CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL STUDIES

Stencilled Occasional Paper

A CRITIQUE OF 'COMMUNITY STUDIES'
AND ITS ROLE IN SOCIAL THOUGHT

by

The Work Group

A CRITIQUE OF 'COMMUNITY STUDIES'

AND ITS ROLE IN SOCIAL THOUGHT

The Work Group.

Pam Taylor
Eve Brookes
Dan Finn
Andy Tolson
Paul Willis
Rachel Powell

> ".... the formal groupings of club, band, choir, union,
> chapel - all the many strands of 'neighbourhood' that
> reach out to attain 'community'"
>
> (Jackson and Marsden 1966 p 19)

An important part of the short history of cultural studies has been concerned with the level of experience, subjective response, and the texture of the day to day routine amongst particular groups. Partly, and especially in the Hoggartian strands, the interest was in the recording and analysis of cultural activities constituted as aspects of a whole way of life rather than as privileged and separate moments relating 'to the best which has been thought and said'.

The fieldwork group, as one of the nine current Centre groups, has preserved and developed this line of interest whilst attempting to place it in a more thorough going analysis which both specifies subjective experience more closely, and locates it within a structured social totality rather than in the looser, 'whole way of life'. Our attention has been on the relationship of determining forces - not necessarily recognizably represented in consciousness or practice - and the form, or potential for change, of given experience and cultural activity in a specific zone.

Though there is a body of ethnographic descriptive work developing within cultural studies we thought it vital to review and use work lying in adjacent areas to generate the maximum information possible on the relation between cultural form and determining conditions.

This spirit led us to make a collective reading of the literature within the genre of Community Studies. We took CS to be the most massive and continuing attempt within social science to use 'qualitative methods' to record and analyse working class experience in particular located cultural forms.

It soon became clear, however, that it was extremely difficult to define the characteristic elements of such a genre, and that there was no direct principled way in which it was possible to borrow evidence directly for our purposes from this source.

We had to proceed via a critique of CS. It was necessary to make a careful analysis of the way in which particular CS were bound up quite intimately with the particular social, political, ideological and intellectual conditions of their creation.

This paper is the result of that exercise. It presents a deconstruction of a genre. It attempts to lay bare the connection between presented evidence and underlying pre-supposition. In fact the very completeness of the mediations and necessary connections between these levels severely questioned for us whether it was at all possible to use evidence from CS for other purposes without also imparting - perhaps unconsciously - something of its theoretical paradigm. Our project became one then, finally, of a critique of the whole conceptual basis of an area of study - not a limited borrowing of 'hard' data. We believe that this offers a model of the necessarily theoretical work of a principled attempt to borrow data and evidence from differently constituted academic regions.

I. Any account of community studies requires, initially, some
definition of the term. As observed elsewhere, and transparently
obvious in the above quote, 'community tends to be a God word', and
rather than attempt to define it, we are all expected to ascribe to
some broad consensual definition of what it means. However, as we
have experienced in the group, it is a difficult concept to map out.
It appears to contain all or some of the following meanings: a terri-
torial area, a complex of institutions within an area, and a sense of
a shared culture.

These vague parameters reflect the diverse traditions feeding into
the notion of community studies. Historically, Robert Owen injected
'community' with political connotations when he proposed a living and
working community as a solution to the degradation and misery induced
by industrialisation.   A manufacturer himself in cotton
spinning, he saw the effects of industrialisation in
long hours, factory employment of women and children and forced emigra-
tion of families from the country to the sites of new industry. He
wanted not a change in the political and economic system, but a more
humane capitalism and a system of working and living in large specially
built communities. Ten or twelve buildings were bought or converted
between 1819 and 1855 and actually operated. Each community organised
its own work (agricultural or craft) domestic work, care of children and
schooling. Women would share equally in the economic work with men. A
system of pricing goods by the amount of labour involved was tried
and markets for exchange of such goods set up. None of the communities
was long lived but the fact that they were able to operate at all in a
basically 'cut and thrust' economic system is remarkable. The early
co-operative movement was formed to raise capital for the Owenite
communities.

In 'The Making of the English Working Class', E.P.Thompson uses
community in the sense of shared values and mutuality; it is a feeling
embodied in the working classes own institutions, the Trade Unions and
the Friendly Societies. But he also sees industrial discipline and
Methodism as setting out to eradicate traditional or 'community' pleasures.
"The working class community of the early 19th century was a product
neither of paternalism nor of Methodism but in a high degree of con-
scious working class endeavour. In Manchester and Newcastle the
traditions and the trade unions and the Friendly Societies with their
emphasis of self discipline and community purpose, reach far back into
the 18th century". (Thompson 1968 p 457) Here Thompson means in
'community purpose' a feeling rather than a locality.

A second meaning is given to community by Tory landowning classes;
a definition which appears in countless autobiographies and memoirs where
country gentlemen or soldiers or diplomats tell of the virtues of
their local communities; and of the stirling virtues of the simple and
devoted folk whose pleasure it is to serve them as farm labourers,
gardners and domestic servants. In return for this labour, deference
and sometimes, votes, the country squire or landowner gives time to
serving on local Boards of Guardians, the Bench or to the School
Governors. He may support local Church, Church school, give land for
playing fields or allotments. F.M.L. Thompson in 'English Landed
Society in the 19th century' has a chapter entitled 'Landowners and
the Local Community' and he means the village community where much
of the employment depends on the local squire, in this case titled
aristocrats, whose household records and diaries form much of the evi-
dence for Thompsons book. The system worked because 'each side knew

its place and the lower orders recognised and acknowledged their
superiors who were superior by reason of their style, authoritative
manner, air of gentility and who were acknowledged as such because they
claimed the rights of their social position with self assurance'.

Bagehot (1867) portrayed the English as essentially a 'deferential
community in which the rude classes at the bottom defer to what we may
call the theatrical show of society and by their deference acquiesced
in and welcomed the rule of the aristocratic classes'.

Country house living and the income, sports, pursuits and enter-
taining that went with the possession of land continued, albeit in an
attenuated form until 1939. There was a spate of books in the late
40's and early 50's eulogising country life and rural communities. As
late as 1947 a country squire, Godfrey Locker Lampson, was justifying
the existence of himself   and his peers in 'English Country Life'.
He feared the extinction of the breed with the coming to power of the
post-war Labour Government. In Ch.1, 'The Extinction of the Country
Squire' he says "Before he takes his departure it may not be amiss to
render him a passing tribute ... he may be pictured as having £5,000
of revenue and 2,000 or 3,000 acres. He will have chosen a wife from
respectable county stock and be on familiar terms with his fellow land
owners within a radius of ten miles. His time will be divided between
sport, the management of his estate and local public duties. His sons
will be at college and his daughters finishing their education at home.
The rest of the household will consist of a butler and footman and
perhaps 6 or 7 other servants. There will be a coachman and groom in
the stables and 3 or 4 gardners will prune his lady's roses ... two
estate men will be needed and in addition to these, there will be a
couple of keepers to rear five or six hundred pheasants to stock his
coverts ... and to keep poachers and trespassers away". This author
also writes of the 'Old Retainers', "What pride in the tradition of
the Family (note capital F) care for its interests, affection, loyalty,
zeal and love untarnished by a thought of gain".

But this view of community was not only represented by ruling class
writers. Far more influential was the literary work done by the repre-
sentatives of the working class, which has had important repercussions
both for English literature and the sociological notion of community.
Writers such as George Elliot and D.H.Lawrence perfectly express 'or-
ganasistic' ideas of tight-knit communities which display peculiar tensions
about the place of the squirearchy. Rulers and leaders of these com-
munities were seen at the same time as necessary and repressive.

Later writers on the working class - especially during the 1950's -
returned to the North and Midlands (Sillitoe, Wesker, Waterhouse) as
the only place where 'true' working class solidarity still existed.*

This is not very different from the idea of community in socio-
logical studies; the talk of simple, face-to-face communities by some
sociologists does hark back to rural hierarchical/feudal set ups. The
bonds and networks of village and community life were seen as cohesive
(not as reactionary and strangling). So, old Tory nostalgic ideas of
community did creep into many of the sociological studies.

Not surprisingly, for it was the village community and its attendant

---

* However, these works displayed crucial ambiguities, for the working
  class life styles they were describing were changing under the impact
  of 'Affluence' - particularly these ambiguities were displayed by
  Sillitoes anti-hero, Arthur S Eaton: 'All I'm out for is a good time -
  all the rest is propoganda'. See later discussion.

relationships which formed the starting point of many classical socio-
logical theories - Durkheim, Simmel, Tonnies, etc. In this sense
community was used, not to refer to a situationally specific group of
social institutions, or a particular geographical area, rather the
concern was with understanding the impact that industrialisation and
urbanisation was having on the texture of social relationships and
social groupings in a general sense. The basic understanding that fed
into mainstream sociology was that industrialisation, or increasing
specialisation in the division of labour was leading to new forms of
social relationships - away from Gemeinschaft where with "one's family,
one lives from birth on, bound to it in weal and woe", to Gesselschaft,
the less overbearing and organic mutual association of individuals.
Thus, apart from the writers' concerns being theoretical in intent and
practice, this process was seen as largely occurring with the transition
from the countryside to the town.

This theme, the transition from rural to urban life, from community
to association, was to dominate social theory. However, whereas with
Tonnies or Durkheim these concepts were tightly linked to their overall
theories of social and historical change, later particularly in the
U.S.A. more limited formulations were advanced as attempts to understand
and analyse specific and limited aspects of a particular society. It
was here that the distinctive form of the community study developed.
Stein, in 'Eclipse of Community', analysed many of the early and
influential American community studies, and argues to good effect that
these studies were looking at specific social processes, such as,
bureaucratisation, industrialisation, etc., and that they were really
concerned with social change in the city.

Another theme which we wish to identify as feeding into post-war
community studies, are the British Social surveys (including official
surveys) carried out from the mid 19th century onwards. These surveys,
particularly those of Booth and Rowntree, aimed not just to measure
poverty, but to explain its causes. This involved, of course, not
a rigorous analysis of capitalist economics, but individualised ex-
planations in terms of the lack of regular employment, accidents and
illnesses suffered by the wage earner, etc.

It was the methods of fact collecting, sampling and evaluation
from this tradition, coupled with the observational techniques and
functionalism of social anthropology which provided the methodological
repertoire utilised by most post-war community studies.

In the preceding discussion we have attempted, as far as it is
possible, to identify the heterogeneous traditions and meanings encap-
sulated within the notion of community and community studies. This
preliminary outline is necessary if we are to understand the ambivalence
and tensions displayed in the term as it is utilised in post-war com-
munity studies. Our concern now is to analyse the post-war develop-
ment of these studies, by locating them both historically and ideolog-
ically, by outlining the central features of their methodology, by
identifying their close relationship to social policy, and by examin-
ing their understanding of class, particularly as displayed in their
analysis of the traditional worker.

Before embarking on the substantive analysis, a note of caution.
In dealing with a body of work such as this there is a danger of
characterising them as uniform, coherent and lacking in contradictions.
It must be remembered that these studies arise from, and reflect,
divergent traditions within sociology. The consequences and incon-
sistencies arising from this have largely been glossed over, not from
neglect, but from a concern to come to terms with the field as a genre.

II. Post-war community studies can be seen as a reaction against
certain developments in sociology and worries about the direction of
social democracy. As with many other developments in the sociology
of the 50's, they can be seen against the background of the proliferation
of 'post capitalist society' and 'embourgeoisement' theories, which,
however unwittingly, added a new dimension to any discussion of class.
To summarise a familiar argument, during the 1950's it was commonly
asserted that capitalism as such had ceased to exist and had been
superceded by 'post-industrial society'. All the theorists with
something in common with the 'post-industrial society' thesis held that
old sources of class-conflict were being progressively eliminated or
rendered irrelevant and that Western society was being recast in a
middle-class style.

These interpretations rested on three basic assumptions. Firstly,
that the liberal and social democracies were pluralistic, power now be-
ing held by a number of social groups. Secondly, that the substantive
inequalities of early capitalism were diminishing and losing their
former significance: differentials in income were being eroded and
other inequalities were being dealt with by an economy stabilised
through the application of Keynsian economic policies; that due to
nationalisation there was now a mixed economy and not a purely capita-
list one; and most importantly, the post 1945 implementation of the
1942 Beveridge Report had bridged any remaining inequalities through
the Welfare State, expressed in Britain through social security, council
housing, the N.H.S., and state-funded secondary education. Thirdly,
for the above and other reasons, radical dissent had been progressively
eliminated or weakened as new patterns of living and aspirations cut
across older class-bound horizons: amongst manual workers. It was
argued, a faith in collective action was being replaced with a reliance
of individual achievement; the old loyalties of class were being re-
placed with preoccupations of status - the ethos of the middle-class.

In its simplest form, the new 'mythology' postulated a continuous
tendency towards the reduction of inequality in income distribution,
and to a lesser extent, in wealth. Thus, the widespread material
poverty characteristic of the 1930's had been overcome, and political
debate now revolved around the new problems faced by people living in
an 'affluent society'. As far as poverty was seen to exist, it was felt
to be a slight social hangover, a problem affecting tiny groups of
people who, through their incompetence and inability, were failing to
share in the new wealth. This was the heyday of 'you never had it so
good'.*

The major ideological impact of these developments was the widely
held and potent belief that class was 'withering away' or had disappeared.
This utopianism was not just complacency but a diagnosis of something
real and important in the 1950's: working-class apathy and lack of
enthusiasm for collective ends. In fact, the sheer numbers of writers
who espoused the thesis was some sort of evidence that the political
apathy of the time was not an illusion - a fact not always recognised

*You will be pleased to hear that Sir Keith Joseph, the Conservative
'think-tank', made this precise distinction - between primary and
secondary poverty - in a recent policy speech: "we've got none of the
former and too much of the latter". The mind reels with the impact
of the intellectual development of the Conservative's new policy
research committee - from the laissez-faire solutions of 19th C.
capitalism last year (sterilisation and birth-control) to the pene-
trative analysis of Butlerism this year: where will it all end?

by some of its opponents.

The fallacies underlying these conceptions went unchallenged, at least ideologically, until the development of the 'New Left' - arising from disillusionment both with the effectiveness of Labour's social reforms and with the sterility of organised left-wing thought. The thrust of this changing ideological stance was characterised in certain key books - Hoggart's Uses of Literacy (1957), Williams Culture and Society (1958). Despite the differences of scope, subject and emphasis, these works stood in one way or another for a favourable evaluation of the meanings of working-class culture, as Hoggart makes clear:

"I think such an impression is wrong if it leads us to construct an image of working class people only from adding together the variety of statistics given in some of these sociological works ... clearly we have to try to see beyond the habits of what the habits stand for, to see through the statements to see what the statements really mean....., to detect the differing pressures of emotion behind idiomatic phrases and ritualistic observances"

(Hoggart 1957 p 17)

In the New Left's interpretation of working class culture, the idea of 'community' plays a pivotal role. 'Community' is important because it allows the Culture/Society question to be thought through in all its dimensions - as a 'totality'. Again, ten years on, it is difficult to appreciate the radical implications of this - but what more than anything else distinguished these literary/cultural studies at this time was their attention to the 'totality': how separate texts/rituals/institutions inter-related in a 'whole way of life'. The idea of community necessarily presupposed an intellectual commitment to go beyond immediate empiricism, the 'obvious', the isolated text, to interpret cultural phenomena in terms of structural relationships or parts of a whole.

These critical developments of Williams & Hoggart were closely linked with a movement in social administration, in which Titmuss (1958) was the leading figure, which stressed the gaps and inadequacies in welfare services, the extent to which working-class material standards remained below those of the middle-classes, and argued that political policy rather than individual competence was responsible for these differences.

The theme linking the two areas was the realisation that working-class people had characteristics that were not explicable simply in terms of their financial position, that proposals for change needed to be grounded in a more complex theoretical understanding of working-class life. It is within this context that we find the development of, for example, the Institute of Community Studies and the work conducted by Liverpool University, at a time when more than superficial social research was rare, and where sociology as an academic subject had gained footholds in only a few universities.

Community studies, in fact, very largely ignored the assumptions of the 'post capitalist society'/embourgeoisement thesis, or at best they conceded that higher wages had meant a rise in the standard of living of the working class, but asserted that this had made no real

difference and that the working class still existed as a discrete group - on a cultural level at least. Community studies set out to "rediscover class", and in this sense 'community' carried connotations which can only be described as political. There was a kind of smuggling process, whereby the idea of 'community' was identified with the central socialist/social democratic preoccupation with class. Not accidentally, we might add, for it was based in part on real anxieties about Labours electoral base. It is noteworthy in this context that of the six British studies published in 1957, four had authors with some formal connection with the Labour Party. The notion of 'community' with its overtones of tradition and oppositional culture had an obvious attraction.

So, whilst we can see that the development of community studies was, in part, a reaction to the more vulgar embourgeoisment thesis and a reflection of the concern generated by the apparent erosion of Labours electoral base, it is apparent that many of the community studies were specifically aimed at the practice of social policy, or directed towards an illumination of those consensually defined 'social problems'. Thus, for Young and Willmott:

"The assumption was that the policy-makers were.... insufficiently aware of the needs of views of the working class people who form the bulk of the users of the social services, and we hoped that social research might help to provide a more realistic basis for policy"

(Young and Willmott 1961 p 2)

Whereas, with Jackson: "The communal urge could then have been harnessed, for a common good". He took ".... The illustration of productivity to show the practical help that can flow from an understanding of the otherness of working class life" (Jackson 1969 p 156).

III. It is important at this point to step back and attempt to understand the position that sociology occupies within bourgeois ideology, and, to explain the phenomenal growth in sociology, both as an academic discipline and as an applied science, during the late 50's and 60's. Sociology, as Gouldner (1971) attempts to point out, arises and assumes that economic problems are solved, when economic problems have become transparently social problems which cannot be solved within the framework of bourgeois economics.

"Sociology focuses upon the non-economic sources of social order. Academic sociology polemically denies that economic change is a sufficient or necessary condition for maintaining or increasing social order".

(A. Gouldner, 1971 p 4).

That is to say, when the social character of capitalist production has become apparent in the oppositional life-style and activities of the chief force of production, the working class, sociology arises as a theory of how to respond to this opposition without abolishing the capitalist mode of production. It recognises the social character of production - only by denying that it is connected with production, which is taken to be the concern of economics. Thus, at one and the same time, sociology is both reformist and repressive. By providing palliatives to real social problems it also, by definition, accrues means of social control.

So, in the boom of social research and sociology, 'social problems', that is, those activities or phenomena which impinge on the interest of capital, are seen to be the result of 'social' life and not of economic contradictions. It is no longer the individual 'problem family' that is at fault, it is a lot of 'problem families' living in a 'problem area'. Thus, for example, the incidence of industrial action can now be explained with reference to the community. The work force of industries with few strikes:

"....are more likely to live in multi-industry
communities, to associate with people with quite
different working experiences than their own, and to
belong to associations with heterogeneous memberships.
In these communities their individual grievances are
less likely to coalesce into a mass grievance which
is expressed at the job level".*
(Kerr & Siegel 1964 p 193)

Alternatively, in regard to education, we can now see that it is the community which largely determines educational success:

"What is unchallenged, however, is that the concept
of community provides us with an illuminating guide
to the expectations and requirements of the population
of the school catchment areas, as well as to the
prevailing factors in the behaviour of its pupils and
teachers".
(Eggleston: 1967 p 36)

This ideological role is clearly exemplified, for example, in the notion 'culture of poverty'. This argues that the poor constitute a distinctive culture or community within society; that the experiences, attitudes and values generated in poor communities are passed on from one generation to the next in a never-ending cycle. Thus, this culture is able

"to perpetuate itself from generation to generation
because of its effect on the children. By the time
slum children are aged six or seven they have usually
absorbed the basic attitudes and values of their
subculture, and are not psychologically geared to
take full advantage of changing conditions, or
increased opportunities which may occur in their
life-time."
(O. Lewis: 1968 p 60)

So it is not unskilled, meaningless, irregular employment, or bad housing, or an irrelevant education that is at fault - it 'basic attitudes' that are wrong. This ideological and overtly repressive thesis logically leads to notions of compensatory education which will, no doubt, finally reach down to the foetus, or maybe sterilisation in hopeless cases.

Thus, within the total context of bourgeois ideology, sociology provides important methodological and empirical data for the social

*The discussion of whether or not single-industry 'communities' are more or less 'militant' than others is more complex than the above quote suggests. See discussion below.

policy makers. Because it has no understanding of contradictions within a total structure it is conceptually limited to understanding class conflict in terms either of cultural or individual deprivation, and its policy formulations boil down to 'tinkering with the machine' - never mind the engine.

IV. This inability to understand society as a total structure in the Marxist sense, has meant that sociology in general, and community studies in particular, have automatically limited themselves to the appearance of things, never trying to analyse the relationships latent in the things themselves. It is in this area, and seemingly for this reason, that community studies have drawn on functionalism, particularly as manifested in the work of social anthropolgists. A practice, custom or belief was interpreted in terms of its present and ongoing functions in the surrounding society. But whereas, anthropologists within small-scale societies are able to study social life at first hand; sociologists have adopted the same model as if their 'communities' are excused participation in the national structures of class and politics.

In practice this approach leads to a concentration on 'normative' facts ('treat social facts as things') so social structure refers to relations between actual, empirically given social phenomena. These relationships are either given in the facts as directly observed, or arrived at by simple abstraction from the facts. Thus, social structure when used in a functional analysis, refers to no more than the actual organisation of a given social system: 'its all moving wall-paper really'.

From within this perspective social behaviour is seen as determined by norms, enforced by implicit or explicit sanctions. These structure, in a regular and predictable fashion, the social life and relationships of individuals. Thus, to Young and Willmott, the mother/daughter relationship is one where:

"Though they both derive benefit from the relationship,
it is far more than a mere arrangement for mutual con-
venience. The attachment between them is supported by a
powerful moral code"
(Young & Willmott 1962 p 193)

The analysis focuses on rules of conduct as mechanisms of social control, on the constellations of rules that govern particular forms of social groupings (for example, kinship) and on the consequences which these norms have for the composition of particular social relationships. The meaningful fabric which constitutes social life is therefore found, not in culture, but in institutions considered as regulative social relationships. This largely descriptive approach to social phenomena is given a certain 'dynamic' by the use of the concept of function. Institutions are seen as functioning parts of a social whole, ('the community') and serve to maintain it in a more or less stable condition. The logic of the approach then becomes circular, because insofar as these institutions continue to contribute to the maintenance of the social system, that is, if the system 'works', then they are seen as functional for it. This approach, by definition, leads to a focus on the mechanisms of control that function to ensure conformity to the prescribed normative order.

Thus, many community studies erect a social reality which is taken as given and giving of itself in immediate appearances. A relatively unquestioned reality is reported on relatively unquestioningly.

We are confronted with, a single-levelled social totality con-
sisting of attitudes, behaviour, activities and institutions, and the
relationships between these things. There is little awareness of
process, or dynamic relations between different forces and groupings.
There is no sense of levels within the social whole, and in particular
no notion of the relations and mediations between the subjective level
of experience, ideology and determining material conditions. In
general people are seen as passive with things happening to them,
rather than as showing some attempt to create their lives: there is
no dialectic between objective and subjective factors.

This single-layered analysis also leads to the abstraction of
community from social processes which constitute it as if it were a
self regulating entity, thus community studies cannot examine the
dialectic between local and national factors.

The ideological construction of a world which is self-evident,
single-layered and functionally inter-related, in which ideas are just
there as they have always been, delivers a specific kind of methodo-
logical unconsciousness. Since one reality is there for the seeing,
there is no more than one way in which to see it - why therefore give
the groundings or detail of your observations? It is not a reflexive
world so why should your methodology be reflexive? The techniques
are 'naturalistic', direct, unproblematic and usually unrecorded. With
no clear statement of the paradigms in this work, without any information
about research techniques, or how respondents saw the investigator, with
no information independently presented both concerning the relationship
of the researched to the researcher and concerning the raw data untreated
by theories of the writers, it is impossible for us to triangulate, to
read back along the lines of the prior theoretical predisposition, to
deconstruct and reconstruct, to come to our own principled interpretation
of the evidence.

CS liturature   forms the single most massive encounter with the
located experience of working class people, and is the major accredited
source of 'qualitative' accounts of working class culture. As such its text
should be 'demystified', and   salvaged as sources for our own, hope-
fully, more reflexive research procedures. As it is 'reading back' from
community studies is an uncertain exercise. We are dealing with a
peculiarly untheorised, naturalised, impacted problematic which
methodologically conceals its own tracks.

Just to give one short example of how this conceptual approach is
used in community studies and how it actually obscures that which needs
to be explained, we can look at Klein's (1965) use of parts of the
Henriques et. al. (1956) study dealing with education and mental
activity. Parents were asked about their aspirations for their children
and the researchers conclude that study, with a few exceptions, is not
taken seriously (because 'book learning' is recognised as applying
only to careers outside the experience of working people). This they
say leads to a general scepticism about theory. Furthermore, the miners
are said to have a 'taboo on tenderness' and to regard most forms of
mental activity as effeminate (and therefore - since this is a male
dominated community - of little value). From this Klein generalises
that 'cognitive poverty' - an intellectual incuriosity arising from
the strongly conformist pressures of social life - is characteristic
of traditional working class communities. The suggestion here is that
anti-intellectualism arises inevitably from the conditions of working
class life - do we detect a note of determinism?

Apart from the very obvious criticism that the dimension of school

experience is totally lacking in both the original study and in
Klein's reworking of the material, the formulation of the explanation
does not explain anything, it leaves us with a necessarily deter-
minist picture: 'That's the way miner's are'. The question still to
be answered in a meaningful way is 'why are they that way?'

In a sense, this brings us full circle and back to Hoggart who,
apart from displaying a peculiar nostalgia for a way of life moulded
by insecurity, local seclusion and crude exploitation, at least asks
us 'to see through the statements to see what the statements really
mean'. However, it would appear that much of the work done in
sociology and community studies is ideologically and politically
rooted in a conceptual framework which is content to skim the surface
of social reality.

V. This paper has taken us a long way from community studies as such,
rather we have tried to locate community studies within sociology and
use them to say things about sociology in general. We have tried to
make plain some fundamental weaknesses which we think are characteris-
tic of the studies we have read. Obviously we have mainly dealt with
one particular ideological strand within sociology.   We now wish
to move on to see how that strand achieves and reflects political
expression   within social democratic formulations.

We noted the uncritical, and mainly willing acceptance of
consensually defined 'social problems' earlier. The construction and
perception of these 'social problems' by the State is a complicated
process. Suffice it to say that this definition is institutionally
reinforced at every level in the academic heirarchy, from term essays
to S.S.R.C. projects. We are not suggesting that 'social problems' do
not correspond with material ones, simply that the nature of that
correspondence is crucially important. In the main, social administra-
tion accepts uncritically sociology's definition of 'social problems'
and formulates its policy in terms of that acceptance.

It is important to note the institutional (through advisory
committees, research etc.), educational (through social work courses,
etc.), and cultural links between social policy and research. Thus
the aims of the Institute of Community Studies, for example, are re-
ciprocated in full by social administration.   Slack
maintains that the purpose of social research:

    "....is to produce factual evidence on which social
    policy action or reform may be based or evaluated.
    It could rightly be said of social research workers,
    as it has been said of sociologists, that their task
    is to strengthen the case for reform by fuller
    investigation of the evils needed to be overcome, and
    to present their results in such a way as to secure
    greater public attention."

                                (Slack 1966 p 71)

This role, played out in the personal biographies of many social
researchers, strictly limits the parameters within which recommendations
on social policy can be made - limits of which very few researchers
are aware. The understanding of social life generated within this
framework tends to take the form of an anaemic cultural pluralism in which
to   see beyond the habits to what the habits stand for, degenerates
into a call to 're-shuffle the pack of cards of cultural values'.

"The aim here was to seek the human detail, the individual
situation in a group phenomenon which made some sense
of what was happening. And always to raise the old
dilemma: Working Class life - listen to the voices -
has strengths we cannot afford to lose: middle class life
transmits within it the high culture of our society, that
must be opened freely to all. That is the problem the
planners must solve"

(Jackson & Marsden 1966 p 249)

This 'pluralism' provides, and illustrates, one of the crucial
linkages between social democracy, public administration and community
studies - the linkage being provided by their emasculated understanding
of the meaning of class. We do not wish to suggest that there are no
important conflicts within social democracy, or within this particular
form of sociological practice - what we want to do is to try to out-
line the relationships that exist between these two bodies of thought
in their understanding of the concept of social class.

A crude historical characterisation of the political demands and
policies of social democracy enables us to identify an immediate
post-war concern with 'equality of provision' - hence the Welfare State,
an attempt to establish 'equality of provision' in certain basic wel-
fare services. It was only after these services were attained that the
other credo of social democratic thought - 'equality of opportunity' -
was able to take its place near the top, of the political agenda. Ob-
viously, both these strands were tightly inter-related, but the change
in emphasis during the 50's and 60's is apparent - particularly, for
example, in education: from 'provision' in the 1944 Education Act,
to 'opportunity' in the comprehensivisation programme in the 1960's.

The role played by social research in the intervening period was,
initially, to provide information outlining the disadvantages still
suffered by certain groups, despite ostensible equality of provision.
The important finding was not just that certain groups were disadvant-
aged, but that there was a pattern to the disadvantages, a pattern
related to social class. Thus, it is at this stage, that a more complex
understanding of working class life is needed. Statistics demonstrate
the existence of deprivations, but deprivations which are no longer
simply understandable in terms of inadequate provisions - it is time
to 'listen to the voices'.

The whole notion of 'cultural deprivation' or 'working class
otherness' as Jackson might say, has been informed and developed by
social research. The historical transition from 'controlling the work-
ing class', to the 'problem family', to the 'problem community', has
significantly altered both the policy makers conceptions of the problems
and the range and type of policy options open to them. Plowden, in this
sense, was a 'watershed'. Instead of the 'under-socialised delinquent',
we now have the 'cycle of deprivation' which is a 'whole series of inter-
related problems'. But because 'social problems' are seen as 'social',
and not the manifestations of contradictions, change can only be achieved
by changing people, their communal values, and by 'tinkering with the
machine'. Thus, education, the social democrats panacea, is seen as
the vehicle for change:

"....better educational provision can, by compensating
for the effects of social deprivation and the depressing
physical environment in which many children grow up, make an
important contribution to overcoming family poverty"
(D.E.S. Circular 11/1970)

To this end we now have Plowden's new policy of 'positive
discrimination' (Urban aid, nursery education, C.D.P's, community
advice centres, etc.), for areas to be identified by 'the criteria of
social deprivation'.

VI. At this point we wish to return to our original discussion of the
'withering away of class', to look at what exactly was being examined
under the heading of working-class, both by the 'post capitalist society'
theorists and in community studies. The direction which our critical
analysis of community studies has taken inevitably leads us into questions
about working-class consciousness: where it came from and how it operates -
both within local and national class structures.

There has always been a 'two nations' tradition in British sociology
and an explicit recognition that British society is the most 'class-bound'
in the world. Accent, vocabulary, dress, diet, recreations, and power
in the labour market are important components of this traditional view.
However, this tradition sees class related economic factors largely in
terms of income, not as reflections of a dynamic relationship. The
variables are normative or status based, i.e. 'social', and from this
is drawn a consensus model of the class structure expressed usually as
'social stratification'. However, this model remains highly problem-
atic because of the obvious differences in the normative factors it
considers important between classes: to use a Parsonian term there is
obviously no 'unitary value system'. Sociology's major conceptual
attempt to come to terms with this problem were 'affluence','embourgeoisement'
and 'convergence' theories. Fifteen years on, these concepts may look
more like leaps of faith than theories, but the problem still remains.
The major problem posed for sociology by the introduction of a class
differentiated view of the normative system is social control. If classes
differed widely, the dominant class would have to rely heavily on physical
coercion as a substitute for moral persuasion - or so it is alleged. Yet
this is not necessarily true. As Parkin (1971) points out the main
problem with the consensus model is that it fails to make clear the
relationship between the normative and factual elements of stratification -
i.e. the connection between the distribution of power and the legitimation
of values. As Marx pointed out in a celebrated passage 'the ideas of the
ruling class are, in any age, the ruling ideas'. The extent to which
dominant values are legitimated is largely a function of the institutional
power of the dominant class.

However, not every member of the working class endorses the moral
order of the ruling class. The 'images of society' held by the working
class are anything but homogeneous. As well as the more blatant section-
alism displayed through racism and sexism, and the division between the
'rough' and 'respectable' working class, there is an obvious sense in
which the consciousness of a London docker and a Coventry car-worker
differ. If the consensual bourgeois values dominant in most institutions
were universally endorsed, unselectively, then the regional/industrial
variations in working class culture, central to most sociology, would be
non existent.

Community studies display some strange tensions about class. One
major problem is that very often there is no objective definition of
class given at all. Yet, at the same time, there is a taken-for-granted
postulation of a national, homogeneous class structure on the part of
the authors largely based on common-sense notions of 'us' and 'them'.
This is evident in the work of Hoggart and Jackson, and Darendorf
emphasised (or overemphasised) its significance to support a general

theory of class consciousness. On the other hand, the small and often esoteric areas within which the studies were carried out, along with the initial lack of an objective definition leads to a stress being placed on the local experience of being working class and hence, the unique formations of classes in any one area. Implicit definitions of class are based on inequality yet dimensions of power and domination are almost entirely lacking. The rich are only different in the sense Hemingway meant - 'they have more money'. The rest of this section seeks to explore how 'class images of society' are created/determined within a particular section of the working class: Lockwood's (1975) 'traditional proletarian' and Parkin's (1971) 'accommodative worker'.*

Lockwood distinguishes three different 'class images of society' spontaneously generated through work experience and the values held by the local community. Firdly, the traditional proletarian, typified by miners, dockers and shipyard workers. Secondly, the traditional deferentialist, likely to work in a craft based industry and to relationships with a paternalistic employer. Thirdly, the privatised worker who is 'instrumental' in his attitude to work and 'privatised' in his home life.

Parkin's categories differ in that they do not refer to spontaneously generated ideologies, but mainly to national ideologies imposed by some means of another and to which different sections of the working class place allegiance. Firstly, there is the dominant value system, the social source of which is the ruling class. Typically, it is accepted by the 'deferential' or 'aspirational' working class. Secondly there is the 'subordinate' value system, the social source of which is two-fold. On the one hand, it is experiential   work and community are of crucial importance. On the other, certain national movements and ideologies - for eg. trades unionism - impinge on and are transformed by the local class practices. It should be noted that this category collapses two of Lockwood's: the privatised and the proletarianised worker. Thirdly there is the radical value system. This is not the property of the working class since they are incapable of autonomously generating a systematic opposition to capitalism - 'the working class on its own can only develop trades union consciousness'. One is left with the feeling that Mannheims 'free-floating' intellectuals rather than whole social groups generate this value system. The only social base suggested for   it is the 'mass political party'. The implication seem to be that only workers who attain a 'state of grace' will actually assimilate these values.

*   And although all the references shall be to the former, they
     also apply to the latter.

If we take it as axiomatic that people are not simply on the 'receiving end' of their objective class position, then it follows that their actions are partly projected in terms of creative expectations and definitions. Unfortunately, mos' examinations of this semi-autonomous layer of working class experience have been within community studies.* It is with this imperfect material that arguments about working class imagery have been carried out.

Lockwood argues that there are two crucial variables in the formation of working class images of society - work and the local community. There are two basic models for this imagery: a model based on power, conflict and a dichotomy between two classes, and a model based on prestige, status and hierarchy.

The proletarian traditionalist is likely to endorse the dichotomous model. This type of worker is the archetypical subject of community studies: he is the most colourful, romantic and inaccessible representative of his class. The proletarian traditionalist is likely to be male and usually works in a situation of physical discomfort and danger. Nevertheless, he has a high degree of job involvement and a strong attachment to his primary work group. This occupational culture spills over into leisure, facilitated by the fact that most of this kind of work requires an 'occupational community'.

The classic community study in this field is undoubtedly Coal is Our Life (1956). This study has shaped a whole generation of academic's perceptions of the miner. The data for this study was collected in the 1950's and it is avowedly a community study influenced by social anthropology. The note of caution this strikes in us seems to be shared by at least one of the authors. Certainly, Henriques is very sensitive to the implications of this approach and method. In the introduction to the second edition he writes: "By its focus upon the community framework as such, this technique will tend to abstract from the societal framework at every level of social life" (Henriques et. al. 1969, p.7). His example is that whereas relationships between husband and wife or the nature of leisure activity are:

*   Whilst we have made it quite clear that we disagree strongly with the
     concept of 'community' as it is usually operationalized, there is a
     sense in which the concept of 'occupational community' is important.
     We agree with Salaman (1975) who argues that this concept can be
     useful: firstly, for the way in which it focusses attention on
     certain aspects of occupation as subjective collectivities; and
     secondly, because occupational processes and features are important
     and significant in our understanding of extra-occupational issues
     and concerns, for example the development of forms of imagery and
     processes of change and conflict within the stratification system.
     We would agree with Salaman that this definition is 'useful' but
     would see it as an argument for the centrality of work processes,
     rather than a call for the reintroduction of a reified notion of
     community.

"viewed primarily from the standpoint of grasping their
interrelationships with the forms of activity and social
relations imposed by the coal mining work upon which the
community is based, this emphasis will tend to obscure
the fact that each of these particular sets of relationships
is extended beyond the community, in both space and time.
By itself, the community study technique provides no way of
measuring the significance of its findings against that
which may crudely be described as these 'external' factors".
                                    (Henriques, et. al. 1969 p. 7)

Ashton miners certainly display dichotomous class imagery - but
whether this conforms to Lockwood's model is unclear. It is certainly
debatable whether it is spontaneously generated through the social
relationships of work and the local community as Lockwood suggests.
Apparently Henriques at least agrees that the miners could be drawing
on extra-local factors for their class imagery.

The central features of the community life described by Dennis et.
al., are: recurring domestic conflict;   particular attitudes of the
miners to their cultural poverty and isolation;   the oppression of
miners wives. These are seen as determinants of actual economic
relationships and working conditions. Thus a logical connection between
the common work experience of the miner and a dichotomous social imagery
is posed. But there are many weaknesses here. One problem is the
clearly   different life experience of women in mining areas. Whilst
men have been thrown together by coal, it has exerted the opposite or
'centrifugal' influence on women. There is no paid work for them unless
they go outside the area. Nor can they identify very easily through the
family - marriage and the family is a battle arena, and seems completely
devoid of affection. Men and women are as effectively separated as
Eskimos and Africans. In fact, the experience of the sexes is so
totally different that one has to make an effort to remember that they
live together in the same town. As Lockwood is contending that the
work and community experience is crucial in the formation of perceptions
of class then it is reasonable to expect that the men's and women's
images would be different. Unfortunately, this seems never to have been
investigated. However, voting returns from mining areas (admittedly
very partial evidence) tend to show that women vote the same way as men,
at least suggesting they share the same type of class imagery. This
interpretation would tend to favour Parkins argument rather than
Lockwood's, in that far from being spontaneously generated, people are
recognising some kind of national ideology and their acceptance or
rejection of it is mediated through their local experience and work.

To take a different stage in Lockwood's argument, is the traditional
worker the most radical working-class type? For social democrats like
Lockwood 'radical' obviously refers to trade-union and Labour Party
consciousness. But if we take 'radical' to mean a total and systematic
opposition to capitalism, then obviously trade-union and Labour Party
consciousness does not go far enough. These types of consciousness are,
as Parkin suggests (firmly in the case of trades union consciousness,
more tentatively with the Labour Party), an 'accommodation to capitalism':
a cultural transcendence rather than a material transformation. This is
reactionary in effect;if not in intent. Far from engendering class-
consciousness, in the sense of the awareness of contradictory interests
between bourgeoisie and proletariat, the type of community relationships

experienced by the proletarian traditionalist brings about the opposite
result - a sectionalist, parochial self-interest. In a paper on
shipyard workers Cousins and Brown give a good example of what is at
stake with reference to the employment market. Favouritism, based on
localism and residence,is a factor in gaining employment in an industry
and area (Tyneside) where unemployment is a major problem. The daily
callstand - a feature of casualisation - encourages localism. Cousins
and Brown quote the following case:

"A chargehand from the former Blyth shipyard a little
further up the coast and now closed told us 'with us it
was always keep the Tynies out' "
                                    (Cousins and Brown 1975 p.58)

There are many examples of this: the hostility towards women and Poles
in Jackson's (1968) Yorkshire mills; the split between newcomers and
'traditionalists' in Stacey's (1960) Banbury; the rich insularity of
Hoggart's (1957) Hunslet - the list is endless.

Westergaard has pointed out in numerous articles that localism
and parochialism is endemic in the working class, and that this factor
inhibits them in the pursuit of their interests. He also makes the
interesting point that parochialism is not necessarily a spontaneous
creation of the working class, but one influenced and fostered by the
ruling class.

A locality consciousness has been imposed in some situations.
Victorian reformers always recognised and valued the conservative
restraints of parochialism, and feared the radical implications of
the absence of those restraints. Westergaard quotes Thomas Chalmers
who in "The Civic and Christian Economy of Large Towns" written in the
1820's advocated a system of localism to break up the large working-
class areas of cities into smaller local units.

"His argument was that if working class interests could
be turned inward into the locality, then workers would
be prevented from forming alliances and loyalties across
the restraining boundaries of the locality and the social
order would be safeguarded."
                                    (Westergaard 1975)

According to Lockwood, however, the old working-class traditions
of community and collective culture are undergoing a major change. The
modern tendency is to break up traditional working class communities,
whether occupational or not, and throw people with little immediately
in common together on council estates or low cost private estates.
These are the living conditions of Lockwood's 'privatised workers'.
However, to return to Lockwood, he argues that there has been an
evolution towards a new kind of collectivism which is no longer 'based
on instinctual narrower kinship ties', so beloved of traditional social
democrats, but 'instrumental', based on a rational calculation of interest.
But there is no reason why the second is necessarily narrower than the
first. On the contrary 'solidarity collectiveness' based on community
and locality is itself a narrow form of social consciousness, and can
lead to yet more sectionalism in the working class. It is our
contention that it is precisely the entrenched, immobile traditional
class consciousness of the British working class which holds it back and
helps to maintain its most cherished illusions.

Anderson in a rather Hegelian synthesis argues that the advent of 'instrumental collectivism' means for the first time the penetration of reason into the closed universe of the Labour movement - its still the market rationality of capitalism, but it's a start. Our basic disagreement with this position - on the revolutionary potential of the privatised worker - is reflected in Parkin's collapsing of these two types within the category of 'accommodative' working class. In a sense, they are two sides of the same coin. The traditional worker's locality and work mates easily becomes the privatised worker's family. Nevertheless, the move towards the break-up of traditional working class communities can only be welcomed by the left. In new industries and new areas workers might avoid the stifling parochialism and traditionalism of the rest of the labour movement.

There are, therefore, several problems with Lockwood's formulation of the traditional worker. He has inverted the classical Marxist idea of the proletariat. 'Traditional' and 'proletariat' seem to us to be contradictory terms when applied to working class consciousness. We would suggest that some of the factors Lockwood associates with traditional community - the existence of face-to-face emotional inter- action at work, the localised labour market, and the high degree of job involvement - inhibit the development of proletarian consciousness rather than support it. To this extent (and only this) we would agree with Anderson that Lockwood's 'privatised pecuniary worker' corresponds more closely to Marx's proletariat than the traditional proletariat. As Westergaard points out (1970), the economic developments underlying the cultural response of privatisation are leading to an increasing transparency in the cash nexus, a development not unproblematic for capitalism.

Lockwood also seems to have a deterministic/positivistic idea of consciousness. It is seen merely as a reflection of activity at the base. This is surprising in view of the (earlier) Affluent Worker monographs where he insisted that three aspects of working class activity must be taken into account. These were, in the discussion of embourgeoisement - the economic, the relational, and the normative, all of which had relative autonomy, with the relational acting as a mediation between the other two. In this sense, consciousness could never be just a reflection of what people do, since the mediation of how they did it, and with whom were crucial. In Sources of Variation in Working Class Images of Society, Lockwood seems to collapse the levels of the economic and relational, giving us instead a crude base- superstructure formulation with mechanistic determinations. An example of this mechanism is displayed in Lockwood's identification of the proletarian traditionalist as the most class conscious worker. Here is Lockwood's account of their images of the social structure:

"Shaped by occupational solidarities and communal sociability, proleterian social consciousness is centred on an awareness of 'us' and 'them'. 'Them' are bosses, managers, white collar workers and ultimately the public authorities of the wider society".

(Lockwood 1975, p.18)

This characterisation displays a crude simplification into a dichotomous imagery, of 'us' and 'them'. Shaped by work and the local community, the proletarian traditionalist sees 'them' in terms of a hierarchy impinging on the activities of work and community, a

characteristic which is also imputed to the privatised worker. But a dichotomous conception of 'them' and 'us' reflects a power and class relationship with wider ramifications than those within the local community. This point reflects Westergaard's criticism that Lockwood's schema does not allow for a 'radical class consciousness' - i.e. one which transcends occupations and locality and becomes generalised to other sections of the working class. Neither of Lockwood's models display radical overtones and neither represent a dichotomous class imagery: they are both hierarchical visions of society.

If 'post industrial society' theorists were taking their typical model of the working class from what Lockwood calls the 'traditional proletariat' and the privatised worker, neither of which, at the moment, poses a particularly substantial threat to capitalism, then it is not surprising that the theories gained a vogue. An important part of the argument was a lack of political mobilization, and this could be largely due to sectional interests as well as to rising living standards. The fatal flaw in community studies was to oppose the thesis of embourgeoise- ment with the traditional worker. This meant that instead of coming to terms with new realities, the social democrats fell back on nostalgia and romanticism: a simple minded ahistorical faith that old customs and habits (which had not produced anything spectacular since the middle of the 19C. and the final collapse of Chartism) were still to be the saviour of the Labour Party, and by implication the working class.

The misleading notion of unity implied in this category was compounded, we would argue, by a misuse of the methodological tool of the 'ideal type' in some of the studies we have examined. It was used as a heuristic synthesis of elements in an attempt to show the essence of particular social relationships. But it allowed the assumption to pass uncontested that the social order could be analysed without recourse to the dialectical connection of social forms with production and exploitation. We were given a response to the visible character of capitalist production in the moment that its heart was denied.

We must conclude that workers do not see the class structure in unitary ways, but in different and contradictory ways. The work remains to be done to show their particular forms and inner connections.

Bibliography

Bagehot, W. (1857) The English Constitution

Cousins & Brown (1975) 'Patterns of Paradox: Shipbuilding Workers Images of Society' in Bulmer (Ed.) Working Class Images of Society R.K. & P.

D.E.S. Circular 11 (1970) Plowden Report

Dennis, Henriques & Slaughter (1969) Coal is our Life Tavistock

Eggleston S.J. (1967) The Social Context of the School R.K. & P.

Gouldner A.W. (1971) The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology Heinemann.

Hoggart, R. (1957) The Uses of Literacy, Penguin.

Jackson & Marsden (1966) Education and the Working Class, Pelican

Jackson B. (1968) Working Class Community Penguin

Kerr & Siegel (1964) Labour and Management in Industrial Society, Doubleday

Klein J. (1965) Samples from English Culture R.K. & P.

Lewis O. (1968) La Vida Panther

Locker Lampson G. (1947) English Country Life

Lockwood D. (1975) 'Sources of Variation in working class images of Society' in Bulmer (Ed.) Op.cit.

Nisbet, R. (1967) The Sociological Tradition, Heinemann

Parkin F. (1971) Class Inequality and Political Order Paladin

Salaman G. (1975) 'Occupations, Communities and Consciousness' in Bulmer (Ed) Op.cit.

Slack, (1966) Social Administration and the Citizen

Stacey M. (1960) Tradition and Change: A Study of Banbury O.U.P.

Titmuss, R. (1958) Essays on the Welfare State Unwin

Thompson E.P. (1968) The Making of the English Working Class Pelican

Thompson F.M.L. English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century

Westergaard J.H. (1970) 'The Rediscovery of the Cash Nexus' in Socialist Register 1970

Westergaard J.H. (1975) 'Radical Class Consciousness' in Bulmer (Ed.) op.cit.

Williams R. (1958) 'Culture and Society' Penguin

Young & Willmott (1961) 'Research Report No. 3: Institute of Community Studies: Bethnal Green' in Sociological Review July 1961.

Young & Willmott (1962) Family and Kinship in East London Pelican