think girls can't be [graffiti] writers because women are not very creative (Tosh, male graffiti writer).

Rather reminiscent in many ways of Irigaray's (2000) contention that women's play/pleasure is usually greeted with a logic alien to it by a male-centred point of view, it is thought unusual for 'a girl' to participate in the cultural activities that are thought to be exclusively male (see Clawson 1993), the usual reasons that explain the average male participant's involvement in graffiti and skateboarding are presumed not to be operative or secondary. It is usual to search for other motives for the unusual interest of a female participant. Therefore, a constant problem for the female graffiti writer and skateboarder is the need to continuously prove her dedication to the cultures and that she has no hidden motives:

... They are always asking if you have a boyfriend or you are with this skater or that. Sometimes they want to test you to see what you will do or say (Chanel, female skateboarder).

...My boyfriend recruited me into his [graffiti] crew so there's this rumour that once we're through then I'll probably stop doing graf... (Eve, female graffiti writer)



It would also seem, as alluded to earlier, that the experience of some female skateboarders and graffiti writers is that of being constantly monitored and surveilled by their male counterparts. Male members want to know whether they have acquired or are acquiring enough subcultural skills:

...they would not do it if it's a guy, they are always asking questions, trying to know if I have improved or learnt new tricks instead of allowing me to learn at my own pace, in my own time... skateboarding is their world, it is all they know and they think that has to be the same for everybody. I've got other things in my life, I can't afford to get injured all the time (*smiles and shows me the orthopaedic cast on her broken leg*); I want to become a dancer. (Marissa, female skateboarder)

... There is a lot of pressure on me. I see myself putting on a show sometimes, trying to prove that I can skate just as well or better than the boys. I get a bit tired of it all and I sometimes feel I should really just be enjoying myself and not have to prove a point.<sup>8</sup> (Lisa, female skateboarder)

Female skateboarders, however, seem to positively evaluate some aspects of their relationship with male skaters. While it may verge on being patronised, it would seem that being a female skater can be subjectively experienced as being 'a little sister to the boys' and 'being looked after and taken care of'.

It's easy to only talk about when they are being silly and naughty. They can be very helpful sometimes and protective, like if you are out alone skating alone in the streets it's not the same thing. Scallies will think twice before trying anything stupid when you're with the boys (Barb, female skateboarder).

My boyfriend is okay, of course and the other lads can be very nice too. Sometimes I feel like I'm their little sister because they show some concern and ask how I'm doing, if I need any help... (Marissa, female skateboarder)

Female interviewees also indicated a sense in which girls may be welcome to skate. Girls may be considered desirable skateboarders as male members can use that opportunity to form intimate relationships with them.

... Of course they like it if girls skate, they are boys. It's more girls for them to be with and to have fun with. It makes it more exciting for them, I think, if it's not just skating but also other things like dating a cute bird (Lisa, female skateboarder).

Apart from surveillance and monitoring by the representatives of the local state and male members of the two subcultures, the parents of the female skateboarder and graffiti writer's also see her as breaking the norms of femininity. This confirms Davies' (1993: 33) argument that women and girls' resistance is usually "framed within a discourse of opposition" against family, friends and husbands:

... My parents hate it that I'm a skater. They say things like 'you're a girl you should be shopping and not skating' (Marissa, female skateboarder).

They [parents] didn't really mind it [her skateboarding] because they thought it was just because I was young, that I would outgrow it. Now they're worried and saying things like 'you're a lady now you know, you should stop doing that [skateboarding]...' (Chanel, female skateboarder)

Because she is thought to be violating core gender norms, the female skateboarder is the recipient of unsolicited comments while occupying what is regarded as the male space of city centre

skateboarders. Onlookers in the city centre tend to easily notice the female skateboarder and tend to associate her participation in a 'manly sport' such as skateboarding with lesbianism:

... scallies shout at me sometimes, they shout 'Avril Lavigne' or something stupid like that or they just call me a lesbian (Marissa, female skateboarder).

Some girl skaters are lesbians but that doesn't mean every girl that skates has to be a lesbian or bi[sexual] or anything like that. It's got nothing to do with that. If you're into skateboarding then you'll love it and that's it (Lisa, female skateboarder).

So far the case has been made for the proposition that it is reasonable to describe the spatial experience of the female skateboarder and graffiti writer as, in some respects, qualitatively different from that of male participants in the cultures. The differences, it has been contended, include surveillance and monitoring from within the in-group and from without, doubts about the female participant's competence and the questioning of the appropriateness of her desires to participate in deviant uses of space. What remains to be seen is what the response of the female member is to the special features of the control of her space. More specifically, are there good reasons to affirm that the female participant confronts control with resistance? The affirmative is what is empirically indicated. The female participant takes up skating and graffiti because of play and or friendship like any other member of the cultures but it seems part of

the reason why she is willing to withstand the discomfort of being female in predominantly male groups is her desire to oppose certain aspects of the social construction of her identity as a young woman:

... One of the reasons I still skate is to take a stand. I don't want to get injured and quit and then they will say "she's a girl, what do you expect". I want to take a stand because this is the 21<sup>st</sup> century and girls are not just about shopping and the kitchen... (Marissa, female skateboarder)

... I now take time out to teach girls how to skateboard, I really enjoy doing it and it's a good feeling to help other girls because it can be difficult trying to start skating as a girl. It is so much better and a lot easier for girls to teach each other (Chanel, female skateboarder).

As part of her determination to reject the norms that declare certain cultural activities and spaces in the city centre as out of bounds for someone that is 'now a lady' and her challenge to the presumed intrinsic maleness of male dominated cultures, the female skateboarder sees herself as a mentor and someone to encourage new female members into the subculture:

Skateboarding is not just for boys, it shouldn't just be for them. For me, it shouldn't even be just for young people. That's why it's good to encourage girls and get them to see that anybody can do it. (Chanel, female skateboarder)

We [female skateboarders] organise girls-only comps [skate competitions] to encourage and support each other and to meet other girl skaters from other cities. We can also get girls who want to start skating that way. It's fun. We make videos, post them on the internet and have prizes. We go on road trips doing legal and illegal skating in the big cities. We get

someone's mum in the city we go to let us stay for the night.  
(Lisa, female skateboarder)

This section has considered the experience of female members of the two subcultures as one which is at once similar and different from that of the male member. What is found is that the resistance of the female skateboarder or graffiti writer transcends that of merely opposing the control of spaces of play by the putative surveillers-street wardens, police officers and private security. She has to also contend with more subtle monitoring and surveillance of her activities within the in-group by male members. This confirms Becker's (1963) intuition that resistance is inherently relational – there can be power relations even among resisters.

By engaging in “male play”, thereby blurring gender categories, female skaters and graffiti writers can help us see the performative dimension to gender (Butler 1999: 175). The fact that gender is put in trouble by actors who violate norms of what types of play match who they “really” are shows that gender is not simply the expression of an “inner self”. Female skaters and graffitiists presence in “male spaces” not only links their “deviant” uptake of space with their resistance but also with gender's tenuousness and contingency. Gender essentialism is easily shown to be false and a fabrication.

The discussion of young women's experiences within the two subcultures also reaffirms the critiques of Bakhtin-inspired ideas about the necessarily liberating and freeing potential of play, pleasure and corporeality – their “indissoluble and essential relation to freedom” (ibid: 265). Here we have evidence that the two cultures of skating and graffiti writing are experienced by some female members not always as related to freedom. While Bakhtin asserts that “power, repression and authority never speak in the language of laughter” and play (ibid), here we find that subcultures centred on play can be experienced in precisely those terms that Bakhtin links exclusively with power. Just as carnivalesque *charivari* functioned to remind deviants about sexual norms (Burke 1978), skateboarding and graffiti can sometimes function to remind female participants about gender norms. Just as carnival does not have a univocal social and political meaning and can be used by those that have power and those with little or no power, skateboarding and graffiti is being used to solidify and to oppose gender norms simultaneously by some male and female members respectively .

Alana Young (2004) provides useful insights into the minimal involvement of female participants in skateboarding and snowboarding. She also discusses discriminatory attitudes towards female skaters by male members who are not related to them or are

not their close friends – “Women in skateboarding have received the same treatment that women have historically received in more mainstream sports, and thus, gender relations seem to be persistent in various types and forms of sport” (2004: 77). Her discussion of the female skater’s subjectivity is also instructive. For example, she argues (ibid: 72) that female skaters report concerns with risk of facial injuries related to damaging their beauty and feminine attributes. Other good discussions of sexist attitudes and gender frictions within skateboarding can be found in Beal (1992), (1995), (1996); and Karsten and Pel (2001). Nancy Macdonald’s (2004) discussion of Masculinity, gender, sexism and female contributions in graffiti remains nonpareil.

## Summary

The analyses and arguments of this chapter started with play. This is an unusual concept to start with when the intention is to tell a story of resistance, for is it not the case that by resistance we usually presuppose some kind of conflict? How can the notion of play not be incongruent with that of conflict, with its usual overtone of seriousness and clash of interests? It was argued that to understand

the resistance of skateboarders and graffiti writers, 'play' is precisely where the data incline us to start from. The social actors of the study, it was contended, do not set out to resist, they set out to play. This is no trivial point, and it is examined more fully in the final chapter of this thesis, as it means that resistance is itself actually a by-product of more fundamental orientations of the cultures under study. It has also been contended 'space' contextualises the clash of visions between skateboarders and graffiti writers and those who wish to control their activities- what norms are appropriate to spaces, what spaces are suitable for play and demarcations between legal and illegal spaces of play shed light on the criminalisation and resistance of both groups. Gender relations within the two groups also illuminate in-group forms of monitoring, conflicts and resistances. In the next chapter I draw together the themes, arguments and analyses of this thesis, showing how as a whole it theory and fieldwork data 'speak to each other' in providing a better understanding resistance, space and the experiences of graffiti writers and skateboarders.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> 'Urbis', when used by skateboarders, usually refers not to the Urbis Museum in the Cathedral Gardens area of the city centre but to the concrete spaces around the building and the Printworks complex. This is an area found highly desirable by skateboarders and BMX'ers.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the point being made by introducing the quote and its analysis is hair splitting if play and friendship are not considered mutually exclusive and actually thought to go together.

<sup>3</sup> All photographs and pictures were taken by me.



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<sup>4</sup> As is the case with other respondents, the name of the skateboarder in question is not revealed in the main text. 'ASBO' (anti-social behaviour order) prefixes his name in the skateboarding community, after his brushes with the law. This particular style of playful naming might be a trend that is catching on among British youth in general.

<sup>5</sup> Parallels between street robbery (crime) and graffiti and skating must not, of course, be incautiously drawn.

<sup>6</sup> There is, however, 'Ashbury garages', near the city centre. It is privately owned and graffiti writers can write on its walls because the owner does not mind. Maybe there is some sense in which this is a legal wall. It definitely isn't the same as what obtains elsewhere, where local authorities have built or dedicated certain walls as 'legal walls' for graffiti.

<sup>7</sup> Cultural criminologists, Jeff Ferrell especially, have described actors like this as engaging in resistance of broad power relations (macro-resistance). In the conclusion chapter I give reasons for my disagreements with this school of thought on this issue and offer a diagnosis of the persistence of this wrong description of actors' actions.

<sup>8</sup> The girl skater's experience is not all doom and gloom. There is a benefit to being a female skater. Girl skaters are more likely to be sponsored by a skate company as there are few girl skaters in the first place and there is a demand for them to be on skate companies' skate promotional teams. Sponsorship usually entails receiving free skate and sports gear and sometimes some financial remuneration.

<sup>9</sup> Pop singer who marketed herself as a rebellious 'skater girl'

## Chapter Seven

### Conclusion

The aims of this last chapter include drawing together the major arguments of this thesis, linking the findings of the fieldwork with theory and highlighting what this study contributes to the literature. I do a thematic overview of how this thesis has accomplished the aims and objectives set out in Chapter One. I start by examining the themes and arguments of the thesis on the subject of resistance. I then explore the implications of the thesis' discussions on space, followed by an examination of the methodological issues thrown into relief by the study. I then flesh out the nexus between the two conceptual categories of 'resistance' and 'space' in relation to Manchester and its skateboarders and graffiti writers. In this discussion, the importance of play and gender in the story of the spatial resistance of skateboarders and graffiti writers is highlighted.

### What is resistance?

On the subject of what resistance is this thesis examined a number of perspectives in order to better understand the concept. From Birmingham School conceptions of resistance, this thesis derives an insight important for any work on resistance. This is that there must be some kind of clear delineation of power relations. Reading the

Marxists' work on resistance we find that the emphasis is on asymmetrical power relations (Cohen 1972, Willis 1977, Murdock and McCron 1975, Clarke et al 1975, McRobbie 1980 and Hebdige 2002). These studies posit powerful social actors and less powerful ones, with a special focus on the structurally subordinate status of working class subcultures. They also state that we have good reasons to believe that some actions of 'the less powerful' can be usefully described as resistant. Another important insight is the school's examination of how leisure (play, in the idiom of this thesis) intertwines with resistance (Clarke et al 1975 especially). We are urged by the Marxists to see leisure activities as relevant to fundamental structural elements of the social system. Working class youth are, according to this perspective, "magically" but also ineffectually resolving class problems even when they go to watch football matches and when they go to disco parties (ibid). What is usually described as mere play, and no more, is linked with issues relating to the organization of society and the position of social groups within it.

Crucial elements of the Marxists' perspectives are evident in this thesis. I have delineated the capacities of the social actors and groups germane to the study. Relative to police officers, wardens, private security and city council officers, skaters and graffiti writers have very

limited capabilities to affect their relations with more powerful spatial opponents. As enactors and or agents of the law, these groups, with which skaters and graffiti writers have to deal, have the power to control and criminalize subcultural activities.

Play (leisure), which Birmingham School theorists saw as overlapping with the resistance of capitalism, also figures prominently in the day-to-day activities of the social actors of this thesis. In this study, it is the playful activities of subcultural members in the city that brings them in conflict with the more powerful groups mentioned. Where this study departs from Birmingham Marxists' understanding of play and resistance is in seeing graffiti writers and skaters not as inveighing against capitalism *per se*. Generally, members do not resist capitalism nor do they set out to do so. Their resistance is primarily directed against the control of their spaces of play.

Becker's (1963) social reaction perspective was also important. A most important insight from Becker is that resistance is always relational. While we may be tempted to think of groups as homogeneous, Becker urges us to be aware that groups themselves are usually composed of subgroups and that resistance, as between subgroups within the same group, should be expected. While Becker

(1963) himself placed little emphasis on women's experience in groups, this insight was helpful in examining the distinct experiences of female graffiti writers and skateboarders, as discussed in greater detail shortly.

Foucauldian perspectives also helped to highlight the importance of the multifaceted nature of resistance for this thesis. For many Foucauldian scholars, power is not simply at a central location in society but implicated in many if not all social relationships (Foucault 1980, 1982, 1988, Thiele 1990, Butz and Ripmeester 1999 and Muckelbauer, 2000). Resistance, they argue, must be expected not only against the state or against modes of production such as capitalism but in everyday relationships whether or not they have firm links with what have traditionally been seen as the locations of power (Butz and Ripmeester 1999). More importantly for this thesis, and this is a point that is rarely mentioned or stressed elsewhere, the *intention* of social actors, their motivation to resist need not be to oppose capitalism or the state, it could simply be to oppose operations of power that block the actualisation of their interests. This is what was empirically found in the case of the social actors of this study. As earlier argued, there is little evidence that their resistance is intentionally or primarily directed against capitalism or

the state, *pace* CCCS. Their fundamental interest seems to be in securing spaces of play for themselves.

The feminist perspectives on resistance examined focused on how women's actions may be interpreted either as resistance or acceptance of subordination (especially Fisher and Davies 1993). Since resistance often masquerades as capitulation, writers within these perspectives argue, it is always better to avoid any uncritical, simplistic depiction of women as willing participants in the power relationships they find themselves (see Clawson 1987, Gordon 1993). Women feign acceptance of subordination when pragmatic possibilities for direct opposition are limited (*ibid*). While these post-modern feminists focus on female social actors, I, by drawing on their insights, became more alive to the fact that *all* actors' actions can in principle be empirically scrutinised to find out if they are resistant or not. A way of doing this, as alluded to earlier in this discussion and earlier in the thesis, is to understand as much as possible of the meanings that social actors attach to what they do through detailed empirical work. This was also part of the motivation for the fieldwork done with female skaters and graffiti writers.

Cultural criminological perspectives on resistance also provide ways of seeing that shaped the direction of this thesis. According to

cultural criminology, the foreground, as different from the background, of crime ought to be emphasised in the study of crime and deviance (Presdee 2000, for example). Relying on Katz (1988), cultural criminologists argue that the 'seductions of crime' in daily life are to be considered primary in understanding crime and deviance (Morrison 1995). By 'seductions of crime' is meant the lived sensuality and emotionality of crime. As capitalism routinizes everyday life and boredom pervades modern society, argue many cultural criminologists, crime through pleasure-seeking becomes inevitable (Hayward 2004, Lyng 1990). It is in 'crimes of style' (Ferrell 1993) and forms of pleasurable deviance that resistance against capitalism inheres. While this thesis takes exception to some cultural criminological positions, cultural criminology made the thesis alive to the danger of postulating background forces or structural determinants as explanations of or motivations for actors' action. Cultural criminologists' emphasis on factors such as fame, pleasure, play and emotions are reflected in many aspects of the thesis' fieldwork analysis. Their description of certain crimes as resistant and their methodological emphasis on immersing oneself in the social world of the actor were important for the thesis theoretically and methodologically. I have, however, tried to avoid some of the limitations of the perspective. Throughout this study my primary

concern has been to describe and have a thorough understanding of resistance rather than celebrate it. Not only do some prominent cultural criminological works (Ferrell 1993, 1995, 2004 especially) over-romanticise subaltern actors by a conflation of the description of resistant actions and their celebration, insufficient attention is paid to the fact that the researcher's notion of what resistance ought to be against may not always coincide with that of actors. Like the Birmingham School before it, cultural criminology sometimes reads its own concerns and preoccupation with capitalism's permeation of everyday life into actors' resistance without adequate evidential warrant. These are points that are especially germane to the themes to be addressed next – precisely because 'resistance' sometimes means different things to differently situated actors, there are multiple notions of liberation that can be attached to the idea of space and the city.

### **Space and its imbrication with resistance and social justice**

A number of perspectives on space were crucial to accomplishing the aims of this study. According to Lefebvre (1991), one of the most prominent neo-Marxist works examined (recall also Mitchell 2000, Castells 1977), space must be seen as a site of conflict between diverse interests. Lefebvre (*ibid*) also argues that struggles in space



can be exemplified by the production of 'controlled and policed space' by the state and 'appropriated space' through which resisters of state and capitalist interests bring about alternative social realities. I have endeavoured to take Lefebvre's insights seriously by examining how this is applicable to Manchester city council officers, street wardens and police on the one hand as well as skateboarders and graffiti writers in the city on the other. While capitalism represents a potent form of the uptake of space according to the interests of some groups in society, Lefebvre (ibid) argues that struggles and contradictions in space cannot be seen as always reflective of fundamental economic struggles. They can be spatial struggles and no more. There is a nuanced sense in which Lefebvre's contention here is applicable to this thesis' analysis. The context of the struggle of Manchester skateboarders and graffiti writers is economic in many ways, as I expand on later, but their motivations, intentions and actions as resisters are not fundamentally economic or directed against capitalism; they are at the core spatial and playful.

Some of the feminist theorists discussed in this thesis see space as a site of power and resistance. The historical 'entrapment of women' in roles and spaces in the West is said to be linked with the ideological separation of public and private spheres along gender lines (Marston, 1990, Nelson 1986, Rose 1993 and Bondi and Domosh 1998),

thereby limiting women's citizenship and their ability to fully participate in public discourse. This kind of circumscription of women's space, which still subsists today in different forms and guises cannot be divorced from the circumscription of women in men's conceptual world, some feminists argue (Grosz 1995, Rose 1993). I also noted that studies that examine the 'gendering of space' have been criticised as depicting women as passive recipients of male power (Torre 1996). Women's counter-production of space which is directed against the 'writing off' of female interests in space is hardly foregrounded by such work and this leads, Torre argues, to a lack of appreciation of women's resistance (ibid). I endeavoured to meet Torre's critique by exploring how 'girl skaters' and female graffiti writers' narratives show an awareness of the socially constructed nature of feminine norms and gendered spatiality. Their resistance was also discussed as entailing opposition of gendered conceptions of female space that they encounter among male graffiti writers and skateboarders.

A number of perspectives which link the governance of space with broader social justice issues were also important for this thesis' description of the nexus between space, the city and resistance. Work by the Situationists and by many contemporary writers on the

connection between space and structural inequalities are agreed on the central theme that the politics of urban space exhibit two features (Debord 1981 and Lees 2004). These are the criminalization and suppression of uses of the city deemed incongruous with the agenda of powerful groups; and the enactment of oppositional realities by marginali(sed) groups that take advantage of the liberatory qualities of the urban realm. The value of this literature is their engagement with concrete examples of power and resistance in space. Indeed as Tonkiss (2005), one of the writers examined, argues, the notion of an equal access urban space is a notion that merely exists at the level of the ideal as opposed to the actual. This obviously problematises issues relating to the control of space and the representation of diverse groups in modern urban spaces. Power, argues Tonkiss (ibid), a phenomenon not readily observable, is given sociological visibility in space. Space gives power away. This thesis extended Tonkiss (ibid) argument to resistance by analysing data relating to the day-to-day activities of graffiti writers and skateboarders in Manchester's spaces. Moving beyond the current lack of spatial contextualisation that currently pervades the literature on subcultures, one of the central contentions was that the examination of their activities in space gives visibility to resistance.

## **Methodological salience of the meanings of the actor**

Methodological issues have also had crucial implications for the thesis theoretically and empirically. Primary data gathering was restricted to skateboarders and graffiti writers because focusing data collection on these instead of extending it to those who control and regulate their activities - city councillors, police, security guards and street wardens - brought more depth to the investigation. The thesis' methodological approach was inspired by cultural criminology's which, like some other methodological approaches in sociology (see Blumer's (1969) interactionist perspective for example) focuses on immersing oneself in the milieu of the social actor. Qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation were important in achieving this kind of familiarity with social actors' world. The thesis placed much emphasis on understanding and describing social actors' interpretation of their actions as different from simply providing interpretations for it, thereby making resistance an empirically findable phenomenon. This is important methodologically and theoretically, as alluded to earlier in my critique of cultural criminology and Birmingham School, as I contend that the visions and interests of Manchester skateboarders and graffiti writers are important in determining whether they are engaging in resistance and a good way of finding out about such visions and interests is by

understanding the meanings they give to their activities as well as those of groups that seek to control them.

### **The production and counter-production of Manchester**

Conceptually drawing on Lefebvre (1991) and Mitchell (2000), I examined how Manchester has been and is being produced by diverse groups with diverse visions of the city. Many producers of space that have been active in the production of Manchester were identified and I argued that, for the purposes of this thesis, a simple schema of 'powerful producers of space' and 'less powerful producers of space' was useful to bring out the contestations of Manchester's spaces in recent history. The role of the city council, the police, private business and security services in producing 'Glamchester' - regenerating, business-friendly Manchester - was identified. Changes in the regulation of the city's spaces were linked to recent regenerative efforts. Such changes include increased restrictions on the activities of 'less powerful' producers of space such as skateboarders and graffiti writers. Such constraints upon the activities of these less powerful producers of space are increasingly being carried out not only by the police but also street wardens and private security. This delineation of the capacities of actors set the scene for my more detailed exploration of skaters and graffiti writer's counter-production of space and resistance in Manchester and provided a

historical and socio-economic context for the research sites of the thesis.

### **Skaters, Graffiti Writers and the Resistant Contestation of Space**

I flagged 'play' as one of the most important motivations for skateboarders and graffiti writers' use of the city. Skateboarders and graffiti writers find that there are other groups with visions of what actions ought to be performed in Manchester's spaces. They come into conflict with city council officers, the police, security guards and street wardens over what spaces are legitimate for play. I argued that the resistance of skateboarders and graffiti writers is found in the refusal of the control of their activities by powerful producers of space. The narratives of female graffiti writers and skateboarders also showed that while in many ways their resistance is similar to that of their male counterparts, female graffiti writers and skateboarders' spatial experience is distinct. An important finding from the field is that not only are female members controlled and surveilled by the out-group – city council officers, police, security officers and street wardens – they are also monitored in many ways by the in-group i.e. male graffiti writers and skateboarders. The uniqueness of female skaters and graffiti writers' resistance is manifest in their resistance of both groups' constriction of their spaces of play. By her choice of

play and the site of that play (assumed male spaces of the city centre) she indicates her contestation of the gendered normative values of space and womanhood.

In what follows I adumbrate the central findings and conclusions of this thesis and point to areas that future work might fruitfully explore. By examining what resistance means theoretically and empirically, a number of important insights emerged which have important implications for resistance literature. I have shown, drawing on the experiences of skaters and graffiti writers, how social actors with little resources for changing their position on the material and discursive map still find ways to countervail the effects of the actions of 'the powerful'. I have lent greater empirical credence to the contention that the opposition of power can take the form of the entanglement of play and resistance: that play and resistance intertwine has not been merely asserted. Precisely how play intersects with the opposition of power has been demonstrated in graffiti writers and skaters' appropriation of space.

My examination of space as an important factor in skateboarders and graffiti writers' resistance has also shown that resistant actions are resistant *in situ*. It makes little sense to say actions *per se* are resistant

or that they are necessarily resistant in themselves. The resistant qualities of the actions of members of the two subcultures inhere not so much in the playful activities they engage in as in the spaces in which their activities were enacted. *Pace* cultural criminology (Hayward 2004, Presdee 2000) and Bakhtin (1984), play *in itself* is not antithetical to capitalist ethos and the authorities do not clash with deviant cultures on play itself. Play, however, that refuses to accept official distinctions between legal and illegal spaces and dictates about where specifically to play is deemed criminal and censured. We now have a better understanding of members' resistance – play is inceptive of that resistance but inadequate in understanding it. The governance of space explains how members whose cultures and motivations, in the main, cannot be said to challenge official discourse end up doing so through the clash over activities that are permissible in the city. The partitioning of spaces by the authorities as appropriate or not for subcultural activities explains how members' resistance come about. This indexical feature of resistant actions highlights city spaces as ideal sites for understanding power and resistance generally and, more specifically, among 'deviant' urban cultures. I have also shown how space figures as a factor in the resistance of gendered normativity. In this regard, what this study was unable to do comprehensively, because the relevant issues were only part of other theoretical and



empirical concerns can be accomplished by other work having the issues of gender, femininity and masculinity as their *primary* focus. That study could use this thesis as part of its resource. For such a study, it might be advisable not to restrict empirical interests to one city but to extend it to many in order to interview more female skateboarders and graffiti writers. One of the best places to start is at some of the exclusively female skateboarding competitions. I am unaware of any similar events among female graffiti writers.

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## **Graffiti Magazines**

12oz. Prophet  
Backjumps  
Big Time  
Flashbacks  
Mass Appeal  
On the Go  
While You Were Sleeping

## **Skateboard Magazines**

100% Skateboarding  
411 Video Magazine  
Big Brother  
Document  
Edge  
Funsport  
Numero  
Phat  
Poweredge  
RAD  
Sidewalk Surfer  
SK8 Action  
Skateboard!  
Skateboarder  
Slap  
Thrasher  
Transworld Skateboarding  
Tribo  
Warp

## **Graffiti Videos**

Beat Street (1984), directed by Brian Robbins.  
Style Wars (1983), directed by Henry Chalfant and Tony Silver.  
The Show (1995), directed by Brian Robbins.  
Wild Style (1983), directed by Charlie Ahearn.

## Skate Videos

Deck Dogz (2005), directed by Steve Pasvolsky.

Dishdogz (2005), directed by Mickey Hilb

Dogtown and Z-Boys (2001), directed by Stacy Peralta

Lords of Dogtown (2005), directed by Catherine Hardwicke

Thrashin', also known as Skate Gang (1986), directed by David Winters

## APPENDIX: SAMPLE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did you start skateboarding/doing graffiti?
2. What problems do you have skateboarding/doing graffiti?
3. Are there any favourite spots for skateboarding/graffiti in Manchester?
4. Are there any legal walls in Manchester?
5. What do you think of the skate parks in Manchester?
6. What is the difference between skating in parks and on the streets?
7. Is it different being a girl skater/female graffiti writer?
8. What do the police/security guards/wardens do to stop you skating/doing graffiti?
9. How do you escape getting caught at an illegal spot?
10. If skating/ doing graffiti is so much hassle why have you not stopped doing it?
11. We all use the city, but what is different about how skaters/graffiti writers use the city?
12. Do you think skaters and graffiti writers see the city centre differently from other people?

## GLOSSARY

**Backside** - when a trick or turn is executed with the skater's back facing the ramp or any other fixture.

**Board** - skateboard

**Bomb** - to paint a (subcultural) name on a surface such as a wall.

**Crew** - a group of graffiti writers who come together for friendship and graffiti writing.

**Deck** - the flat standing surface of a skateboard.

**Diss** - to *dis*respect, especially through words of abuse.

**Fame** - the recognition a graffiti writer gets from contributions to the subculture especially through prolific graffiti writing.

**Frontside** - when a trick or turn is executed with the front of the skater's body facing the ramp or obstacle

**Grind** - involves a skater scraping one or both axles of a skateboard on a curb, railing or any other surface.

**Get up** - act of getting a graffiti writer's (subcultural) name on any surface.

**Kickflip** - a variation on the ollie in which the skater kicks the board into a spin before landing back on it.

**Nose** - the front of the skateboard, from the front truck bolts to the end.

**Nosegrind** - involves a skateboarder grinding on only the front truck of

the skateboard.

**Noseslide** - sliding the underside of the nose end of a board on a ledge etc.

**Ollie** - a jump performed by tapping the tail of the board on the ground; the basis of most skating tricks.

**Piece** – (a) as noun (short for “masterpiece”), a graffiti mural  
(b) as verb, to draw/paint a masterpiece.

**Railslide** - a trick in which the skater slides the underside of the deck along an object such as a handrail or curb.

**Redcoats** – (especially among skateboarders in the Northwest of England) a street warden.

**Skatepark** - a purpose-built recreational facility for skateboarders (and sometimes rollerbladers and BMX riders) to ride and develop their technique. It usually contains wooden frames of diverse kinds upon which skateboarders can practise.

**Sketchbook** – a book a graffiti writer uses to keep outlines of his/her work and autographs from famous graffiti writers.

**Slide** – a skateboard trick that involves sliding on an obstacle

**Street skating** - skating on streets, curbs, benches, handrails and other elements of urban and suburban landscapes.

**Tailslide** - sliding the underside of the tail end of a board on a ledge etc.

**Tag** – (a) as noun, a graffiti writer’s name or signature

(b) as a verb, to mark his/her name on any surface

**Tail** - the rear of the skateboard



**The slalom** - To perform this trick the skateboarder jumps high from one 'strong' fixture to another one not faraway with her/his feet still on the board.

**The wheelie** - A simple trick which consists in the skater using only two of the four wheels of the skateboard.

**Throw-up** – (also called a fill-in) a name painted with few colours, an outline, and a fill-in colour.

**Toy** – an inexperienced graffiti writer

**Vert skating** - skating on ramps and other vertical structures specifically designed for skating.

**Walkboarder** – a person who hangs out with skateboarders but is not herself/himself one.