AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF YOUNG MEN’S SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN A HILL TOP ESTATE IN THE SOUTH WALES VALLEYS

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Contents.

List Of Figures.
List Of Tables.
Acknowledgements.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Paradoxes Of Globalization: Spatial Polarisation, Socio-Economic Inequality And The Importance Of The Local In A Globalized World.

Introduction.
Globalization, Time Space Compression And Socio-Economic Inequality.
(Post) Industrial South Wales And The New Geographies Of Inequality.
Conceptualising The Role Of Place And The Local In Contemporary Globalization.
Conclusion.

Chapter 3: Statutory Structures Of Exclusion: Poverty, Social Exclusion And Social Security Reform

Introduction.
The Role Of Wider Government Policy In Poverty And Social Exclusion.
Free Market Economics And The Hazards of Social Security.
Social Security Reform And The Unemployed.
Social Security Reform and The Under 25s
Social Security Fraud, Social Security Reform And Social Exclusion.
Social Security Reform, Citizenship And Social Exclusion.
Conclusion.

Chapter 4: Methodology.

Introduction: Researching Social Exclusion.
Youth, Social Exclusion And The Case For Ethnographic Research In “The Site”.
Initial Plans.
Initial Encounters.
A Conundrum Of Ethnographic Research In The Context Of Social Division And Conflict.
Fieldwork As A Volunteer In “Reflect”
Recording Fieldwork Data
Chapter 5: A Vicious Paradox: Young People, Social Exclusion, And Community.
Introduction.
Community In “The Site”.
Social Exclusion, Social Intimacy And Community.
Social Exclusion, Economic Interdependency And Community.
Stress And Emotional Anguish As A Communal Dynamic.
Youth, Social Exclusion, Spatial Containment And Competition.
Conclusion.

Chapter 6: Empowerment And Disempowerment: A Paradox Of Social Exclusion And Delinquency.
Introduction: Young Men, Delinquency And The Climate Of Crisis.
Moral Panic Or Social Reality?
Acquisitive Criminality, Economic Exclusion And Social Participation.
“Bucket Bongs” And “Bottle Bags”: Illegal Drug Consumption Amongst Young People In “The Site”
Consuming And Structuring Time.
Cannabis, Socialisation And Culture.
“Drug Culture”, Conflict And Community Fragmentation.
Anti-Social Behaviour, Social Conflict And Social Exclusion.
Conclusion: Disempowerment, Social Exclusion And The Acquisition Of Delinquent Status.

Chapter 7: “Who’s Telling The Truth And Who’s Telling The Lies”: Youth, Community Activism And Social Exclusion In A Divided Community
Introduction
Social Exclusion And Community Regeneration.
Community Activism In “The Site”
Competing Visions Of Community Activism: “The Tenants” And “The Volunteers”
Reflect, “The Youth” And The Community Centre.
Reflect In The Community Centre: The Transformation Of Concept Into Reality.
Conclusion.

Chapter 8: Conclusion.
List of Figures.

1.2 The Rhondda Heritage Park In Trehafod.
1.3 "Bottle Bags" discarded in a derelict building.
1.4 Sleeping rough in an abandoned building.
5.1 Map showing the layout of "the Site" and the boundaries of it's Enumeration Districts.
6.1 A discarded "bottle bag"
6.2 "Bottle Bag On '94"
6.3 "Bongen Forever"
6.4 "The Toker"
6.5 "Buzzin"
7.1 Sketch Map Of The Community Resource Centre.

List Of Tables.

2.1 Incidence Of Key Deprivation Indicators In Penrhys, "The Site", And The Remainder Of Their Constituent Wards.
2.2 Percentage Of Households In Receipt Of Means Tested Benefits In Local Authority Households And Amongst The General Population In Four Welsh Unitary Authorities (1997-1998)
4.1 Key Conceptual Distinctions Between Poverty, Deprivation And Social Exclusion
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Chapter 1: Introduction.

The Rhondda Valleys In The 21st Century.

The South Wales Valleys were, in the last century an archetypal, defining, and essential component of British industrial expansion. This image has persisted throughout the twentieth century, despite the fact that these defining industries have been engaged in a process of gradual decline for much of this period (Thomas 1990). This long term process of decline has been punctuated by periods of acute economic crises, and accompanying widespread social hardship. From the late 1970s to date, a combination of government policy and structural economic change has ensured the extinction of these traditional industries in the Rhondda Valleys. The capital which exploited the natural resources of the South Wales Valleys in the nineteenth century, has moved elsewhere, and now needs to be enticed with publicly financed packages of incentives designed to encourage inward investment. The economic presence of coal is now felt principally in a small number of heritage sites dotted around the South Wales coal field, one of which is located at the lower end of the Rhondda Valleys. Similarly, much of the fabric of the social and cultural forms which emerged alongside the coal industry now lies empty, abandoned and often derelict (see figures 1.1 to 1.4). Economic decline and a myriad of other technological, social and cultural transformations has had a huge and visible impact upon the Rhondda Valleys. Much of a once extensive rail network, which with its
There is poignant contrast between the run down appearance of the Coal Board Social Welfare Organisation in Pontypridd (above), and the newly built Rhondda heritage park in Trehafod (below).
Figures 1.3: "Bottle Bags" discarded in a derelict building.

Spaces and physical structures which were once integral to Valley’s life but which now lie abandoned and derelict are often colonised by marginalized groups.

Figures 1.4: Sleeping rough in an abandoned building.
tunnels and viaducts, bears testimony to the vigour and skill of nineteenth century engineering, now lies disused. Currently trains run from Cardiff to the Rhondda Valleys on an hourly basis. The out-migration of population is equally in evidence, with many streets dotted with boarded up housing, and demolition programmes being implemented in certain local authority estates, which have become key sites of contemporary concentrations of poverty and exclusion.

Whilst in socio-economic terms the Valleys are tied to urban, industrial structures, but physically they occupy a setting, not dramatically dissimilar to the Brecon Beacons National Park to their north. An incongruity accentuated by the demise of traditional industries whose environmental legacy of industrial scars and pollution is fast being “greened” from the landscape. Whether through deliberate land reclamation strategies or natural re-vegetation, spoil heaps are rapidly becoming virtually indistinguishable from the natural landscape, their presence given away only by discordant shapes which even the greening process cannot disguise. Yet at the same time the communities which are located within this increasingly “greened” post-industrial environment, retain a potent urban orientation, and experience the full gamut of socio-economic difficulties faced by their urban industrial counterparts in declining inner city districts throughout the Western World.

As is explored in more detail in Chapter 2 the negative effects of economic restructuring and industrial decline in South Wales have not been spatially uniform, but have formed complex overlapping spatial patterns. Predominantly, new forms of economic activity and their associated employment opportunities have been located
within a relatively narrow strip of land on the southern coastal plain (the so called 'M4 Corridor'), whilst the Valleys to the north continue to experience high levels of unemployment and associated deprivation. However underlying this broad spatial pattern, local authority estates caught within wider processes of residualisation and welfare withdrawal, have followed national trends (Barclay & Hills 1995) in emerging as sites of particularly acute deprivation and social exclusion (Adamson 1995, Jones 1995). The historical processes involved in residential development in the Rhondda Valleys, have produced a contemporary situation where poverty and social exclusion are particularly concentrated within local authority estates situated on the plateaus which divide and separate the Valleys. An arrangement which stands in stark contrast to the optimism which surrounded their original construction as a “new environment......that offers a dramatic change from the conditions of the past”, where “the future generation will not be condemned to live amongst a legacy of dirt, rubbish and dereliction” (BBC Wales 1995).

This thesis focuses upon the dynamics of social exclusion within one particular hill top estate (“the Site”) situated at the lower end of the Rhondda Valleys. Here the paradox of archetypal urban problems of poverty and social exclusion situated in a rural setting is particularly acute. Described in one local newspaper report as possessing panoramic views of the Rhondda Valleys but “precious little else” (1), “the Site” is perched amongst rocky crags, heather and whinberry moor land. On a clear day the view stretches to the Bristol Channel, but on wet winter days when rain clouds hug the hill tops, even the view down to the valley below is obscured. This urban rural
paradox to the Valleys is a particularly fitting way of introducing the main subject of this thesis, as paradox and contradiction are both recurrent and dominant themes throughout the analysis which follows. Although necessarily dealing with the dynamics of social exclusion within “the Site” more generally the underlying focus is upon young people whose social exclusion is characterised and underpinned by their inherently ambiguous and contradictory social status.

Expressed in its simplest form the main argument of this thesis is as follows. That within excluded communities young people are especially disadvantaged not only by the direct effects of wider structural processes, but also through the ways in which these processes underpin the emergence or exacerbation of local divisions. In turn the conflicts which emerge from these divisions underpin the emergence of localised processes which can ultimately act to exclude young people from the communities they are part of. Although the thesis has been divided into eight separate chapters, each with their own discrete themes, in terms of the overall structure of the thesis this argument is split into two main parts: the fieldwork chapters which examine various aspects of the complex relationships between young people, their community and social exclusion; and chapters two and three which set out to depict the wider structural contexts of these processes.

Chapter 2 provides an empirical and theoretical framework, which justifies the micro-spatial focus of the thesis as a whole and links “the Site” to processes occurring at far wider spatial scales. It begins with an examination of the growth in socio-
economic inequality which has accompanied the contemporary phase of globalisation. Here it is argued that the differential nature of the effects of time space compression and access to its technologies, has facilitated an increased mobility of capital over labour, which has in turn facilitated the emergence of a new international division of labour. Analysis then turns to the role of these processes in the radical restructuring and decline of the economic base in Britain’s old industrial areas. Taking (Post)Industrial South Wales as an example the focus is then placed upon the complexly overlapping patterns of inequality which have emerged at sub-regional levels, and which reach their greatest extent at micro-spatial scales (operationalized here as the electoral wards and enumeration districts which constituted the smallest spatial scales for which data from the 1991 census was released). At these scales the combined effects of economic restructuring and government policy have fragmented the formerly relatively homogenous working class social structure in the South Wales Valleys and produced patterns of socio-spatial polarisation which bear comparison with those in global cities such as London and Los Angeles.

However although there are key similarities to the socio-spatial patterns and processes which have emerged in the Valleys, and those which have emerged in localities across the western world, there are also crucial differences. In this sense analysis does not take a traditional case study approach in which South Wales is examined solely in terms of its similarities with other industrial regions, with differences being regarded as minor superficial detail. Instead attention is paid to the particular and specific forms which these globalized processes have taken and how these locally
specific forms are reproduced through the precise positioning of the Valleys in relation to
globalized processes and flows. This analytical framework is principally based upon
theoretical arguments developed by Massey (1994) which attach considerable importance
to forms of local specificity, and argue for a conceptualisation of space in which the
locality is viewed as a uniquely positioned nodal point within a web like system of
overlapping and inter-dependent spatial relationships. Within this framework local
specificity and spatial structures more generally are afforded key causal roles in the
explanation of past, present and future trends. This chapter is therefore key to the
analytical approach taken within the wider body of the thesis which, whilst concerned
with the wider process and structures which produce “the boys” impoverishment and
social exclusion, is equally concerned with localised dimensions of these processes. Thus
each of the fieldwork chapters begins with an examination of the wider structural and
discursive contexts of the particular issues being addressed, before examining the
particular forms, dimensions and dynamics of these phenomena within “the Site”.

In Chapter 3 attention turns to the role of social policy (in particular
welfare policy) in contemporary processes and structures of social exclusion. Given that
during the duration of the fieldwork around 83% of households in “the Site” were wholly
or partially dependent upon state benefits for their income (see Chapter 5: 194) it is
difficult to overstate the influence and importance of the social security system within
this community. Chapter 3 focuses upon the changes which have been made to social
security provision from the late 1970s to the present, and argues that underpinning these
changes has been the emergence of a new orthodoxy in social security policy making.
This approach is characterised not only by the subordination of social policy to economic policy, but by the stigmatisation of benefit claimants and an associated use of welfare benefits as a means of social control (particularly over labour market behaviour). In this way the development of social policy in Britain during the late twentieth century has occurred in such a way that it has become a key agent of social exclusion.

In structuring this argument Chapter 3 begins with an examination of the implications which wider aspects of government policy such as taxation, privatisation and labour market flexibilisation policies have had for the growth of socio-economic inequality in Britain. The intention here is to contextualise the social security system within wider trends in government policy, and more fundamentally within the New Right political philosophy which has dominated the policy making agenda from the late 1970s onwards. This context is essential to understanding the nature and direction of social security policy within what is described as the emergence of a new orthodoxy in social security policy making. A clear example of this can be seen in the relationships between the New Right’s ideological objections to state intervention in the market place and the fiscal and moral crises which government ministers have identified in social security provision and which (despite their weak evidential basis) have shaped the development of social security policy. Taking evidence from three key areas of social security policy subsequent sections analyse how the combination of direct benefit cuts, withdrawal of benefit entitlements and radical changes to eligibility conditions, have undermined benefit claimants’ citizenship to the point where it has become separated from and subordinated to that of “the taxpayer”. As is explored in later chapters this denigration of
benefit claimant’s citizenship forms a key underlying structure to the processes of exclusion operating in “the Site”.

Following on from this Chapter 4 explains and justifies the choice of research methodology which has been employed in this study of youth and social exclusion. It begins with an examination of key conceptual distinctions between more established means of viewing socio-economic disadvantage such as poverty or relative deprivation and social exclusion. In particular it focuses upon social exclusion’s concern with the multi-dimensional nature of disadvantage, its relational aspects and a related concern with dynamic process (Room ed. 1995). These conceptual distinctions predispose a move away from the more traditional quantitative approaches which seek to map and enumerate the number of individuals who can be said to be living in poverty using such devices as poverty lines or deprivation indices. Although such forms of analysis still have a role to play in researching social exclusion, this concept also demands greater emphasis upon qualitative approaches capable of illuminating the relational aspects and dynamic nature of social exclusion as a process rather than an outcome. In view of this, and the established tradition of this form of methodology in conducting research with young people, the case is then made for an ethnographic approach based around participant observation methods pioneered by Chicago School urban geographers and sociologists during the 1930s. Particularly during the 1970s these methods have been widely utilised by British sociologists studying various aspects of working class culture, and in the study of marginalised, alienated or deviant sub-cultures (e.g. Foster 1990, Corrigan 1979, Craine 1997, Parker 1974).
Chapter 4 goes on to examine the actual practise of fieldwork in “the Site”. Although serving to introduce some of the key individuals and social groups included within the thesis, the principal function of this section is to illustrate the considerable practical and ethical difficulties involved in conducting this sort of research in a divided and conflictual social setting. An implication of this is that the researcher needs to be flexible and adaptive in the approach which is taken to ethnographic fieldwork. Finally Chapter 4 turns its attention to the nature and significance of the fieldwork data upon which the bulk of this thesis is based. The principal concern here is with the inevitably partial and subjective nature of the entire research process from its initial inception to the analyses presented in the fieldwork chapters. Consequently one or two notes of guidance and caution are issued about how the subsequent fieldwork chapters should be read and interpreted. These are based principally upon the conclusion that these chapters constitute an account of social life in “the Site” which represent a particular interpretation of the interactions and events witnessed during fieldwork. Others might well present quite radically different interpretations and analyses of these phenomena.

In total there are three fieldwork chapters each dealing with separate aspects and dimensions of the dynamics of young people’s exclusion in “the Site”. Chapter 5 begins with an examination of the complex and intrinsically contradictory nature of community. This section focuses particularly on the internal plurality of communities and the ways in which communities are dependent upon the construction of
“us/them” “insider/outsider” distinctions (Crow 1997). Therefore notions of community are apparently inherently paradoxical to the extent that they simultaneously require (and imply) a degree of social solidarity, cohesion and shared values, yet at the same time are inherently exclusionary to the extent that their members seek to define who belongs and who does not. Recognition of this forms a vital backdrop to subsequent sections of Chapter 5 which explore various dimensions of communal life in “the Site” and use these to construct an overarching argument described in terms of a “vicious paradox”. This term is intended to convey the contradictory and paradoxical nature of “the boys” relationship to their community and to “the Site” as a place. A community which they are dependent upon yet which can also function as an agent of their social exclusion, and a place which they express intense dislike towards, yet to which they also display a strong affinity and a marked reluctance to leave. Essentially this argument holds that the bonds of social and economic inter-dependency and mutual support which bind individuals to the close knit family and community structures in “the Site” appear to have been intensified by the problems which this community now faces. Given the severity of their marginalisation, this is particularly evident in the lives of young people in “the Site”, whose social networks are not only a vital source of material sustenance and social support, but can almost be said to define the entire breadth of their opportunity structures.

In this sense contemporary inequality, poverty and social exclusion can be said to have acted as a basis for the construction and reproduction of various forms of local solidarity. However, the same processes which have acted to intensify community
in “the Site” have simultaneously incapacitated, undermined and over-burdened these social networks. In doing so they have fostered and exacerbated division and conflict within “the Site”, the dynamics of which are essential to understanding the development of localised patterns and processes of social exclusion. Consequently Chapter 5 is also intended to function as an introduction to specific aspects and dimensions of social life which are explored and analysed in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

Chapter 6 focuses upon the complex relationships between the delinquent activities which “the boys” engage in and their social exclusion. It begins with an examination of the “climate of crisis” which characterises contemporary discourses surrounding young people’s delinquency and the influence of these discourses upon what appears to be an increasingly punitive policy making agenda. This background context to “the boys” delinquency is also drawn upon as a means of dividing the fieldwork material into three separate sections dealing with acquisitive criminality, illegal drug use and anti-social behaviour. It is important to note that this is in many senses an artificial categorisation imposed simply as a means of managing the complexity of the fieldwork data and linking its analysis to wider discourses and debates. In reality the three categories of behaviour are complexly entwined with one another to the point where they effectively inseparable.

It is nonetheless possible to link these three categories of delinquent behaviour to particular dimensions of “the boys” exclusion. Acts of (ostensibly) acquisitive criminality help facilitate participation in key socio-cultural arenas from
which “the boys” would otherwise be excluded. The consumption of illegal drugs provides a degree of temporal structure, activity and momentum to daily life, and crucially opens up a social space that challenges the social limbo which characterises young peoples’ social exclusion. Finally, the sorts of hostile and “anti-social” behaviour described in the final section of this chapter provide a means by which “the boys” can exert political agency in their immediate surroundings. In these ways the various forms of delinquent behaviour empower “the boys” in ways which possess an immediacy and autonomy that is quite simply lacking in many youth projects/initiatives which claim to empower socially excluded young people. However as with the vicious paradox discussed in Chapter 5 there is again a ‘sting-in-the-tail’, as through involvement in these activities and through encounters with other members of their community, outside authority figures and institutions “the boys” increasingly run the risk of being constructed as a pathologically deviant ‘other’. This in turn further marginalizes and de-legitimises their voice and in doing so not only further exacerbates their social exclusion, but can actually legitimise it.

In its most obvious form this process is evident in the ways in which “the boys” interactions with law enforcement institutions and agencies seemingly inevitably involve their eventually being subject to custodial prison sentences and classified as persistent offenders/criminals. As this process progresses the withdrawal of the most basic citizenship rights is both formalised and legitimised, and in turn further reduces opportunities to participate in economic, cultural, social and political arenas through non-delinquent means. In the local context such activities enlarge the social divisions which
are fundamental to the processes by which young people become excluded from their community. As is explored further in Chapter 7, these activities impact directly upon local young people’s ability to access communal resources and further marginalize their voice in the decision making process as to how these resources are structured, shaped and deployed. For other members of the community the fear and fact of criminal victimisation exerts an obviously detrimental effect upon their quality of life and can be viewed as an essential component of their exclusion. Consequently a key dimension of local community activism in “the Site” has been geared towards persistent demands for greater police action against local young people, and the development of housing allocation policies which effectively seek to banish particular young people from the locality. More generally the association between young people and problems of crime and delinquency impacts their ability to access communal resources and further marginalizes their voice in the decision making process as to how these resources are structured, shaped and deployed. Thus whilst immediately and multiply empowering the delinquent activities in which “the boys” engage ultimately serve only to reinforce and exacerbate their disempowerment.

The final fieldwork chapter examines how these problems of conflict and division which are causally entwined with the exclusion of young people also exert a debilitating and undermining effect upon attempts at community regeneration. Although as with all the dimensions of social exclusion discussed in previous chapters responsibility for the failure of attempts at community regeneration in “the Site” must ultimately be borne by wider structural factors (e.g. inadequate funding), it is nonetheless
the case that other communities facing similar constraints have enjoyed considerably more success. The analysis presented in Chapter 7 therefore relies heavily upon the forms of division and social conflict identified and analysed in earlier chapters. The text focuses upon the development of a community resource centre and a youth drop-in centre in "the Site", which (broadly speaking) can be viewed as the separate outcomes of two distinctive and competing modes of community activism. One of which was constituted by the local tenants and resident association ("the tenants") whose efforts succeeded in securing the funding for a community centre which opened shortly before fieldwork began in "the Site". The other is constituted by a group of four local women ("the volunteers") whose efforts were directed towards the establishment and running of a youth drop-in centre ("Reflect"). Although sharing much of "the tenants" analysis of the problems posed by young peoples' behaviour "the volunteers" differed quite radically in their views on how these issues were best addressed. Whereas in the guise of "the Site" forum at least "the tenants" approach was characterised by attempts to bring greater law and order to bear in "the Site" (see Chapter 6), "the volunteers" sought to address these issues through an approach which emphasised the difficulties faced by local young people.

The community centre became the key setting for the prolonged and increasingly bitter power struggles which subsequently developed between these groups, with the resultant conflicts being further complicated by the input of other key groups of players such the community centre's management, another group of local women who wanted to establish a youth club, and not least by the young people themselves. Despite
the occasional recognition of the need for a more unified and co-ordinated approach
between competing groups of community activists, the dynamics of conflict and division
made this an apparent impossibility. The net result of this was that both initiatives
ultimately collapsed as they were abandoned by their client groups, and particularly in the
case of community centre became a key target for violent attacks by frustrated and
disillusioned local young people. The key conclusion to be drawn from the events
described in Chapter 7, and which is hinted at in earlier chapters, is that the social
exclusion of young people from both wider and local structures is not just a problem for
young people themselves, but for the communities and the society of which they are a
part.

Endnotes.

(1)This newspaper article has not been referenced here in order to preserve “the Site’s”
anonymity.

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Chapter 2: Paradoxes Of Globalization: Spatial Polarisation, Socio-Economic Inequality And The Importance Of The Local In A Globalizing World.

Introduction.

The complex geographies of inequality, poverty and social exclusion which exist in contemporary British society form an essential backdrop to the highly localised events and interactions described in subsequent fieldwork chapters. Although these chapters focus on events and processes occurring within "the Site" these interactions are underpinned by processes whose origins lie many miles away. Indeed as is argued in the first two sections of this chapter the concentrations of poverty and social exclusion in communities such as "the Site" are ultimately attributable to the dynamics of contemporary globalization. More specifically the geographies of inequality of which they are a part, are underpinned by the particular combination of global economic restructuring and the ways in which British governments have responded to the perceived pressures and realities of globalization. In the contemporary setting it is therefore impossible to conceptualise an individual locality such as "the Site" as existing independently from these wider processes and systems. However it is equally inappropriate to treat individual localities as passive settings in which universalised processes are played out (i.e. the traditional case study approach). As this chapter argues and as the fieldwork data presented in later chapters demonstrates, the nature of relationships between localities and wider, often globalized processes, is clearly more interactive than traditional formulations permit. The principal aim of this chapter
therefore lies in consideration of how the local can be adequately conceptualised within the contemporary era of globalization, and through this the construction of a theoretical framework in which later fieldwork chapters can be situated. However before these more abstract issues are taken into consideration it is first necessary to examine the challenges presented to social theory by the complex geographies of inequality which have emerged or have been exacerbated during the late twentieth century. This chapter therefore begins with a section examining the relationships between globalization and inequality, followed by an empirical analysis of the inequalities evident at various spatial scales, but which focuses particularly upon the patterns of socio-spatial fragmentation and polarisation which are apparent at micro-spatial scales.

Globalization, Time-Space Compression And Socio-Economic Inequality.

In terms of an ever increasing internationalisation of trade, the social relationships and even political institutions which emerged around these flows, there has been an ongoing process of globalization since pre-industrial, pre-modern times. Underpinned by major technological innovation in transport, information and communication systems the pace of this process accelerated during Modernity to the point where it reached a breadth and intensity which is widely believed to signal the emergence of a new and different era of human development (however conceptualised). What distinguishes this era of globalisation from earlier phases are the all encompassing ways in which its complex and multi-dimensional facets penetrate and pervade social, cultural, economic and political life. The development of national policy is increasingly contained within the parameters laid down by international agreements
such as the General Agreement On Tariff And Trade, and heavily influenced by supranational agencies such as International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation (1). In Western Europe the role of supra-national bodies has been extended to responsibility for key areas of national policy making as part of the ongoing development of the European Union. Cultures have also become internationalised, facilitated in large part by the mass production and consumption of domestic and commercial communications technology (e.g. video, satellite and cable television, mobile phones and the internet). Within western societies particularly, individuals in even the most isolated localities are subject to cultural influences from across the globe, and moreover, providing they have access to new (relatively) cheap communication technologies, are potentially capable of achieving virtually instantaneous access to anywhere in the world. These processes of globalization in political, social and cultural life, exist interdependently but are ultimately underpinned and driven by processes of economic globalisation. The over-riding role and concerns of the agencies and agreements associated with the political dimensions of globalization has for example been in helping facilitate the internationalisation of markets, capital flows and production.

Summarizing the complexity of these multi-dimensional processes is no easy task, and is further complicated by the fact that in addition to being used as a shorthand description of these processes, globalization is also being employed in explanatory and ideological ways (Wilding 1997). However, what can be established in more straightforward terms is that the effects of these processes are ultimately constituted by a phenomena which has become known as "time space compression". This term refers
to ways in which globalization has acted to collapse time and space, effectively making
the world into an ever smaller space. This phenomenon is perhaps most obviously evident
in the ways in which innovations in transport systems have resulted in the increasingly
rapid mobility of physical objects and entities (e.g. people, goods and capital) across
large distances, or in the ways in which innovations in information and communication
systems can act to obviate these distances altogether. Less obviously the effects of time-
space compression are such that in addition to being subject to cultural influences from
around the globe, enormously significant events occurring in particular localities are
frequently dependent upon events, processes or decisions which originate many miles
away. The pervasive nature of globalization is such that even the most marginalized and
excluded social groups and individuals remain intimately connected to global processes
and flows. For example despite their exclusion from ‘mainstream’ structures and even
local social structures “the boys” in “the Site” remain connected to global trade flows
through such things as their use of illegal drugs (see Chapter 6), and in a myriad of other
consumption habits and practises.

Thus time space compression appears to impact universally upon
individuals lives regardless as to whether they have access to its technologies or different
positioning in relation to global flows. However, these factors are crucial to determining
the more variable effects which it has upon individuals lives. The different levels and
forms of access to the technologies of time space compression do not simply reflect
established patterns of relative advantage and disadvantage but actively reinforce and
even exacerbate these relationships (Massey 2000). This does not only occur at the
polarities of power hierarchies with the increased mobility of powerful individuals, groups and agencies acting to further reinforce the powerlessness of those at the lower end of these hierarchies, but is also apparent in the relationships between groups situated much more closely to one another. An example of this can be seen in the spatial similarities (and often proximity) in the hill top locations of the polarities of the local socio-economic spectrum in the South Wales Valleys (described in the subsequent section of this chapter). One of the key forms of difference evident between these two types of community is in different levels of car ownership, with ownership of at least one car per household being the norm in the relatively affluent communities but relatively rare in those communities with the highest incidence of poverty and social exclusion. The effects of this are not just evident in the ways in which car ownership relates to the considerable differences which exist between respective opportunity structures (e.g. in terms of the ability to access goods, services and employment opportunities), or in the ways that, as a result of differences in personal mobility, space and time are experienced very differently in these two types of community. They are also evident in the ways in which the growth in personal mobility through the ownership of private transport, is inextricably linked to the decline of a public transport infrastructure, hence exacerbating the lack of mobility and isolation of those who do not own or have routine access to private transport.

At a much broader and more fundamental scale, differences in the effects of time space compression are evident in the increased mobility of international capital, and the consequential disempowerment of inherently less mobile labour. These
developments have been key to enabling the emergence of the international division of labour which underpinned the processes of de-industrialisation and restructuring experienced in Western industrial economies during the late twentieth century (Byrne 1999). As centres of production shifted to other global regions (notably the Pacific Rim countries) western economies underwent steep and unremitting decline in their "old" industrial base of heavy manufacturing and primary industries. At the same time service sectors underwent considerable expansion, aided significantly by the reinvestment of profits from sectors such as manufacturing into such sectors as financial services (Glyn 1992). This tertiarisation of the economy occurred even within the primary and secondary sectors (e.g. in the increased role of Research and Development)(Kennett 1994).

However, restructuring has not been limited to sectoral change, but has also included equally fundamental transformations to working conditions and practices as labour markets have undergone a process of flexibilisation. This has been manifested through such trends as increases in part time working, temporary employment contracts and fixed term appointments, by legislative changes to workers statutory employment rights and the use of legislation to substantially reduce the power of organised labour (this latter point is presented in more detail in Chapter3). Ultimately labour market flexibilisation has had a down grading effect upon much employment, with an increasing casualisation of employment contracts, the deskilling of employment tasks and a general denigration of working conditions. Indeed, in key areas of employment growth working conditions bear comparison with the strict industrial discipline in the Victorian mills of the nineteenth century. For example a recent television news report contained claims that
employees in some telephone call centre firms (a key area of new employment growth) had their visits to the toilet timed and recorded by management, and that in one instance management had even suggested that employees wear nappies in order to avoid the need for such visits altogether (Channel 4 News 04/04/2001).

In terms of the structure of individual firms flexibilisation has also been characterised by a shift from core and periphery workers to core and periphery firms as low status and low skilled functions (e.g. cleaning) are sub-contracted, creating further downward pressure upon workers employment conditions and rates of pay (Lash 1994). In some instances these arrangements can involve the complete negation of statutory employment rights as sub-contracted service providers exploit labour in the hidden economy (2). The net effects of flexibilisation have therefore included the downgrading of much employment but has also, given the ways in which flexibility has ultimately entailed the weakening of employers commitments and responsibilities towards their workforce, been a key factor in the generation of structural insecurity for employees in contemporary labour markets.

Although there are a plethora of ways in which the new mode of capitalism is labelled and conceptualised (e.g. post industrial capitalism, post fordist, advanced capitalism) there exists a widespread acknowledgment that the economic restructuring of the late 1970s and 1980s signified a definitive break with the post war economies. There is equally widespread acknowledgment that one of the defining qualities of the new mode of capitalism has been the emergence of levels of socio-economic inequality
unimaginable in the previous phase of post-war capitalism. By the mid 1990s the Child Poverty Action Group calculated that the disparity between the wage levels of the richest and poorest in the U.K. was at its greatest level since 1886 (Welfare Rights Bulletin June 1994) whilst the incomes of the poorest decile of population had declined by 25% in real terms since 1979 (Byrne 1999). Moreover, the structural nature of present levels of inequality under contemporary capitalism apparently represents the reversal of a centuries-old trend towards increasing income equality, which had up until the mid to late 1970s accelerated during the twentieth century (Barclay & Hills 1995). Although these levels of inequality were initially underpinned by the massive shedding of labour which occurred within old industrial sectors during the 1980s (and therefore associated with economic decline), it has subsequently become apparent that these levels of inequality continue and are even subject to further increases during periods of economic growth (Massey 1991, Massey & Allen 1995). They are in other words a structural dynamic of the contemporary form of globalized free market capitalism.

However, the extraordinary increases in inequality in the U.K. are not simply determined by forces of economic globalization but have resulted from the complex interplay between these forces and the actions of the state. Recognition of this prompted the development of regulation theory, a mode of analysis which seeks to situate both economics and politics within an integrated framework and claims that different phases of capitalist development are identified with particular configurations of capitalist accumulation and statutory regulation (Kennet 1995). Each new phase of capitalism exists as means of resolving a previous crisis of capitalism which is resolved through
transformation of the accumulation/institution relation. For example, Kennett (1994) argues that the development of the interventionist Keynesian political economies of the post war period emerged from the crisis of the laissez faire capitalism of the 1930s, whilst the origins of the current phase of capitalist development and its changed regimes of accumulation and regulation can be traced back to the oil crises of the 1970s. However, whilst regulation theory provides useful insights into the dynamic relationships between politics and economics, its more “pessimistic” analyses have concluded that the contemporary dynamics of capitalist societies are not only inevitable but that the pressures of globalisation are such that there are no viable alternatives (Byrne 1999).

Such analyses are evident in the emergence of a new orthodoxy in social and economic policy making, in which the demands of the free market economy and labour flexibility take precedence over those of social and welfare policy. Within this framework social and welfare policy has been explicitly designed in ways which complement the needs of free market economics and labour flexibility, a process which has wide ranging implications for the dynamics of contemporary poverty and social exclusion (3). From the election of the first Thatcher government in 1979 to date Conservative and subsequently Labour governments have pursued policies of deregulation and flexibilisation in both labour and capital markets whilst simultaneously, through a series of privatisations, extricating the state from previous patterns of intervention in the economy (e.g. in former nationalised industries) and the provision of social goods (e.g. housing, and in less obvious ways, health). These developments reflect the emergence of a “logic of no alternative” (Hay 1998), which can be viewed as an
outcome of what Wilding (1997) describes as an ideological form of globalization in which the harsh realities of the global economy are used as a means of justifying New Right ideology.

Yet the falsity of the "logic of no alternative" would seem to be evident in the considerably different fortunes of those countries which have subscribed to it in their development of policy and those that have either not done so, or else have done so to a lesser extent. There are not only continuing significant differences between the ways in which the inequality and poverty which has been produced by globalisation are conceptualised in different nation states (Mann 1994, Silver 1993) but crucially in the policy responses to these phenomena. For example, Byrne (1999) points to considerable differences between the response to globalization in the U.K. and the U.S.A. to that of France where there has been "real popular resistance to the tendencies of post-industrial capitalism. There have been occupations of benefit and employment offices, mass demonstrations and a coherent social critique of the logic of flexibility. The Communist and Green elements in the ruling coalition have explicitly distanced themselves from any endorsement of 'Blairism' and are associated with radical Catholic elements, including a bishop suspended from office by the Pope, in a programme of active analysis of and resistance to globalization as a process" (Byrne 1999: 86).

These different reactions to the pressures of globalization are evident also in the considerable differences between socio-economic structures which have emerged in different countries. Thus in France the deskillling of the labour force has been nowhere
near so severe as it has been in the U.K., where by the early 1990s only 38% of the workforce possessed skilled vocational training, compared to 80% in France (Massey 1991). Such differences are most obviously manifested in the different levels of inequality which are evident in different nation states. Writing in the Guardian newspaper Peter Townsend claims that “during the last twenty years, the U.K. has become - as international agencies have testified - odd man out in Europe, experiencing faster growth in both inequality and poverty than any other member state” (Townsend in the Guardian, 09/03/2001). Moreover it is not just a matter of difference in the extent of poverty and inequality, but in its patterns and dynamics. In the U.K. the risk of poverty increases in families with dependent children (especially lone parent families), but in many European countries this relationship does not exist, and in Germany the risk of poverty actually decreases for families with dependent children (Walker 1996).

These differences between nation states and the outcomes of their interactions with global processes have fundamental significance for the ways in which particular places are conceptualised within an era of unprecedented globalization. One of the most striking features of the growth in poverty and inequality which have resulted from globalization has been the complex and multi-faceted spatial forms which it has taken. This is true at spatial scales ranging from the global, where there has been increasing inequality between (broadly speaking) the advanced industrial nations of the northern hemisphere and the industrialising nations of the southern hemisphere (Townsend 1993, Buffoni 1997), to the local, where increasing inequality has found its spatial expression in the emergence of increasingly segregated and polarised urban places
The following section attempts to map the complex spatial patterns of socio-economic inequality within the U.K., but is particularly concerned with the micro-spatial patterning of inequality within the South Wales Valleys. This serves the dual purpose of contextualising "the Site" within wider regional, national and global systems, and in doing so providing concrete illustration of the more abstract arguments presented in the final sections of this chapter.

**(Post) Industrial South Wales And The New Geographies Of Inequality.**

Given the historically uneven nature of capitalist economic development it was inevitable that the social and economic consequences of restructuring would be spatially uneven. In Britain during the 1980s this was perhaps most immediately apparent in the (re)emergence of a North-South divide as the economic structures of former industrial heartlands in South Wales, Northern England and Scotland underwent rapid, severe and seemingly permanent decline (Lewis & Townsend 1989, Smith 1989). Although during the recession of the 1990s this pattern was ostensibly reversed somewhat with job losses in the South East occurring at a faster rate than elsewhere in Britain, the North South divide was still identifiable in terms of income and poverty levels (Martin 1995). The re-emergence of a North-South divide in Britain’s economic structures during the 1980s was also associated with the reinforcement and sharpening of distinct regional identities. Thus Taylor, Evans & Fraser (1996) argue that in the (post) industrial north of England there exists "a powerful sense that this economic catastrophe represented a real moment of truth in the given popular definition of the North - namely, that the North has always been a region that is defined by it’s residual and subordinate
relation to London and the South-east. Being 'of the North', in this sense, has always involved a recognition that one is 'peripheral'" (Taylor, Evans & Fraser 1996: 18). There are obvious similarities between the peripheral, subordinated and marginalized components of a "northern" identity, and ideas of Welshness particularly as these notions intersect with a distinctive Valleys identity (Adamson & Jones 1996).

From the point of their emergence the communities of the South Wales Valleys were heavily dependent upon the development of the coal industry, an industry whose influence was fundamentally important in shaping not just the socio-economic structures of the coal fields themselves, but the entire regional economy of South Wales. However, the coal industry had undergone a process of gradual decline for much of the twentieth century, and went into rapid decline during the programme of pit closures in the years following the 1984-1985 miners strike (Thomas 1990). By the early 1990s the deep mining coal industry in South Wales was to all intents and purposes extinct with the worker owned Tower Colliery in Hirwaun representing the last working deep coal mine in South Wales. The direct effects of such closures were further amplified by what economists describe as the negative economic multiplier effect, that is the knock on effect which the closure of an industry has upon the local economic structure. The closure of Taff Merthyr colliery alone caused 485 direct job losses, but the multiplier effect was estimated to have produced a further 730-1100 job losses in the Merthyr and Rhymney travel to work areas (Mid Glamorgan Update Winter 1993).

However, although the old industrial forms have declined and/or
disappeared new employment has been generated through an expanding service sector, and inward investment in manufacturing and service sector industries. Indeed Wales has succeeded in attracting a larger proportion of inward investment than any region in England or Scotland (Fevre 1999). In contrast to the wider UK economy, the share of manufacturing output in the Welsh economy actually increased over the course of the 1980s, largely as a result of inward investment (Morgan & Price 1992, Fevre 1999).

However, these new patterns of capital flows into South Wales bring their own potential problems and appear to offer at best only a partial solution to the problems generated by the decline of the old industrial base. Unlike the old industrial base which was inextricably linked to the regional economy, inwardly investing firms tend to have a low positive economic multiplier effect (Turok 1993, Roberts 1994). Moreover despite much of the new industry being in sectors where pay and skill levels are normally high, it has predominantly been the low paid and low skilled assembly line operations which have been located in Wales, whilst more prestigious, highly skilled and well paid functions continue to be located elsewhere. The wage levels in inwardly investing firms are typically around half that of a coal miner or a steel worker, whilst average incomes in Wales have declined relative to other parts of the U.K. (Drinkwater 1997). There are of course exceptions which defy the wider trend towards the emergence of a branch plant economy in South Wales. Morgan & Price (1992:6) cite the example of Pirelli in Aberdare, “the flagship of the companies cable operation”, but admit that “the likes of Pirelli are few and far between”.


This new trend in the South Wales economy brings with it new forms of vulnerability for the labour force. In common with other old industrial areas of Britain, the particularly pronounced effects of economic restructuring and recession in South Wales during the 1980s, were blamed on the region's over reliance upon a narrow economic base (i.e. coal and steel production). Whilst inward investment has succeeded in generating a more sectorally diversified economy, it is widely acknowledged that this investment has been attracted by the availability of a large pool of cheap labour and government grants. It would therefore seem likely that if either of these conditions change that these investment flows will be reversed. In addition to being generally low paid and low skilled much of the new investment has been in highly mobile, and hence easily disposable, forms of commercial activity (e.g. call centres). Unlike the previous mainstays of South Wales economic base which were inevitably reliant upon the local availability of raw materials, the new forms of investment have relatively weak attachments to the region, and therefore appear more susceptible to the changing conditions, demands and pressures of the global economy. Meanwhile global pressures continue to undermine those remnants of the traditional economic base which on the face of it successfully restructured during the 1980s. For example following restructuring and privatisation during the 1980s the Welsh steel industry managed to secure huge increases in efficiency and productivity levels. As late as 1999 Fevre (1999) held up the steel industry as "a rare example of high levels of investment" and as providing a quality of employment lacking in the Welsh economy. Yet by 2001, Corus (the former British Steel) announced over 3000 redundancies in Wales alone, claiming that it was unable to compete in global markets due to a high pound and a global over capacity in steel
In addition to the considerations described above one of the key problems of inward investment into South Wales, has been in the spatially concentrated form it was taken. Inward investment has largely occurred around a relatively narrow "M4 corridor" on the southern coastal plain, and not in the Valley districts to the north where new employment is most needed following the demise of the coal industry (Blackaby et al. 1996). Consequently, there is evidence of a north-south divide within the South Wales regional economy, in terms of employment and unemployment (Morris & Wilkinson 1996, Adamson 1995, Jones 1995) and also, correspondingly, in terms of average income levels (Mid Glamorgan Update summer 1994). There are further layers of complexity in patterns of socio-economic inequality evident at more micro-spatial scales, where it has increasingly been argued that the true extent of inequality is made evident. Even at the time that commentators noted the (re)emergence of a regional North South divide within Britain there was awareness that this formed only one dimension of the complex geography of poverty, social exclusion and inequality which was emerging, and that important sub-regional patterns of differentiation existed. Thus in the North East of England "the land of motorised golf trolleys and timeshares in the Algarve" (Wilsher & Cassidy 1987:25 cited in Lewis & Townsend 1989:3) could be found immediately adjacent to areas of economic devastation. Similarly, London was home to the most poignant manifestations of increasing inequality, whether in the ostentatiously wealthy "yuppies", or in the rapid increase of ostentatiously destitute young people sleeping rough on the capital's streets. It is at these micro-spatial scales that increases in inequality
are most evident, a trend which reflects the fact that inequality has increased not just between the polarities of the socio-economic spectrum but within particular economic groups (e.g. in the polarisation between work rich and work poor households) (Barclay & Hills 1995). The complex and subtly differentiated micro-spatial patterns of inequality which emerged from this trend were not only repeated across Britain's urban places seemingly regardless of the positioning of a particular urban place in relation to global capital flows, but in urban places across the globe.

In the South Wales Valleys economic restructuring has had the effect of rupturing, the shared experience of work and leisure, widely held as the basis of the cultural solidarity evident in what was a more or less homogenously working class social structure. Consequently similar forms of inequality, division and polarization have emerged in the Valleys as have occurred elsewhere in the U.K.. Adamson (1988,1995) argues that three socially, economically and residentially distinct class fractions have emerged from this process: a relatively affluent New Working Class who have been the principal beneficiaries of post-war diversification and tertiarisation in the Welsh economy; an increasingly ageing Traditional Working Class, primarily located in the terraced housing of the valley floor and whose social, cultural, economic and political association with the traditional economic base is reflected in high rates of male unemployment and permanent sickness; and a Marginalized Working Class, primarily located in residualised and often stigmatised local authority estates, and who are characterised by their relatively young population structure and extremely high levels of poverty, deprivation and exclusion (4).
This process of fragmentation and residential segregation was clearly evident in the findings of a socio-economic mapping project conducted by the University of Glamorgan's Regional Research Programme in the mid 1990s (Adamson & Jones 1996, Adamson 1995, Jones 1995). The project utilised data from the 1991 census to perform a multi-layered spatial analysis of socio-economic change in the South Wales region generally, but focused particularly upon what was then the Mid Glamorgan Valleys (5), examining how this area related to the rest of Wales and most particularly the changes which were occurring within Mid Glamorgan at micro-spatial scales.

Although the census is the only large scale official dataset upon which this sort of multi-layered spatial analysis can be performed, the range of suitable deprivation indicators is extremely limited. This is especially the case at micro-spatial scales (i.e. electoral ward and enumeration district) where only the Small Area Statistics are available rather than the more comprehensive Local Base Statistics (6). Moreover some traditional indicators included within the census (e.g. possession of an indoor toilet) are an increasingly inappropriate means of representing contemporary forms of disadvantage. The census is therefore poorly suited to the detailed and exhaustive exploration of the multiple dimensions of deprivation, but is capable of mapping the spatial incidence of deprivation through the use of a much more limited range of key indicators, (in this case male unemployment, lone parenthood and the proportion of households which did not own a car (7)).
The North-South divide in the socio-economic structure of South Wales was evident also in the internal structure of Mid Glamorgan where the southernmost districts of Taff Ely and Ogwr had lower levels of male unemployment and lone parenthood, and higher rates of car ownership than the valley districts of Merthyr Tydfil, Rhymney, Cynon and Rhondda. At this scale socio-spatial inequality can be best described in terms of a gradation of physical proximity and isolation to new patterns of employment. It is not just the case for example that unemployment levels are higher in the northern valley districts, but they are at their highest in the upper reaches of the valleys and in adjoining tributary valleys such as Rhondda Fach (Adamson & Jones 1996).

However at the smaller spatial scale of electoral ward (of which there were 120 in Mid Glamorgan) a contradictory trend emerged in which deprivation was concentrated in mainly in those wards which contained a large proportion of local authority housing, more or less regardless of their location within the wider regional system. Thus whilst the district of Taff Ely had the second lowest rate of male unemployment in Mid Glamorgan, it also contained the ward of Ilan which had the highest rate of male unemployment in Mid Glamorgan. This trend was even more apparent in an analysis of Enumeration Districts (EDs) which constituted the smallest spatial scale at which data from the 1991 census was released (8). At this scale it was possible to isolate some of the larger local authority estates and compare their socio-economic structure with that of other EDs in the same electoral ward. Table 1 shows the differences which exist between the incidence of key deprivation indicators in the
Penrhys estate and the aggregated totals for other EDs in the electoral ward of Tylorstown, and those which exist between "the Site" and the remainder of the ward in which it is located (this ward has been called Ward A here in order to preserve "the Site's" anonymity).

Table 2.1: Incidence Of Key Deprivation Indicators In Penrhys, "The Site", And The Remainder Of Their Constituent Wards. (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deprivation Indicators</th>
<th>Penrhys</th>
<th>Rest Of Tylorstown</th>
<th>&quot;The Site&quot;</th>
<th>Rest Of Ward A</th>
<th>Wales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Unemployment *</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Youth Unemployment * (16-24 age group)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Parent Families **</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households With No Car</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OPCS 1991 census 100% Small Area Statistics.
* Measured as a percentage of the economically active population.
** Measured as a percentage of all families with dependent children.

In both "the Site" and Penrhys the incidence of male unemployment and lone parenthood are broadly speaking three times higher than they are in the rest of the ward in which they are situated, whilst the proportion of households with no cars is roughly 50% higher. These differentials remain constant despite the differences in the levels of deprivation in the two estates (e.g. in Penrhys nearly two thirds of the economically active male population was classed as unemployed at the time of the 1991 census, compared to just under half in "the Site") (9). Moreover the structure of deprivation which existed within Penrhys and "the Site" is clearly different from not only local but national trends. Thus whilst nationally and locally male youth unemployment (i.e. in the 16-24 year old age group) was considerably higher than overall male unemployment, in Penrhys male youth unemployment was six percentage points lower.
than overall male unemployment whilst in “the Site” it was only five percentage points higher than overall male unemployment.

Although at the time of writing the final draft of this chapter the 1991 census is ten years old, there is little to indicate any fundamental change in the socio-spatial structures identified in this analysis. The pattern of dislocation between the fortunes of local authority estates and the wider systems in which they are located also appears in an analysis of the Department Of Social Security’s caseload count between 1997-1998 (10). In Wales as a whole 71% of households in Local Authority accommodation were claiming means tested benefits in 1997/1998 compared to 23% of the general population. Whereas the proportion of the general population claiming means tested state benefits was subject to considerable variation between Unitary Authorities (ranging from 33% in Merthyr Tydfil to 14% in Monmouthshire and 15% in Powys), this was less evident amongst Local Authority households (ranging from 80% in Caerphilly, 79% in Rhondda Cynon Taff and Merthyr Tydfil to 56% in Powys). Moreover in every Unitary Authority in Wales over half of households in Local Authority accommodation were claiming means tested benefits, a figure which rose to over three quarters in the three Unitary Authorities (Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, and Rhondda Cynon Taff) which were previously classified as Mid Glamorgan.
Table 2.2: Percentage Of Households In Receipt Of Means Tested Benefits In Local Authority Households And Amongst The General Population In Four Welsh Unitary Authorities (1997-1998) (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unitary Authority</th>
<th>Proportion Of Local Authority Households Claiming Means Tested Benefits (%)</th>
<th>Proportion Of All Households Claiming Means Tested Benefits (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merthyr Tydfil</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhondda Cynon Taff</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caerphilly</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powys</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Conceptualising The Role Of Place And The Local In Contemporary Globalization

The central concern of this chapter has been with the complex and multi-dimensional nature of the geographies of inequality which have emerged as a result of contemporary processes of globalization. This social and spatial complexity directly contradicts the ways in which globalization has traditionally been regarded as exerting a homogenising effect in which local differences are increasingly eradicated. There are certainly almost infinitely wide ranging examples in contemporary societies, whether it is in the emergence of English as a global language of commerce (Spybey 1996), or global brands of consumer product and consumption patterns (e.g. Coca Cola, Levis jeans). This trend and assumption of increasing homogenisation was entwined with the belief in inevitable evolutionary human progress which lay at the heart of modern era and formed a key assumption of modern social theory. Thus in the U.K. during the Keynesian and Fordist post war period, increased political centralisation, coupled with attempts to redistribute wealth through welfare and regional policy, and the new cultural dominance created by London centred radio and television programming all contributed to a trend of
increasing regional convergence (Cooke 1990).

In this context concern with local difference and uniqueness has tended to have been regarded as more suited to the previous pre-modern era where the material basis of life was undeniably far more localised (Jonas 1988). A concern with local uniqueness was not only viewed as irrelevant, obsolete or superficial to the modern era - "a misguided and misleading exercise" (Harloe, Pickvance & Urry 1990:187) - but as inherently reactionary, anti-progressive and potentially dangerous. Robertson (1992) asserts that a constant accompaniment to globalization since its nineteenth and twentieth century “take-off” period, has been a rise in “wilful nostalgia”, whereby nations rediscover and reconstitute key elements of their “past”, in the construction of a “national myth” (Robertson 1992: 155). In their most extreme forms these trends were manifested in the extreme nationalisms which emerged in Germany and Japan prior to and during the Second World War.

Thus, within much modern social theory, there is a view that a concern with local uniqueness brings with it inherent dangers of the development of potentially dangerous forms of reactionary political activity, and indeed has been implicated in what are arguably the most horrific acts of the twentieth century (i.e. the holocaust). In this framework the only valid context for the study of localities, was on a case study basis whose primary focus lay in the identification of empirical similarities, from which generalisations could be constructed about wider global processes. Through the identification of empirical similarities it was hoped that the general or universal
principles believed to be the primary determinants in shaping socio-economic structures would be revealed.

However although contemporary processes of polarisation and fragmentation do ostensibly challenge modernist notions of increasing homogenisation, this challenge is by no means as clear cut as it might at first appear. Paradoxically the localised patterns of polarisation associated with increases in socio-economic inequality can also be regarded as part of a trend towards global homogenisation. This is certainly evident in the dual city thesis which emerged from the New Urban Sociology of the 1970s as a means of conceptualising the increasing polarising effects which processes of economic restructuring and globalization have upon individual urban places (Dangschat & Fasenfast 1995). The dual city thesis basically contends that the more a city reflects the logic of free market economics the more its social and spatial structures become polarised in terms of relative advantage and disadvantage, effectively creating two distinct urban realities. This model therefore contains recognition of the importance of socio-spatial difference at local scales, but is ultimately still situated within a modernist framework which is concerned with the search for universal trends. Essentially the dual city thesis is concerned with localized processes of polarisation as they are replicated and reproduced on a globalized basis. Thus Dangschat & Fasenfast (1995) argue that: "in an ever more globalized economy each of the major cities acts in increasingly similar manners, competing in essentially identical arenas. As the prostitution of the city through the form of de-regulation and flexibilisation is more and more extensive there is an increasing likelihood of some form of economic revitalisation as a result. But the more successfully
a city has restructured in economic terms, the more polarised the urban society becomes’’ (Dangschat & Fasenfast 1995:55). Byrne (1999) shares this view arguing that differences in the extent of polarisation merely reflect differences in the extent to which different cities have been subjected to post-industrial capitalism: “The evidence is now overwhelming. It does not show that all post-industrial cities are polarised. It shows that they are polarizing and that those which are fully subject to liberalizing post-industrial capitalism are polarized” (Byrne 1999:113).

As has been seen there is considerable empirical support for these arguments, particularly when empirical analysis takes place at the micro-spatial scales at which polarization is made most evident. The cheek by jowl gentrification and residualisation in Britain’s major cities shares key similarities with the patterns of residential segregation in the South Wales Valleys, where the impoverished communities of Marginalised Working Class are often quite literally situated a ‘stone’s throw’ away from the relatively affluent communities of the New Working Class. However, the differences in wealth and the multiple forms of advantage which separate these communities are not nearly so great as those which exist in inner city London. The New Working Class’s grip upon relative advantage is invariably more precarious and fluid than that of the “super rich” in the (effectively) gated and gentrified enclaves of inner city London. Moreover, whilst the causation of these spatial patterns of inequality is inextricably entwined with processes of economic restructuring and decline in the South Wales Valleys, it also owes much to the more mundane reality of a lack of availability of land for new residential development in the cramped valley floors and lower valley sides.
Such specificities cannot simply be discounted as contingent or superficial detail, but have played key causal roles in the cultural, social, economic and political development of the South Wales Valleys. In their early development influential figures claimed that the geographical isolation of the Valleys and the distinctive ribbon like development of its urban form, created an insularity within its social structures which was in turn related to labour militancy and industrial unrest in the coal fields (May 1996). In the contemporary setting this continuing remoteness (despite processes of time-space compression) means that the Valleys have not experienced the same inflows of private capital (often aided by urban regeneration policy), which have gentrified parts of Cardiff Bay and the London Docklands.

More fundamentally, specific features of the historical development of the Valleys social and economic structures appear integral to the severity of the effects of recent waves of economic restructuring. This is not just in the sense of the narrow industrial base which evolved in the area, but in the solidaristic socio-cultural formations which grew around the coal mining industry in particular, and from which a particular tradition of radical left wing politics emerged. The South Wales coal fields were for example the primary source of recruitment for the Welsh contingent of the International Brigade during the Spanish Civil War (Francis 1984). The impact of ideas and institutions emerging from this political tradition has been felt at far wider scales than the Valleys themselves. For example, the Valleys produced such key political figures as Aneuran Bevan, who drew heavily upon his background in the Valleys in formulating the
underlying principles and constructing key institutions of the post war welfare state.

However, these same political traditions placed the South Wales Valleys in an improprious position during the political hegemony of the right wing conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s. This was particularly the case during the early to mid 1980s when the underlying principles of the new regime of statutory regulation and capitalist accumulation were arguably most contested and opposed. Areas like the South Wales Valleys with their tradition of radical left wing politics and their highly unionised and often militant labour force represented a key source of practical, ideological and symbolic opposition to the conservative governments of the 1980s, a fact which was manifestly evident during the 1984-1985 miners strike. The planned programme of pit closures which precipitated the miners' strike was couched within an ideological framework of neo-liberal economics in which it was argued that the nationalised coal industry had been allowed to become unproductive, inefficient and unprofitable. This was in turn portrayed as an inevitable consequence of its insulation from the rigours of the free market, and as an illustration of the perils of state interference in the market place more generally. The economic reality of the coal industry was considerably more complex than this formulation allowed for. Whilst there was undeniable contraction in many of the coal industries traditional markets, the spectacular success of the worker owned Tower Colliery during the 1990s, apparently gives weight to the pre-closure claims that productivity and profitability figures were subject to deliberate downward manipulation (Thomas 1991). It therefore appears likely that as in the wider programme of privatisations (Dobek 1993, Hutton 1995), the programme of pit closures which
precipitated the miners' strike and which ultimately prepared the way for the de-nationalisation of the coal industry, was motivated as much by goals of maintaining political hegemony as those of economic efficiency and productivity. In destroying the power base of what was arguably the most powerful and influential component of the trade union movement, the government was able to curtail the power of organised labour, something which was explicitly seen as an essential requirement of labour flexibility and to which end a raft of new legislation was introduced during the 1980s (Employment Department 1991) (11).

It therefore appears to be the case that certain unique and locally specific characteristics of the historical development and contemporary form of the South Wales Valleys have played key causal roles in processes occurring not just within the valleys themselves but at much wider spatial scales. This interactivity between local and wider processes has also been noted by analysts such as Cooke (1990) who has argued that local agency is of fundamental importance in either maximising benefits of a localities positioning in relation to new capital flows, or in seeking to curtail the worst effects of capital disinvestment. Similarly despite the centralising tendencies of the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s, there were frequently considerable gaps between central intentions and local outcomes as local political elites mediated and manipulated centrally conceived policy in ways which suited their own political agendas and ideologies (Boyne 1993). More fundamentally the failure to take account of or attach importance to local specificity has been identified as a key factor in the failure of successive urban regeneration policies. Using the Moss Side area of Manchester as an
example Fraser (1996) argues that its construction as an icon of ‘dangerous Britain’ has led to forms of analysis (and policy) which have effectively dislocated Moss Side from the urban system it is located within and in doing so hampered the development of effective urban policy: “the prolonged reluctance to provide the means by which the area could be reconnected up with the rest of the city by addressing the particularities of its social and spatial positioning have further entrenched its status as decidedly ‘Other’” (Fraser 1996:59).

Thus rather than being simply characterised by an ongoing process of homogenisation the extensive and heightened nature of contemporary globalization has also been entwined not only in the continuation of local difference, but in certain instances (e.g. the fragmentation and polarisation of the urban form) in the exacerbation of local differences. More fundamentally conceptualising the dynamics of the interactions between local and wider spatial scales appears to require recognition of a level of causality to particular socio-spatial structures and forms of local specificity, which is lacking in modern social theory. To an extent this recognition is evident within the wide ranging and substantial critique of modern social theory embodied within a diverse, “often mutually inconsistent and internally contradictory” (Callinicos1989:2), body of “post-modern” thought which challenges, undermines and denies many of the most basic and fundamental assumptions of modernity.

In part this development can be traced to the inadequacy of these assumption in the conditions which existed and the processes which were occurring
during the late twentieth century. That in other words societies had evolved to the point where they had now entered into a new era of post-modernity where assumptions, principles epistemologies of modernity no longer held the same salience. Although these arguments are most frequently propounded in the field of culture they are also applicable to the sorts of socio-economic change and trends which emerged in the late twentieth century. For example the apparently structural increases in inequality, poverty and exclusion, apparently make the modernist belief in inevitable if faltering progress increasingly difficult to justify. However, the post-modern critique was not restricted to a critical questioning of modernity's validity within contemporary settings, but extended also to the critical analysis of its interpretation of historical processes. Best (1994:40) distinguishes between "a sociology of post-modernity" (i.e. of the contemporary era) and "a post-modern sociology" which employs post-modern concepts and perspectives in an analysis of modern society. For example rather than viewing the development of modern institutions such as the penal system as being progressive in the modernist sense Foucault (1977) argued that they actually represented greater refinement in the techniques of domination and subordination, and therefore more sophisticated means of maintaining and exerting power. A similar form of analysis might be applied to the development of the post war welfare state which in seeking to resolve the crises of 1930s laissez faire capitalism by presenting a more moderate and acceptable face of capitalism, may have ultimately acted to preserve and reinforce capitalist power relationships. However, it is more clearly applicable to the workings and trajectories of the contemporary welfare regime which as is argued in Chapter 3 is increasingly geared towards the use of welfare provision as a means of exerting control over benefit claimants' behaviour, most
especially their labour market behaviour.

A distinguishing and unifying characteristic of post-modern analyses has been the recognition of social heterogeneity and a related concern with giving “voice” to the myriad of perspectives obscured, relegated and hidden in modernity’s search for mono-causal, universal laws or “grand narratives”. Thus Laclau & Mouffe (1985) criticise orthodox Marxism for the way in which “diverse subject positions are reduced to manifestations of a single position; the plurality of differences is either reduced or rejected as contingent.” (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 21-22). As part of post-modernity’s concern with giving voice to “narratives” excluded by modernist thought as epiphenomena, marginal, superficial detail, or belonging to the category of “other”, post-modern theories have frequently given prominence to local domains of thought and action. For example Foucault vindicated local forms of discourse as a means of combating what he regarded as the coercive effects of centralising powers and globalizing discourses (Best 1994). Thus in many ways the post-modern critique of modernity emphasises recognition of the local empirical specificities described in earlier sections of this chapter, and indeed the ascension of these differences over generality. In this respect post-modern analyses appears to offer greater potential for explaining the dynamics of Western societies whose characteristic complex plurality, cannot be explained through grand universalising narratives, or totalising and mono-causal theories.

However the debunking of modernity has in some instances prompted theoretical development which have cast doubt upon the possibility of attaining any
absolute knowledge, and has led some to proclaim the death of social theory (Baudrillard 1983). The post-modern critique has therefore come to an impasse whereby its original aims of promoting greater egalitarianism through giving recognition and voice to various categories of marginalized “other”, has generated theoretical perspectives which in their logical extreme claim “the end of all crises, the end of all narratives and revolutionary transformation” (Montag 1988: 102). In doing so post-modernity has encountered similar theoretical pitfalls as modernity, constructing theoretical edifices which are themselves inevitably reductionist, and constructed its own totalising narratives (Montag 1988: 92). Indeed ironically Foucault’s criticisms of modernity’s elite discourses are echoed in Philo & Miller’s (2001) allegations that post modern analyses have become increasingly over abstracted, impenetrable and inaccessible, but above all “lost in language games in which the real is just another discourse” (Philo & Miller 2001: 75).

Consequently considerable attention has been focused upon developing new ways of conceptualising space and locality within a framework of reformed modernity which is capable of accommodating the useful insights provided by post modernity (namely recognition of highly complex and plural social realities), but avoids its more nihilistic implications (i.e. the impossibility of attaining objective knowledge, and therefore, by implication, of securing progressive social change). A key component of this trend has been the development of theoretical frameworks which have insisted not only on the significance of spatial difference and local specificity, but have accorded a level of causation to local differences and specificities which has hitherto been lacking. A key figure in these developments has been Doreen Massey whose early collaborative
work (Massey & Catalano 1978, Massey & Meegan 1982) introduces the concept of a "geological metaphor" as a means of explaining continually uneven processes of capitalist economic development.

Here uneven development is explained through successive rounds of investment and disinvestment, each responding to the competitive necessity of capitalism which exist at particular historical junctures, and with each 'deposit' influencing the nature of subsequent layers. For example, although during the 1970s and 1980s the domestic economy floundered beneath successive bouts of recession and waves of restructuring, British capital continued to remain profitable through patterns of overseas investment (5) which reflected Britain's former imperial role (Massey 1986). Of more direct relevance to the concerns of this thesis, viewed through the "geological metaphor" the historical development of industry in the U.K. created a spatial division of labour based upon patterns of regional sectoral specialisation. During the latter stages of globalization this industrial legacy has not only been reflected but expanded upon as the combination of decline in the old industrial base and new flows of inward investment have meant that Britain's old industrial areas have increasingly evolved into branch plant economies. Moreover new patterns of inward investment and new areas of economic growth have not only occurred in different economic sectors, but have frequently exploited previously untapped pools of 'green' labour. Thus in former heavy industrial areas such as South Wales the decline of the old male dominated industrial base and the sectoral shift towards low paid employment in light manufacturing and service industries has coincided with considerable increases in women's economic participation (Rees &
Fielder 1992). The 'geological metaphor' therefore contains a minimal but nonetheless important element of causality in the specificities of local spatial structures whereby the unique deposits and residues of each historical layer of industry formation and related social, cultural and political configurations influence the nature of the processes of the next era.

In later work emerging as a result of her participation on the ESRC funded Changing Urban And Regional Systems (CURS) initiative at Lancaster University, Massey takes a broader and more abstract approach in further developing ideas of local specificity and causality within an integrated theoretical framework. In doing this Massey (1994) draws upon insights from wider theoretical debates and developments. Thus modernist criticisms that place bound identities are inevitably reactionary and anti-progressive are countered by drawing upon post-modern arguments about the plural and fluid nature of identities. However, Massey ultimately rejects the ways in which both modern and post-modern frameworks treat space as existing within a dichotomous relationship with time, in which space is viewed as the subordinate partner. Although most evident in classical modernity's view of space as the passive setting for more dynamic temporal processes, Massey argues that whilst post-modern approaches view space in more dynamic terms it is still conceived within a dichotomous relationship in which space is less dynamic than time. Instead, drawing upon arguments developed by Marxist geographers during the 1970s and 1980s that space is socially constructed, and feminist critiques of simplistic either/or dichotomies, Massey argues for a conceptualisation of space and time in which both exist within an inextricably woven and
mutually influential relationship. Central to this argument is recognition not just of the causality of spatial structures in social relationships, but of an element of chaos and upheaval in spatial systems which it is argued is a pre-requisite of radical social change. Although Massey concedes that the spatial is pre-disposed to order the spatial juxtaposition of phenomena which are the product of separate determinations can produce unintended and unexpected outcomes. In turn Massey argues that this intrinsic element of chaos in spatial systems can produce the contingencies necessary for the emergence of political thought and action which challenge the dominant mode of capitalism.

Following on from this an equally interactive and dynamic model is proposed for the relationships between localities and wider spatial systems, a conceptualisation of "place and culture [which] is intended to enable both the recognition of difference (between places and cultures) and of the fact that such differences are continually reproduced, made anew in ever changing forms, and at the same time the recognition of our essential interconnectedness" (Massey & Jess 1995:235). Within such a framework individual localities are conceptualised as unique points of interaction in complex webs of inter-dependent social relations (Massey 1994). Although these interactions take place within an overarching relationship of domination and subordination, it is not just the case that globalized processes simply pass through a series of stages (e.g. national, regional) before impacting upon the local. Rather the impact of global processes upon individual localities is the product of the interaction of these processes with specific and unique local characteristics.
Conclusion.

As was stated in the introduction the principal function of this chapter is to provide an empirical and theoretical basis for the micro-spatial and micro social focus adopted in the wider body of this thesis. Clearly in an era when globalized processes have unprecedented influence upon localities across the globe such a focus needs careful consideration and justification. Empirical justification is provided in relatively straightforward terms by what Spybey (1996: 112-116) describes as the paradox of “globalization and localization” which is particularly evident in the localised patterns of inequality and polarisation which have resulted from global economic restructuring. Although all empirical mapping exercises are inevitably undermined by their intrinsic need for boundaries whose very construction denies the essential fluidity of space, these localised patterns of polarisation are clearly visible in the analysis of data from the 1991 census. Indeed the fact that it is made available at a variety of spatial scales from the local to the national means that the census is capable of illustrating far greater complexity in the spatial structuring of inequality than is evident in concepts such as the dual city or the North-South divide. Thus whilst the empirical justification for a micro-spatial focus is reasonably straightforward, developing a theoretical framework which emphasises the local, but at the same time accommodates it within wider spatial systems is far more complicated. As has been seen it is a task which neither traditional modern or post modern social theory appears capable of adequately fulfilling.

Massey’s (1994) conception of space and locality provides a more
sophisticated analytical framework which appears capable of grasping the complexities and contradictions of social processes and their outcomes. This web like framework of overlapping and mutually interacting spatial relationships has an obvious role to play in analysing the complexly nested patterns of inequality described in earlier sections of this chapter, and in contextualising "the Site" within wider spatial systems. Equally Massey's insistence upon the importance of local specificity and causality, appears vital to understanding the sorts of localised social relationships, interactions and processes described in later fieldwork chapters. Moreover it is important to recognise that these concerns are not simply abstract philosophical arguments but have far more direct practical applications such as in the development of effective social policy. For example recognition of the importance of local specificity is fundamental to providing answers to such questions as - to take the subject of Chapter 7 - why attempts at community regeneration achieve considerably more success in some communities than in others?

Endnotes.
(1) The power and influence wielded by these organisations is much greater in developing countries reliant on trade with west and western aid packages, especially those laden with debts.

(2) An example of this is described in Chapter 5.

(3) The specific features of this new orthodoxy in welfare policy are dealt with in more detail in Chapter 3.

(4) In other formulations this group is commonly referred to as an underclass, a term which for reasons outlined in Chapter 3 is rejected in this thesis.

(5) The area which comprised Mid Glamorgan at the time of the 1991 census has since
been divided into separate Unitary Authorities. The area covered in this analysis is now referred to as Rhondda Cynon Taff.

(6) A more comprehensive range of data is made available in the Small Area Statistics 10% sample data, but there are obvious problems with the reliability of this data which result from the small sample size (around 15-20 households), and the deliberate manipulations and modifications which are made to this data in order to preserve anonymity. In the event this data proved unreliable. For example the 10% sample recorded a figure of 50% for lone parent families in the Gurnos estate, double the figure of 25% recorded in the 100% statistics.

(7) These indicators reflect key aspects of the forms of poverty which have emerged over the last two decades. Male unemployment has an obvious salience for the valleys given the shedding of employment in the previously male dominated industrial base. The growth in the number of lone parent is associated with a particular form of gendered poverty, whilst car ownership has particular significance for access to services and employment given the areas inaccessible nature and poor public transport infrastructure.

(8) Each ED typically contained between 150-250 households (Denham 1993), but the size of EDs was subject to considerable variation with 10% of all EDs in the UK containing less than 100 households (Cole 1993)

(9) At this scale it is impossible to tell whether or not these differences are real or a product of what Barr (1993) describes as the “modifiable areal unit problem” (i.e. the essentially arbitrary way in which ED boundaries are defined). Whereas Penrhys was comprised of five different EDs all of which included only different parts of the estate, the smaller size of “the Site” was evident is reflected in the fact that it is composed of
only two EDs, of which the boundaries of one also incorporate areas of traditional terraced housing and parts of a new private estate. Moreover this part of “the Site” includes “the blocks” an area which is perceived locally to be the most impoverished (and troublesome) part of the estate (see Chapter 5). This problem should be capable of being resolved in the 2001 census where data will be released at the smaller spatial scale of post code sector.

(10) These figures shown in are derived from dividing the total numbers of the caseload count in each Unitary Authority in Wales by the total number of local authority dwellings (for a measure of the proportion of Local Authority tenants claiming means tested benefits) and by the total number of chargeable dwellings (for a measure of the proportion of the general population claiming means tested benefits).

(11) The effects of this are stated in more detail in Chapter 3.

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OPCS - 1991 Census


Chapter 3: Statutory Structures Of Exclusion: Poverty, Social Exclusion And Social Security Reform

Introduction.

In Chapter 2 the focus is placed upon the role of globalizing economic processes and flows in structuring contemporary inequality, poverty and exclusion. In particular analysis is focused upon the socially and geographically uneven nature of the negative effects of economic restructuring and the implications of labour market flexibilisation. These economic processes represent one of the key underlying structural dynamics to the forms of poverty and social exclusion which are examined in later fieldwork chapters. However, as was also argued in Chapter 2 nation states are not merely passive recipients of homogenizing and disempowering global processes, as is exemplified by the particularly steep growth in inequality in the U.K. compared to other E.U. member states. This growth in inequality is not simply the product of Britain's positioning in relation to global economic forces, but is also underpinned by the particular direction which the development of social policy has taken in the U.K. Thus, in this chapter the focus shifts to the role of social policy in reinforcing, exacerbating and structuring inequality, poverty and social exclusion.

This is perhaps most obviously exemplified by the wide ranging reforms which have been made to the post war welfare state from the mid to late 1970s onwards and the overall trajectories of social security policy making which these reforms have established. Given that during the duration of the fieldwork around 83% of households in
"the Site" were dependent upon state benefits for all or part of their income (1) the significance of the social security system to this study of poverty and social exclusion cannot be over estimated. Consequently concentrating on the themes of policy making towards the unemployed, the under 25's and the issue of benefit fraud the following analysis focuses upon the nature and implications of the numerous 'reforms' which have been made to the social security system. However, before analysing these trends in social security policy they must first be placed within the wider policy making context initiated by the Thatcher governments of the 1980s.

The Role Of Wider Government Policy In Poverty And Social Exclusion.

The social security system does not exist in a policy vacuum, but is instead located within a multi-faceted and complex government policy making machine. Current directions in Social Security policy, are for example, inexorably entwined with labour market policy, taxation policy, the programme of privatisations initiated since 1979, and the comprehensive array of policies intended to promote a free market economy. In isolation and in combination, each of these aspects of policy have played key roles in fundamentally restructuring the relationships between capital and labour, and in sculpting the contemporary terrain of inequality, poverty and social exclusion in Britain.

During the 1980s and 1990s the taxation system was radically reconfigured with substantial cuts made to income tax coinciding with equally substantial increases in indirect taxation. Between 1979 and 1988 the top rate of income tax was halved, but Value Added Tax (VAT) doubled to 17.5% during roughly the same period,
and was extended across a wider range of goods and services, including domestic fuel. At the same time that these changes benefited the wealthy they worsened both the relative and absolute position of the poorest. By the mid 1990s a situation existed in which the only group to have had their tax burden reduced were those in the top quintile of income (Byrne 1997), whilst the poorest 20% of the population lost almost twice the proportion of their income to taxation, than the wealthiest 20% (Johnson 1994). There were even occasions when the implementation of policy packages presented as tax cuts actually amounted to tax increases for the poorest sections of the population. For example, in the 1991 budget a £140 reduction in the community charge was announced, but this was accompanied by an increase in V.A.T. For those liable to pay only the 20% flat rate community charge (e.g. benefit claimants and students) the net effect of these changes in taxation was reckoned to actually increase their overall taxation by £32 per year (Berthoud & Kempson 1992)(2).

The privatisation of state owned assets followed a similar trend of benefiting the relatively better off sections of the population, but in many instances worsening the condition of the poor, whether directly or indirectly. The sale of council houses through the “Right To Buy” policy, offered initial discounts of 35-50% from the market value and these discounts were later extended to 60% for houses and 70% for flats. However for those unable or unwilling to buy, rents were increased by double the Retail Price Index in the Thatcher administration’s first term of office, whilst expenditure on infrastructure, maintenance and service provision was reduced (Malpass 1992). Thus the beneficiaries of this policy, living in better quality accommodation in good locations, with higher and
more stable incomes (Forrest & Murie 1990), reaped substantial financial benefits. In contrast, those who did not benefit, found themselves paying more for accommodation which was declining in quality, in a housing sector which was becoming increasingly residualised, and increasingly stigmatised as “welfare housing”: “a symbol of failure in the consumer society - a tenure of the last resort” (Taylor 1996: 2). The “Right To Buy” was the pre-cursor of what subsequently became a programme of privatisations, which whilst, perhaps, not worsening the plight of the poorest so directly, certainly presented the more affluent with opportunities to realise immediate cash windfalls (the share price of British Telecom rose by 40% on its first day of trading alone (Dobek 1993).

Moreover, the sale of state owned industries was integral to a process in which the post war relationships between capital, labour and the state were being radically transformed. By undermining a highly unionised public sector, privatisation complemented a sustained drive to curb the powers of trade unions through a series of stringent new laws. Hutton (1995) describes the impact of successive trade union reforms as “cumulatively devastating” in its impact upon organised labour, resulting in a situation where by 1993: “Secondary picketing was banned. Ballots before strike action became mandatory. Individuals not wishing to abide by majority union decisions could violate them freely, without any fear of disciplinary action. Unions could be sued for damages if they went on strike without fulfilling the statutory procedures. Companies were under no obligation to recognise unions, and if they chose to undermine collective bargaining arrangements with individual contracts they were free to do so”(Hutton 1995:92). In an overarching structure of government described by Gamble (1988) as a partnership
between "the free economy and the strong state", the other main strand of economic policy lay in a series of measures designed to de-regulate labour markets with the intention of introducing greater labour flexibility and fostering an entrepreneurial culture driven by a free market economy.

Within this approach it was claimed that the growing national prosperity which these policies would help generate, would exert a "trickledown" effect which would improve the condition of the poor. Importantly however this improvement was based upon notions of absolute poverty. Government ministers rejected ideas of relative deprivation, arguing that those who propounded such ideas were "not concerned with the living standards of real people but with pursuing the political goal of equality......We reject their claims about poverty in the UK, and we do so knowing that their motive is not compassion for the less well off, it is an attempt to discredit our real economic achievement in protecting and improving the living standards of our people." (John Moore, then Social Security Secretary cited in Gordon & Pantazis 1997:5) Increasing inequality was therefore regarded to be of little consequence, and at times was even claimed to be indicative of the success of government economic policy (Hutton 1995, Gamble 1988). In this context it was the natural functioning of free market economics which provided the only route to long term and sustainable economic prosperity, a process which could only be frustrated and constrained by state intervention in the market place. A statement by Michael Portillo, captures this position (and its radicalism in relation to the post was Keynesian economics of demand management), in particularly succinct terms: "It has recently been argued that the free market is a jungle to
be tamed by governments. It is at least as plausible to argue that governments are a jungle
to be tamed by the free markets” (Portillo 1994).

Consequently a key component of economic policy consisted of the
identification and removal of labour market regulations which were believed to exert
dampening effects upon economic growth. Such forms of regulation not only represented
the illegitimate intrusion of the state into arenas which “are a matter for individual firms
and their employees”, but formed barriers to the free market, which undermined
economic growth: “Labour Market controls proliferate in the mistaken belief that these
controls create social harmony. In practise they have the opposite effect, by stifling
growth and job creation.......good wages and stable employment cannot be achieved by
administrative law. They depend crucially on entrepreneurship, productivity and
competitiveness. Over regulation has made the creation of new jobs expensive and risky”
(Clarke 1995). Likewise pressure to adopt new measures such as a minimum wage or
joining the European Union’s Social Chapter were vigorously opposed on grounds of
economic cost and ideological objections to state interference.

Free Market Economics And The Hazards of Social Security.

Representing as it did the cornerstone of post war attempts at intervention
in the market place, the social security system and the wider welfare state in which it was
located, occupied an especially improprietous position within this policy making
framework. Here it was argued that public expenditure on social security inevitably
hindered economic growth, and that if allowed to grow 'out of control' ultimately threatened economic collapse. Illustrating this argument in his 1993 "Mais Lecture" Peter Lilley, juxtaposed the polarities of the "fast growing free market economies of the Pacific Rim", with their minimal social security systems, to those of the former Soviet Union, where an "over-ambitious" system had "exposed them all to the collapse of the system itself". The financial/economic crises of social security is thus based on a simple equation in which economic growth varies inversely with social security spending. Given that in Britain "the DSS budget is huge, has grown rapidly and is set to continue outstripping national income in the future.....[thus].....there is no escaping the need for structural reform of the social security system" (Lilley 1993).

The validity of this crisis is however far from certain. Oppenheim (1994) rejects the "myth of 'unsustainable spending'", arguing that projections of rapid underlying growth were the product of successive economic recessions, flawed assumptions, inconsistent and inappropriate methods of calculation. Barr & Coulter (1990) confirm this, claiming that with a static number of claimants spending although rising in absolute terms would have fallen as a proportion of GDP between 1974-1988. Similarly Le Grand argues that whilst absolute spending on the welfare state as a whole increased during the 1970s and 1980s it did so slowly, and "remained a fairly constant proportion of general government expenditure (just over half), and as a proportion of GDP (just over a quarter)" (original brackets) (Le Grand 1990: 338-362). Thus whilst there is little disagreement about Lilley's claim that social security spending "is up two thirds in real terms since 1979", the ramifications of this do not necessarily equate with
the crisis of expenditure which formed a key element in the impetus for reform.

This relative stasis in patterns of social security spending has been interpreted by some as evidence of the resilience of welfare provision despite New Right antipathy and the radical rhetoric of government ministers (Page 1995). However as Page argues this position is equally flawed as it ignores real changes in the structure of social security provision, the ways in which expenditure may be redirected within the system, and the effects of interaction between different policy areas. The relationship between housing policy and housing benefit provision is a key example of this. Even Lilley (1993) acknowledges that the disproportionate increase in expenditure on housing benefit (which at this point had trebled since 1979) was largely a consequence of “the rise in rents in the local authority, housing association and private rented sectors” (Lilley 1993).

Elements of increased expenditure therefore occurred as a direct consequence of government policy in areas outside the social security system. Indeed despite increased expenditure Housing Benefit claimants were actually significantly worse off. Although claimants living in local authority accommodation still had their total rents met by housing benefit, their rents no longer included such items as water rates and domestic rates. Claimants living in privately rented accommodation fared worse. Their housing benefit award was no longer guaranteed to meet the full cost of their rent but was calculated through a system of “reference rents” which determined the maximum Housing Benefit award. Although reference rents were purported to represent the average local rent in a particular area from January 1996 local authorities no longer had
to demonstrate that cheaper accommodation was available in their area before setting the reference rent (Lowe 1997). In other instances increases in expenditure resulted from increased administration costs arising from policies which actually constituted direct cuts to social security provision. For example the replacement of Single Payments grants with Social Fund loans in 1987, involved a substantial increase in administration costs, which accounted for over 30% of a limited budget, and tied up 4.2% of departmental personnel in delivering a provision which constituted only 0.5% of the overall budget (Gilmour 1992).

However, despite the manifest exaggeration evident in claims of a crisis of public expenditure the demands placed on the social security system did increase considerably during the 1980s and 1990s. Economic restructuring and recession generated levels of unemployment not witnessed since the 1930s (3), whilst socio-demographic trends such as the growth in lone parent families and an ageing population, brought more claimants into the system. Government ministers’ explanations of this growth hinged upon two key claims. First that the growth in claimant numbers in key areas of the benefits system could be attributed to the defective and pathological behavioural and cultural norms of claimants themselves. The growth in unemployed claimants was for example routinely depicted as something which emerged from individual actions rather than a structural lack of demand within the economy (Mackay 1998). Interwoven with these types of explanations were claims that the social security system itself fostered the development of these behavioural and cultural norms. This was a system which, in the words of one News Of The World editorial, was “a charter for
scroungers” (28/09/97), or in the words of the American Underclass theorist Charles Murray, was “a system designed to be exploited” (Murray et. al. 1998). Such viewpoints are not merely restricted to right wing commentators but have become part of the accepted orthodoxy of social security provision. Thus the current Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair has consistently stated his intentions to introduce social security reforms which will put an end to the “something for nothing society” (Blair 1999).

This process of identifying behaviourally defective claimants was selective and reflected long established suspicions as to the deservingness of the able bodied poor. Thus although the growth in the numbers of long term sick was treated with a certain amount of suspicion, given that it occurred at a time when “the nation’s health is improving” (Lilley 1993), the unemployed and lone parent families formed the principal focus of this process. The misleadingly simplistic (given the restructuring of the taxation system) taxpayer:claimant dichotomy used in a purely financial equation of affordability, was reconstituted as a moral framework of virtue and vice within the socio-cultural crisis of social security. The taxpayer was discussed in terms in which they were imbued with intrinsic virtues of honesty, decency, hard work, and self reliance. The benefit claimant, or at least a discernible proportion of “undeserving” benefit claimants were presented as existing within a “culture of dependency” which espoused qualities which where the polar opposite of these.

Such ideas are far from alien in British social policy, being evident to an extent in the original establishment of the post war social security system, and highly
visible in the system it replaced (Novak 1997). In the 1980s and 1990s the immediate inspiration has been principally derived from American social policy and the ideas of right wing American intellectuals. Lawrence Mead’s (Mead 1986) ideas of a dependency culture generated and sustained by social security provision, were firmly embedded in the British social security policy making agenda by the mid 1980s (Deacon in Becker ed.1991). During the 1990s further impetus was given to behavioural explanations of poverty and disadvantage, when American sociologist Charles Murray transported his ideas of an urban underclass to this side of the Atlantic.

Murray views the social security system as being structured in such a way as to “seduce people into behaving in ways that seem sensible in the short term but are disastrous in the long term” (Murray et al. 1990: 71). Ultimately the impact of this was to undermine and corrupt core values of respectable working class culture, with regard to such issues as the work ethic and attitudes to parenthood, particularly the appropriate institutions of parenthood (i.e. marriage and the nuclear family). These core values had been penalised by the well meaning but “wrong headed” (Murray 1990:71) sentiment which had informed a mode of social security policy making regarded as rewarding undesirable forms of behaviour. According to Murray this had resulted in the emergence and increasing dominance of an underclass culture in many working class communities (or what Murray terms lower class neighbourhoods). This culture was defined by its inimical and oppositional relationship to the norms of respectable society, a culture which accepted wilful unemployment, lone parenthood (“illegitimacy”) and criminality, particularly violent criminality, as the norm. As paraphrased by Baggulley & Mann,
Murray's underclass was defined as a class of population comprised of "idle, thieving, bastards" (Bagguley & Mann 1992).

The threat posed by Murray's underclass was, however, far more fundamental than the immediate impact of its predatory and violent criminality, the financial burden it imposed on wider society, or indeed the blighted lives of those who having adopted the cultural and behavioural norms were engaged in their own and society's destruction. The fundamental threat of the underclass lay in the future potential of the underclass "disease" to grow to epidemic proportions. Murray introduced his first visit to Britain as "a visitor from a plague area come to see if the disease is spreading" (Murray et al. 1990), quickly concluding that whilst Britain's underclass was "still largely out of sight....it is growing rapidly" (Murray et al. 1990: 3-4). This diagnosis is re-iterated in even bleaker terms during a return visit in the mid 1990s where Murray contends that "we are not talking about a small underclass but a very large one", which if not addressed threatens the "survival of free institutions and a civil society" (Murray 1996: 117 & 127).

Murray's underclass has been widely refuted within British social science on the grounds that it was based largely on conjecture, that primary data was drawn from a flawed methodology, whilst secondary data was used both naively and misinterpreted, and that the concept itself was historically flawed, inadequately defined and theorised (Townsend 1993: 99-101, Morris 1993, Bagguley & Mann 1992, Mann 1994). In short it has been extensively refuted. Nonetheless, it has been an enormously influential concept to the extent that the underclass has penetrated popular vocabulary to an extent rare
amongst sociological terminology, (appearing in sources as diverse as broad sheet newspapers to mainstream pop songs), and precipitated what was arguably the major British sociological debate during the early to mid 1990s. Moreover this debate has focused exclusively on the sort of welfare defined model of the underclass, advocated by Murray, in contrast to earlier post war usage of the term in both Britain (e.g. Rex 1988) and America (e.g. Myrdal 1962) as a means of portraying the structural marginalisation and separation of ethnic minority communities.

This debate has an ambivalent relationship to the concerns of this thesis. Whilst complex and convoluted, generating a plethora of different positions, at times distinguished from one another by only the slightest nuances in detail, at others being as far removed from one another as possible, the debate has a shared focus central to the concerns of this thesis. With varying degrees of explicitness it is exclusively focused upon the economic position, attitudes, behaviour and cultural forms of a highly marginalised and disadvantaged, youthful section of the population (MacDonald 1997). Equally ideas of social exclusion and ideas of an urban underclass share common ground to the extent that both are concerned with "an underprivileged minority or minorities, who are not only materially but also in some way culturally and politically 'cut off' from what is referred to as 'mainstream society'" (Watt 1996: 2).

However, whilst dealing with what is essentially identical subject matter there are key differences which exist between these concepts and the styles of debate in which they are located. Social exclusion, and the concepts of poverty and relative
deprivation which it adds to, takes as its primary concern the conditions, implications and dynamics of severe disadvantage and marginalisation. Although similarly concerned with these issues the over-riding focus of the underclass debate resides in devising appropriate labels with which to classify this severely disadvantaged group, contesting different versions and definitions of the underclass, and testing these against established theories of social stratification and class formation. Much of the underclass debate is therefore conducted at a highly abstracted, theoretical and in some manifestations ideological level, in contrast to the more practical, “grass roots” and policy oriented applications of social exclusion. In doing so the underclass debate frequently becomes divorced from its own origins (i.e. the nature of poverty and benefit dependency) and the social reality it purports to represent. Moreover, in seeking to establish a more solid empirical basis and a more rigorous theorisation, against which various models of the underclass are to be tested, the underclass debate has tended to have lost sight of what are arguably its most important implications for contemporary society (and certainly the most important for the concerns of this chapter). That is the extent to which the social security policy making agenda (and in many instances social policy more generally) has, even when not explicitly referring to “the underclass”, been based upon assumptions of the defective and dangerous characterisation of behavioural and cultural forms contained within Murray's underclass.

Despite Murray's claims to have found himself in a position of “an authentic radical” (Murray 1990: 78) aligned to no particular political party, and able to offer no specific advice to policy makers, other than to “stop thinking as engineers”, the crisis of the underclass is ultimately a crisis of social control. The policy agenda it
underpins is therefore aligned to a well established trajectory in social security policy which, whether indirectly (e.g. through expanding means tested provision) or directly (i.e. through increasing the capacity for punishment and discipline) has sought to establish greater control over claimants lives as a condition of eligibility. Social security forms an arena where policy makers feel obliged to stress their “tough” credentials, whether through initiating a “short, sharp, shock to idlers” (Lilley cited in The Independent 13/11/92), “mak[ing] no apologies for our tough new welfare regime” (Darling 1999), or promising that “it really is the end of the something for nothing days” (Blair 1999).

The translation of these discourses into policy has set in motion an ongoing process of welfare reform (often referred to as a process of modernisation) which has witnessed the abandonment of some of the most basic precepts of the original post war social security system. Hidden beneath the relative continuity in patterns of aggregate expenditure, is a system which has been radically reconfigured to the extent that poverty and social exclusion, are in effect pre-requisites of benefit eligibility. Rates of basic entitlements have in many instances been reduced to dubious officially defined subsistence levels which make little pretence at providing levels of income which enable inclusion in the types of social and cultural activities which are routinely engaged in by wider society. The effect of benefit sanctions can reduce some claimants income to below even these minimal levels and in some instances entitlement can be withdrawn altogether. Such cuts to benefit incomes have obvious implications for social exclusion, in the sense that income levels obviously determine the extent to which claimants can participate in the social, cultural and even political activities accessible to the socially included.
However, the implications of benefit reform for social exclusion extend much deeper than this. In the current trajectory of social security policy, the lowering of benefit rates has occurred alongside restrictions on eligibility, and the intensification of regulation and control over claimants' lives. The net effect of reform has been to substantially denigrate the citizenship of benefit claimants, particularly for certain groups of claimants whose citizenship was already structurally precarious. The remainder of this chapter examines three key areas of social security policy making (unemployment, young people and benefit fraud) before examining how changes in these areas have affected changes in benefit claimants' citizenship which form a fundamental structural component of their social exclusion.

Social Security Reform And The Unemployed.

The unemployed were the principal, or at least most obvious, losers in the benefit reforms implemented during the 1980s. Indeed according to Barr & Coulter the position for other claimant groups had apparently not just kept pace, but improved "after adjusting for inflation, benefits per recipient rose for the elderly, for widows, for families and for the sick" (Barr & Coulter 1990:333). Yet, as they also note this does not necessarily mean that there was an overall improvement in the incomes of these claimant groups. As is argued earlier in this chapter increases in aggregate expenditure may well reflect changes made to the system (e.g. increased administration costs), whilst increases in individual benefits are offset by other aspects of social security reform (e.g. in changes to benefit supplements and passport benefits such as free school meals, or children's
clothing grants), or by other areas of government policy (e.g. by increases in indirect taxation).

Thus despite the apparently contrasting nature of policy towards unemployment benefits and the payment of in work benefits there is uncertainty about the net effects of these differences upon claimants incomes amongst both claimants and observers alike. Whilst benefit levels for the unemployed were falling and eligibility conditions were being tightened, the eligibility conditions of "in-work" benefits (Family Income Supplement and subsequently Family Credit) were broadened, and rates increased (Pierson 1994) (4). Yet despite these increases there is considerable uncertainty about whether or not the expansion of in-work benefits brought any real financial gains to those claimants able to access them (i.e. those with dependent children). Indeed Pantazis & Gordon (1997) found higher levels of poverty amongst this claimant group than they did amongst the unemployed (5). Evason & Woods (1995) describe a situation of "swings and roundabouts" in Family Credit, whereby increased gross income could end eligibility to passport benefits such as Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, free school meals and school clothing grants. Fear of being financially worse off has been established as a key barrier to taking up Family Credit (Millar, Cooke & McLaughlin 1989), as has the financial fears generated by the possibility of having to return to the social security system in the future, the complexity, delays and risks involved in making a new claim (Irwin & Morris 1993).

Whilst the effects of the totality of government policy upon the income
levels of other claimant groups was at best ambiguous, the process of reducing claimants' incomes by cutting benefit levels was far more explicit in the treatment of benefits for the unemployed. This process was, however, far from straightforward, being characterised by a multitude of incremental changes (Atkinson & Micklewright 1989 conservatively charted at least 17 significant changes between 1980-1988) the individual impact being minor, but whose collective impact was to engineer a creeping process of wholesale transformation. A process described by Pierson as “death by a thousand cuts” (Pierson 1994: 101). That this appeared as a key aim of government policy in its own right is evident in the lack of coherence in and the frequently tautological justifications which were made for these benefit cuts. Gilmour (1992) cites an early example of this when: “In 1980 [unemployment] benefit was raised by 5% less than inflation on the grounds that it was tax free. When, however, unemployment benefit became taxable in July 1981, that 5% was not restored”(Gilmour 1992: 120). This aspect of reform was equally evident in the introduction of the Job Seekers Allowance nearly two decades later. Alongside a host of sweeping measures with fundamental implications for the provision of benefits made to the unemployed, a Waiting Days Rule was introduced. This stipulated that new claimants had to wait three days before becoming eligible for Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), (with plans to extend this to seven days in 1999), on the basis that “many employers” made final payments to workers facing redundancy. However no attempt was made to quantify how many employees received these payments, and no provision was made for those that did not (Welfare Rights Bulletin 134/October 1996: 6-15).

Such direct cuts to benefits paid to the unemployed were important to the
extent that they contributed directly to their impoverishment, but the most fundamental implications of reforms made to these benefits stemmed from the changing nature of provision. Of particular significance in this respect is the virtual abandonment of social insurance based unemployment benefits, and their replacement with a system of means tested support. Between 1979 and 1995 the number of individuals claiming means tested out of work benefits (supplementary Benefit and its successor Income Support) doubled, standing at 9.8 million in 1995. Growth was even greater in means tested in work benefits (Family Income Supplement and subsequently Family Credit), increasing eightfold over the same period (from 81,000 families in 1979 to 648,500 in 1995 (Piachaud 1997:76). The increased emphasis upon means testing had the effect of pushing some claimants out of the system altogether until such time as they became poor enough to satisfy the means test. The introduction of the JSA alone ended entitlement to contributory benefits for an estimated 165,000 unemployed claimants, 70,000 of whom lost all entitlement (Barnes & Witcher 1995). For those who remained eligible for benefits the expansion of means testing meant a loss in income as these benefits were paid at significantly lower rates than the social insurance based benefits they were displacing. In 1996 the average weekly payment for unemployment benefit stood at £53.60 compared to a basic rate of Income Support of £47.90, falling to £37.90 for 18-24 year olds and £28.85 for those under 18 year olds who were eligible for Income Support (Department Of Social Security 1996).

Accompanying the shift to means tested provision was the introduction of an ever increasing series of measures and regulations through which the state sought to exert greater levels of control and coercion upon the labour market behaviour of the
unemployed. The introduction of the JSA in 1996, was a key event in this process, representing in many respects a final watershed in social security policy for the unemployed. Not only did the JSA signify the almost complete dismantlement of contributory benefits by “streamlining” contributory and means tested benefits into one benefit (6), but it firmly embedded the principle of benefit provision being conditional on what was regarded as appropriate labour market behaviour. Previous packages of reform had already increased financial sanctions levied on benefit rates as a punishment for “offences”. This was particularly evident in the case of those who were judged to be “voluntarily unemployed” whether through leaving employment of their own volition or being dismissed for misconduct. Successive packages of reform increased the severity of the sanctions which were imposed upon this group, with the 1986 Social Security Act extending the maximum time period for which sanctioned rates applied to Unemployment Benefit from 6 to 13 weeks, and the 1988 Social Security Act extending it to 26 weeks (Brown 1990). However, although subject to sanctioned rates of payment these claimants were not left financially destitute but were able to access means tested benefits for the period of time when they were disqualified from Unemployment Benefit.

This final safety net was abolished with the introduction of the JSA which not only extended the range of scenarios where an unemployed claimant could be categorised as voluntarily unemployed (e.g. by breaching their Job Seekers Agreement, or refusing to apply for a notified job vacancy) but now carried the ultimate sanction of withdrawing all support for up to 26 weeks, regardless of claimants means. For claimants sanctioned in this manner, and who have been refused/are awaiting adjudication of
discretionary hardship payments, there is no final statutory safety net. Although there is
at present no systematic research into the impact of this (7), cases documented by the
Child Poverty Action Group, show that where the state has withdrawn, family, friends
and charitable agencies such as the Salvation Army have stepped in to provide for basic
needs (e.g. distributing food parcels) (Welfare Rights Bulletin 138/June 1997).

At the same time that the JSA increased the capacity for the state to exert control through punishment, it further increased the state's capacity to force claimants into whatever employment is available, regardless of pay, conditions or suitability. Regulations stipulated that claimants could only restrict their job search to their usual occupation for a maximum of 13 weeks, and were only able to do this if their “advisor” deems them to have “a reasonable prospect of securing employment”. They must be available for work for at least 40 hours per week, and after six months of unemployment cannot refuse employment because the pay is too low, even if the level of pay is lower than their income on benefits. Eligibility for JSA is dependent upon the signing of a Job Seekers agreement, which details the steps which the claimant will take to secure employment (e.g. number of vacancies applied for per week). This “agreement” can be changed at any time by the “client advisor” on the proviso that the claimant signs the new agreement (8). The “client advisor” can also issue “directives” to the Job Seeker, instructing them to take “reasonable” steps to improve their employability. Potentially such directives are almost infinitely wide ranging, and include such items as modifying dress/appearance/behaviour, applying for a particular job vacancy, or agreeing to participate on a “workfare” style work experience, training or “re-motivation”
programme.

Thus the "intensification of industrial discipline" which Wikeley (1989) identified in social security reforms during the 1980s, was dramatically extended by the mid 1990s. The collective impact of these reforms has been to substantially redefine the relationship between the unemployed and the labour market. This has been an explicit element of policy, with for example, the JSA being introduced as "a further important step in the Government's wide ranging labour market reforms" (Welfare Rights Bulletin 123/December 1994). Social security reform has therefore constituted a key component of much broader series of measures designed to promote flexible labour markets and a flexible labour force. The pursuit of this goal has been conducted through a process where reform has acted to successively worsen the position of the unemployed, and hence increase the relative economic attractiveness of the labour market. For example Barr & Coulter (in Hills ed. 1990) argue that the underlying agenda of reforms made to unemployment benefits during the 1980s was that of reducing the replacement rate (the ratio of income when employed to net income in employment).

This approach, which is clearly based in an analysis where unemployment is regarded as a choice made by the unemployed rather than a predicament which is largely beyond their control, has been further expanded throughout the 1990s and appears to be central to a new political orthodoxy in social security policy making. Yet there is scant evidence that unemployment is in fact a product of the inflexibility of unemployed labour. For example research examining the impact of the
JSA conducted by Department of Social Security found little impact upon already high levels of flexibility where the only major stipulation made by unemployed respondents was that they were seeking only full time work (Department Of Social Security Research Report No. 99). Moreover there was "no clear indication that being flexible about the type of job that people were prepared to accept assisted them to rapidly return to work" (Department Of Social Security Research Report No. 111: iv). There was however some evidence to support Byrne's (1997) arguments that social security policy has acted to accentuate the wage depressing effects of a reserve army of labour, particularly amongst unemployed men. Although following the introduction of the JSA there was an increase of £7 (from £115 to £122) in the mean weekly take home wage of women’s first post-unemployment job, the corresponding rates for men dropped from £179 to £153, a decrease of 17% (Department Of Social Security Research Report No. 99). Moreover, there was an 8% increase in the number of respondents citing their economic status as being on a government scheme, disproportionately high numbers employed in temporary jobs (over 50% compared to 8% in the wider working population) and a 33% decrease in the numbers returning to JSA after a spell of employment, something which "may suggest that JSA acts as a deterrent to re-claiming" (Department Of Social Security Research Report No. 111: ii).

Social Security Reform and The Under 25s

The young unemployed have fared particularly badly in successive rounds of welfare reform, and are subject to a particularly stringent set of benefit regulations.
This was made possible partly through the inherent ambiguity in the social status of youth and also through the disruptive effects of mass youth unemployment upon traditional routes into adulthood. The net effect of these reforms has been to create a system of social security provision for the under 25’s which manages to combine minimal payments with enormous bureaucratic complexity. Far from being a source of support in times of hardship, the social security system is often a central feature in young people’s accounts of the problems they are experiencing. Frustrating encounters with a baffling, intractable and frequently nonsensical bureaucracy, appear as recurrent themes in these accounts as the following extract of an interview with a homeless young woman who was attempting to join a self build housing project for homeless young people illustrates: “All right, there’s some who sit on their arse doing nothing, but for those who are trying to do something they kick you in the teeth....I asked for a crisis loan because I’m homeless and they said ‘no’ because being homeless doesn’t count as a crisis. Nothing seems to be right for them.....I’d been signing on for six months so they put me on the New Deal. I joined [the self build housing scheme] and told the New Deal. They told me to fill in the forms but there was no point because I wouldn’t be on their books anymore [i.e. they would stop her benefit]. I was sitting on my arse and now I’ve found something I want to do and they tell you that you can’t do it .....I carried on anyway [as a volunteer] ..... I don’t care if I have no money. I want to be settled down and then find myself full-time work like .....They told me to find a full time job but if I lose this [the self build scheme] I won’t have anywhere to live......I broke down in the dole office......I’m trying to find somewhere to live.” (Hutson & Jones 1999). Although this young woman was eventually able to successfully negotiate her way through the maze of benefit regulations this was
only through the intervention of a professional intermediary employed on the self build scheme, a resource which the vast majority of young people simply do not have access to.

Policy towards this age group was based upon the assumption that if unable to achieve financial independence through employment, then young people aged under 25 would reside in the parental home. As such it was argued that this group did not require the same levels of support as claimants aged over 25, and that moreover to provide them with the same levels of support would encourage young people to leave home earlier than would otherwise be the case (Brown 1990). Consequently, from 1986 a system of age differentials was put into place in the payment of Income Support, whereby those aged under 25 had their benefit levels reduced to a level comparable with sanctioned rates (Brown 1990). Not only did this system of differentiation stay in place during the 1990s but it was actually extended to cover the payment of Housing Benefit. From 1996 Housing Benefit awards for the under 25s were restricted to a “Single Room Rent Allowance”, which as its name suggests restricts the maximum housing benefit award to an amount comparable to the rent for a single room in shared occupancy accommodation.

Although these policy developments were justified though arguments that to do otherwise would encourage young people to leave home early, and would thus encourage the further erosion of the nuclear family (9), such justifications were scarcely credible. Instead as with other areas of social security policy the underlying agenda again appeared to be determined by a desire to cut public expenditure on social security and the
related goal of changing the nature of provision. Effectively young people have found themselves pioneering the implementation of new styles and principles of welfare provision which subsequently become generalised throughout the system. The introduction of the Single Room Rent Allowance was an example of this, as whilst initially applying only to those aged under 25 it was originally intended to extend this rule to all single claimants aged under 65. Although these plans were later abandoned this was not the case in what is perhaps the key development in social security policy towards the unemployed, the introduction of American inspired “work fare” style policies in which benefit provision is conditional upon participation in various government schemes. Two years after the introduction of age differentials in the payment of unemployment benefits the 1988 Social Security Act effectively abolished unemployed 16 and 17 year olds automatic right to unemployment benefits, and replaced this with a system of Youth Training Schemes together with a guarantee of a training place for every unemployed 16 or 17 year old. The unpopularity of these schemes amongst unemployed 16 and 17 year olds has been widely documented in academic research (Jones 1999, Coffield et al 1986, Barke & Turnbull 1992, Craine 1997, Furlong 1992, Wilkinson 1996).

Key aspects of this unpopularity stem from perceptions of employers exploiting such schemes as a source of cheap labour, related concerns about poor quality training, and low rates of training allowance. Perhaps most fundamentally rather than acting as routes into employment, participation on government training schemes often serves only to disrupt, disguise and postpone underlying patterns of long term unemployment. Craine (1997) describes how young people in inner city Manchester have
dubbed their circulation between training schemes and unemployment as "the Black Magic Roundabout" and came to regard the local careers office as the location where: "illusions were peddled under the guise of careers guidance, or where (un)employment training schemes were offered on the back of youthful desires for proper jobs." (Craine 1997: 141). These factors are widely understood to be behind the emergence of a sizeable number of unemployed 16 and 17 year olds who have opted out of the benefits system altogether (Williamson 1997).

Despite the unpopularity of compulsory government training schemes this form of provision has become firmly embedded within the contemporary social security system. Indeed, as is discussed further in the final section of this chapter the use of this type of policy has been progressively expanded across a wider range of unemployed young people, to other groups of the unemployed (e.g. the long term unemployed), and latterly to groups such as lone parents, and the long term sick or disabled. However before this process (and its role in redefining the citizenship of benefit claimants) is explored further, it is first necessary to examine another crucial issue in social security provision. Underpinning the introduction and extension of increasingly coercive conditions of benefit eligibility have been a series of suspicions about the authenticity of the claimants' predicaments. In part these suspicions have been based (as is discussed in earlier sections) upon allegations that groups such as the unemployed are at best too inflexible in their labour market behaviour and at worst that they are simply "work shy", "idlers" or "scroungers". An added dimension to these discussions which is never far from the surface in these discourses is that a significant proportion of claimants are in
fact defrauding the system. Thus when Gillian Shepherd announced the expansion of the workfare style "project work", she emphasised perceived success of pilot projects in remotivating the genuinely unemployed whilst rooting out the work shy and the fraudulent: "Some [participants] have been reluctant at first but they have learnt that active job seeking, purposeful activity, will help them back to work. Some are just reluctant, when faced with compulsory work experience they have left the unemployment register. Maybe they were too busy" (Shephard 1996).

Social Security Fraud, Social Security Reform And Social Exclusion.

As has been argued throughout this chapter the process of benefit reform has frequently been entwined with the construction of stigmatising stereotypes and discourses about benefit claimants. This trend reaches its apex in the increasingly prominent debates which surround the issue of benefit fraud. The "benefit cheat" is quite simply depicted as a criminal against whom a hard line must be taken. Thus the Education and Employment secretary, David Blunkett writes in the Observer(14/01/2001) newspaper that: "We know there are people out there who work and claim benefit at the same time. As far as the government is concerned they are quite simply thieving form everyone else. It is time to get tough with those people who steal public money - money that could be spent on schools, hospitals, and other vital services" (Blunkett 2001). This theme of benefit fraud constituting the appropriation of scarce resources which would otherwise be spent in the provision of welfare services is also reworked in such a way that the "benefit cheat" is depicted as someone who is "defrauding the poor" (Gordon
Brown cited in the Guardian 09/03/2000). As such the development of policy which claims to take a hard line against fraud is something which generates little political controversy (10). Unlike other areas of the benefits system there are no support groups to voice and mobilise opposition, whilst charities and campaigning bodies are inevitably reluctant to champion the cause of the “benefit cheat”. Consequently depicting the social security system as a soft touch for criminal exploitation presents an ideal opportunity to implement sweeping and stringent reforms throughout the system, whilst overtly being presented as tackling an altogether different and uncontroversial agenda.

However the empirical evidence to support such claims is weak to say the least. Successive reviews of different areas of benefit provision have estimated the extent of fraud using a methodology which ultimately does little more than quantify suspicion. These reviews have examined samples of new or existing claims for evidence of fraud, and applied a four tier hierarchy of suspicion to these claims. Levels 3 (strong suspicion of fraud but no proof) and 4 (certain that fraudulent situation has been discovered but insufficient information to establish that fraud) constitute the greatest levels of suspicion. The proportion of claims falling into these categories, is extrapolated across the entire claimant population for that benefit, and used in producing the “headline figure” of fraud. Even with this loose definition, the results of the successive reviews consistently revealed a low incidence of “confirmed fraud” (i.e. established through admission and/or third party evidence). The 1997 review of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) (n = 1135) uncovered only 1.5% cases of “confirmed fraud”, a figure comparable to the 1.1% cases of incorrect payments made through Benefits Agency error (Welfare Rights Bulletin
Yet the “official figures” which made newspaper headlines which declared that within the social security system generally “1 in 10 Is A Benefit Cheat”, and revealed DLA as “one of the worst areas for fraud....Investigators found 12% of claims are false” (News Of The World 20/10/98).

In part the impetus to devise policies which “clamp down” on fraud is based upon these estimates of its extent, but underlying this are issues of cost, and projected expenditure savings. Tellingly, one recent package of anti-fraud measures, which increased resources, introduced new initiatives, expanded anti-fraud personnel, and established new institutional structures, was floated as a “spend to save” initiative (Welfare Rights Bulletin 136/February 1997). Quantifying the cost of fraud, uses estimates of its extent as a base figure, against which cost is calculated by a multiplier which is said to constitute the average life of a claim for that particular benefit. These figures, similarly extrapolated across the entire claimant population for that benefit, produce aggregate totals which reach billions of £'s per year, and are in turn easily translated as the expenditure savings (or even tax cuts) which would be made possible, if fraud were eradicated from the system. Yet such interpretations take no account of such things as the particular point in the lifecycle of a claim when fraud was discovered or other forms of benefit provision which these claimants might be entitled to. This is especially the case in areas such as sickness/invalidity benefits. During times of high and rising unemployment, and the dismantlement of Unemployment Benefit, there was tacit acceptance, if not encouragement, by the government, for claimants to move into different areas of the benefits system where there was no requirement to “sign-on” (thus lowering official unemployment) (Beatty & Fothergill 1998).
Examples such as this illustrate dimensions of fraud and its close but ambiguously defined relation, "abuse", which rarely surface in policy debate. As Evason & Woods (1995) argue the dynamics of certain forms of benefit fraud (11) epitomise the interactions between flexible labour and deregulated labour markets. In their study: "claimants had no bargaining power and no option but to accept the wages offered. In addition, employers enjoyed access to a large pool of labour without rights generally and with no means of address in the event of an accident at work. Moreover they could be quickly and easily dispensed with. In essence, doing the double is de-regulation in its purist form" (Evason & Woods 1995: 50). Many of those working whilst claiming benefits were therefore exploiting opportunities in exactly the sort of deregulated labour markets which government policy had actively and explicitly sought to encourage. In this way policy towards fraud was both highly contradictory and selective, characteristics which have caused some commentators to express suspicions of a hidden agenda in government policy towards benefit fraud. For example, Hakim (1992) suggests that the selective focus upon the relationships between the unemployed and the hidden economy, was a matter of political expediency, allowing government to argue that the economy is more buoyant than unemployment figures suggest, and casting doubt on the authenticity of unemployment, which in turn provided justification for stringent benefit reforms. It was certainly the case that in other aspects of the hidden economy important questions were not asked, and in some instances an entirely different policy approach was taken. Thus little if any consideration was given to the ways in which this labour contributed to the profit making arrangements of large scale legitimate corporations which subcontract areas of operation such as cleaning to the lowest bidder (12). Equally whilst the issue of
benefit fraud precipitated the further tightening of benefit regulations, the issue of tax evasion was used as a partial justification for making cuts to income tax (Johnson 1994)(13). Moreover the dynamics of benefit fraud would appear to owe much to the inflexibility and impoverishment which has characterised the re-structuring of the social security system.

Although presenting quite different interpretations of the sociological significance of benefit fraud, researchers have recorded in claimants’ accounts of their actions, universally recurring, and dominant themes of financial survival, in the face of an inflexible and iniquitous benefits system, and a lack of “proper jobs” as an alternative to benefits (Evason & Woods1995, Jordan & Redley 1994, Dean & Melrose 1996, 1997). The recurring notion of “proper jobs” (i.e. of employment providing acceptable, regular and reliable incomes in conditions of long term security) contrasts starkly with the low paid, casualised, temporary and insecure employment “opportunities” which are frequently available in local labour markets. Although seeking to expand opportunities for “legitimate” participation in these types of employment by expanding in-work provision of benefits (i.e. Family Credit), this was restricted to families with dependent children, and, as is described in an earlier section, arguably did little to improve claimants’ net incomes. In other areas of social security policy, reforms such as the reductions in earnings disregards, and the shift from payment of benefits from a daily to a weekly basis have increased the inflexibility of the system (14).

In other instances fraud can be committed through ordinarily innocuous
acts which have no relation to the hidden economy whatsoever. Instead these fraudulent acts are a direct product of the successive tightening of regulations and increasingly stringent systems of means testing, which make trivial, and often arbitrary distinctions in personal circumstances when setting benefit rates. Thus a JSA claimant may find themselves in this position if they travel outside the area where their Job Seekers Agreement stipulates that they will be seeking employment, and neglects/forgets to inform the Benefits Agency of this. Similarly a single claimant can commit fraud if they neglect to inform the Benefits Agency of the start of a new sexual relationship, the number of nights per week when their new partner sleeps at their home, or any financial support they provide no matter how irregular this support may be.

The policy response to fraud has been characterised by an increasingly vigorous attempts at prevention and detection, coupled with a toughening of sanctions. Thus in the 1990s a Fraud Strategic Board was established in November 1993 with a remit to conduct a fraud review of each benefit, and from August 1996 an information phone line which previously provided confidential advice on benefit eligibility was replaced by a National Fraud Hotline together with a “Beat a Cheat” national advertising campaign (Howard 1997). Other measures introduced during this time included a significant expansion in the number of anti-fraud personnel employed by the Benefits Agency. At the same time legislation was introduced which not only weakened the criteria necessary to establish a claimant’s criminal non-disclosure of information but also increased the state’s powers to obtain highly confidential information about benefit claimants. The 1997 Social Security Administration Act, granted agencies concerned
with social security provision routine powers to access information held by the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise. This information is ordinarily subject to rigid rules of confidentiality which were contravened only in exceptional circumstances such as investigations into drug trafficking or terrorist offences (Welfare Rights Bulletin 136/February 1997). More recently plans have been announced to extend the U.S. inspired "two strikes and you're out" principal from the sentencing of offenders in the wider legal system to the treatment of fraudulent claimants in the benefits system. Under these proposals anyone convicted twice of committing a benefit offence over the previous three years will at the very least have their benefits substantially reduced and may even have entitlement withdrawn altogether (Guardian 7/12/2000).

Ultimately the effect of benefit reform generally, and the policy response to fraud in particular, has been to create a new layer of policing, geared exclusively towards the policing of benefit claimants. This process has coincided with increased institutional linkages between statutory and legislative bodies dealing with "law and order" (e.g. courts, prisons and the police) and those dealing with social provision (e.g. the social security system and local authorities). Thus the 1997 Criminal Justice Act made provision for fines imposed by the courts to be deducted directly from benefits whilst in the fight against benefit fraud joint operations are conducted between the police and Benefits Agency staff. In 1996 "Operation Tinstar", Benefits Agency staff questioned 10,000 drivers stopped during routine police road checks (Welfare Rights Bulletin 136/February 1997).
Social Security Reform, Citizenship And Social Exclusion.

In its original establishment the post war welfare state was strongly influenced by the idea that citizenship required social rights, in addition to civil and political rights (Marshall & Bottomore 1992). This idea underpinned the development of universal forms of provision in services such as health and education which became a right of citizenship. However, whilst these egalitarian ideals informed the development of social security provision, the social security system itself frequently made such rights conditional and its social insurance based benefit provision tended to exclude groups such as married women and recent immigrants (Gordon 1991). Indeed Kennett (1995) argues that these post war notions of citizenship were “built upon the creation of new dimensions of inequality based around patriarchy and racism” (Kennett 1995:229).

Clearly then the implementation of social rights can be problematic, yet whilst imperfect, the development of social security policy, from the original establishment of the welfare state until the mid 1970s, grew progressively more comprehensive, and progressively more aligned to the idea of benefit provision as a right not just for the socially insured.

However, this trend in social security policy making has been reversed in the emergence of the new political orthodoxy from the mid 1970s onwards. It now seems clear that the “Modern” social security system is to be defined by its increasingly conditional, coercive, highly restricted and stringently regulated, means tested provision. The ideal of benefit provision as a right of citizenship which enabled not just subsistence but participation in the socio-cultural fabric, has been usurped by issues of economic
expediency and social control. Within this framework the predominant focus is upon the responsibilities of benefit claimants to a wider “taxpaying” society, rather than the maintenance of their social rights. Moreover, the redefinition of citizenship entailed within the modernisation of social security, has not merely denigrated claimants social rights. The character of poverty and social exclusion engendered through social security reform, also impacts negatively upon civil and political rights. The policy response to fraud is a particular example of how claimants civil rights are distinguished from, and subordinated to those of the wider “taxpaying” society. Equally, although exercising their political rights, is perhaps unlikely to be regarded as a pressing priority for the homeless population (compared to securing accommodation, receiving benefits and surviving periods of rough sleeping), the obstacles erected to their entry to the electoral role have been well documented, at times only being secured after lengthy court cases.

Moreover in the pathologising discourses which have underpinned the process of social security reform, benefit claimants are routinely positioned as existing outside the realms of ordinary citizenship, and are instead presented as a dangerous and depraved social entity. This is perhaps most apparent in the indignation which is generated when benefit claimants appear outside of their allotted space. When for example they live not in residualised and stigmatised local authority estates or inner cities, but instead move to areas, steeped in, and saturated with, romanticised notions of traditional Britishness and national heritage. It was for example revealing that during the 1996 conservative party conference the parliamentary candidate for Blackpool South, chose the heritage debate to express his dismay about the influx of the excluded (15)
"new poor" to declining seaside resorts (Lee 1994), and urged ministers to: "use your influence in government to find a quick solution to the use of established holiday and guest houses by DSS clients. This blossoming blot to our holiday areas is creating ghettos of depravity and must be stopped".

As is apparent throughout this thesis the translation of ideology into policy, has in many senses and at many levels proven to be self-fulfilling. Where ideology has drawn imaginary distinctions policy has frequently been used to make these part of a more concrete reality. Despite attempts to engineer a more privatised and intuitively right wing electorate (Dobek 1993, Gamble 1988, Hutton 1995), key areas of collectivist provision continued to attract popular support most notably in areas such as health and education which continue to make provision for the majority rather than an impoverished minority (Golding 1991). The effects of the vastly increased role of means testing together with increasingly stringent eligibility conditions have separated the social security system from these more universal forms of provision within the welfare state. This process of institutional ghettoisation was further reinforced in 1988 when the Department of Health and Social Security, was split into the Department of Health and the Department Of Social Security (Vincent 1991). Moreover as benefit reform places cumulative restrictions on eligibility, makes provision increasingly conditional and further impoverishes claimants, the stereotypes of a violent and dangerous class within the population may also be reinforced, at least insofar as those concerned with the delivery of benefit provision are concerned. Thus when the J.S.A was introduced Job Centre staff staged a series of one day strikes, demanding more protective screens to prevent them being attacked by "angry clients" whose benefits had been stopped (BBC
In these ways the ongoing process of social security reform is creating a statutory framework in which as a condition of benefit eligibility claimants' citizenship is made structurally inferior and subordinate to that of the wider population. This process is most evident in the treatment of groups such as immigrants and young people whose citizenship is already inherently precarious and therefore more open to redefinition. As is described above young people have found themselves at the cutting edge of social security reforms whose combined effect has been to redefine their citizenship in such a way that it is no longer "a function of age, but of employment and dependency status" (Dean 1997:59). This process does not end with the undermining of the citizenship rights of marginalised minorities. Instead these groups find themselves in the position of pioneering the implementation of new principles of provision which subsequently become adopted on a much wider basis. For example, 16 and 17 year olds were the first group of claimants to experience a system of compulsory "workfare" style training programmes or lose all entitlement to benefit. Such initiatives have subsequently been subject to considerable expansion being extended to all unemployed under 25 year olds with the introduction of the New Deal, which has itself recently expanded to cover all those aged between 25-50 and unemployed for 6 months or more (Blunkett 2001). Moreover in a series of pilot projects this element of compulsion has been extended across virtually all claimant groups under the guise of a "full participation" initiative (Welfare Rights Bulletin 156/August 2000).
Conclusion: Social Security And Social Exclusion.

The analysis presented in this chapter clearly demonstrates that the restructuring of social security provision has played a fundamental role in structuring contemporary poverty and social exclusion. In its most obvious sense this is evident in the ways in which the reductions which have been made to benefit incomes have impoverished benefit claimants and in doing so denied them the financial means to participate in key social and cultural arenas. However the most significant implications of social security reforms are evident in the less obvious ways in which their collective and cumulative impact has resulted in the redefinition of benefits claimants' citizenship in such a way that it is separated from and subordinated to that of the taxpayer.

Whilst social policy has acted in ways which foster and exacerbate this distinction, this dichotomous relationship between benefit claimants and taxpayers is in many respects misleading and illusory. Fundamentally, it creates a framework in which the impoverishment and exclusion of benefit claimants through welfare reform is implicitly seen as an issue which has no direct bearing upon the taxpayer other than the possible financial advantages it might pose in terms of tax cuts. Yet as the structural analyses presented in this chapter and in chapter 2 argue the fortunes of the socially excluded and the bulk of the socially included are inexorably interwoven. Indeed the wage depressing effects of the presence of an excluded reserve army of labour is essential to understanding the problems experienced by the working poor, and in broader terms, to processes of labour market flexibilisation (Byrne 1999). Whether through its subsidisation of low paid employment, the fact that poverty has become a condition of
entry and of continuing eligibility, or its explicit function of industrial discipline in the workplace, the contemporary social security system is an essential component of these processes. As such it does not just denigrate the citizenship of benefit claimants, but of huge swathes of the working population generally.

As will be repeatedly seen in the following fieldwork chapters the problem of social exclusion is not therefore a problem just for the socially excluded but for society as a whole. However, before this the following chapter examines the concept of social exclusion in greater depth, placing particular emphasis upon its methodological implications and sets out the methodological approach adopted during the fieldwork.

Endnotes.

(1) This figure was arrived at by dividing the number of Housing Benefit returns received by the Area Housing Office by the number of council owned properties in the area. A similar method has been employed in Chapter 2 and is explained in more detail there.

(2) This trend in taxation policy has shown a certain degree of abatement under the Labour government with the introduction of such measures as the working families tax credit and the introduction of a lower basic rate of income tax for the low paid. However the increased emphasis on indirect taxation remains in place.

(3) Unemployment quickly rose to over 1 million during the first Thatcher government and remains above this level to date.

(4) This trend represents a key area of continuity between social security policy under the conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s and the current Labour government.
(5) However this may well be due to the fact that they did not distinguish between the unemployed who were claiming means tested Income Support and those who were claiming the social insurance based Unemployment Benefit.

(6) Although the JSA abolished Unemployment Benefit, it retained an element of contributions based provision, the conditions of which are more generous in terms of income, capital or the number of hours worked by a partner than the means tested, income based JSA. However, the period of entitlement to contributions based benefits was reduced to 6 months, additions for adult dependents abolished, and the rates of benefit reduced to the same level as means tested unemployment benefits. Like many reforms to social security, those aged under 25 were particularly badly affected by this. The conditions of entitlement effectively ended any possibility of 16 and 17 year olds acquiring sufficient National Insurance contributions to qualify, for contributory JSA, whilst 18-24 year olds eligible for contributory JSA receive £10.35 per week less than they would have received from Unemployment Benefit. (Welfare Rights Bulletin 134/October 1996)

(7) Even the Department Of Social Security's annual publication of statistics relating to social security provision does not include data about either the number of individuals who are subject to sanctions or the severity of these sanctions.

(8) Signing a Job Seekers Agreement which assesses the labour market tests of entitlement is a condition of eligibility. This agreement can be changed at any time by the claimant or the Employment Service officer, but must be signed by both parties or eligibility ends. (Welfare Rights Bulletin 134/October 1996)

(9) The idea that the benefits system was undermining the nuclear family and
encouraging the emergence of increasing numbers of lone parent families was a central component in the analyses of the dangers of social security provision.

(10) For example in the debate preceding the 1997 Social Security Administration Act Opposition Social Security Spokesperson Chris Smith criticised the then conservative governments approach to fraud on the grounds that it did not go far enough, accusing the government of complacency about fraud, on five occasions) (Welfare Rights Bulletin 136/February 1997).

(11) It is important to note that benefit fraud is characterised by the plurality of its forms. Although the predominant focus is upon claimants working in the informal economy, fraud may also be perpetrated by forging benefit books/altering amounts on benefit cheques, and also increasingly by seemingly minor/irrelevant breaches of complex benefit regulations. Equally fraud is not solely the preserve of benefit claimants themselves but may well extend to those concerned with making provision for claimants. A diverse group which potentially ranges from private sector landlords to Benefits Agency staff.

(12) It was exactly this sort of arrangement which was evident in the instances of benefit fraud which were encountered during fieldwork in “the Site” (see Chapter 5).

(13) The current Labour government has taken a different approach to the extent that it has sought to implement tougher measures against both benefit fraud and tax evasion (The Guardian 09/03/2000).

(14) The conditions of entitlement for Unemployment benefit (i.e. availability for work) were assessed on a daily basis, with a daily earnings limit, but in the JSA are determined by examining the claimants “pattern of availability” over an entire week. (Welfare Rights
(15) In this instance used to describe those unable to access public sector housing and discriminated against within the private rented sector (Lee 1994).

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Chapter 4: Methodology.

Introduction: Researching Social Exclusion.

From the early to mid 1990s social exclusion has occupied an increasingly central position in political debates concerning socio-economic disadvantage which was traditionally analysed through concepts such as poverty and deprivation. The concept itself is understood to have emerged from policy debates in the European Union and a continental intellectual tradition which emphasises relational, rather than distributional issues (Room 1995). The use of social exclusion therefore represents much more than a simple shift in terminology. Although not without its critics (e.g. Watt 1996), and regarded by some as having been interpreted by policy makers in overly narrow economic terms (Levitas 1996, Byrne 1999), there is a widespread acceptance that the concept is capable of offering fresh, more meaningful and sophisticated insights into old debates.

In addition to the concern with relational issues, manifested in a concern with the social rights of citizenship, Berghman (1995) emphasises the “multi-dimensional and dynamic connotations” of social exclusion. Whilst noting similarities with the multi-dimensional and relational aspects of Townsend’s (1993) definition of relative deprivation (1), Berghman suggests that it is the “explicit focus” upon “dynamic process”, rather than static outcome which distinguishes social exclusion as a concept (see table 4.1).
Table 4.1: Key Conceptual Distinctions Between Poverty, Deprivation And Social Exclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Static Outcome</th>
<th>Dynamic Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multidimensional</td>
<td>Deprivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impoverishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Exclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Berghman 1995: 21

The key conceptual differences which exist between social exclusion, and traditional ways of viewing disadvantage, present a significant challenge to research in this area. However, although in emphasising the relational processes which generate patterns of inclusion and exclusion, the concept of social exclusion moves away from concerns such as the establishment of a poverty line, from which the number of individuals, households or families which can be said to be living in poverty can be calculated. Whilst there is a continued need for quantitative analyses which measure and map its static dimensions (i.e. poverty and deprivation), the relational and dynamic aspects of social exclusion require a “detailed qualitative analysis of structures, institutions and behavioural patterns” (Moulaert 1995:186). Thus in its operationalisation social exclusion transcends polarised methodological debates, which seek to place quantitative and qualitative methodologies in an oppositional relationship, and instead views both styles of research in complementary fashion.

This approach is central to the structure of this thesis. The main body of analysis is drawn from an ethnographic study examining youth and social exclusion in a small hilltop estate (“the Site”) in the Rhondda Valleys. However, this sits within a framework which seeks to locate “the Site” theoretically and empirically (Chapter 2)
within a web of intersecting relationships (Massey 1994) with wider spatial systems and processes. The importance of this is underlined by Byrne’s (1999) assertion of the need to avoid the “weak” versions of exclusion which have been adopted in Western public policy, and instead recognise that: “exclusion is not a property of individuals or even of social spaces. Rather it is a necessary and inherent characteristic of an unequal post industrial capitalism founded around a flexible labour market, and with a systematic constraining of the organisational power of workers as collective social actors” (Byrne 1999: 128).

Youth, Social Exclusion And The Case For Ethnographic Research In "The Site".

For a combination of practical, methodological and conceptual reasons an ethnographic approach is ideally suited to an examination of the processes of social exclusion affecting young people. Practically ethnography provides a means by which social groups who are ordinarily considered ‘hard to reach’ through other approaches are made accessible to social research. That this tradition continues into the present is evident in studies such as Taylor’s (1993) study of a female injecting community in Glasgow, or Craine’s (1997) examination of alternative opportunity structures in inner city Manchester.

Equally ethnography is well placed to fulfil key methodological requirements which are laid down in the conceptualisation of social exclusion. For example although typically regarded as a qualitative method proponents of ethnography are often critical of this categorisation and of the qualitative versus quantitative
dichotomy more generally. Thus Hammersley argues that "in doing research we are not faced with a fork in the road, with two well defined alternative routes. The research process is more like finding one's way through a maze. And it is a rather badly kept and complex maze; where paths are not always clearly distinct, and also wind back on one another; and where one can never be entirely certain that one has reached the centre" (Hammersley 1992: 182-183). These arguments are reflected in an approach which whilst best exemplified by participant observation can include both quantitative and qualitative forms of data collection within this framework. Silverman (1993:34) cites Whyte's use of "powerful quantitative measures" in an examination of gender and occupational hierarchies in a restaurant as an example of ethnographers' willingness to blend different approaches. Such an approach sits well with both the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion and of a mode of analysis which requires both quantitative and qualitative data.

The flexible nature of ethnographic research is not restricted to the blending of different methodologies but is also an essential component of the fieldwork process itself. A defining characteristic is that (unlike an approach such as a questionnaire survey) the initial research design is not set in stone, but is subject to continual modification and adaptation as the fieldworker struggles not only with the process of "getting in" and subsequently "staying in" (Beynon 1983), but responds to unanticipated areas of interest. This exploratory nature of ethnographic research is intimately associated with the origins of its emergence, whether in the work of early anthropologists studying alien and exotic foreign cultures, or the explorations of "internal Orient" (Back 1996) of urban poverty in Victorian London conducted by the like of Charles Booth or Henry
Mayhew. The continuing relevance of this style of exploration is self evident in a concept such as social exclusion which is by definition a phenomena which is largely hidden from mainstream society.

However, the principal benefits which an ethnographic approach brings to the study of social exclusion lies in its concern with the analysis of dynamic processes through close and prolonged examination of social behaviour as it occurs in its natural setting. This is something which is of particular relevance to this study which whilst concerned with the wider structural processes which act to exclude young people, is principally concerned with the ways in which these processes can generate more localised dimensions of exclusion within communities. In this respect the advantages of ethnography over other approaches are perhaps best exemplified by an encounter which provided the immediate impetus for the subject of this thesis. “The Site” was one of a number of localities in the Rhondda and Cynon Valleys which were visited during an extensive questionnaire survey conducted by the Regional Research Projects socio-economic mapping project (Adamson & Jones 1996). Here, whilst completing a questionnaire with three unemployed young men a conversation developed around the issues which were being raised. Yet, at best the profound and comprehensive sense of exclusion which they articulated was recorded in a series of terse statements: “no jobs” “no money” “nowhere to go” and “nothing to do”. Although accurately summarising key aspects of the conditions faced by these young people such statements reveal little about the processes which shape and sustain this situation. Moreover vital locally specific detail was altogether lost. For example during this conversation mention was made of the plans
to build a community centre in "the Site", yet even at this early stage of its development considerable scepticism was expressed about this being a resource which would be made accessible to them.

Ethnographic Research In "The Site": The Fieldwork Process

Initial Plans.

Given the inherently exploratory and flexible nature of ethnographic research, initial thoughts were obviously open ended. At this stage of the research process it was impossible to foresee how the research would actually progress. Consequently consideration was limited to identifying key requirements, potential problems and ways in which these might be resolved. These considerations were dominated by issues of gaining access, the nature of this access (i.e. the role I would seek to adopt) and potential ethical dilemmas likely to be encountered during fieldwork.

The subject of the research created particular difficulties in relation to these issues. For example, access would undoubtedly have been less problematic, if it had been possible to contact excluded young people through services such as drop-in centres or similar youth projects/services. Yet, this would have been an inappropriate means of gaining access for several reasons. At this time such projects were relatively scarce, and those that did exist tended to serve large catchment areas. Not only did the local scarcity of such facilities mean that significant numbers (perhaps the majority) of excluded young
people in the South Wales Valleys were unlikely to have contact with these agencies, but that these were inappropriate venues from which to explore relationships within a specific community setting. Although there may now be more appropriate venues for this task due to a recent expansion in locality based community development/re-generation programmes (Adamson 1997), it should also be borne in mind that the facilities generated through such programmes are not necessarily inclusive of young people (Fitzpatrick, Hastings & Kintrea 1998) (2), and may well actively exclude more difficult young people.

Related to this, a key area of research interest lay in the influence of young peoples' congregation in areas of relatively un-regulated communal space (e.g. playgrounds, street corners, bus shelters) and with the resulting relationships with other sections of the community. This was envisaged to be a significant factor in understanding localised dimensions of young peoples' social exclusion, given that at scales ranging from the micro/local to the national, perceived crises of public space consistently appear as key factors in generating fears of "dangerous" youth. However, these requirements of the fieldwork design, inevitably presented certain practical and ethical difficulties.

In ethnographic studies based in more "natural" settings, the means by which the researcher gains access to the study group, clearly exerts an influence upon the nature of their access, and the researchers role in relation to the study group. For example some who have conducted their research whilst employed as youth workers have said little about being expected to participate or collude in acts of minor criminality or
delinquency (e.g. Back 1996, Craine 1997). This is in contrast to other researchers who rather than maintaining more distanced roles, have pursued forms of participant observation in which they are immersed within the group they are studying (e.g. Parker 1974, Foster 1990), occasionally doing this in a covert manner (e.g. Patrick 1973). In doing so these researchers have frequently encountered ethical dilemmas which have resulted from finding themselves in situations where membership of the group brings an expectation of participation in criminal activities.

Whilst the strategies which have been developed in response to these dilemmas vary according to the particular circumstances of individual studies, there is a common theme of responding in ways which seek to minimise this involvement but are acceptable to the norms of their study group. Parker (1974) adopted a position in which he limited engagement to such things as receiving “knock off” and “keeping dixie” whilst “the boys” stole car radios. However Foster (1990) managed to avoid direct involvement, by for example justifying paying for admission into a cinema (rather than illicitly gaining entry), on the grounds that her age would make the consequences more severe for her if she were caught. Others such as Corrigan (1979) have sought to avoid these dilemmas altogether by conducting their research in more formal institutional settings such as schools, although fieldwork in these settings tend to produce their own particular dilemmas.

Thus in the initial considerations of how I would go about this research I realised that gaining acceptance, might involve some participation in deviant activities.
This likelihood was perhaps accentuated by the fact that I was unknown in “the Site” and had no means of gaining access other than by approaching young people directly. Being an unknown entity might therefore increase the possibility of such involvement in establishing myself as someone who was “trustworthy” or “alright”. However, given that the research focuses upon social exclusion rather than delinquency, the necessity of this was perhaps negated to an extent as the research was not dependent upon my being able to observe delinquent acts. As such I felt that it would be possible to resolve the dilemma between ethics and data collection, by keeping involvement in these activities to a bare minimum. In part I hoped to achieve this by conducting the research mainly during daylight hours, and therefore avoiding the key times when such activities were likely to occur. Additionally I set a guideline in which I was only prepared to involve myself in activities which involved very minor illegalities and which did not involve causing harm to others or their property. However as is discussed below it quickly became apparent during the fieldwork that designing the research I had completely failed to anticipate the dynamics and intensity of social conflict in “the Site”, and the ethical implications this would have for the research.

Initial Encounters.

After several preliminary visits to “the Site” I plucked up the courage to approach a group of young men stood outside the community centre. I introduced myself as a researcher based at the University of Glamorgan who was interested in their views and experiences on life in the South Wales Valleys for a book I was writing on this subject. Whilst their response was not immediately hostile, neither (as might be expected)
was it particularly enthusiastic. One of the young men mentioned that he recognised me from the 1995 questionnaire survey (3), which gave some credibility to the way I had introduced myself, and also allowed me to pick up on issues discussed during our previous meeting (e.g. such as the fact that the community centre had actually been built). However, this was also perhaps disadvantageous to the extent that I was cast in my previous role as a survey researcher, and was therefore probably expected to ask a few questions and go away. It seemed clear that there was a shared sense of awkwardness in this encounter, and after a short and quite stilted conversation with this group of boys, I withdrew asking if they would mind me speaking to them again at a later date.

At this stage, I envisaged the process of gaining access as being a long and drawn out affair. I hoped that now I had at least made myself known I could work on getting to know these young people, but still had considerable doubts about whether or not this would be possible. Consequently, I considered the possibility of using more structured methods such as qualitative interviews, but decided to persevere in the short term. The situation changed dramatically during my next visit to "the Site". It was intended to approach the same group of young people, but as they were not around I approached another slightly younger group of young men who I subsequently came to know as John, Keith and Lee.

When I explained my reasons for being in "the Site" Keith suggested that I should meet Sian, and I was invited to "a meeting" at her house later that morning. Although I was puzzled by what Keith meant by "a meeting" I went along with him, John and Lee to Sian’s house, where perhaps twenty teenage boys and girls were crowded into
Sian’s living room. Keith introduced me to Sian, Steph and Angharad as “writing a book” about young people in the area (4). Sian was immediately welcoming, offering me a cup of tea and asking further questions about the nature of the research. As I responded to these questions, Sian, with Angharad and several of the young people chimping in spoke of their aim of setting up a youth drop-in centre, the complex problems they were having in bringing this to fruition (Chapter 7) and more generally of the problems young people in the area routinely encountered.

After leaving Sian’s house the three boys Keith, John and Lee, gave me what almost amounted to a guided tour around “the Site” and introduced me to other members of their male peer group: Bass; Joey; and Rob (“the boys”). In between pointing out various things, and talking about their lives and views on a wide variety of issues, they asked questions about me, my views and perhaps most frequently why I was doing the research. I answered these questions as honestly and directly as possible, yet was aware that in doing so I risked alienating “the boys”, by drawing attention to the considerable differences between us. For example most of them had recently left school without sitting any public examinations, and had clearly detested their experience of education, whereas I was presenting myself as someone who worked for a university. At one point John asked in a miserable tone “can you use computers and that then butt?”

However, they also seemed to give a degree of endorsement both to the research and the methods which were being used. When I explained why I wanted to spend time just hanging around with them, Lee responded “yeah, you’ve got to live it.”
was equally pleased early in the afternoon, when whilst with “the boys” I was approached by a group of young girls who I recognised from the meeting earlier on in the day. When this group began to fire a series of questions at me, each question coming before I had time to answer the question before, John came to my aid. He intervened on my behalf and responded to the most frequently asked question with the comment that I was going to “to tell people what it is like”.

Ultimately the process of gaining access was at least in part a matter of good fortune. Introducing myself to Keith, John and Lee, had been a breakthrough, but this was a breakthrough borne out of a particular moment in their lives, and at a particular moment in the evolution of community activism in “the Site”. At this time there existed a particularly close relationship between these young people and the group of local women who were attempting to establish a youth drop-in centre (Reflect) on their behalf. A key indication of this is the fact that later on the same day I accompanied Keith, John, Lee and Steph on a visit which Steph had organised to an Open Door Project in Pontypridd. During the time I subsequently spent in “the Site” no visit of a similar nature was made, and a rift developed in the relationship between these young people and the three women (Chapter 7). Whilst it is impossible to state with any certainty whether or not I would have received as enthusiastic a welcome from “the boys” at a later date, it does seem unlikely.
A Conundrum Of Ethnographic Research In The Context Of Social Division And Conflict.

Something which had not been anticipated in initial considerations about the research, was the depth and intensity of local social conflict in "the Site", and the ways in which this appeared embedded within the routines of "the boys'” daily life. Yet this was something which became almost immediately apparent as I embarked on the fieldwork, and was something which had far reaching implications for its subsequent direction. Initially these issues crystallised around a prolonged and bitter dispute which existed between "the boys" and a local couple known to them as “Mad Mary” and “The Animal” (hereafter referred to as Mary and Terry). However over the course of the fieldwork, the existence or emergence of similarly conflictual relationships between “the boys” and other individuals or factions in “the Site”, proved to be a regular occurrence.

The specific details and significance of these disputes is discussed at length in Chapter 6. Of greater relevance to the concerns of this chapter is the practical and ethical difficulties this presented in conducting the fieldwork in the manner I had originally intended. The dynamics of these disputes were such that it was impossible not to become involved. This was particularly the case given that (as is discussed further in Chapter 6), “the boys” collective presence was something which they drew upon as a weapon during confrontations with enemies.

During these interactions I was repeatedly torn between the demands of
data collection, maintaining "the boys'" trust and the impact which my actions were having on others. For example, on one occasion during a lull between the confrontations between "the boys" and Mary and Terry, we were sat at the rear of the flats, when Keith asked if me "is that fat slut up there?". From where I was sat I could clearly see Mary, reading a book on her fire escape, but knowing the likely result of doing so, was reluctant to tell Keith of this. At the same time if I replied that she wasn't there it would only take one of the boys to stand up for Mary (and my lie) to become visible to them. Reluctantly I replied that she was there, and led by Keith several of "the boys" started shouting insults at Mary.

Although I felt uncomfortable with my role in actual events, it was also clearly apparent that potentially far more serious outcomes might lie ahead. On several occasions during this day the interactions which occurred between "the boys" and this couple were clearly capable of escalating into violent encounters, and I was deeply troubled about how I should respond to this eventuality. Moreover, it was not just the case that I felt these encounters were likely to escalate in their intensity, but that I could unintentionally find myself in a position where I actively encouraged this process. Thus on one occasion, Terry appeared suddenly to confront "the boys" who quickly sprang from the low wall where they were seated. I was totally unprepared for this eventuality and remained seated, an act which was later (mis)interpreted as an act of bravado by John's younger brother who remarked admiringly upon the fact that I had not moved.
Leaving "the Site" that evening I felt that this dispute was certain to escalate further, and equally certain that I must adapt the methodology in order not to become embroiled in such situations. However, it was one thing to know that the methodology must change, but I was at a loss about how to do this. The next phase of Reflect's development provided an ideal opportunity to resolve this dilemma. The appointment of an official manager for the community centre, meant that Reflect was now able to function from the community centre for two evenings per week. I received a phone call from Sian, who informed me of this and invited me to the Reflect's first session the following day.

Fieldwork As A Volunteer In Reflect.

The fact that Reflect was now functional meant that there was now a space where I could maintain contact with "the boys", but at the same time establish the sort of distance necessary to avoid becoming embroiled in their conflicts. The importance of this was underlined when I arrived in "the Site" and saw "the boys" for the first time in nearly three weeks (5). I was immediately informed that Mary and Terry had moved out of the area, following a fight between John and Terry, and a burglary for which Rob had been charged.

After a few weeks of attending Reflect, I was asked by "the volunteers" if I would take on a volunteer role, as they had difficulty in attracting male volunteers.
From this point onwards the fieldwork centred around Reflect's operation from the community centre. Whilst allowing me to avoid the sorts of ethical dilemmas I had encountered earlier on in the fieldwork, this shift in my role within "the Site" brought numerous advantages. I now came into contact with a wider range of young people, and was also able to redress to an extent the inherent gender bias in the original methodology. Previously I had been unwilling to approach young women, feeling that my intentions could easily be misconstrued. I mentioned this to a detached youth worker who I had met early on in the fieldwork, who agreed saying that their regulations required them to always work in pairs and that there was a preference for mixed sex pairs. However, this imbalance was never truly redressed as even in the shared space of the drop-in centre, groups of young men and women tended to sit separately from one another.

Although providing a solution to certain fieldwork dilemmas, being a volunteer in Reflect also presented new and different dilemmas. Its operation was quickly beset with difficulties as the intense local politics which surrounded the community centre, impinged upon its operation. As is discussed further in Chapter 7 Reflect's operation in the community centre, was contested, and subject to numerous externally imposed rules and regulations. "The volunteers" now found themselves in a position of being expected to enforce the young people's adherence to these rules. This obviously created a conflict between my role as a researcher and that of a volunteer in Reflect, yet this was relatively easily resolved through, along with the other volunteers, developing a selective blindness. Indeed in certain ways the existence of these rules was actually beneficial to the fieldwork. For example the No Smoking rule which operated in Reflect,
meant that everyone had to go outside for a cigarette, resulting in a situation where there was constant traffic between the community centre’s entrance and Reflect. The community centre’s entrance also served as a congregation point for many local young people, and it was often possible to catch up with those who did not use Reflect on the pretext of popping out for a smoke (this was a ploy which was also used regularly by “the volunteers”). However, the blatant mismatch between the original plans for Reflect and its actual reality, was reflected in a rapid deterioration in the relationship between “the volunteers” and the young people, who for a time engaged in a coordinated boycott of the project. Given that I was now cast in the role of a volunteer these events had a quite considerable impact upon the fieldwork as for a time many of “the boys” became sullen and withdrawn in my presence, as they did with the other volunteers.

This dynamic of shifting allegiances and transforming relationships was not unique to the relationship between “the boys” and “the volunteers” but was also a key feature of peer group relationships. The fieldwork occurred at a time in “the boys” lives which was defined by a state of flux which extended not only to the material circumstances of their lives but to their social relationships. Indeed the extent of change was such that the group described in the initial fieldwork was barely recognisable by the end of the fieldwork. Thus like many other ethnographic studies which examine the lives of young working class men (Parker 1974, Foster 1990) “the boys” were not a strictly defined “gang”, but a loosely structured group of 3-7 young men who met regularly during the summer of 1996 and whose association could in many respects be described as a “bong syndicate” (see chapter 6). This was a transitory grouping of individuals, whose
association over the course of time transformed or dissolved, as individual members forged relationships with others.

The Fieldwork Data.

Recording The Data.

The fieldwork data was collected between August 1996 and November 1997, during which time 40 separate visits were made to "the Site". The majority of these visits occurred in the last quarter of 1996 (during the main period of Reflect's operation), but occasional visits continued to be made throughout 1997. These later visits, provided an opportunity to catch up with many of the people I had met, and also to verify some of the themes which were emerging in the write up, through observing changes, or discussion with particular individuals such as Sian, Keith or John. Field notes were recorded from memory as possible after I had left "the Site", which in practice usually consisted of skeletal notes written up during the frequently prolonged periods of waiting at the train station (6). These notes which consisted of such items as fragments of conversation, key details of particular events and/or rumours, provided the basis for a more elaborate field diary which was written once I had returned home.

These records often contained sensitive and potentially damaging information about particular individuals which necessitated a high degree of confidentiality and anonymity. In order to ensure this, I was careful to remove all
previous entries from the pocket notebook used in the field before each visit to “the Site”.

Equally I ensured that the field diary was accessible only to myself and have used pseudonyms to describe people and places in draft and final texts. Nonetheless there were instances when writing about a particular issue whilst maintaining confidentiality/anonymity, became virtually impossible due to the intensely personal nature of what had occurred.

In some instances it was possible to include these issues in the analysis by describing them in a general manner and making no mention of individuals. In other instances it was impossible to do this without any risk of that individual being recognisable. It might be possible to justify including such material on the grounds that the risk was small, given that these individuals would only be recognisable to others living in “the Site” who are unlikely to wade through this thesis. However, I felt that in these instances given the possible repercussions the risk of this, whilst slight was still unacceptable. Consequently the majority of the text consists of description and discussion of events which were in the public realm of communal knowledge in “the Site”. It should be noted however that in doing this I have not had to omit huge chunks of the fieldwork data, as the bulk of the data falls into this category of public knowledge. A more fundamental problem of selectivity, relates to the process of recording the data, rather than its analysis and dissemination.

There are obvious problems in relying on memory in recording fieldwork data, but as with many other ethnographic studies there was no operational alternative. To
have made notes whilst in the field would have been highly inappropriate and incongruous to the setting and would undoubtedly have drawn attention to my presence at exactly the time when I was seeking to merge into the background. However, making notes from memory inevitably involves a considerable loss of detail, particularly when dealing with interactions as intricate as conversations. Consequently the fieldwork chapters contain relatively few direct quotations, and those that are included tend to be snippets of conversation short enough to be recorded with a reasonable degree of accuracy.

A further dilemma in recording fieldwork data was deciding what should be included, given the impossibility of recording everything that was said and done. Whilst I attempted to ensure that records were as comprehensive as possible, fieldnotes are inevitably selective and partial accounts of events (Emerson, Fritz & Shaw 1995). Rather than capturing any event in its entirety, it was only ever possible to provide a synopsis of events which were frequently bewilderingly complex and highly confused. Often this sense of complexity and confusion was not unique to myself, but seemed to be shared by others caught up in these same events, particularly in the intense local politics which surrounded the community centre.

This dimension to the data was also influenced by the change in my role and relationship to "the boys", during the fieldwork period. As is discussed above my role in Reflect inevitably (and deliberately) established a certain distance between myself and "the boys". This meant that I was now more reliant upon what they told me (rather
than direct observation) and that there was perhaps also a change in the information they were prepared to share with me. Therefore in certain instances and during certain periods of the fieldwork I became dependent upon what others told me of "the boys"' activities, knowledge which often amounted to local rumour. Whilst over the duration of the fieldwork, it usually proved possible to verify the accuracy of these rumours, or at least to obtain the views which the individuals concerned held about them, it is also worth noting that rumour had an importance which was not dependent upon verification. As is discussed in Chapters 5 and 7 speculation, suspicions and rumour formed an important dynamic of social life in "the Site", and frequently constituted a basis for social action. Potential problems therefore relate not so much to the data itself but to the ways in which this data is handled and interpreted.


Traditionally ethnography has been seen as something of a trade off. The closeness of the researcher to the research subject is seen as producing greater validity in the fieldwork data, but the explicitly localised basis of ethnographic research problematises claims that fieldwork findings have a significance which extends beyond the immediate fieldwork setting. The issue of generalisability has obvious (and at times explicit) relevance to the analysis which is presented within the following fieldwork chapters, particularly as this analysis sits within a theoretical framework which stresses local uniqueness and specificity. To the extent that the precise events and interactions
which are analysed within the fieldwork chapters will not be replicated exactly in other localities the findings of this research cannot be said to be generalisable in any way, shape or form. However, this is not necessarily the case for the underlying processes or dimensions of social exclusion which are identified through this analysis.

Although the specific processes are unlikely be replicated exactly in other localities they may well take similar forms. For example, the fundamental role of social networks in young peoples’ lives (see Chapter 5), has also been a feature of other research projects which I participated in alongside fieldwork in “the Site” (see for example Hutson & Jones 1997,1999). Likewise, the fears which are generated by young people’s colonisation of public spaces and (often) associated fears of youth crime, drug use or ‘anti-social’ behaviour are not unique to “the Site” but are incorporated in prominent national debates, and are a consistent finding of fear or crime surveys. In other instances, most notably in the analysis of community activism presented in Chapter 7, the processes and events which are described differ considerably from the fortunes of community activism in other localities in the South Wales Valleys (see Adamson 1997). Quite simply it cannot be taken as given that the findings of this research are generalisable to other localities, but by the same token it cannot be taken as given that they are not. The acid test lies in the extent to which the findings of this research correspond (or not) with the findings of other research, perhaps most particularly of research where a different methodological approach is taken.

Similarly the validity or realism of the ethnographic data which is
presented within this thesis cannot simply be taken as given. A key recent development in ethnographic analysis has been the increasing demands for greater reflexivity in every stage of the research process (Aull Davies 1999) and not just in terms of considering the impact of the field upon the self, but also in terms of the role of the field in shaping the self (Coffrey 1999). This is in stark contrast to the "realist tales" (Van Maanen 1988) or "naive realism" (Hammersley 1992) of classical ethnography where the production of the text was regarded as an objective reporting of social facts, problematised only by the distortion to the data by possible researcher effects or by the potential dangers of 'going native'. The fieldwork process itself was "seldom discussed and almost never written about" (Aull-Davies 1999: 71).

These developments have occurred through increasing recognition that ethnographies are not literal representations of society, but merely "a means of representation" (Van Mannen 1988: 7) or "society-as-reconstructed" (Atkinson 1990: 6). Consequently the reader's interpretation of ethnographic texts is as much reliant upon their ability to gain an understanding of the author as it is upon the presentation of the interactions and events which are encountered during the fieldwork process. A partial means of fulfilling this requirement, which has become conventional in ethnographic research is for the researcher to provide an account of their own biography as an aid to understanding the interactions between the researcher and researched. However, I have considerable reservations in doing this, as I share Back's "suspicions" of: "those - particularly in discussions of working class culture - who claim 'insider status' through invoking a kind of radical credentialism [and use this in ways which] suppress...the
multiple aspects and social features that affect fieldwork. What is thus invented is a novel intellectual hyphen that in effect represses such complexities through a homogenising discourse of nativism." (Back 1996:23). Above all else such an approach denies the plurality and complex individuality of the young people which I met in "the Site", and instead serves to assign these characteristics to a series of stereotypical, one-dimensional categories. However a cynic might argue that my reservations in providing an account of my own biography are in part due to the fact that in many ways I cannot invoke this "radical credentialism".

I did not grow up in the South Wales Valleys, but in Wigan, an industrial town in the North West of England. Whilst I would consider myself to be from a working class background, others might dispute this (defining socio-economic class is a key and contentious area of debate within the social sciences). In any case, the steep increase in intra-class inequality which occurred during the 1980s and 1990s, implies that such labels do not necessarily denote shared experience, nor an inherent ability for empathy. It is certainly the case that my own background was in many ways more privileged than that of "the boys". Equally in terms of my current status, during my time in "the Site" I was constantly and painfully aware, that even on a post-graduate’s income well below average wage levels, I was able to escape the hardships encountered by many, if not most, of the people I encountered. Even where there existed shared experiences between myself and the people I met in "the Site" there are important qualitative differences in these experiences.
Like “the boys” I detested the time I spent at school and left with a deep hostility to authority, but unlike them I had 'O' Levels, and subsequently went on to further education. Equally I have experienced successive periods of unemployment, the financial hardship of living on benefits, the boredom of having lots of time but no money, and have worked in the black economy when opportunities presented themselves. Yet unlike “the boys” these periods of unemployment have proved relatively short lived, and at the time I always expected my situation to eventually improve. By way of contrast their experience seems to suggest that they expect the future to inevitably contain more of the same.

Thus although there were areas of similarity in experience between myself and the subjects of the fieldwork, it is important not to overemphasise these influences and invoke the misleading “radical credentialism” described by Back (1996). Perhaps most importantly, despite the important and multiple differences which were well recognised from the outset (as is described above) “the boys” seemed to give some endorsement to the purpose of my presence in “the Site”, and the approach which was being taken in the research. Whilst, this endorsement may well have subsequently waned as I modified the methodology and during particular phases of the fieldwork, I was on the whole able to remain on good terms with “the boys”. Indeed during the last phase of the fieldwork on ‘catch-up’ visits to “the Site” there were often reminiscences of events which had occurred during the previous year. It is impossible for me to ever really know what “the boys” truly thought of me, and doubtless in certain respects and at certain times I was viewed in negative terms, yet given that they continued to talk to me and never
showed any hostility towards me, it seems reasonable to conclude that despite this I was broadly accepted as being "alright".

Nonetheless it is equally important not to discount these influences altogether nor their quite fundamental importance to both the nature and direction of fieldwork. Whilst, as is described in an earlier section of this chapter, the immediate impetus for this research came from a conversation with three unemployed young men in "the Site" my interest in this research subject was also underpinned by events and experiences from my own background. Rather than such subjectivities hindering the research process, if explicitly recognised they can actually aid the process. Thus Green argues in relation to her ethnography of a mining village during the 1984-1985 miners strike that truly "neutral vision" is neither possible nor necessarily desirable: "My interviews were not conducted in an academic or political vacuum, and both the interviews and data analysis would have suffered considerably if this fact had not been acknowledged" (Green 1993: 110-111).

For my part my own experiences meant that I arrived in "the Site" with a set of values and beliefs which I feel similarly aided the research process. I did not for example believe that localities such as "the Site" were necessarily dangerous and unpredictable, nor did I subscribe to the stigmatising images of benefit claimants as a bunch of scroungers and fiddlers. However, what was perhaps most immediately influential in the fieldwork process was the fact that I lived relatively locally and in an area which was not recognised as being 'posh' or 'stuck up'. This also meant that there
was no obvious separation between my work life and my private life, or my public and private self, as I would on occasion quite literally bump into somebody from "the Site" on my front doorstep or during such mundane activities as shopping in Pontypridd market. Equally during the course of my private life I was witness to numerous instances which whilst not explicitly appearing in the analysis presented in the fieldwork chapters nonetheless influenced and at times helped shape this analysis.

Finally some consideration needs to be given to the wider implications of this style of research and whether or not it can be said to be ethically justifiable. These ethical concerns are distinct from those which arise during fieldwork itself, but instead relate to the system of power relationships within which ethnographers are located. This is particularly important given that as Green (1993) argues fieldwork does not take place within a social or political vacuum, and as such is located within and replicates wider systems of power relationships. Similarly Turner argues that 'the field', "far from being neutral or inert, is itself the product of disciplinary 'technologies'" (Turner 1989:13) and that as such sociological inquiry maybe implicated within the maintenance of wider power relationships and systems of social control. In other words studies such as this possess a clear potential in further underpinning and legitimising the very powerlessness which is arguably the defining dynamic of social exclusion. This is not merely an abstract theoretical point but can have concrete implications. It is notable for example that Murray (et. al. 1996) claims to draw support for his underclass thesis from ethnographic research evidence, rather than the fleeting encounters of survey researchers. Indeed when part of the analysis from this thesis was presented as a conference paper one of the
questions which was asked in the subsequent discussion related to the paper’s potential contribution to pathological definitions of a youth underclass. However, I would argue that the analysis presented here helps illuminate the empirical deficiencies and the crude and unsophisticated nature of such models. Moreover as Craine (1997) argues the unwillingness of researchers to engage in a “warts and all” approach to these contemporary debates is equally indefensible: “In a situation where politicians, senior church and police representatives and media opinion shapers are, almost daily, prepared to offer public comment on the issues of unemployment and youth crime, it seems inexcusable that youth researchers are reluctant to enter this debate........It is partly as a consequence of such empirical deficiencies in the contemporary understanding of career transitions - or perhaps in spite of them - that stigmatising populist theories of a homogenous, criminogenic youth underclass have flourished.” (Craine 1997: 134-135).

A final point worth noting when reading the fieldwork chapters is that the principal weakness of the fieldwork data perhaps relates not to those individuals and groups who were part of the research process, but to the majority of residents in “the Site” who were not. It cannot simply be assumed that the research sample is representative of the complexity and plurality of community in “the Site”, and indeed in certain key ways it appears relatively safe to assume that it has not. For example the fieldwork was principally conducted in certain key public spaces and therefore automatically excluded those individuals and social groups who had withdrawn from public life altogether, or who did not use these spaces and may well have actively avoided them.
Endnotes.

(1) A condition in which an individual or household is so multiply deprived of resources as to be unable to participate in activities integral to prevailing social and cultural norms.

(2) As is discussed in Chapter 7, these issues are of particular relevance to the development and subsequent operation of the community centre in “the Site” and the divisive issue of youth provision within this setting. However in some other localities community centres and community development projects have served as base for the provision of innovative and challenging youth projects.

(3) He was one of the young men who I had spoken with during the Regional Research Project’s 1995 questionnaire survey.

(4) I almost instantly regretted introducing myself in this way feeling that it was a slightly deceitful way of describing the outcome of the research. Over subsequent weeks and months I tried to shift the perception of me as “writing a book” but the label stuck, and this was how I was introduced to others.

(5) During this time I had been reluctant to return to “the Site” as I was couldn’t think of ways of resolving the dilemma of staying in contact with “the boys”, but avoiding becoming embroiled in their disputes. I did make one visit but “the boys” were not available having managed to secure some temporary labouring work.

(6) Although as the crow flies “the Site” is situated only a few miles from where I live the natural topography of the local area and a poor public transport infrastructure meant that travelling to and from “the Site” could be a lengthy and tiring business. For example, trains to Pontypridd were timetabled on a hourly basis but cancellations/breakdowns/late running meant that on occasion it took over two hours to make the return journey to
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Chapter 5: A Vicious Paradox: Young People, Social Exclusion, and Community.

Introduction.

There are few concepts which possess such enormous social, cultural and political resonance as that of community. It is something which is heavily and explicitly drawn upon in the construction of party political agendas of both left and right, often in ways which display a nostalgic yearning for a past “golden age” of community (Campbell 1996). In the development of social policy community increasingly occupies a central role in policy initiatives directed towards otherwise seemingly intractable social problems such as crime (Hope & Shaw ed. 1988), or poverty and social exclusion (Adamson 1998). Moreover, the appeal of community is much broader than the relatively narrow confines of party political politics and academia, but appears to be deeply embedded within the popular imagination. Owing to the region’s particular economic, social and political development this is particularly the case for the coalfield communities of the South Wales Valleys. Here despite the virtual extinction of the traditional industrial base around which these communities emerged, community still appears to be regarded by the majority of residents as a defining and highly valued component of Valleys’ life (Adamson & Jones 1996).

However despite, or perhaps in part because of, its broad appeal it is extremely difficult to pinpoint precisely what is meant by community. It is a concept which is both complex and intrinsically contradictory. Sociological perspectives on community have tended to focus on such themes as “reciprocity”, “altruism”, and “neighbourliness”, but have also discussed how communities represent moral orders
which exert social control over their members and generate “us/them”, “insider/outsider” distinctions (Crow 1997). Communities therefore require (and imply) a degree of social solidarity, cohesion and shared values, yet at the same time are inherently exclusionary to the extent that their members seek to define who belongs and who does not.

Such patterns of belonging and non-belonging, or inclusion and exclusion might typically be viewed in terms of the hierarchical segregation of different residential ‘zones’ identified by Chicago School sociologists/urban geographers such as Park or Burgess. Clearly communities are defined at least in part by the differences which exist between adjacent residential areas, and in the context of a capitalist urban society, by differences in wealth. Many commentators have noted that in recent years such differences have been exacerbated in many Western societies by a sharply increasing socio-economic inequality. At micro-spatial scales residential polarisation is most evident in large metropolitan areas such as London where communities numbered amongst the poorest in the UK are immediately adjacent to wealthy populations living in gentrified Victorian Streets, gated communities or warehouses converted into luxury apartments replete with intercom access and underground parking. However increased residential polarisation is also evident in areas, such as the South Wales Valleys, previously renowned for their relatively homogenous working class communities ((Morris & Wilkinson (1995)Adamson & Jones (1996)). For Jordan (1996) increasing inequality has generated two distinct forms of community which correspond to patterns of social inclusion and social exclusion: “communities of choice” and “communities of fate”. Within the socially excluded “communities of fate” Jordan argues that there have been
“generated strong resistance cultures, which have expressed themselves outside the political mainstream, and have consisted both in solidaristic and mutually supportive association, and opportunistic predatory action against the communities of choice” (Jordan 1996: 174).

Whilst as will become apparent in this and subsequent chapters there is much evidence from the fieldwork conducted in “the Site” to support such claims, Jordan implies a sense of homogeneity, coherence and cohesion which may well be lacking. In part this may stem from the plurality of different cultural forms and peoples who can co-exist within a single residential area. For example Rex and Moore’s (1967) study of Sparkbrook identified at least ten different ethnic groups, often with widely differing and sometimes conflicting cultural practices and beliefs, residing within roughly one square mile of inner city Birmingham. Whilst the ethnic diversity of 1960s Sparkbrook bears little relation to the almost completely white, Welsh and working class population of “the Site”, it does illustrate the range of difficulties encountered in considering community as anything other than plural and multi-dimensional. The implications of this are that it is equally impossible to consider communities as consisting of a population who sharing the same geographical space, also share a single unified sense of identity and who all adhere to a shared set of values. Whilst there may well be instances of this, such things are dynamic and during the process of continual change, frequently contested (Massey 1994). Consequently, community is a concept rife with contradictions and paradoxes, not least of which is that it is not only possible for there to be “community without unity”, but that this appears to be an inherent characteristic (Brent 1997).
Brent's arguments are particularly pertinent to community in "the Site" where divisions and social conflict were so deep rooted and bitter, that many spoke of the need for a "community spirit" and at times expressed doubt about whether a community could be said to exist at all. Yet, at the same time fieldwork notes detailed a strong sense of community which operated at many levels, and performed vital functions, particularly in ameliorating the conditions of poverty and social exclusion which prevailed within "the Site". These functions of community were especially evident in the lives of young people who were arguably subject to the most severe forms of poverty and social exclusion. For this group community was often all that stood between them and destitution, yet as this and subsequent chapters discuss, in other respects community was a key source of their social exclusion. This is the vicious paradox referred to in the title of this chapter.

Community In "The Site".

In part community in "the Site" can be defined by its physical differences in fabric, layout and location. As can be seen in figure 5.1, the planned layout and relatively isolated hill top location clearly differentiate "the Site" from more traditional ribbon like developments of terraced housing in the Valleys. The form of housing also differs from adjacent residential areas, with the 370 household units in "the Site" taking the form of low rise blocks of flats constructed out of grey concrete and semi-detached houses with a pebble dash finish. Local recognition of the ways in which these features distinguish this area from adjacent areas is reflected in the fact that residents refer to it as
Figure 5.1: Map showing the layout of "the Site" and the boundaries of its Enumeration Districts.
a distinct place: "the Site". However it is in the interactions which occur between people, space, physical fabric and wider socio-economic and political structures that such differences are both accentuated and imbued with meaning. In other words it is in these interactions that community in "the Site" really begins to take shape.

As with other local authority estates, particularly hill top estates, a key distinguishing factor is the concentrations of poverty and social exclusion which occurs within "the Site". This is not just something which can be measured empirically through the use of abstracted statistical indicators, but is immediately evident in "the Site's" physical appearance. The one shop (1) is protected by wire mesh grilles, the community centre, area housing office, and local police house by heavy steel shutters and doors permanently closed. The same devices protect properties which are unlet, and tellingly where they do not, properties often lie derelict and like the stolen cars which have been dumped in various parts of the estate and its surrounding area, frequently "scrapped" (see Chapter 6) of saleable commodities. The run down physical appearance of "the Site" contributes to what a reconnaissance report produced by detached youth workers operating in the area described as "a threatening environment for both outsiders and residents" (2).

Such perceptions arising from "the Site's" physical appearance not only reinforce the definition of "the Site" as a distinct community, but also lend a particular stigmatised character to such definitions. The importance of stigma in compounding the
social exclusion faced by an area and its residents has been widely discussed in sociology. In both a contemporary and historical context the process of stigmatisation revolves around external perceptions of an area and its inhabitants as being in various ways consistently problematic and dangerous (Gill 1977, Campbell 1993, Fraser 1996). Issues of stigmatisation and demonization are of crucial importance to understanding processes of social exclusion, particularly those processes affecting young people and are discussed more comprehensively in other areas of this thesis. Here consideration is restricted to the way in which "the Site" is fixed as a distinct and separate area by the concentrations of poverty and social exclusion which it contains, and the way in which this generates a social distance between "the Site" and adjacent areas which belies their physical proximity.

Equally high levels of poverty and social exclusion profoundly influence the nature of social relationships within "the Site". One implication being that this is a community whose population spend the majority of their time within the immediate confines of the area, something which intensifies the intimacy of daily social life. This appears to be a feature of life common to many excluded communities. Barke and Turnbull (1992) write of the Meadowell estate in the North East of England: "Envisage a community where only a minority work, where news travels fast from doorstep to doorstep 'around the doors', where there is no private business just 'Chinese whispers'. This is South Meadowell." (Barke & Turnbull 1992: 90). They could just as easily have been describing social life in "the Site".
Social Exclusion, Social Intimacy And Community.

Whilst many have argued that the traditionally close knit and intimate nature of life in working class communities has broken down in the post war period, due to the increasing privatisation of social life (Goldthorpe et al. 1969), the privatisation thesis has been criticised as "speculative" (Crow 1997). It was certainly the case that there appeared to be little evidence of a privatised social life in "the Site", where most people tended to not only know those around them, but to possess deep and multi-layered knowledge of them, built up over time and continually being added to. This was particularly the case for young people in "the Site" and indeed as is discussed in the final section of this chapter, the public nature of young people's social life was a key source of conflict.

During the time I spent with "the boys", walking around the site or sitting on walls watching the comings and goings of daily life, they appeared to know virtually everyone who passed them by. They would shout greetings and wave to some and pass muttered comments to one another about those they disliked, usually accompanied by commentaries on who that person was, and how they related to the rest of the community. For an occasional visitor such as myself the complexity of these relationships was such that I was frequently left bewildered, as they were referred to as essential components of understanding in conversations about altogether different subjects. One of the most obvious means of conveying the intensity of the social intimacy which existed within the community, was in the way outsiders were instantly and openly recognised as such:

'Two Dogs': "What are you doing up here, you're not from here?"

'Boy': "I am"

'Two Dogs': "Do you live here now?"

'Boy': "No, I used to"
‘Two Dogs’ : “No you didn’t, I would have remembered you”  
(12/09/96 - Community Centre Entrance).

Although it might not appear so in print, this was a relatively good humoured exchange between a man in his early twenties and a young boy, who were part of a group of young people standing outside the community centre. The man had recently left the site for a nearby estate, hence his question about the boy living there now. The exchange resulted from the boy’s repeated attempts at interrupting the conversation the man was having about his two bull terriers with another man. After several unsuccessful attempts to attract his attention the boy had christened him “two dogs”. The use of nicknames as a device which, often humorously, reflected elements of a person’s reputation, physical appearance, or character was a routine component of social life in “the Site” particularly amongst “the boys”. When applied to those with whom they had conflictual relationships, these nicknames would often incorporate derogatory terms, or allegations which summarized “the boys” negative perceptions of particular individuals or groups. Whether operating within conflictual or affectionate frameworks the use of nicknames is indicative of the extent of social intimacy in “the Site”.

This level of social intimacy can be understood as the product of many things, but would appear to be particularly influenced by the small size of “the Site”, and the presence of large and established extended families. For example two of “the boys” were cousins (Rob & Keith) who now live in flats directly opposite and above their grandmother’s flat, a fact which caused one of them to jokingly remark “they should call this block, Davies Towers” (Keith 28/11/97). Both had other members of their immediate and extended family living in neighbouring blocks of flats. Indeed when Rob became a father early in the fieldwork, this meant that four generations lived within the space of a few blocks of flats. The presence of large extended families living locally was not unique
to Rob and Keith, but was a frequent, almost universal occurrence amongst the established residents that I encountered.

This level of social intimacy had many fundamentally important implications for the dynamics of community life in “the Site”. Perhaps most fundamentally it meant that community life was enormously complex and paradoxical. As is described in subsequent sections of this chapter the dense social networks upon which it was based, constituted a key and deeply relied upon resource for many residents. Extended kinship networks were of particular importance, and in this respect newcomers and others who did have these networks not only lost out on a key source of support, but were actually made more vulnerable by the absence of these relationships. Whilst community life was characterised in part by social intimacy, it was also characterised by intense social conflict, and in this context extended kinship networks were a source of physical protection. For example when Keith was accosted by two men on his doorstep and an argument arose about a stolen car his father came over from a neighbouring block of flats and the two men backed off (09/07/97).

Equally, many of the incidents described in subsequent chapters (particularly in Chapter 6) involve “the boys” making various forms of attack on other members of the community. Whilst such incidents are connected to much broader structural conflicts occurring within the community, their victims were frequently relatively isolated individuals or households who had little “history” and few social ties in “the Site”. Their vulnerability was exacerbated by patterns of housing supply and demand within “the Site”. As is discussed further in the final section of this chapter, a particular focus of social conflict was an area of low rise blocks of flats (“the blocks”) on the Eastern periphery of “the Site” which had a reputation for being rowdy and troublesome (see figure 5.1). The local area housing officer explained that “the blocks”
unpopularity was reflected in a high population turnover, and the fact that most transfer requests came from this part of the estate. As such most vacant accommodation was in “the blocks” and it was here that both newcomers and local young people were normally housed (02/07/97).

In certain respects these complexities to social life in “the Site”, contradict the central argument of this thesis: that in communities where there are high levels of social exclusion, polarisation and conflict between older and younger sections of the community can result in young people becoming excluded from their own community. As has been seen already, the reality appears far more complex than this might suggest. Indeed in certain respects the presence of distrustful and antagonistic relationships can be regarded more in terms of the relationships between, and reputations of different extended families. This was illustrated particularly by a conversation which occurred between Keith, Rob John and an elderly woman who like the three boys was part of a large extended family network living in the locality. The conversation illustrated not only the importance of belonging to such networks, but also the importance of a family and its individual members having a reputation for being “tough”.

The woman was watching over her great grandson whilst he played on his bike. As he played she talked proudly to the boys about her great grandson, saying how he was a nice boy, but “too gentle” and because of this he kept getting beaten up at school, “even by the girls”. Turning to the boy she said “you don’t like fighting do you?” before turning back to the three boys and saying that in in some ways “I wouldn’t want him any other way, but he’s got to learn or he’ll get it all his life”. Still all was not yet lost as his father and her other grandsons were apparently the same at his age but had presumably “learnt”: “Now if somebody looks at them wrong they don’t look back”. Rob agreed with this wholeheartedly, laughing and saying to the boy “I don’t even call him by
his name your old man he's so hard”. The young boy was oblivious to much of the conversation, ignoring it in favour of riding his bike over a small jump. Seemingly getting bored of doing this alone he called over to another boy of the same age asking him if he wanted to have a go. His great grandmother quickly interjected telling him to not lend his bike to people, before turning to Rob gesturing to the boy’s parents who were stood a few blocks away and saying in low voice “I don’t want to fight them, they fight everybody on “the Site”.” (06/09/96).

Thus, whilst a reputation for toughness was important at both an individual and family level, it was also something which could cause others to be wary to the extent that two children could be prevented from playing together. By the same token, although inter-generational conflict was a recognisable and arguably core dimension of social relations, at the inter-personal level such relationships were by no means uniform. Indeed whilst age differences are undeniably a key aspect of the conflicts described in Chapters 6 and 7, the conflicts themselves were about far more than a simple difference in years, or lack of understanding between generations. Such conflicts can be understood as revolving around relatively abstract and almost ideological principles. Whilst their relative vulnerability was implicated in newcomers being frequent targets for the criminal activities of “the boys”, the intentional targeting of individuals was also based upon their reputations as informants for the police and other outside agencies of authority (Cf: Evans 1997). As is described in Chapter 6, in this context criminal victimisation could be used as deliberate form of punishment against those individuals whom “the boys” perceived as hostile. In this respect, an essential paradox of community in “the Site” is that whilst the intimacy of social life is a pre-requisite for the forms of social cohesion and solidarity discussed in this chapter, it is also something which appears to add a particular personal intensity to conflicts, and in doing so make them all the more intractable.
Social Exclusion, Economic Interdependency And Community.

As has been argued in the preceding section the exclusionary processes which have impacted upon “the Site” are likely to have intensified the intimacy of communal life. Likewise the impoverishment which has resulted from labour market exclusion and the emergence of an increasingly stringent welfare regime has acted to intensify complex webs of economic inter-dependency amongst social networks of family, friendship and acquaintance. In a multitude of ways, ranging from supply of information about the labour market or benefits system, to the supply of cheap goods such as second hand clothing or black market tobacco, community functions as a mechanism which can help ameliorate economic aspects of poverty and social exclusion. Reliance upon these networks is particularly evident in the lives of young people, who being disproportionately vulnerable to unemployment and cuts to welfare entitlements, are in turn susceptible to particularly acute forms of poverty and social exclusion.

At the beginning of the fieldwork only Lee (who at 19 was older than the rest of “the boys”) was eligible for social security benefits. Keith, John, Dennis and Rob had officially left school earlier in the year but had been unable to secure regular employment, and as a result of the 1988 Social Security Act were routinely denied financial support from the state without participating on a Youth Training Scheme. The many shortcomings of these initiatives and their deep rooted unpopularity with many young people, particularly marginalized young people, have been well documented (see Chapter 3). Problems with training provision appear particularly acute for marginalized young people in the Rhondda Valleys, where Ruth Jones (1999) reports that: “some ‘marginalized’ young people are actively refusing training provision as a stepping stone
into work. Limited training opportunities, coupled with a perception of training as ‘poor quality’ or lacking in financial reward has led to a voluntary disengagement from the quasi work spheres of youth training, manifesting in initial refusal to participate or premature leaving of training schemes.” (Jones 1999: 151)

The particular reluctance of marginalized young people to participate on government training schemes may well have been shaped in part by earlier experiences of statutory education. It was certainly the case that a key barrier to the success of the Barnardos self build housing scheme in Pontypridd, whose college based component was likened to a return to school and despised as such, particularly by the male self builders (Hutson & Jones 1999). Viewed in this context the refusal of “the boys” in this study to join a Youth Training Scheme, can be regarded as the continuity of attitudes shaped by profoundly alienating and negative experiences of statutory education. None of the boys had left school with any formal qualifications, and indeed many had not even completed their statutory education. Lee had been excluded from school at the age of 13 and claimed to have received no statutory education after this time (“they tend to forget about you up here”), whilst Keith claimed to have never returned after a teacher made fun of his learning disability.

For whatever reason “the boys”, like many of their peers, avoided joining training schemes and instead “opted” for an economic position labelled by Williamson and Istance (1996) as “Status Zero”: a term which describes the economic limbo of young people who are not in education, training or employment. Like an estimated 750,000 16
& 17 years olds at this time (Williamson 1997), the four boys had no visible means of financial support, and were consequently entirely dependent upon their parents and/or members of their extended family for the provision of such basic requirements as food, clothing and shelter. The extent of socially excluded young people's reliance upon their social networks of family and friends was illustrated by research examining homelessness in Rhondda Cynon Taff (Hutson & Jones 1997). Here it was found that many young people were saved from sleeping rough only through the actions of friends or relatives who could at least provide a couch or floor for them to sleep on. Similar patterns of reliance were also found in many of those sleeping rough, where even if social networks were unable to provide accommodation, they could often provide food, fresh laundry or a place to keep warm for a few hours. In this way social networks could help ameliorate the "cold" "hunger" and "dirt" which respondents felt to be the worst aspects of sleeping rough.

However whilst "the boys" kinship networks were able to provide basic support, they were nonetheless frequently financially ill-equipped to meet these needs. Indeed the effects of welfare reform has not only directly disadvantaged 16 and 17 year olds, whose automatic entitlement to Income Support has been ended, but also directly disadvantaged the households they are a part of. If the young person is living in the parental home they are deemed as having no housing costs as it is expected that their parents will subsidise them, yet, their parents housing benefit entitlement is subject to deductions based on the expectation that the same young person will be contributing towards the household's rent (Jones 1991). It is therefore unsurprising that kinship
networks were routinely unable to provide funds for daily living expenses and that as such "the boys" daily social life was conducted in circumstances where they were almost permanently virtually penniless. Where family networks could not provide "the boys" improvised and through drawing upon wider social networks were able to gain inclusion to particular spheres of social life. For example the 'bong smoking' described in Chapter 6 was made possible through "the boys" pooling resources and establishing complex patterns of borrowing and lending. Raising the funds for this social activity was equally dependent upon "the boys" drawing upon resources within their community. Many of the acts of acquisitive criminality discussed in Chapter 6, relied upon "the boys" utilising their social networks, drawing upon their comprehensive body of 'knowledge' about others within their local community and generally exploiting local opportunity structures. Other non-criminal or legally ambiguous economic opportunities were also made available through these channels and the connections they contained. For example, Bass and Joey, (the two boys who being slightly younger than the rest were still at school) earned small sums of money by clearing weeds from some residents back gardens.

Equally whilst "the boys" family networks were normally unable to provide them with money directly they could on occasion facilitate access to opportunities to earn money through paid employment in the informal economy ("hobbles"). These openings were highly valued as despite their low wages in relation to the formal economy, they were perhaps the most lucrative economic opportunity available to "the boys" (3) and often constituted their only experience of paid employment. Invariably such opportunities arose through their social networks. For
example when Keith and Rob secured several days employment "knocking out concrete" this had been secured for them by Rob's father. Similarly prior to the fieldwork John had briefly been employed as a labourer for a tarmacing company which employed his step father.

Social networks, most especially family networks, were therefore fundamentally important in providing "the boys" with their few experiences of paid employment, however marginalized and however temporary. Allatt & Yeandle (1992) report similar findings in the North East of England, where many respondents in their study rated the importance of social networks in finding employment in a changing and insecure labour market, at least on a par with qualifications, experience gained from training schemes or help from the careers office/job centre. Yet as Allatt & Yeandle (1992) also note the ability of social networks to fulfil such roles had been undermined by the poor state of the local labour market, and changing employment practices and patterns. This was equally apparent in "the Site" where it was indicative of the level of exclusion from mainstream economic structures, that opportunities for "hobbies", in what is ultimately the most marginalized and peripheral of labour markets were rarely available to "the boys". To my knowledge Keith and Rob's employment "knocking out concrete" was the only occasion that any of "the boys" accessed a "hobble" during the duration of the fieldwork. A conversation which occurred between Sian and a friend is perhaps more typical of the experience of social networks in this role. Hearing of Keith's despondency when his "hobble" ended prematurely, Sian asked a friend who was employed on a nearby farm "find [Keith] a hobble will you?", but could only lament that
"it's a shame he's a good little worker [Keith]", when her friend replied that she didn't know of anything (06/09/96).

This inability of "the boys" social networks to help facilitate regular access to either the formal or informal labour market is indicative of the generalized nature of labour market exclusion amongst "the Site's" residents. Individuals located within these networks are scarcely able to aid "the boys" when this is something which they themselves cannot access. As such the acutely perceived scarcity and poor quality of employment evokes similar feelings of anger, resentment and frustration in older residents as it does in "the boys". It is for example little wonder that Sian was unable to secure Keith a "hobble" when her own visits to the job centre left her so frustrated as to tell the staff "call this place a job centre, what you want to put outside is fucking joke shop" (28/11/97). Williams & Windebank (1998) note a similar incapacitation of social networks in areas of endemic long term unemployment, arguing that: "social networks..... are only communications channels which can put the unemployed in touch with work opportunities. If no such opportunities exist, then obviously dense social networks are of no value: they have nothing to communicate" (Williams & Windebank 1998: 148).

However, whilst the state of the local labour market largely incapacitated the ability of "the boys" social networks to provide access to even the most rudimentary employment opportunities, their social networks were able to function in other important ways. In particular they could provide important information about the working of the benefits system. Here the knowledge accrued by others in their interactions with this
system, could be communicated and used in formulating strategies by which this system
could be navigated more successfully. If nothing else such information could help an
individual avoid the frustration of signing up for an initiative or scheme which others had
perceived as futile. Thus, a 19 year old young man describes why he avoided joining the
Job Club in terms of his friends perception of its futility:

Boy: “They tried to get me to join the job club but I didn’t bother”
S.J. : “Why was that ?”
Boy: “He was in it last year and said it was shit, (motions towards friend standing nearby)
so I didn’t bother”

(06/08/96 - Community Centre Entrance)

In other instances such experience could actually be used to gain access to benefits.
Although, “the boys” were ordinarily ineligible for benefits, when equipped with the right
information there was at least a possibility of circumventing the barriers placed in their
way (4). For example during a conversation with Keith in which he described how his
attempts to access benefits had merely resulted in his being repeatedly shunted between
offices and departments, Leanne was able to suggest a range of alternative strategies.
Initially she responded with a suggestion about how he might be able to access benefits
with joining a government training scheme by exploiting shortages in training vacancies:
“All I can say is what my son told them. That he wanted to be a fork lift driver, there is a
huge waiting list for that.” (10/09/96). Whilst Keith did not actually access benefits
through this route, Leanne also advised him that he may be eligible for benefits as a carer
for his elderly grandmother, whose flat he was living in, and this approach eventually
proved to be successful (5).
No doubt commentators such as Murray (1990, 1996) would regard the use of such strategies as further evidence of the cynical exploitation of the welfare system by an emergent urban underclass. However, residents in “the Site” would proffer radically different interpretations. The welfare system occupied a highly ambivalent position in their lives. With 83% of households receiving Housing Benefit in 1997(6), the vast majority were reliant upon means tested benefits for all or part of their income and as such this system was probably the principal source of cash circulating within the local economy. However, the same system which individuals and households relied upon for subsistence was a source of considerable resentment for its perceived injustices. Given the state of the local labour market the various initiatives designed to improve employment prospects were regarded as largely futile and exploitative, and benefit rates as being insufficient to prevent hardship(7). Such contentions are supported by a considerable body of academic research and analysis which demonstrates that benefit incomes are often scarcely sufficient to meet even the most routine and basic household expenses (Townsend 1993, Campbell 1984, Putland 1993, Gordon & Pantazis 1997, Berthoud & Kempson 1992, McNeish 1994). Those living on benefits hardly need academic confirmation of the difficulties which this entails, the struggle to make ends meet is a constant feature of daily life. In these circumstances it takes only a relatively small sum of money to tip the scales on incredibly finely balanced budgets, and for the routine difficulties of meeting basic and routine household expenses to escalate into acute financial crises which threaten the most abject forms of hardship.

Such crises would arise despite the most meticulous budgeting. For
example, Sian would know to the exact penny how much she had spent on individual items of food, and would actively search out the lowest possible prices when doing her shopping. She had two coats one of which had been given to her by a friend, the other had cost £2.95. Clothing for her three children was purchased from a woman who lived on her street and sold bin bags filled with second hand clothes for a few pounds. Electric, gas and water bills were paid off in regular small amounts every fortnight. Despite such measures certain expenses could not be met. Thus whilst Sian possessed a television she could not afford a license and as the television was rarely used, for fear of being caught and subsequently being unable to pay the fine for license evasion. The three piece suite, which along with the television constituted all the furniture in an otherwise bare living room, had been obtained through hire purchase, but Sian had fallen behind on her repayments. One week, having had to “pay off” the bailiffs, she faced a situation where all but £5 of a fortnights benefit payments had been spent, but there was no fresh food in the cupboards and payment was still due for the gas and electricity. When one of her children Nick, notices that there is no milk in the fridge, he asks for some money to buy some, but she has to explain that she has no money to go the shops. Apparently embarrassed at this unfolding in front of me she says: “I have to tell them see, so they don’t make me feel bad, asking for money and things when I don’t have any”. In a voice which sounds close to tears Nick asks Sian “does that mean we can’t have breakfast tomorrow” but before she has time to respond Nick adds angrily “I don’t want breakfast anyway” (23/09/96). Sian manages to reassure them that they will get fed, but the only way she can do this is by sending the children up to her parent’s house for meals.

The considerable resentment generated by the level of benefit income and the hardship that this induces, is exacerbated by the workings of a system which can frequently appear to be concerned only with reducing benefit incomes further. The implications of welfare reforms which are discussed at an abstract level in Chapter 3,
have real and immediate implications for the lives of residents in “the Site”. For example, within weeks of the introduction of the Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), the household income for Angharad’s family was reduced when her husband was adjudged by the Benefits Agency as not being able to demonstrate that he was actively seeking work (23/10/96). The same day, Steph arrived at Sian’s house complaining about a visit made to her house by the Benefits Agency, “a weasally little man with glasses, a mac and a clip board” had been checking on whether she was cohabiting with her boyfriend (if the Benefits Agency judged that she was cohabiting then she would have been entitled to a lower rate of benefit, and possibly even accused of fraud). Similarly, it later transpired that Sian’s financial difficulties were in part caused by a mistake made by the Benefits Agency in calculating her mortgage interest payments (8). Over the course of four years she had been underpaid £2,500, but when this came to light the underpayments were sent straight to the building society, despite Sian’s arguing that “me and my kids have had to struggle, they’ve gone without, been deprived of things because we’ve had to make up the shortfall.” (02/07/97)

When such procedures are viewed in combination with the stress and poverty of living on benefits, the reality of the local labour market and in this context the perceived ineffectiveness of various initiatives and measures designed to improve employability, it is scarcely surprising the benefit regulations are regarded as having little legitimacy. Perceptions of the benefits system as an uncaring and unjust bureaucracy are a common finding of academic research examining benefit claimants’ attitudes, particularly in the relatively small amount of research on benefit fraud where these perceptions are frequently cited as justification (Evasion & Woods1995, Jordan & Redley 1994, Dean & Melrose 1996, 1997 ). Indeed the strength of these feelings is such that one respondent (9) in this study, makes no reference whatsoever to benefit regulations, nor the sort of moral agenda which governments seek to impose (see Chapter 3). Instead this
respondent’s account focuses upon the financial pressures to participate in low paid and low status employment which is perceived as demeaning and disheartening: “[they] dangle a few quid in front of your nose coming up to Christmas, but I know I can do something better than clean shit out of the toilet.” (12/11/97)

Stress And Emotional Anguish As A Communal Dynamic.

Although in certain ways the impact of poverty and social exclusion upon “the Site” has exerted an intensifying effect upon key dynamics of community these effects are far from straightforward or free from contradiction. Through intensifying the intimacy of social life in “the Site”, and through intensifying reliance on complex webs of economic (and social) interdependency, the impact of poverty and social exclusion forms a powerful basis for the development of social solidarity. However, the same processes are paradoxically implicated in the emergence/exacerbation of social conflict, division and polarization between different groups and individuals. This is most obviously illustrated by the sorts of conflict which could result from the demands placed upon social networks, and the difficulties which these over-burdened networks could encounter in meeting these demands. The strain which this placed upon personal relationships could on occasion result in arguments and sometimes violence. For example there was a strong element of coercion in the patterns of borrowing and lending which facilitated “the boys” collective purchase of cannabis. Arguments could result from an individual refusing to enter into these arrangements and the repayment of loans of even very small sums of money was enforced by a very real threat of violence (See Chapter 6). Similarly, whilst Sian was able to access help from her parents during the periods of
acute financial crisis, on at least one occasion this caused a temporary rift between her and her father, who in a moment of anger called her "a scrounger" (23/09/96).

Research findings suggest that unemployment has profoundly negative consequences for an individual’s mental health, not just as a result of the socio-psychological implications of unemployment (e.g. loss of status) but also as a direct consequence of the poverty of unemployment and the restrictions which this places upon lifestyles (Fryer 1992). Within “the Site” the stress and emotional anguish generated in part by the daily hardships of living on benefits was evident throughout its social structure, and constituted a key and debilitating dynamic of communal life. At an extreme level this could generate a sense of hopelessness and despair which quite literally caused individuals to question whether life was worth living. Many of those who I encountered spoke of feeling suicidal, of past suicide attempts and at least one individual attempted suicide during the course of the fieldwork. Suicide was a subject which could be dropped into conversations in a casual, matter of fact manner. For example, John openly recounted a suicide attempt which he claimed to have made whilst he had been in custody.

Similarly, during a conversation with a detached youth worker Angharad recounted an incident in which Carl (a thirteen year old boy with an angry, frequently bruised face, and a reputation for being troublesome) had tried to climb onto the roof of a coach as it was travelling along a motorway. When restrained from doing this, he had apparently then tried to climb out of the emergency exit. Visibly shocked, the youth worker responded “he could have killed himself”, to which Angharad replied “he do say that he wants to kill himself” (01/10/96). Some suicides had even found their way into local folklore. In
particular there was a story told to me by Sian, of a local man whose body had been
discovered in the middle of a field on Christmas Day after he had shot himself in the head
the previous evening. For Sian Christmas Day always evoked memories of this man, who
was apparently known locally for his "lovely temperament" and who was also a close
friend of her father (12/12/96).

Of course suicides or even suicide attempts are far from the normality of
life in "the Site", but are indicative of the levels of despair and anguish which individuals
could reach, and even, in an albeit more subdued form, of the almost routine existence of
these states for many residents. It was notable for example that some of the nicknames
which "the boys" gave to their enemies depicted mental illness (e.g. "Mad Mary") or an
alleged dependency upon prescribed tranquillisers (e.g. "Natalie Jelly Head"). Equally
"the boys" themselves routinely spoke of being "bored" and "pissed off", and were
frequently visibly despondent, particularly when already minimal aspirations and
expectations could not be met. One such incident occurred when Keith and Rob’s
"hobble" (discussed above) came to an abrupt and premature end. Keith was particularly
disappointed by this and whilst the other boys talked amongst themselves remained
withdrawn, staring morosely into the distance. Eventually he responded to John’s
persistent attempts to draw him into the conversation with a shrug and the comment that
"I'm just pissed off that's all". This prompted a conversation amongst "the boys" which
centred on this subject, with John saying how he always felt "pissed off" and how it was
"shit up here".

Given that it was in this locality that “the boys” experienced their social exclusion it was not surprising that such expressions of dissatisfaction were often transferred to “the Site” as a place. Later the same day, I was walking towards Sian’s house with John, when he stopped and looking around, suddenly changed the subject of the conversation we were having:

John: “It's fucking shit isn’t it?”

S.J. “What do you mean?”

John: “This place its shit, I hate it.”

(06/09/96)

Views such as this were frequently expressed. When the drop in centre had its opening night several weeks later (see Chapter 7), Sian, spotted John looking glum and suggested the idea of a day trip organized by “Reflect”. John brightened at the prospect but when Sian asked for ideas, the response was simple “anywhere away from here, I just want to get away from [the Site]” (10/09/96). Over a year later even the prospect of another term of detention, had its silver lining for John “back to Portland, another break away from this place” (27/10/97).

Again an individual’s social network could offer both practical and emotional support, helping to alleviate feelings of depression and despair. Such support was often conducted through the medium of a keen, and often dark, sense of humour. This was an important aspect of social life in “the Site”, and one which stands at odds to the otherwise bleak picture painted by this chapter. During fieldwork examples of this were endless, including such things as the way funerals were described as “plantings”, or a sign in a local shop window which stated “toilet rolls twelve for a pound, cheap enough to wipe your arse on”. The use of humour could open up a space in which an individual
could discuss problems they were having or painful past experiences, and generally get things off their chest without the conversation becoming too serious or doom laden. Thus when Sian was telling Leanne about her debts and the consequent visits to her house by bailiffs Leanne joked about how she was on first name terms with her bailiff and how it was unfair that Sian got two bailiffs whilst she only got one (23/09/96). On a previous occasion Sian’s ex-husband had walked past her house coughing, prompting her to comment “I hope you cough up a lung you bastard”, before turning to Leanne laughing and saying “I don’t mean all these things I’ve just got a really sick sense of humour”. There followed a conversation between the two women in which both spoke about their previous relationships and in particular about their experiences of domestic violence. Perhaps some would regard the jokes and laughter which littered this conversation as being inappropriate to a subject as serious as domestic violence, but this would seem to entirely miss the point. By recounting their experiences in this way, both women could work through painful past experiences without dwelling on them, and in the course of doing so offer emotional support and bolster each other’s self confidence. For example when Sian made the comment that her ex-spouse had quietened her down when she was in company, and in doing so “brought out the nice side of me”, Leanne quickly disagreed saying “I thought he suppressed you” (12/09/96). Sian visibly brightened at this.

The emotional consequences of hardship and adversity can therefore in certain respects be seen to act as a sort of social cement, tying individuals ever more closely to social networks which can provide not only practical but also emotional support in times of need. However, whilst this may be the case, it was equally apparent that a sense of hopelessness and despair could not only exert severely debilitating effects upon individuals, but upon the dynamics of community life more generally. Whilst there is an inherent element of speculation in making such a claim (as there is no certainty of knowing how individuals and social groups would react to events without these
conditions being present and that making such a judgement is highly subjective) it did appear to be the case that the constant underlying stresses and tensions of life in "the Site", contributed significantly to the development and nature of social conflict and division. It is for example highly likely that these underlying conditions were a significant factor in eliciting disproportionate responses to particular events and issues from both individuals and social groups, and that many of the events discussed in subsequent chapters should therefore be viewed within this context. Equally, the existence of stress and emotional anguish as a dynamic of social relationships in "the Site" appears to interact with other conflictual dynamics of community life in mutually exacerbating ways.

Youth, Social Exclusion, Spatial Containment And Competition.

As is argued in earlier sections of this chapter, a key implication of poverty and social exclusion for the dynamics of social life within "the Site" is the way in which these issues act to largely restrict its populations social interactions to within this locality. The combination of high unemployment, geographical isolation, low mobility and extremely limited financial resources restrict both the need to venture outside "the Site" and the means with which to do so. These containing effects are compounded not only by the multiple and complex forms of reliance which individuals place upon their social networks in the area, but also by the effect of perceived stigma and the ways in which this can undermine an individuals self confidence outside "the Site". This is perhaps best exemplified by Steph's attempts to involve John, Keith and Lee in a self build housing project based in Pontypridd (Hutson & Jones 1999).

When taken to meet the scheme's co-ordinators at the Barnardos Open Door Project in Pontypridd the three boys were enthusiastic about the prospect of joining
the scheme. However, within the building itself they were unusually quiet and withdrawn barely responding to the scheme co-ordinators attempts to talk to them and even taking several minutes to pluck up the courage to help themselves to a plate of biscuits which had been placed on the table in front of them (13/08/96). Ultimately despite their initial enthusiasm and Steph’s continued encouragement none of “the boys” joined the scheme, nor even attended any further meetings. Reflecting upon her attempts to involve the three boys with the scheme, Steph believed that the major problem she encountered were that none of the boys were willing to go along to meetings if their friends were not present, because “[away from “the Site”] they think people don’t like them” (14/10/96). Thus despite their routinely and intensely expressed dislike of “the Site” and their considerable dissatisfaction with their life within it, “the boys” demonstrated a deep rooted attachment to this place. Indeed, when towards the end of the fieldwork John’s parents moved to an area several miles away from “the Site”, John still made regular return visits when he would stand in the same places and complain about being bored and that “life is shit” (28/11/97).

Barke & Turnbull (1992) note similar deep rooted attachments to place amongst residents in the Meadowell estate in the North East of England, arguing that: “on the estate residents use social networks, extended families, contacts and ‘space’ to live out their lives in a meaningful way, but off the estate people feel vulnerable and different. Because so much of a person’s make up is intertwined with ‘life on the Meadowell’ it means it is fixed, stuck to a place” (Barke & Turnbull 1992: 123). Viewed in this way the shared circumstances of poverty and social exclusion, which through intensifying the intimacy and interdependency of community life, underscore attachment to place also act as a form of spatial imprisonment. Individuals become fundamentally reliant upon a place and a community which offers little in the way of opportunity or material resources, and with which they are in many ways deeply dissatisfied. Moreover in an environment
characterised by the scarcity of opportunities and material resources, those opportunities and resources which are present take on a significance which may well be lacking in other more prosperous and socially included communities. In turn, the inevitable conflicts which develop through competition for scarce resources are likely to be exacerbated by both an introspective dimension to community life in which there is little alternative focus, and the emotionally stressed circumstances of resident’s daily lives.

Such is the scarcity of resources within “the Site” that public and semi-public spaces constitute resources in their own right and as such are a key setting for such conflicts. The polarisation and conflict which occurs between younger and older sections of the community are based in particular around young people congregating in and colonising public and semi-public spaces. Such tensions are not new to British society (Pearson 1984), and neither are they restricted to working class areas (Taylor 1995), but do appear to achieve a particular intensity in “the Site” due to the presence of large numbers of socially excluded young people with “no jobs”, “no money” “nothing to do” and “nowhere to go” (Regional Research Project 1995 - unpublished data)(10). For these young people such spaces present a rare opportunity to interact with their peers and pursue a social life, but for others their use of these spaces is a source of nuisance, irritation and even fear, the basis of which is both real and imagined.

Conflict over space is not uniformly distributed throughout “the Site”, but is focused upon particular spaces, most notably the community centre and “the blocks”. Especially prior to the construction of the community centre “the blocks” were an area of “the Site” which held particular attractions for local young people. In part this was a consequence of the local patterns of housing supply and demand described in earlier sections of this chapter. However, architectural considerations were also a key component of “the blocks”’ attractiveness to young people. Unlike accommodation in
other parts of "the Site" where boundaries are clearly demarcated with gardens and low walls, no such boundaries are demarcated in "the blocks" and each block has an open access stairwell. For the young people who congregate in these stairwells they provide a rare source of shelter from the cold, wind and the rain, weather conditions which are accentuated by "the Site’s" exposed hill top situation. Additionally at the rear of the blocks there are basement storage sheds and fire escapes which also provide some protection from the elements, and have the added advantage of being relatively discrete spaces hidden from public view.

Nothing illustrates more explicitly the sorts of conflict and polarisation which can occur between younger and older sections of the community than the way in which this area of the estate is perceived by different social groups. "The boys" described "the blocks" as "loud", a definition which recognised the unstable nature of the area and its negative implications, but also contained the promise of excitement and stimulation, a respite from the stupefying boredom which constituted the routine backdrop to their social lives (11). As such "the blocks" held an attractiveness for "the boys" which other parts of "the Site" and its surrounding areas, which being described as "quiet", did not possess.

"The boys" perceptions of "the blocks" were the polar opposite of those held by many older members of the community at least in so far as this section of the population were represented by the local tenants and residents association: "the tenants" (see also Chapter 7). For this group "the blocks" were so problematic that a separate forum group was established in order to voice concerns about the area and the behaviours manifested within it, with representatives of outside agencies such as the local authority and the police. The minutes of these forum group meetings detail a list of complaints about "the blocks" which precisely pinpoint key dimensions along which
inter-generational conflict occurs within “the Site”. There are frequent complaints made that residents feel powerless to act against the “abuse of police and residents by gangs in the area” (20th July 1995), due to police inaction and “a real fear of reprisals” (24th April 1995). Consequently it is claimed that “the blocks and their surroundings had become a ‘no-go area’. Good people were terrified to stay there” (24th April 1995). The minutes also contain more precise complaints about the types of behaviour identified as problematic, which as detailed in Chapter 6 revolve around issues of drug use, crime and ‘anti-social behaviour’. Equally as is also discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 “the tenants” identified this area and the sorts of behaviour manifested within it, as not only problematic in itself, but as a source of many of the problems which they perceived to be afflicting “the Site” more generally. Although these problems were sometimes attributed to young people from outside the area being housed in “the blocks”, it was also frequently the case that indigenous local young people, amongst whom “the boys” were numbered, were identified as the source of these problems.

Many of the allegations contained within the minutes of the “blocks forum” meetings have been borne out during the period of this study (see Chapter 6). To this extent the minutes are an accurate reflection of the social dynamics present within both “the blocks” and “the Site” more generally. However, they are also indicative of the local power relationships in which the competition for access to or control over local resources occurs, and also of the relative powerlessness of local young people in this respect. As Hvinden (1995) argues social exclusion is characterised not so much by absolutes but by ambiguity, and this is something which forms one of the defining characteristics of youth, a social status defined by being neither adult nor child. At a structural level it is this same ambiguity of social status which has made young people particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of welfare reform (Dean 1997). Equally, the ambiguity of youth is something which can lead to exclusionary implications at the
local level, most particularly in relation to the capacity to lay claim to and define legitimate usage of space. As Sibley (1995) observes: “Adolescents may be threatening to adults because they transgress the adult/child boundary and appear discrepant in “adult” spaces. Whilst they may be chased off the equipment in the children’s playground they may also be thrown out of a public house for under age drinking” (Sibley 1995: 35).

Thus on account of their youthful social status young people in “the Site” lack political power in the inevitable struggles and conflicts which ensue over the capacity to exercise control over scarce and inadequate resources. Ultimately this is the key underlying factor in the various dimensions of their social exclusion which are described in subsequent chapters. Equally it is in this context through which behaviours which are damaging not only to the wider community, but to the young people themselves should be viewed. Such behaviours do not exist in a social vacuum but in response to particular structural conditions and circumstances whose defining characteristics include a sense of hopelessness, powerlessness and lack of any real alternative.

Conclusion.

One of the central contentions of this chapter is that processes of social exclusion have in many ways intensified community in “the Site”, through for example intensifying the intimacy of social life and the relationships of social and economic interdependency which bind individuals to family and community structures. In circumstances where the traditional economic base has collapsed and mass unemployment (re)emerged, the social networks of family and friends which underpin community function as a key source of support upon which many individuals are deeply reliant and without which they would undoubtedly be much worse off. There is considerable irony in this given that in this respect communities such as “the Site” are the embodiment of a level of community frequently believed to be lacking in wider society, yet at the same time are frequently
pathologized as epitomising “Dangerous Britain” (Campbell 1993, Fraser 1996) and identified as the settings from which dangerous new cultures are emerging (Murray 1990, 1996, Dennis & Erdos 1992). Although deeply ironic this is scarcely surprising as at the time of their existence the same communities which are now romanticised were frequently subject to broadly similar forms of critique. For example May (1996) describes how at the turn of the century, Ll. Thomas an influential local figure, explained labour unrest in the South Wales coalfields as being a product of poor community structures. Earlier than this, at the time of their very formation concerns about crime and disorder, again often political disorder, was integral to the formation of a modern police force (Jones, 1992, :201).

This situation is made doubly ironic by the fact that, as is argued in Chapter 3 and subsequent fieldwork chapters, key aspects of the exclusionary processes affecting “the Site” are shaped by contemporary versions of such characterisations. This is an important point which should be borne in mind when reading later chapters, as although these chapters tend to focus upon exclusionary processes which originate from within “the Site’s” social structures, these processes are constantly underpinned by wider structural factors. The central underlying argument contained within these chapters is essentially an elaboration of the vicious paradox referred to in the title of this chapter. Whilst the impact of poverty and social exclusion has exerted an intensifying effect upon community it has in effect intensified several paradoxes inherent within community. Thus, although one impact has been to create a powerful basis for social solidarity and cohesion within “the Site’s” social networks, these networks have been simultaneously been over-burdened and undermined. In doing so another impact of poverty and social exclusion has been to foster/exacerbate division, fragmentation and conflict, and it is out of this that the localised processes of social exclusion which affect young people in “the Site” have emerged.
In this respect this chapter has been intended to function in part as a platform upon which subsequent chapters rest (hence the numerous cross references). In particular the intention has been to introduce the notion of community in "the Site". as something which is paradoxical and contradictory for its younger members for whom it is a source of both sustenance and exclusion. Equally for all the social conflict and division analysed in subsequent chapters, there are clearly instances of consensus, shared values and social solidarity. This is perhaps most evident in the four core themes of "no jobs", "no money" "nothing to do" and "nowhere to go" identified by the Regional Research Project’s 1995 survey. Divergence appears not so much in the analysis of what is wrong, but in the different ways in which people respond to these circumstances. As will be demonstrated further in subsequent chapters this is something which results in the development of problematic perceptions of the area’s youth, which is in turn reflected in attempts to exclude them from their own community. Yet as this chapter clearly demonstrates it is these people who are amongst the most obviously dependent on their community and its structures. They live in a world which offers them little in the way of opportunity, almost all of which is derived from the social networks to which they have access (i.e. the community in which they live). Yet whilst this undoubtedly results in them having powerful social ties to their immediate area, it is also in this area where their stark disillusionment and dissatisfaction with life is routinely experienced. Their responses to this can (as will be examined in Chapter 6) be highly destructive not only to other members of their community, but also to themselves. Resultant divisions not only compound the processes of social exclusion which people face, sometimes even to the extent of attempts being made to literally banish young people to another locality, but as will be examined in Chapter 7, has served to undermine the grassroots attempts of some community members to exercise their own agency in tackling the problems faced by the areas youth. It is important to recognise that these are processes derived not from failings
within the community's structure but from their attempts to co-exist with some of the worst symptoms of the stranglehold of social exclusion.

Endnotes

(1) There is only one shop within "the Site" itself, but there are several other shops on the main road which runs alongside "the Site".

(2) This report has not been fully cited here in order to preserve "the Site's" anonymity.

(3) Whilst the sum of £15 per day quoted by "the boys" in this study, and also by young men in similar positions in other local studies (Hutson & Jones 1999) is low by most standards, and is even recognized as such by "the boys", this figure compares favourably with other potential sources of income such as training allowances. Equally, as is described in Chapter 6, 'scrapping' was a popular means of raising income amongst "the boys", but often brought little financial return. For example one young men claimed to made less than £10 for what amounted to a day and a half's work.

(4) Although routine eligibility for state benefits was ended with this legislation provision was made for particular cases. For example if the young person could demonstrate "severe hardship", or if there were no suitable training vacancies in their area.

(5) When fieldwork started in "the Site" Rob was homeless and along with Keith was staying in his grandmothers flat. Both Rob and Keith subsequently secured independent housing in neighbouring flats. Part of the reason for this was the two boys were able to claim that by being housed in this way they could help support their elderly grandmother whose health was failing.

(6) This figure was arrived at by dividing the number of housing benefit returns received
by the Area Housing Office by the number of council owned properties in the area. A similar method has been employed at a larger scale in Chapter 2 and is explained in more detail there.

(7) As is described in Chapter 4 on the first attempt to gain entry, a group of young men who were stood outside the community centre were approached. Although this encounter was very stilted and awkward, when, at a loss for anything else to do, I asked whether they felt that benefit rates were at high enough levels, the answer was a spontaneous, and resounding chorus of “No!”

(8) Although growing up in “the Site”, during their marriage Sian and her husband had taken out a mortgage on a three bed roomed house on the main road next to “the Site”. Historically the South Wales Valleys have had higher than average owner occupancy rates and house prices in the area tend to be low. Sian’s house had cost £17,000.

(9) This respondent will not be named here due to the sensitivity of the subject and the albeit remote possibility of the punitive implications which could result from their identification.

(10) “The Site” was one of the localities which were visited during a large scale questionnaire survey conducted by the University Of Glamorgan’s Regional Research Project in 1995. Twenty questionnaires were completed with respondents in “the Site”, seven of whom were aged between 16-18. Four core themes of their dissatisfaction were expressed by these young people: “no jobs” “no money” “nothing to do” and “nowhere to go”. Indeed as is mentioned in the Chapter 4, it was a conversation which occurred between a group of three young men during the completion of a questionnaire which provided the impetus for this research, its subject and its setting.

(11) As is discussed further in Chapter 6, any event which deviated from the routine was a source of excitement even when this event could have profoundly negative
consequences.

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Chapter 6: Empowerment And Disempowerment: A Paradox Of Social Exclusion And Delinquency.

Introduction: Young Men, Delinquency And The Climate Of Crisis.

There is a long standing association between working class adolescent males, poverty and delinquency. Over the years this relationship has formed a key focus of ethnographic research which has consistently drawn attention to aspects of socio-economic structure, material deprivation and restricted opportunities (Parker 1974, Patrick 1973, Gill 1977, Corrigan 1979, Foster 1990, Craine 1997). It is equally apparent in analyses of aggregated crime data which have revealed that poverty, youthfulness and masculinity are factors which in isolation and in combination bring a disproportionate risk of becoming incorporated into various crime datasets as victim, offender or both (Home Office 1995, Mayhew et al. 1992). Such relationships invite obvious economically based explanations of criminality, in which the financial hardships of poverty propel individuals into acts of acquisitive criminality. This is a view which appears to have some support amongst the general public, with for example, almost 60% of respondents in the Regional Research Project's 1995 survey considering unemployment to be the major cause of crime in their area (Adamson & Jones 1995: 24-25). It also derives some support from analyses of official crime and unemployment data, with (once account is made of a "time lag" effect) fluctuations in recorded unemployment being matched by fluctuations in recorded property crime (Wells 1994).

However, considerable caution should be exercised in interpreting such
findings in isolation, as rather than representing an accurate portrayal of the totality of these phenomena both crime, and unemployment data are partial and distorted social constructions. This is especially the case with crime data which as is widely recognised is made problematic by the existence of a "dark figure" of unrecorded crimes. As such the dominance of adolescent working class males in crime data may well be a partial reflection of traditional fears of this group (Pearson 1983) and their influence upon law enforcement. Brogden et al. (1988) argue that the historical development of the various law enforcement agencies and institutions has contributed directly to the production of a "criminalized class" of powerless and marginalized social groups. Young working class men are particularly vulnerable to being incorporated into this group which Brogden et al argue is best conceived of through Lee's (1981) notion of police property: "historically and in the present, the youthful male poor find themselves the primary inhabitant of that public space which it is the police mandate to keep orderly, their poverty making them problematic, their youthfulness doubly so" (Brogden et al. 1988: 149).

Recognition of the historical processes through which marginalized and powerless groups of people are made vulnerable to being criminalized, is especially important to the contemporary setting. Here these processes have been accentuated by a climate of crisis generated by the huge economic, social and cultural transformations which have occurred over the last two to three decades. The climate of crisis has particularly surrounded discussion of those individuals, social groups and communities who have been profoundly marginalized as a result of these transformations. A curious
feature of this climate of crisis is that the disproportionately high criminal victimisation levels amongst acutely marginalized groups such as the homeless (Spurling 1998) are often overlooked, as are the multiplicity of ways in which the negative effects of crime are greater for the urban poor than for more affluent sections of society. Instead the emphasis is placed more on the perceived threats which this group poses to wider society. It is in this context that the association between marginalized young men and criminality has been both broadened and intensified in recent years. Intensified to the extent that the structural nature of socio-economic transformation appears to have permanently “extended” (Furlong 1992) traditional routes into adulthood for many working class men and women.

This is particularly the case for socially excluded, young, working class males who some commentators fear have, in the absence of more traditional opportunity structures, built “alternative careers” in the hidden and illicit economy (Craine 1997). Broadened to the extent that there are now more ways in which this group’s behaviour can become officially classified as delinquent or criminal. This is particularly exemplified by policy makers current concern with the “anti-social” behaviour associated with what the Prime Minister recently described as “yob culture” (Blair 2000: Labour Party Conference Address). Definitions of anti-social behaviour are wide ranging and incorporate a broad spectrum of activities which range from the overtly criminal (e.g. the use or supplying of illegal drugs) to forms of behaviour which would not ordinarily be considered criminal (e.g. “excessive drinking”, “large groups hanging round in public space”) (Social Exclusion Unit 2000). However, these latter forms of “anti-social
behaviour" which are commonly associated with young people have been effectively criminalized. Thus the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, includes measures which grant statutory authorities the power to implement child curfews, anti-social behaviour orders and parenting orders.

This process of broadening and intensifying the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and delinquency, is strongly related to the identification and causal entwining of a wide range of imputed social pathologies amongst the poorest and most marginalized sections of society. This trend has its clearest expression in the emergence and dominance of right wing explanations of poverty based upon notions of moral turpitude and degeneracy. Such explanations are best exemplified by those such as Murray (1990,1996) or Dennis & Erdos (1992) who claim to have identified the emergence of dangerous new cultural forms amongst the young in poor communities. These cultural forms (whether Murray’s underclass culture or Dennis & Erdos’s “culture of anomie”) not only serve as explanations of the poverty associated with welfare dependency but are put to use in explaining a wide range of related social ills. The issues of drugs, crime and anti-social behaviour examined within this chapter are also strongly associated with these emergent cultures. Like the underclass more generally, these are issues which, in isolation and in combination, are depicted as presenting fundamental threats to the future of civic society:

“Drugs wreck lives, drugs traumatising families and they loosen the foundations of once stable communities”

(Jack Straw, Home Secretary, Labour Party Conference Address 1999)
“Anti-social behaviour destroys lives and shatters communities”
(Charles Clarke, Minister Of State Home Office - foreword to social exclusion unit 2000)

The dominance of such analyses generates a policy making agenda in which policy responses to both crime and welfare are predicated on the need to be “tough” and to initiate systematic “crackdowns”. This is evident not only in the rhetoric which accompanies new policy initiatives or in the genuinely punitive and authoritarian direction of much new crime (Muncie 1990) and welfare policy (see Chapter 3), but in the increasing inter-locking of these two, ostensibly separate areas of social policy. At times this process, which has been described by some commentators as the criminalization of social policy, is a relatively subtle and underlying process. For example, whilst noting the much needed investment which Community Safety initiatives bring to poor communities, Gilling & Barton (1997) express fears that by subordinating and restricting the role of welfarist policy objectives to their utility in maintaining law and order, these initiatives contribute to the criminalisation of social policy. In other instances this process is made far more explicit, as is exemplified by the centrality of benefit fraud in the development of welfare policy, the adoption of terminology whose origins lie in American crime policy (e.g. “Zero Tolerance”, “three strikes and you’re out”) or specific proposals such as the plans to deduct fines directly from benefits.

Given the way in which contemporary concerns reflect historical fears and prejudices which have surrounded working class youth (Pearson 1983) and the urban poor more generally (Baggulley & Mann 1992), it is tempting to dismiss them as merely constituting the latest in a sequence of moral panics. It is certainly the case that in public
debate these issues are sensationalised, distorted and amplified. The specific issues of
 drugs, crime and anti-social behaviour and underclass culture more generally are
 commonly described as a highly contagious social disease:

"the general belief was that drugs were a problem confined to the inner cities. Now the
curse is in our leafy suburbs. No parents can think that they are immune" (original
italics)

(Keith Hellawell writing in the News Of The World 06/07/97)

"unacceptable crime and anti-social behaviour....plagues our streets"

(The Home Secretary Jack Straw writing in the News Of The World 01/03/98)

"I arrived in Britain earlier this year, a visitor from a plague area come to see whether the
disease is spreading"

(Murray 1990: 3)

Related to this is a tendency to describe issues such as youth crime in ways which imply
an ever worsening problem more or less regardless of the available empirical evidence.
Thus the narration of a local television documentary opens with the claim that “now even
those who have known trouble before are shocked by the ages of children in crime today"
(BBC Wales 1996), yet Home Office statistics for the mid 1980s to mid 1990s revealed a
rise in the peak age of known offending from 15 to 18 years (Littlechild 1997) (1).

Arguably moral panic is most pervasive in the public discussion of illegal
drug use. Drugs are regularly presented as the “greatest peace time threat to
society”(Dorn, Murji & South 1992) and consequently generate policy responses phrased
as a “war against drugs”. That this terminology is not merely used rhetorically is reflected
in policies which grant the state power to seize assets from convicted drug traffickers without needing to prove that these assets are derived from drug trafficking (Dorn, Murji & South 1992), or in the development of biological warfare technologies which work against plants such as the opium poppy (Panorama 2/10/2000). The illegal drugs debate is dominated by heroin (Ruggiero & South 1995, Hough 1996). Whilst this drug has undeniably bleak connotations of addiction, disease and death, heroin consumption (let alone addiction) has an extremely marginal position within patterns of illegal drug consumption in Britain. Whether data is drawn from police arrest figures (Hough 1996), drug seizures (Sutton & Maynard 1992), or self report surveys (Roberts et al. 1995, Coffield & Gofton 1994, Smith & Nutbeam 1992, Wright & Pearl 1995, Parker & Measham 1995), the most widely used illegal drug is cannabis, a substance which is normally not addictive and which is extremely unlikely to have fatal consequences. The approach taken towards the consumers (rather than producers and suppliers) of illegal drugs, especially those caught in possession of the so-called “soft drugs” is considerably less severe, and has softened significantly in recent years, with cautioning largely replacing prosecution. However, whilst the formal legal sanctions imposed against drug users have declined in severity, becoming officially recognised as a drug user has a wide range of exclusionary implications: “being recorded by a doctor as a drug user, convicted of a drug offence, or known to use drugs illegally can have repercussions on a drug users: eligibility for a variety of jobs; license to drive; custody of children; tenancy in rented properties; acceptability for life insurance, mortgages or loans; compensation for criminal injury; and ability to travel abroad.” (Newcombe 1993:10)
Moral Panic Or Social Reality?

Although there is a pervasive sense of moral panic evident in the discussion of young people's involvement with drugs, crime and anti-social behaviour, this is not to say that the concerns voiced through these discourses have no basis in social reality. For example whilst at a societal scale it is misleading to talk of a heroin "epidemic", the tendency for heroin use to spread along friendship networks (Pearson 1987) means that it is likely to cluster amongst particular social groups and localities where this description is perhaps more apt. This has been the experience in the South Wales Valleys where growing numbers of heroin users have been clustered in certain (often highly deprived) communities (Bowman 1998). More generally the identification of the problems posed in many poor communities by the threatening, destructive and predatory behaviour of young men appears relatively consistent in the accounts of otherwise disparate social commentators. There are for example fundamental similarities between Dennis & Erdos's (1992) description of young men in Meadowell "[terrorising] the old and weak in their neighbourhoods with riot and abuse, as they normally blighted their lives with the fear and fact of burglary and abuse" (Dennis & Erdos 1992:102); and Campbell's (1993) description of the "appropriation and degradation" of public space "by the lads who terrorised men women and children with whom they once shared this space" (Campbell 1993: 320). Moreover such descriptions are not only evident in the accounts of academic outsiders but frequently occupy a central place in resident's accounts of the problems facing their community. As such the problematic behaviour of young people generally, and the issues of drugs, crime and anti-social behaviour
specifically, have been a key focus of much locally based community activism.

This is certainly evident in "the Site" where these issues have formed the primary focus for the efforts of the local Tenants and Residents association, and a subsidiary group, "the blocks forum" (collectively referred to here as "the tenants"). The minutes of forum group meetings clearly illustrate how these issues are regarded by this group as the main problem faced by residents in "the Site":

"______ opened the discussion on Item 1 (Allocation of Flats), by saying that the blocks and their surroundings had become a 'no-go area'. Good people were terrified to stay there" (24th April 1995)

"The estate is in danger of becoming a 'no-go area' because of the abuse of police and residents by gangs in the area" (20th July 1995)

"______ outlined the main concerns of the community which focussed on the growing drugs problem......open drug dealing was taking place. This had culminated in an increase in the cases of anti-social behaviour, vandalism and general unrest" (October 26th 1995)

Alongside these complaints about the negative effects of young people's behaviour upon the nature of communal life in "the Site", are complaints about the failure of statutory agencies to adequately respond to these problems. Whilst "the tenants" successfully lobbied for the establishment of a police house in the estate, there are continuing complaints about low staffing levels, police inaction in relation to information provided by "the tenants", and also in relation to the harassment of individuals who local young people suspect of providing information to the police:

"No official complaints had been made because there was a real fear of reprisals. Some of
the tenants have harassed and abused neighbours and others off the site" (24th April 1995)

"Drugs have caused the biggest problem. The group has given names to the police but no action has been taken" (September 11th 1995)

"Open dealing is going on but the police don't seem to be doing anything about it" (October 26th)

"Tenants are complaining that their community policeman, [Steve Smith], is never in the office, and two policemen are supposed to be patrolling the area at night, but only occasionally have they been seen" (October 26th 1995).

For "the tenants" and the community who they claim to represent, the problematic behaviour of local young people is fundamental to the social exclusion they experience and articulate. Their viewpoints cannot simply be dismissed as baseless moral panic, and indeed many of the allegations which they level at young people are borne out by the fieldwork material included within this chapter. Other members of the community are deliberately targeted by "the boys" for abuse, harassment and sporadic violent assaults, whilst their material resources (and that of the community as a whole) are subjected to vandalism and theft. Indeed as is discussed in Chapter 4, the extent and nature of social conflict between "the boys" and other individuals/social groups within "the Site" was such that it caused me to make quite fundamental changes to the original research design. That said it is also to important to recognise that "the tenants" concerns constitute only one set of perceptions, and cannot be accepted as the sole authentic voice of community in "the Site". The intrinsic plurality of community makes this an
impossibility, doubly so in a setting such as “the Site” where community is undergoing processes of fragmentation and factionalisation.

This chapter does not therefore present an analysis in which the often profoundly negative effects of “the boys” delinquent behaviour are diminished, nor (as is a popular perception of sociology) “excused”. However, it does present an analysis which is fundamentally at odds with the culturally based explanations of poverty and delinquency which are described above, and which currently dominate the policy making agenda. The argument presented here is not just that these explanations are misleading, but that in their translation into social policy they compound the very problems which they claim to be solving. As Young observes such explanations rely upon the demonisation of marginalized social groups and in doing so invert “causal reality”: “Instead of acknowledging that we have problems in society because of basic core contradictions in the social order, it is claimed that all the problems of society are because of the problems themselves. Get rid of the problems and society would be, ipso facto, problem free!” (Young 1999: 110-111). Glassner (1999) makes a similar observation in relation to the “culture of fear” which he identifies in American society and which he argues underpins the development of social policy: “Panic driven public spending generates over the long term a pathology akin to the one found in drug addicts. The more money we fritter away on our compulsions, the less we have available for our real needs which consequently grow. [Thus] One of the paradoxes of the culture of fear is that serious problems remain widely ignored even though they give rise to precisely the dangers that the populace most abhors” (Glassner 1999: xvii - xviii).
Such arguments fit well with the analysis of fieldwork material presented in this chapter which argues that “the boy’s” delinquent behaviour can only be explained through the specific context of their seemingly absolute exclusion. Fundamentally “the boys” excluded circumstances are characterised by a vacuum-like state of limbo which relates not only to their “Status Zero” (Williamson & Istance 1996, Williamson 1997) or N.E.E.T (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) economic position, but to the routine socio-cultural context of daily life. Given the fact of “no jobs”, “no money”, “nothing to do” and “nowhere to go” identified as young people’s key grievances by the Regional Research Project’s 1995 survey, routine daily life for “the boys” is ordinarily characterised by a profound lack of stimulation and consequently by acute boredom. Within this context of multi-faceted exclusion “the boys” delinquent behaviour makes sense, at least in the short term. Through their delinquent behaviour “the boys” are able to momentarily challenge the immediate circumstances of their social exclusion and gain a sense of agency and inclusion in social, cultural and political arenas from which they would otherwise be excluded. However, whilst effective in the immediate and short term, these strategies ultimately serve only to deepen, compound, and confirm their social exclusion. Through these activities and the interactions with various agencies of law enforcement which inevitably result from them, “the boys” become classified in ways which ensure the further marginalisation and de-legitimisation of their voice. Through the acquisition of a status such as “young offender”, “juvenile delinquent” or simply “criminal” the denial of citizenship which many commentators associate with social exclusion (e.g. Marshall & Bottomore (1992), Kennet (1995)) is deepened and
legitimised. Thus Keith’s involvement with various forms of car related crime ultimately diminished the possibility of his ever legally owning or even driving a car. Similarly John’s use of illegal drugs caused him to be repeatedly banned from amateur boxing, whilst getting into trouble meant that a promised offer of a trial at Cardiff City Football Club failed to materialise. This is what is meant by the paradox of empowerment and disempowerment referred to in the title of this chapter.

The fieldwork material is presented using the three core themes of illegal drug use, acquisitive criminality and anti-social behaviour, and, utilising the fieldwork relates these themes to social, economic and political aspects of “the boys” exclusion. It should be noted that this classification is in many ways artificial and rife with tautologies, as the three categories of delinquent behaviour are complexly entwined both in their legal definition, and in the social realities in which they occur. For example the consumption of illegal drugs is a criminal activity in its own right, yet is also a vital element in definitions of anti-social behaviour. Likewise whilst the consumption of illegal (and legal) drugs was a routine and core component of “the boys” social life, it was also something which could provide economic opportunities, whether through supplying drugs to others or consuming a particular drug to aid in the commission of an acquisitive crime (3). In turn, as is described in the final section of this chapter, acts of ostensibly acquisitive criminality, can be primarily be motivated through the desire to harass and punish others who are perceived as enemies. Sub-dividing the chapter in this way is not therefore an attempt to categorise different forms of delinquent behaviour, but serves as a reflection of dominant themes within the policy making agenda, and also as a convenient means of
managing the complexity of this subject.

Acquisitive Criminality, Economic Exclusion And Social Participation.

In terms of acquisitive criminality the dominant discourses described above tend to concentrate upon issues such as burglary, car theft or street robbery (mugging). Whilst reflective of public concern about crime this focus misleadingly implies that rather than being atypical these are the main forms of acquisitive criminality which marginalized young men such as “the boys” engage in. Whilst during the course of the fieldwork certain of “the boys” did steal cars, burgle and “mug” this was far from routine, did not appear to be a significant source of extra income and frequently appeared to be motivated by reasons which were more complex than economics alone. Indeed these crimes were frequently carried out in such an inept and amateurish fashion that it is scarcely credible that they could form a routine form of economic survival strategy. For example Keith attributed his decision to steal a car (described further in following sections) upon a combination of Valium and alcohol which he had consumed, and which he felt had deprived him of his normal decision making facilities. This explanation appears to have added credibility when it is considered that Keith’s right leg was in plaster at the time, something which was integral to his getting caught for this crime. Similarly although netting what they estimated to be £500 worth of goods from a burglary on Mary and Terry’s flat (described in the final section of this chapter), they were caught because a witness had seen them drunkenly arguing over the spoils in the stairwell immediately outside the couple’s flat.
Rather than being typified by acts such as muggings, burglaries and car crime the principal and routine forms of acquisitive criminality which “the boys” engaged in were of a far more mundane and trivial nature. These acts demonstrate the stark lack of choice faced by socially excluded young people seeking to improve their condition. The virtual destitution which forms the economic underpinning of “the boys’” social exclusion, generates a situation where identifying and devising economic opportunities becomes of paramount importance. However, it is difficult to imagine a scenario where available economic opportunities and survival strategies do not involve some form of legal transgression. Even the hobbles which constituted “the boys” closest connection with the labour market were located within an illegal hidden economy. As is described in Chapter 5, whilst highly prized such openings were rarely made available, a reflection of the generalized nature of labour market exclusion in “the Site” and the highly restricted nature of local opportunity structures. Equally indicative of this was the economic survival strategy most widely utilised by “the boys”: “scraping” (5). This activity, which involved the salvaging of items and their sale to scrap yards, is especially apt given the post industrial landscape and its legacy of dereliction which “the boys” inhabited. However, whilst scrapping involved the salvaging of derelict items (and sometimes not so derelict items such as manhole covers) these items were not “ownerless” and therefore, technically at least, the process of scrapping constituted theft. Rather than being characterised by “the pursuit of easy money” (Foster 1990), these forms of “the boys’” acquisitive delinquency are more accurately described as a pursuit of any money in which levels of remuneration were extremely low. “Hobbles” often involved a day’s manual
labour for as little as £15 whilst the rewards for “scrapping” could be even lower. I had passed Danny as I had left my house one afternoon and the next time I saw him asked him what he was doing in the area as it was unusual to see any of “the boys” away from “the Site”:

Danny: “Weighing in scrap” (there is a scrap yard at the top of the hill)
S.J.: “Did you make much”
Danny: “£9”
S.J.: “That’s not much for a day’s work”
Danny: “A day and a half’s actually. It was a day collecting it and a half day weighing it in, but then £9 is £9 when you’ve no money”
(08/04/97).

However, whilst remuneration levels were extremely low, they were, sufficient to enable at least some notional level of participation in key socio-cultural arenas. This theme of delinquency enabling participation is the central theme of this chapter, underlying and binding its various components. Within the context of a society which is increasingly geared towards consumption, this is obviously a key arena of participation, and one which is largely denied by the poverty which determines much social exclusion (6). Indeed, in these circumstances even the most basic and essential forms of consumption can propel individuals into contact with the criminal justice system. For example as is described in Chapter 5, Sian’s purchase of household furniture resulted in County Court Judgements being made against her when she fell into arrears. Whilst County Court Judgements are likely to compound financial difficulties by placing
further burdens on meagre incomes and further reducing opportunities to access mainstream or legitimate forms of credit (rather than that available from loan sharks) they do not in themselves constitute a criminal conviction. However, in other instances accessing equally basic forms of consumption can result in criminal convictions. For many scraping by on benefit incomes the annual cost of a Television License (£104) is prohibitive, meaning that these individuals face a stark choice between not engaging in a fundamentally basic leisure activity which is taken for granted by included society, or risking prosecution, fines, potential imprisonment and a criminal record. The risk is very real, especially for women, with Wireless and Telegraphy convictions consistently accounting for over 50% of female criminal convictions (Pantazis & Gordon 1997:22).

The ways in which ostensibly acquisitive criminality can be underpinned by a lack of opportunity for participation is particularly exemplified by car crime. Here economics may be circumscribed altogether in the quest for participation. In many instances it is scarcely credible that acts as car theft, taking and driving away (TDA), or taking without the owners consent (TWOC), are economically motivated. Frequently cars taken in this way are driven around, dumped and burnt out, with at most minimal attempts made at realising the car’s economic value (e.g. removing radio cassette players). Whilst economic value is also realised by “scraping” stolen cars, this is frequently carried out by others who were not involved in its initial theft and who happen upon a dumped and/or burnt out car. Instead much car crime appears primarily motivated by a desire to participate in the experience of driving a car, a phenomena which has become popularly known as “joy-riding”. The attractions which cars hold for socially
excluded young men are as fundamental as they are numerous. In a society where most households own at least one car and where the geographical organisation of a wide range of opportunity structures (e.g. leisure, shopping, employment) is predicated upon the assumption of car ownership, the opportunity structures of those who do not own or have access to private transport are considerably restricted. Equally cars and other forms of private transport are not simply practical machines, but possess enormous cultural significance, especially within masculine cultures. Ironically these forms of significance are likely to be accentuated amongst socially excluded young men such as “the boys”, through the demise of traditional cultural focal points such as employment, the isolated nature of the area where they live and the area’s poor public transport infrastructure.

However, whilst “joy-riding” can be viewed as an attempt to participate in a socio-cultural arena which would otherwise be inaccessible, it should not be assumed that this form of crime typifies such attempts at participation. Amongst “the boys” cars appeared to hold a particular level of attraction for Keith. Fundamentally, driving was an activity which he felt himself to be good at, as was exemplified when having borrowed his father’s car he spotted me walking up to “the Site” and stopped to offer a lift. Deftly manoeuvring the car Keith turned to me grinning and said “not a bad driver for 16 eh?” (23/09/96). It is therefore unsurprising that Keith’s criminal record and participation in criminal activities which did not become officially recognised were skewed towards various offences which were either directly car related or were related to attempts to acquire cars through more legitimate means than simply stealing them. Thus during one period of the fieldwork Keith energetically pursued whatever economic openings he
could identify in order to scrape together the funds to purchase a car. During this time the
other boys claimed that he was selling off the few personal possessions he had, and
withdrawing from public life: "He's gone really weird he doesn't come out or anything
anymore" (John: 8/10/96). This was explained one evening when Keith appeared at the
entrance of the community centre, looking pale and gaunt, his appearance presumably
being related to the amphetamines he was taking in order to stay up at night and go
"scraping" (12/12/96).

By this time he had managed to purchase a small car for £200, but was
without the funds to repair a blown head gasket. Consequently he had appeared at the
entrance of the community centre to raise funds by attempting to sell "bucket bongs" (see
below) to his peers for £1 a go. Ultimately however the car was in such a poor state of
repair that Keith was forced to sell it as scrap. Even if this had not been the case it is
extremely unlikely that Keith would have been able to maintain the car at anything like
the legal requirements. The combined costs of an M.O.T, car insurance, road tax and
those costs associated with learning to drive and acquiring a driving licence (7) would
probably have been at least double the initial cost of the car. Moreover these costs would
have been exacerbated by the fact that Keith's youthful impetuousness had meant that he
had multiple driving convictions before he had even reached the minimum legal age for
driving, and had subsequently gained further convictions for driving without M.O.T,
insurance, road tax.

The main body of Keith's criminal record was comprised of such offences,
and whilst he did have convictions for offences related to “joy-riding” (T.D.A and T.W.O.C.) and to my knowledge had stolen at least three cars during the period of the fieldwork, these were things which Keith himself regarded as aberrant. For example following one such incident in which he had been caught driving a stolen car (a fact he blamed on his right leg being in plaster at the time) Keith reflected on his actions which he felt were due the intoxicating effects of a potent combination of “valiums” and strong lager: “you can’t move but you can if you know what I mean, you don’t know what you’re doing” (22/10/97). Indeed such were the effects of this combination that in addition to claiming that he did not know what he was doing at the time, he had only minimal and fleeting recollections of these events afterwards. Before his court appearance he joked that when the magistrate asked him about what he had done, he would reply “I don’t know you tell me” (27/10/97).

“Bucket Bongs” And “Bottle Bags” : Illegal Drug Consumption Amongst Young People In “The Site”

Before examining its sociological significance it is worth stating the obvious motivation for “the boys” consumption of illegal drugs (i.e. the pleasure of intoxication). Being stoned was a time when the boys claimed their “best thoughts” and also when they visibly appeared at their happiest. As one 25 year old man visiting his girlfriend in “the Site” stated: “over here you only see people smiling when they are pissed or stoned” (14/08/96). It is more than likely that if presented with Becker’s (1963) arguments that the pleasure of drug consumption, or even the effects themselves, are socially constructed, “the boys” would have responded with a similar level of derision as
Pearson & Twohig's (1993) study group who suggested that Howard Becker should “change [his] dealer”. However, despite this “the boys” consumption of illegal drugs does appear to be underpinned by considerably more than a simple pursuit of pleasure.

Their drug consumption is set against a wider societal backdrop in which it is argued that the consumption of illegal drugs is increasingly being normalised amongst young people (Parker & Measham 1995). Whilst such arguments have been criticised for their failure to take account of geographical specificity (Coffield & Gofton 1992) and for overstating the significance of research findings (Shiner & Newburn 1997), it is inescapably the case that illegal drug use is widespread amongst young people and integral to mainstream youth lifestyles (Miles 2000: 87-106). However rather than being characterised by homogeneity young people’s illegal drug consumption takes place within particular and widely differentiated “adolescent social worlds” (Glasser & Laughlin 1987). Within “the boys” social world, drug consumption (like other forms of consumption) is largely defined by their socially excluded circumstances, takes on particular forms of significance within these circumstances and is moreover integral to their being constructed as dangerous and deviant.

These circumstances do not necessarily imply that “the boys” are denied any capacity to make choices in their drug consumption, quite the contrary. Their consumption of illegal drugs closely reflects what is known about wider patterns of consumption more generally in that whilst eclectic it was overwhelmingly dominated by cannabis. From an economic perspective this dominance appears surprising given that at
between £10-15 for an eighth of an ounce, this was perhaps the most expensive drug available to "the boys". Amphetamine cost at most £10 per gram, LSD sold for between £2-5, prescription pills for as little as 30-50 pence, whilst at certain times of the year magic mushrooms could be freely collected from the surrounding countryside. No direct observations were made of the purchase or use of heroin but South Wales Police claim a street price of £10 for 1/12 of a gram (Bowman 1998) and local drug agencies have claimed that introductory deals have been on offer for as little as £5.

Rather than price or availability, the key factor determining whether or not a particular drug was used regularly, appeared to be based on a cost-benefit analysis of its perceived potential to "do your head in". Ironically the prescription pills whose legal status is ambiguous, were the lowest priced and amongst the most readily available drugs, were also regarded as having the most severe negative consequences. During the fieldwork one young man was admitted to hospital after a combination of prescription pills with alcohol reputedly caused him to collapse, turn blue and "piss himself" (12/12/96). This young man was fortunate that the actions of his friends in calling an ambulance saved him from potentially becoming one of the 1,810 individuals who died through Benzodiazepine abuse between 1990-1996 (a figure which is higher than the total number of deaths resulting from cocaine, heroin and methadone combined during the same time period) (The Observer 05/11/2000)(8). Context was also important in whether or not a particular drug would "do your head in". During a court appearance for car theft (described above), Keith was talking to John who by coincidence also had a court appearance on the same date. The two boys joked about the possibility of sharing a
cell together in Portland, with Keith claiming to have some dried “magis” (magic mushrooms) which could be smuggled in. John was suddenly serious, saying “I wouldn’t do a trip inside man it would do your head in, it was bad enough being on acid in [named police station]” (27/10/97). Although during a particular part of the fieldwork certain of “the boys” did start using heroin, this was a short lived period of experimentation. On the same morning of Keith and John’s court appearance John pointed out his cousin who also had a court appearance:

John: “He’s nuts, he’s only fifteen and he’s a smackhead”

S.J. (thinking of rumours earlier on in the fieldwork) “Have you never tried it then ?”

John “Once or twice”

S.J. “what was it like ?”

John “It was all right but you couldn’t keep taking it, it would do your head in.”

(27/10/97).

Thus despite its relative expense the low perceived potential of cannabis to “do your head in” meant that this was a drug which could be consumed on a daily routine basis. This is not to say that cannabis was viewed as entirely unproblematic by “the boys”. On successive occasions Keith expressed feelings of unwanted dependency on this drug, complaining for example of “turkeying for a smoke” (14/08/96)(9). Indeed he claimed that the principal reason for his consumption of Valiums and alcohol which underpinned the incident of car crime described above, was the sleeplessness he experienced when attempting to stop using cannabis. What can be said is that the negative aspects of cannabis use were perceived as considerably less than other available
drugs. For example Keith contrasted his use of cannabis to that of Valium and alcohol by expressing the view that at least cannabis kept him out of trouble: "I don’t go out except to go and buy munchies" (22/10/97). Lee was altogether more positive, joking that with cannabis “there’s something to look forward to everyday" (23/10/97).

**Cannabis Consumption And Structuring Time.**

Most obviously these activities although overtly geared towards the consumption of cannabis also consumed time, the one resource which "the boys" possessed in abundance. This time consuming dynamic was largely dictated by “the boys”’ financial circumstances which (especially at the beginning of the fieldwork) dictated that they pool their resources and purchase the cannabis collectively(10). Inevitably this produced delays as the group as a whole was forced to wait for its individual members to raise the necessary funds. Although individual contributions were only in the region of £2-3 individuals would often not have access to even these small amounts. For the group as a whole these difficulties could be surmounted by the establishment of complex patterns of borrowing and lending, yet this placed considerable pressure upon the individual receiving the loan. There was an element of coercion to accepting an offer of a loan as refusing to do so effectively blocked the group’s access to the cannabis, yet accepting a loan whose repayment conditions could not be met brought a real threat of violence (11). Consequently, putting these financial arrangements in place was often a convoluted and lengthy process of haggling and negotiation.

Even when the financial arrangements had been successfully negotiated and the cannabis purchased, further delays could arise through preparing the "bucket
"bongs" or "bottle bags" which were the preferred method of consumption. "The boys" explained this preference in terms of the perceived cost effectiveness of "bongs". Unlike consuming cannabis through "joints" (12) there was no requirement to mix the cannabis with tobacco, and moreover each "bong" used relatively less cannabis but produced a more intense effect (13). However this method required considerably more effort and organisation, with the various components of the "bucket bong" or "bottle bag" having to be collected and assembled. For a "bucket bong" this entailed, as the name suggests, a bucket two thirds filled with water, an empty two litre plastic soft drinks bottle with its bottom cut out and a bowl (often fashioned out of tin foil) which sits in the neck of the bottle. A "bottle bag" (see figure 1) also requires an empty bottle and bowl, but instead of a bucket a plastic carrier bag is taped to the bottom of the bottle.

Finally the process of consuming "bongs" and "bottle bags" was also a more intense and focused activity than other potential methods of cannabis consumption. Unlike a joint which is rolled and then passed around the group, each member of the group receives their own individual "bucket bong" or "bottle bag". A small amount of cannabis resin is heated, softened and crumbled into a bowl which has placed into the neck of the bottle. The bottle starts from a position where it is submerged in the water to a point just below the bottle neck. The cannabis is then heated again, this time until it starts to smoke and the bottle is drawn upwards until it is almost out of the water, whereupon the bowl is lifted off, and the user puts his lips to the bottle and forces it back into the water thus pushing the smoke into their lungs.
Figure 6.1: A discarded “bottle bag”
“Bottle bags” work on the same principle but follow a different procedure. Here the plastic carrier bag taped to the bottom of the bottle starts from a position where it is stuffed inside the bottle chamber and pulled out as the cannabis is burnt, thus drawing in the smoke which is then pushed out of the bottle by pushing the bag back up inside the bottle.

Collectively the various stages of activity involved in consuming “bucket bongs” and “bottle bags” could fill the best part of a day, with each stage in this process being characterised by periods of often intense activity. Even if such activity is constituted by something as mundane as preparing a “bong” or a “joint” it can provide a momentary focal point around which the boys can busy themselves. The fundamentally significant nature of these periods of activity is made starkly apparent by the periods of acute inactivity which sandwiched them. These periods of inactivity formed a sort of social vacuum in which levels of stimulation were so low that using a cigarette end to stretch spit off the ground could become an absorbing task. Quite simply these were periods of time in which nothing happened and the resulting boredom could take on an oppressive and grinding intensity. In contrast the activities associated with cannabis consumption provided a degree of momentum, process and structure to daily life. It was perhaps this dimension of their cannabis consumption as much as the intoxicating effects of the drug itself which Lee was referring to with his comment that “there’s something to look forward to everyday” (23/10/97).
Cannabis, Socialisation And Culture.

As an activity which was embedded within “the boys” daily routines and which constituted a primary focal point of daily life, cannabis consumption performed social functions in “the boys” lives which were comparable to the social functions of the workplace. The consumption of cannabis opened a relatively autonomous socio-cultural space in which individuals could demonstrate proficiency in various tasks, demonstrate their acceptance amongst drug using/supplying networks of older youths and in doing so achieve the respect and recognition of their peers. For example Lee was respected for his proficiency in working the bongs, stretching out small amounts of cannabis and had also fashioned a portable bowl out of old gas fittings which was infinitely superior to the tin foil bowls which were normally used. Thus Lee’s cannabis consumption created a space in which he could, albeit nominally, fulfil his expressed aspiration for employment where he did “something with [his] hands” (14/08/96), and moreover his competence in this arena helped compensate for his slight build within the establishment of masculine hierarchies. “The boys” consumption of cannabis both reflected and established their positions within peer group hierarchies. It was for example noticeable that the four older boys (Lee, Keith, John and Ross) took responsibility for negotiating the purchase of the cannabis, were always the first to receive a “bong” and usually managed to consume more than Bass or Joey.

Indeed in the absence of other signifiers of the change in status from being “a kid” cannabis took on an important role. This was especially apparent during the early stages of the fieldwork when through lack of an alternative space “the boys” normally
consumed their “bongs” at the rear of the block where Keith and Ross lived with their grandmother. Being situated at the rear of the flats this setting was partly shielded from public view and also afforded a degree of shelter in poor weather as at the rear of block of flats there was a basement storage shed. Although attempts had been made to block access to this shed through the installation of a steel door (14), this had been prised open, and “the boys” had even made rudimentary attempts to furnish this space. Scraps of carpet had been placed on the concrete floor and stepping stones had been strategically placed outside the doorway for use when the drains overflowed, which they apparently did on a fairly basis.

Although relatively hidden from public view the semi-public nature of this space had implications for conflicts between “the boys” and other members of the community, but could also attract unwelcome attention from other young people who wished to join in. Setting aside financial contributions, age and the social status it conferred was important in “the boys” decisions as to whether or not they would allow other young people to join them. Thus on one of the first occasions when I observed “the boys” smoking “bongs” they were approached by two younger boys, one of whom was sent away on account of his being “a kid” whilst the other (Carl) was told: “you can’t have any but you can watch” (13/08/96). This marked the beginning of a transition in Carl’s social standing amongst “the boys”, with cannabis providing an activity around which what might be termed a “social apprenticeship” took place. When nearly two months later Carl arrived at Reflect obviously stoned (see part 3 below), possibly for the first time, it was clear that his social standing amongst “the boys” had progressed within
this transformation (08/10/96).

These social functions remained relatively stable, in contrast to the dynamics of consumption which changed rapidly in relation to changes in “the boys” material circumstances. Collective purchasing strategies, spatial settings and to a lesser extent the choice of technology, reflected the particularly extreme financial constraints which “the boys” faced at the beginning of the fieldwork. As the fieldwork progressed the dynamics of consumption altered as more of “the boys” became eligible for state benefits, and two (Rob and Keith) were able to secure independent housing within “the Site”. Yet, within this context of changing circumstances cannabis appeared to retain its importance for “the boys”, and its social functions appeared relatively constant. This was illustrated during a scene which unfolded during one of my final visits to “the Site” when another younger boy appeared to be undergoing a similar form of initiation as Carl.

Keith, Rob, another young man of roughly the same age, and a younger boy in his mid teens were smoking cannabis, listening to music and generally relaxing in Keith’s flat. Although the flat was sparsely furnished and in a poor state of repair, the setting was infinitely more comfortable, with battered but comfortable armchairs to recline in and a gas fire for warmth. The younger boy’s transitional status was partially demarcated by his use of these facilities, as whilst the other boys relaxed in the armchairs he was seated on the floor next to the doorway. It was also demarcated by the fact that from this position he was repeatedly called upon to run various errands such as getting glasses of water from the kitchen or going upstairs to Rob’s flat to turn his heating off.
(which Rob had forgotten to do). His role in performing these errands seemed taken for
granted and unquestioned by the other boys, and no mention was made of this during his
absence, whilst for his part the boy didn’t voice any objection nor project any visible sign
of resentment (28/11/97). In return he was able to participate in the cannabis smoking,
but always appeared to be last in line when a joint was passed around or when bongs
were being prepared.

Despite the divisions and conflict which their drug consumption generated
between “the boys” and other, especially older, members of their community, there is a
strong element of cultural continuity evident in the roles played by their cannabis
consumption. Although there are obvious contradictions between “the boys” interest in
sporting activities and their drug consumption (“They’re mad on weights up here....my
bodies a temple and all that and then they go off for a bottle bag” Angharad 12/09/96)
these are no greater than those which are apparent in more traditional aspects of working
class culture, where sporting activities are often integrally connected with drug use.
Rugby clubs have club houses, pubs have football teams, and Formula 1 racing cars carry
tobacco advertising. Moreover as Coffield & Gofton observe alcohol and nicotine have
traditionally performed similar socialising roles as the boys consumption of cannabis:
“buying rounds of drinks and passing round cigarettes acted as a form of ‘social cement’
binding working men together in their leisure time.......Becoming a drinker was a learning
process, linking generations to leisure in the same way as the apprentice system did at
work. Becoming a drinker was part of becoming a man, and like work roles, leisure roles
were learnt, and subject to the informal regulation of the social group” (Coffield &
However whilst there is a strong element of cultural continuity there is also discontinuity to the extent that "the boys"' drug of choice is illegal, and more fundamentally is consumed in a post-industrial setting where distinctions between work and leisure are made meaningless. It is not simply the case that in the absence of employment "the boys"' social life is framed by leisure activity as the poverty which underpins their social exclusion creates an economic imperative for the boys to participate in various forms of remunerative "work". Instead the crucial difference appears to be that both "work" and leisure are conducted within the same space and are interchangeable in the sense that leisure activities such as cannabis consumption may also provide economic opportunities. Furthermore the absence of a workplace in "the boys"' lives represents a radical departure from traditional patterns of social organisation, and the loss of something which has historically formed a key setting for the construction of masculine working class identities. It is little wonder then that some commentators have identified a crisis of masculine identity (Campbell 1993) as a means of explaining the problems which young men's behaviour can pose in socially excluded communities. It is certainly the case that in areas such as the South Wales Valleys the range of activities from which identities can be constructed has been severely curtailed by the decline and virtual extinction of the traditional industrial base, and that the range of available options are drawn almost exclusively from leisure activities.

In this context something such as cannabis use can perform vital functions
and was indeed something which “the boys” drew heavily upon in the construction of
their own personal identities. They would for example often refer to themselves as
potheads (or variations on this theme), and take pride in the number of “buckets” or
“bottle bags” they consumed, whilst the cannabis leaf motif was incorporated into various
items of personal adornment such as jewellery, clothing or tattoos. That this personal and
cultural significance of cannabis is not something which is unique to “the boys” in “the
Site” is evident in the examples of graffiti shown in figures 6.2 -6.5, photographs of
which were taken in a variety of locations in Rhondda Cynon Taff. These illustrations are
a clear celebration of cannabis consumption and a rejection of the laws which criminalize
it. For “the boys” cannabis consumption clearly constituted a relatively autonomous
socio-cultural space through which they could not only construct aspects of their identity,
but do so in relatively positive ways which differed radically from the problematic and
pathological identities which others conferred upon them. Such identities frequently
derived from their interactions with powerful agencies such as youth training
organisations or the legal system, where young men such as “the boys” often become
classified in fundamentally negative ways. It is one of the ironies of “the boys” exclusion
that in drawing upon cannabis to define themselves, the same aspect of their lifestyle
brings seemingly inevitable conflict with these agencies. In this context the consumption
of cannabis specifically and particularly, but also “drugs” more generally becomes
politically charged, not only in the sense of the explicit defence of consumption, but can
take wider symbolic forms in which drug taking is used in the demarcation and
promotion of other areas of conflict.
Figure 6.4: "The Toker"

Figure 6.5: "Buzzin"

Graffiti representations and celebrations of cannabis consumption.
Figure 6.2: “Bottle Bag On ‘94”

Graffiti representations and celebrations of cannabis consumption.

Figure 6.3: “Bongen Forever”
“Drug Culture”, Conflict And Community Fragmentation.

Given the multiple and fundamental importance of cannabis in “the boys” lives, and the concerns which groups such as “the tenants” voice about the drug problem, it is seemingly inevitable that local social conflicts will focus on this issue. The depth of feelings held on either side of this polarised set of perceptions, and the stressed dynamics of community life described in Chapter 5, mean that such conflicts are made all the more intractable and moreover generates a propensity for different factions to resort to extreme actions in the pursuit of their goals. This was something which was immediately apparent from the beginning of the fieldwork and subsequently proved consistent throughout its duration. For example, within minutes of being introduced to Sian, Steph, Angharad and Leanne, I was told of the local controversy which surrounded their attempts to establish a youth drop-in centre, and how this controversy centred upon plans to operate a needle exchange scheme from its premises. The plans for a drop-in centre thus became associated with “junkies” and shortly after a public meeting Reflect’s intended premises were rendered derelict by an arson attack (these events are described more fully in Chapter 7. Similar levels of radicalism were evident in later events when a young woman (Karen) who was known locally as a heroin addict was effectively forced out of the area by angry relatives of a child who had been found playing with a discarded hypodermic needle. In an attack which matched brutality with poignant symbolism Karen was beaten up, and the “dirty junkie” had a bleach soaked mop forced into her face whilst attempts
were made to pour cleaning agents down her throat (15).

Although such extreme manifestations of social conflict were relatively infrequent, more muted forms were a regular occurrence. The importance of cannabis for “the boys” was reflected in the ways in which they would defend their use of this drug to others. Thus on one occasion Carl arrived in Reflect obviously “stoned” to the point that the simple task of making a cup of coffee was a source of considerable amusement for him and he kept dissolving into fits of giggles. Given that he was only 13 years old at the time Sian and Angharad were concerned and gently prompted him with questions about what he had been taking, but Carl repeatedly responded that he had not taken anything. Labouring the point but not wanting to appear threatening, Sian pointed to his cup of coffee and said “that’s a drug as well you know, caffeine”, to which Carl’s laughing response that “they should put the price up then” caused even Sian and Angharad to smile. Eventually John intervened on Carl’s behalf telling him to “stop telling lies” and adding “he is [stoned], we all are, I am and I’m proud of it”(08/10/96).

Defence of their cannabis use could take a more defiant and confrontational tone when “the boys” were faced with those who they perceived as enemies. Thus, on one occasion Tom, Dennis, Lee and another boy were making a joint in the community centre’s porch, when they became aware of being observed by one of the tenants (Natalie) who was peering at the four boys from the kitchen doorway. Clearly suspicious, Natalie started walking towards the four boys, prompting a warning to “hide the joint”. Derek disagreed saying “No, fuck her, do it right there in front of her”, at
which point two boys who had up until this point been attempting to obscure Natalie’s view stepped out of the way. Natalie turned away and walked back into the kitchen with “the boys’” laughter following her (19/11/97).

Although within the local community “the boys” enemies could include anyone who they felt had wronged them in some way, their principal enemies appeared to be the various individuals who belonged to “the tenants”. “The boys” believed this group to be actively against them, and were aware of “the tenants” efforts at ensuring that greater levels of police action be brought to bear on them. For obvious structural reasons given “the boys” criminalized status and the police mandate, the relationship between “the boys” and the police was deeply conflictual. This organisation wielded considerable power over “the boys” not only in the sense that it was responsible for detecting and collating evidence of the crimes they committed but also in more mundane and routine aspects of daily life. “The boys” clearly felt that the police had adopted a highly partisan role in the conflicts which occurred over public space and moreover abused their power in this role. Unlike Anderson et. al’s (1994) study of young people and crime, they had a store of first hand stories of police brutality and malpractice which had either occurred to them personally or which they had witnessed. Thus John recounted the events which culminated in a police officer attempting to spray him with C.S. gas when he refused to “move on” from a phone box where he and his friends had been congregating: “[the police officer told them] somebody’s going to get arrested if you don’t move, “the boys” started to move away but I said I’m not moving” (27/10/97). For “the boys” such actions represented an abuse of police power, and this was something which could also occur in
more underhanded ways. Whilst awaiting his court appearance for the theft of a car Keith became incensed at the police’s case against him when he discovered that the charges included assaulting a police officer and damage to police property. From Keith’s perspective these charges originated from the police dispensing what Holdaway (1984) termed “summary justice”, the damage to police property occurring when the door of the police car had been slammed shut on his plastered leg, whilst the “assault” on a police officers was viewed in entirely different terms: “when you’re on the ground and they’re hitting you with truncheons you’re going to kick back” (27/10/97). As Keith recounted this incident he revealed a still visible scar on his wrist which he claimed had resulted from the handcuffs being placed (deliberately) too tightly.

An added dimension to the undisguised disdain with which “the boys” viewed both “the tenants” and the police derived from the fact that these groups were regarded as deeply hypocritical. Thus “the boys” claimed that certain individuals who belong to “the tenants” who were actively campaigning against “the boys” drug use, were what “the boys” described as “jelly heads” (dependent upon prescription tranquillisers). Doubtless “the boys” own negative experiences of these drugs contributed significantly to their perception of the hypocrisy in this, as did their allegation that on at least one occasion a particular individual had supplied them with pills which “really messed [them] up”(14/08/96). Such perceptions of hypocrisy were also based on the widely held belief that the local community police officer was “shagging” some of those women who were complaining about “the boys” behaviour.

Keith: “He’s shagging all the single women up there.”
S.J.: “Are you serious?”

Keith: “Yeah they do call him the local hero”

Seeking corroboration I mentioned Keith’s claims to Sian who clearly believed in them (“well he’s certainly shagging some of them.....you see him coming in and out of their houses” (25/09/96)) and (informally) to a police officer I know, who described such eventualities as an “occupational hazard”.

Although drugs and other aspects of “the boys” delinquent behaviour constituted an issue around which conflict developed in its own right, these conflicts were also underpinned by the particular dynamics of their social exclusion and the wider dynamics of community life in “the Site”. For example, “the tenants” concerns appear framed in part by young people’s behaviour in and colonisation of “the Site’s” public spaces, a situation which is aggravated by the increased demands which processes of social exclusion place on these spaces (see Chapter 5) and the lack of any alternative venues. Indeed the search for more comfortable and private spaces had on occasion brought the brought “the boys” into conflict with other older youths in “the Site” whose flats were periodically colonised, until the tenant grew tired of this arrangement and denied them access. However, barring access was by no means as straightforward as it might sound and Karen claimed to have resorted to calling the police after “the boys” refused to leave her flat (29/10/96)(16). Similarly the social intimacy, stress and boredom of daily social life all played their own roles in generating and sustaining the conflicts which occurred between “the boys” and some other members of their community.
Anti-Social Behaviour, Social Conflict And Social Exclusion.

To the extent that “the boys” perpetrate intentionally hostile acts against some other members of their community, their behaviour can be undeniably anti-social. At times during the fieldwork their behaviour towards others closely resembled the stereotypical images of “yob culture” invoked by both politicians and sections of the media. This was particularly exemplified in the events described below where a couple (Mary and Terry) who lived three blocks from Keith and Rob were subjected to a prolonged campaign of harassment and abuse, and as it progressed violence and theft. For this couple “the blocks” were indeed the dangerous “no go area” described by “the tenants”, and the origins of this danger emanated from “the boys”.

These events began to unfold on the second day of our acquaintance, at a time when there was little to do and we were all bored. Glancing towards “the blocks” Keith found a focus in Mary who had come out of her flat and was talking to a neighbour. “Look at the fat bitch” he said, before mentioning to the other boys that Steve Smith, the community constable, had visited her flat (again) a few days earlier. Following a discussion in which suspicions were voiced that Mary had been complaining/informing on “the boys” behaviour, Keith, John and Lee made the decision to sit on the low wall outside her block, in order to “really wind her up”. Rob who at this time was a newcomer to “the Site” was (like me) reluctant and initially stayed where he was as the three boys walked over. It wasn’t long, however, before we both walked over to join the three boys. Although she had clearly seen them Mary initially ignored “the boy’s” presence, until
Keith shouted up comments which made sexual inferences about the nature of Steve’s visit:

Keith: “He was up there an hour and a half the other day”

Mary: “So was [Terry]”

Keith: [getting a big laugh from the other boys] “Two ups is it, wait till my old man hears about this”

Once goaded into responding it was not long before Mary threatened to send Terry down to sort “the boys” out, but when he appeared he also attempted to diffuse the situation: “It wasn’t [Mary] shagging Steve boys, it was me.” However, he too was goaded into a more confrontational response, asking whether any of “the boys” wanted “to have a go”.

Although, there was a brief discussion amongst “the boys”, which amounted to John being urged to oblige, he didn’t and the moment passed.

By mid afternoon “the boys” were sat at the rear of one of “the blocks”.

Having earlier bought and consumed an eighth of cannabis, their boredom was slowly beginning to return. Mary was sat reading a book on the fire escape at the rear of her third floor flat. Led by Keith and John the boys once again started goading her: “fat slut”; “mad bitch”; “Valium freak”. As in the morning Mary initially ignored the remarks, and then as they continued adopted a placatory response, “you leave me alone, and I’ll leave you alone”, “I’m not bothering you so don’t bother me”, only to be told by Keith that her presence “bothered” them.

Attempting to draw a more vitriolic response the boys discussed various
possibilities, drawing upon communal "knowledge" of the couple as they did so. Thus they discussed various aspects of Mary's "known" lifestyle, personality and appearance, before using these in constructing their insults. Such aspects included her use of Valium, her alleged supply of Valium to John and Keith, her weight, her sexual nature (Keith contended that she had tried to seduce him on one of the occasions when she had supplied him with Valium) and her reputation as a "grass". Some comments were discussed but not used, as when John noted that Terry was "said" to have raped her, or that her baby had died a 'cot death'. John went so far as to suggest shouting "where's your baby gone?". Lee interjected saying this was "going too far" and the idea was dropped.

As Mary was drawn into the confrontation she too used similar techniques calling the boys "druggies" and claiming to have seen them "begging around "the Site" for drug money". As she did so more of "the boys" were drawn into the fracas. Her allegations of "begging" (probably her interpretation of the complex peer group borrowing arrangements used to buy cannabis), infuriated Rob, who until this time had remained an observer rather than active participant. Angrily denying having ever begged for anything in his life Rob piled further insults upon Mary. After being urged to by "the boys", Bass also joined in but when he did so Mary singled him out, claiming that she would come down and fight him herself, much to the other boys' amusement. Bass looked worried, even more so when a few minutes later Terry appeared from nowhere and tried to grab hold of him, but was thwarted when Bass dodged behind a patch of brambles. The potential for violence increased further with the arrival of Derek, who quickly joined in insulting Mary. Like John and Keith, Derek seemed to hold a particular
loathing for Mary, and it was not long before he had thrown a stone up at her. The stone missed but clanged loudly off the fire escape where she was sat.

At one point during the confrontation Mary suggested that “the boys” were trying to get her off “the Site”, adding that it would take “more than little boys like you”. Keith replied “if we want you off, you’ll be off”. Nearly a month later (06/09/96) John told me that he had been arrested and charged for criminal damage, following a fight with Terry. His version of events was that he had intervened when Terry had come down to fight Dennis, who (like Bass), was one of the physically smaller members of the group. John claimed that Terry had come worse off in the fight and that as he had withdrawn from the scene shouted a threat to rape John’s mother, also shouting for Mary to call the police. John attempted to pursue Terry back into the flat, but when thwarted had smashed a pane of glass at the side of the front door. This coincided with the arrival of the police and John was arrested and later charged for criminal damage. Days later, by their own admission, three of “the boys” burgled the couple’s flat stripping everything from it that they could, including the carpets, and the couple left “the Site” for another area.

As is described in Chapter 4 I found encounters such as this extremely troubling and had difficulty in remaining objective or in feeling any empathy with “the boys” during these incidents. Despite the wrongs which “the boys” felt this couple had inflicted upon them my sympathies lay with the couple who “the boys” had effectively hounded off “the Site”. In the encounters I witnessed it appeared that “the boys” were
cast in the role of instigators whilst the couple had attempted to diffuse the situation. Moreover, it also appeared to be the case that “the boys” actions had as much to do with staving off boredom and promoting group solidarity as the reasons which they cited. Like their drug use these interactions were perhaps valued simply for their activity and it was at times when “the boys” were complaining of boredom and had no other activity to occupy themselves with that Mary and Terry became targets. Equally at times it appeared as though particular individuals were almost willing the couple to wrong them in order that they too could claim to have been aggrieved, thereby legitimise their actions and join in the group activity. Thus when Mary claimed to have seen the boys “begging for drug money” (a comment which was aimed at the group as a whole) Rob interpreted this as a personal insult and became incensed. Previously he had not been an active participant but after this moment became increasingly involved, and was ultimately the only one of “the boys” to be charged with burgling the couple’s flat.

However although in situations like this “the boys” actions are undesirable and worthy of condemnation, to explain such behaviour as being the product of a “yob culture”, an “evil in our society” which should be treated with “zero tolerance” and “stiffer penalties” (Blair 2000 Labour Party Conference Address) appears misleadingly simplistic. Indeed in many ways even describing this behaviour as anti-social is deeply flawed, given that it is impossible to rationally examine such behaviour without reference to the particular social dynamics of life in “the Site”. As is evident in the arson attack upon Reflect’s intended premises, in the attack upon Karen, or even, in an albeit more diluted and legitimated form, in the use of eviction orders to ‘banish’ anti-social tenants,
these forms of behaviour are in no way unique to "the boys". Similarly the highly personalised forms which conflicts such as this take are for example an outcome of the tightly knit and intimate communal life described in Chapter 5. Thus both sides draw upon communally held 'knowledge' of the other in constructing their jibes and insults in the interactions described above. Equally the existence of stress and emotional anguish as a key dynamic of social life in "the Site" appears to add an extra dimension to these conflicts, whilst the lack of alternative stimulation appears to allow conflicts to fester and develop where they might otherwise be forgotten. These conditions appear to generate a vicious circle in which conflict takes on a life of its own as with each fresh set of interactions both sides can add to the list of perceived wrongs inflicted upon them. In this way it appears that factional allegiances and negative perceptions of the other are reinforced, and that from this conflict is further deepened.

However perhaps most fundamentally the existence of such conflicts and the nature of the interactions through which they are manifested reflects the powerlessness which is arguably the key underpinning of social exclusion. Powerlessness is not just something which can be objectively assessed as a dynamic of social exclusion, but is something which is acutely perceived by "the boys" themselves and exists in combination with equally acutely perceived feelings of injustice. Equally this powerlessness is not restricted to the broader background structures of exclusion (e.g. economic change or welfare reform) but is felt in more immediate ways in the locality where "the boys" reside. This is particularly exemplified by the disputes which occurred over access to the community centre which are described in the following Chapter.
However the difference here is that whilst “the boys” are marginalized and made relatively powerless in the local setting, it is still a setting where they can exert some degree of agency. Their conflict with Mary and Terry exemplifies this well as its ultimate outcome (the removal of the couple from “the Site”) represents one of the few occasions when “the boys” can claim some limited success in shaping what happens in their community. In other instances they may not achieve the same level of success but by resorting to similar actions are at least able to punish those who they feel to be against them. Thus someone who is suspected of informing on them to the police runs a very real risk of having their windows smashed.

A similar form of punishment was evident in the treatment of Brad, a young man who was employed as an assistant manager (17) in the later stages of the community centre’s operation. For the young people in “the Site” Brad’s role, like that of previous members of the community centre’s staff, appeared primarily as that of gatekeeper to this resource. The conflicts which inevitably arose around the community centre (see Chapter 7) generated a situation where the local young people would routinely congregate at the community centre’s entrance, and from this point would frequently have heated confrontations with the community centre’s staff about their lack of access to this resource. Such interactions obviously generated resentment on both sides, and as such both sides made no secret of their active dislike for the other. Although “the boys” routinely failed to gain greater levels of access as an outcome of these confrontations, they were able to make their presence felt in other ways. Brad’s car was broken into and cash and other valuable items were stolen from it. The following day, it was made clear
to Brad who had been responsible for this when during a conversation with a group of young people he was asked how much money had been stolen from the car, but before he had time to respond was given an exact estimate.

Conclusion.

It can therefore be seen that overall the various forms of delinquent behaviour which "the boys" engage in possess common characteristics of challenging various dimensions of their social exclusion. Acts of (ostensibly) acquisitive criminality help facilitate participation in key socio-cultural arenas from which "the boys" would otherwise be excluded. The consumption of illegal drugs provides a degree of temporal structure, activity and momentum to daily life, and crucially creates a social space that challenges the social limbo which characterises the social exclusion of youth. Finally, the hostile and "anti-social" behaviour described in the final section of this chapter provide a means by which "the boys" can exert political agency in their immediate surroundings. In these ways the various forms of delinquent behaviour empower "the boys" in ways which possess an immediacy and autonomy that is quite simply lacking in many youth projects/initiatives which claim to empower socially excluded young people (this is what is meant by the term autonomous empowerment).

However, ultimately their delinquent activities serve to confirm trajectories of social exclusion and to exacerbate the underlying processes through which these young people become excluded both in terms of their relationship to wider society and in terms of their relationship to the community in "the Site". In the local context such
activities enlarge the social divisions that are fundamental to the processes by which young people become excluded from their community. As is explored further in Chapter 7, these activities impact directly upon local young people’s ability to access communal resources and further marginalize their voice in the decision making process as to how these resources are structured, shaped and deployed. Moreover, the problems which delinquent behaviour poses to the wider community means that a key direction in the development of local policies has been the adoption of policies which seek to banish such young people from “the Site”. During an interview with the local area housing officer, it was claimed that almost all of those receiving eviction orders had been young people and that the reasons for these evictions were principally drug related (02/07/97).

In the broader context “the boys” delinquent behaviour inevitably brings them into conflict with the law, and as time progresses the legal sanctions which are imposed increase in severity. As this process progresses the legitimacy of their voice is further undermined and marginalised, as are their opportunities to participate in economic, cultural, social and political arenas through non-delinquent activities. From the beginning of the fieldwork period “the boys” spoke of previous experiences of arrest and detention, and of future expectations in which the certainty of imprisonment featured strongly. By the end of the fieldwork period these expectations had already come to fruition for some, and seemed increasingly probable for others. Accompanying these expectations of imprisonment was an acceptance, and its prospect was usually met with a ritualised shrug and the comment “I’ll just go on the weights”. Of course such comments may merely have represented a show of public bravado, but when faced with the
interminable prospect of paying a large fine, “the boys” would frequently make no effort to pay it, preferring to let the machinery of the legal system catch up with them and serve a short term of imprisonment. Equally if an important event such as Christmas or a birthday looked set to clash with a term of imprisonment “the boys” would frequently not turn up for their court appearance, gambling that by the time the system caught up with them the event would have occurred. In the meantime they occupied a fugitive status, knowing that the courts would have issued a warrant for their arrest, but not knowing when this warrant would be executed. In the most recent visit to “the Site” only two out of the seven boys who formed the initial focus of the research did not have forthcoming court appearances where they anticipated a custodial sentence, and for some of these this would be their second sentence. Little wonder that Steph expressed fears that an entire generation which she believed had “been left to rot” (13/08/96) may well end up in prison: “I know it might sound like exaggeration, but, I’m worried we’re going to end up with a whole generation in prison. The 13 and 14 year olds are coming up now, and they seem to going the same way” (05/07/97).

Ultimately therefore “the boys” delinquency is disempowering and serves only to compound their social exclusion. It is also a key contributory factor in the social exclusion experienced within “the Site” more generally. Fear and the fact of criminal victimisation obviously impacts negatively upon residents quality of life, and efforts made to prevent crime through making residences more secure can also have this effect. For example the planned removal of fire escapes from the rear of “the blocks” means that internal fire escapes will have to be constructed and there will therefore be a
permanent loss of habitable living space in these dwellings. However the ways in which
"the boys"' delinquency is conceived of and responded to within the policy making
agenda appears likely to only exacerbate further the present 'no-win' situation. For
example as the area housing officer admitted those local young people who have been
served with eviction orders have not left the area, but making use of the social networks
described in Chapter 5, have instead stayed on with family and friends. Such approaches
appear to act in ways which only exacerbate the underlying dynamics of the social
exclusion which underpins "the boys"' delinquency in the first place.

Endnotes
(1) Whilst such statistics are notoriously problematic and should therefore be treated with
cautions, this trend conforms to expected consequences of the processes which have
'stretched' and disrupted young people's transitions into adulthood.
(2) Not in education, employment or training.
(3) For example during certain periods of the fieldwork the other boys claimed that Keith
was using amphetamines in order to stay awake at night and go "scrapping".
(4) To my knowledge there were only five such incidents during the course of the
fieldwork, and one of these (an alleged mugging) was thrown out of court when it
transpired that the perpetrator (Rob) was merely collecting money that was owed to him.
(5) A form of economic activity which appears to be adopted by profoundly marginalized
groups on a global basis, being noted amongst crack addicts in the American ghetto
(Harrell & Peterson 1992:232) and amongst street children in the third world (Mackay
1997:8).
(6) Whilst poverty is a key factor of social exclusion it is not an essential pre-requisite. Exclusion can equally occur as a result of disadvantages related to such things as disability, mental health, sexuality or ethnicity.

(7) Even if Keith had not paid for driving lessons which stand at around £15 per hour, there are unavoidable costs involved in taking each driving test, acquiring a provisional and full driving license.

(8) This is also the American experience where over half of those dying from drug related conditions or seeking help, are abusing prescription drugs (Glassner 1999: 131)

(9) Slang terminology referring to the symptoms of heroin withdrawal.

(10) The complex borrowing and lending arrangements used to purchase cannabis were not exclusive to this activity but formed a routine part of “the boys” financial arrangements. Inevitably at times circumstances would combine in such a manner that people would not be able to repay debts, and at various times during the fieldwork several of the boys sold personal possessions or kept a low public profile because of this. Equally such collectivist practices were not restricted to finance but permeated other forms of social activity. For example when smoking cigarettes, which was universal amongst the boys, it would be rare for one of the boys to have an entire cigarette to themselves. “Bookings” would be made by other boys, and sometimes a single cigarette would be consecutively shared amongst as many as four. Even when “bookings” were not formally made through a comment “next on that?”, it would be routine for the last third of a cigarette to be passed onto someone else.

(11) These sorts of difficulties were also noted in a self build housing project involving young people, where several of the scheme’s participants were forced to leave the area
after getting into debt with their peers (Hutson & Jones 1999).

(12) Cannabis in a cigarette form.

(13) The particularly intense effect of bong smoking is also noted by Pearson & Twohig (1993).

(14) This and other measures designed to make “the blocks” more secure was response by the local authority to the concerns voiced by “the tenants”.

(15) As is described in Chapter 7 a particularly depressing feature of this episode was that Karen had earlier approached Reflect to seek help in securing emergency accommodation away from the shared flat where she and her friends were using heroin. For a number of reasons relating to both the poor level of facilities in the community centre, and the poor local housing support infrastructure, Reflect was able to offer little practical support.

(16) The colonisation of dwellings by other young people was cited as one of the problems in housing young people by agencies in the survey of single person homelessness in Rhondda Cynon Taff (Hutson & Jones 1997).

(17) As is described further in Chapter 7 there was considerable confusion over Brad’s role in the community centre. The volunteers were under the impression that he had been appointed as a youth worker, yet Brad was adamant that this was not the case and that he had been appointed as an assistant manager.
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Chapter 7: “Whose Telling The Truth And Whose Lying”: Youth, Community Activism And Social Exclusion In A Divided Community.

Introduction.

Previous fieldwork chapters have attempted to analyse the complex and paradoxical processes of social exclusion impacting upon “the Site’s” community. In particular they have argued that the key impact of these processes has been to exacerbate often inherent forms of social division and conflict, which are in turn complexly linked to localised patterns of social inclusion and exclusion. In this chapter the focus is instead placed upon local community activists' attempts at redressing various forms of communal deprivation, hardship and exclusion which they have identified within their community. However although the focus has shifted somewhat, the underlying story remains familiar. Community activists find their efforts thwarted by the same multiplicity of structural factors and agents which underpin processes of social exclusion within “the Site” and by the debilitating effects of local social division and conflict.

The specific focus of this chapter lies in an examination of the ways in which these dynamics of social life in “the Site” influenced the development and operation of two distinct modes of community activism. One of which was constituted by the local tenants and resident association (“the tenants”) whose efforts succeeded in securing the funding for a community centre which opened shortly before fieldwork began in “the Site”. The other is constituted by a group of four local women (“the
volunteers”) who were attempting to set up and run a youth drop-in centre (Reflect).

Although sharing much of “the tenants” analysis of the problems posed locally by issues such as drugs and youth crime Sian, Angharad, Steph and Leanne differed quite radically in their views on how these issues were best addressed. Whereas in the guise of “the Site” forum at least “the tenants” approach was characterised by attempts to bring greater law and order to bear in “the Site” (see Chapter 6), “the volunteers” sought to address these issues through an approach which emphasised the difficulties faced by local young people “the youth”. The community centre formed a key setting for the prolonged and increasingly bitter struggles which subsequently developed between these three groups.

This setting was unique within “the Site” in that it was ostensibly a public space (although defined as a private company) which was managed on a routine basis by individuals living outside “the Site”. The community centre management were also distinctive. Whereas the local community activists involved in developing and subsequently managing this resource were overwhelmingly female, the individuals involved in its management on a paid basis were exclusively male (cf. McCulloch 1997).

However before examining the fortunes of community activism in “the Site” it is first necessary to place these developments within a wider policy context where the involvement of local community activists is increasingly seen as central in the implementation of key areas of central government policy.
Social Exclusion And Community Regeneration.

In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in the potential of community development/regeneration strategies in combating poverty and social exclusion, coupled with a considerable expansion in such initiatives. In many ways this trend is unsurprising. There is a long established tradition of working class communities acting on a collective basis to protect individuals from the hardship which stems from the inevitable inequalities and uneven development of capitalism. This has especially been the case in the South Wales coal fields. Community based self help was a vital source of support during the Great Depression of the 1930s (Twelvetrees1998), and indeed the organisations which developed in these times served as a key source of inspiration for the creation of the post war welfare state. More recently community self help played an equally vital role in sustaining opposition to the pit closures during the year long miners' strike of 1984-1985 (Coulter 1984, Miller 1986). Moreover as Chapter 5 argues in communities such as “the Site” the informal social networks which are the building blocks of community continue to play a powerful role in the contemporary setting. For individuals located within these networks community it is in effect the final safety net, and one which increasingly fills the gaps left by a dwindling welfare state.

What is perhaps more surprising about the current growth in state funding for community development initiatives is the broad basis of their political support and the apparent willingness of powerful centralised public sector bodies to devolve power back to local communities. Instead of the top down policy which brought hill top estates such as “the Site” into existence during the 1960s, much new policy now claims to be working
in ‘partnership’ with or ‘empowering’ local communities, and to be actively encouraging community ‘participation’ or ‘community control’ over decision making processes. The Social Exclusion Unit’s report on neighbourhood renewal is unequivocal in its support for such developments arguing that: “It has become conventional wisdom that communities need to be involved both in designing what is to be done and in implementing it, and that the best policies work through genuine partnerships” (Social Exclusion Unit 1998 2:1). Whilst in principle many have welcomed this policy direction as an opportunity to avoid and rectify the failures of “centralised bureaucracies” (Slater 1998) actual policy initiatives which claim to embody these principles have often been received more cautiously and critically. Thus Mayo (1997) sees considerable potential for partnerships between statutory bodies and local communities in addressing the problems of socially excluded communities but only if these partnerships operate within a framework of “longer term strategies” rather than headline grabbing “short term swoops”. In this context some have also claimed that the funding of such strategies can amount to little more than a token or placatory gesture which in no way offsets the impact of wider centrally conceived government policy. For example Marsh & Murie (1998) argue that the impact of the Major government’s Single Regeneration Budget came “nowhere near compensating for the money lost that is being through the government’s attempts to reduce public expenditure by cutting local authority core funding. Further, social security and income support regimes are exacerbating the problems of disadvantaged communities, as are policies of high rents and lack of capital investment in social housing” (Marsh & Murie 1998:4-5). Indeed, as is argued in Chapter 3 these other aspects of policy, such as social security reform, have frequently played crucial roles in
structuring the patterns and processes of social exclusion which have impacted upon communities such as "the Site". Significantly notions of community involvement or influence do not extend to these key policy arenas. Moreover despite increasing levels of community participation in the actual implementation of urban regeneration initiatives their conceptualisation still takes place at the level of central government and as such within the ideological agenda of the government in power. Thus the belief in free market economics which constituted the ideological foundations of successive conservative governments during the 1980s and 1990s is reflected in the construction of a community centre in "the Site" which was essentially defined as a commercial venture (i.e. as a private limited company and which was intended to be self financing within three years). Similarly, although (as is described in Chapter 6) various aspects of youth crime formed a key concern for community activists in "the Site", the fact that the successful funding bid included letters of support from the police and probation service is perhaps also reflective of the propensity of conservative governments to provide funding for social provision in poor communities through a crime prevention/community safety framework (Gilling & Barton 1997).

It is little wonder then that some commentators have criticised such policy initiatives for 'tokenism' and expressed a degree of cynicism about the actual extent of community participation. Moreover concern has also been expressed about the potential for concepts such as community self help, empowerment or participation to merely serve as a further means by which the state can (further) absolve itself of responsibility from the problems faced by socially excluded individuals and communities (Bennet, Beynon &
Hudson 2000). Thus Hart, Jones & Bains (1997) argued that the ways in which notions of community empowerment were implemented under the Major government were in reality an exercise in shifting responsibility, as the local service providers whose role it was to empower local communities did not themselves possess the power to do this. There are further reasons to doubt the authenticity of central government’s claims of promoting community empowerment, fostering local innovation and encouraging the work of community activists when consideration is given to the ways in which other mechanisms of the state apparatus (e.g. benefit regulations) can actively work against these practices on the ground.

In the following account of community activism in “the Site” there are numerous examples of this. For example during a visit to her house made by a member of staff from the Benefits Agency Steph claimed that she had been questioned closely about the number of hours she worked as a volunteer at Reflect, before being told that if she put in more than 16 hours her benefit entitlements would be affected: “I felt that he was constantly trying to catch me out” (23/10/06) (1). Similarly, there were numerous occasions when the drop-in centre’s effective operation was undermined by considerable inadequacies in the local service infrastructure. A particularly notable example of this occurred when Karen arrived at the drop-in centre in an obviously highly distressed and vulnerable state seeking help in securing emergency accommodation away from the flat where she and her friends had been using heroin. The only available alternative accommodation was in a hostel for the homeless situated thirty miles away in Cardiff, and which had its own reputation for drug abuse (1/10/96). Unsurprisingly Karen
declined this offer and stayed on "the Site" where her heroin problem subsequently worsened and from where she was eventually banished after a brutal attack was made upon her (see Chapter 6).

It is therefore unsurprising that many commentators have drawn attention to the wider structural factors which limit and constrain the activities of community activists. As is described in the section below these factors have certainly played important roles in determining the dynamics of community activism in "the Site". However important difficulties also arise in the conceptualisation and operationalisation of community itself. As is particularly argued in Chapter 5, but is also apparent in the arguments presented throughout this thesis, communities cannot simply be assumed to be homogenous and inclusive entities, quite the reverse. An essential problem for community development is therefore presented by the need to operationalise community in ways which are genuinely inclusive, yet of the fundamental and inherent difficulties of doing so (Bennett, Beynon & Hudson 2000, Gilchrist and Taylor 1997, Atkinson & Cope 1997, Fitzpatrick, Hastings & Kintrea 1998). An added dimension to this problem relates to the ways in which processes of community empowerment seemingly inevitably focus upon 'capacity building' through the empowerment of particular individuals or groups within a community. For example Nugent (1998) writes of the need to identify community leaders and to develop organisations which institutionalise this leadership and its ability to mobilise funding. However in the context of a deeply divided and factionalised community such as "the Site" there are clear dangers that this process could act to further reinforce the power base of already powerful groups, and in this way
exacerbate the exclusion of those who feel alienated from these groups. This is a particular danger for young people who are frequently excluded from regeneration initiatives and who, even when attempts are made to include them, frequently find that their priorities are not shared by adult decision makers (Fitzpatrick, Hastings & Kintrea 1998).

Community Activism In “the Site”

In comparison with some other Valleys communities such as Betws in the Ogwr Valley (Bourke 1998), Penrhys in the Rhondda Valley, or Pen-Y-Waun in the Cynon Valley, the tangible achievements of community activism in “the Site” have been relatively modest. For example, in Penrhys local people operating within the Penrhys Partnership have, amongst other things, managed to dramatically improve local service provision, establishing such facilities as a community cafe, community launderette and a chemist (2). By way of contrast the single greatest achievement of community activism in “the Site” has been the construction of a community centre using £550,000 of Strategic Development Scheme funds secured by “the tenants” in 1995, and a further £240,000 of secured from the European Regional Development Fund the following year. In the successful funding bid and in official documentation relating to its developmental phase (e.g. minutes of steering group meetings) the following claims were made: that the community centre would be an inclusive resource providing important social facilities for both the young and old; that it would serve as a springboard for local economic regeneration “focusing of local energy on creating training and employment opportunities
through the centre"; and "to make the centre self financing after three years" (Funding Application 1993). As this Chapter explores the reality of the community centre's operation could hardly have been more different from these stated intentions.

Instead of functioning as an inclusive resource and a focus of social cohesion the community centre became a setting in which wider conflicts and divisions within "the Site" found a particular focus which ultimately served to exacerbate these dynamics. The intensity of the problems and conflicts which beset the community centre's operation was such that by the end of the fieldwork, it was to all intents and purposes abandoned and was subsequently rendered derelict for a period of time. Few things capture this process more succinctly than a photograph which accompanied a newspaper article which presented an abbreviated version of the troubled life and times of "the Site's" community centre in the summer of 1998. In the foreground, Rachel and Joan (two locally prominent community activists who held key positions in "the tenants" and on the community centre's board of directors), stand with tight lipped expressions outside the by then abandoned and abused community centre. In the background there are two teenage boys pictured beside a dented and graffiti strewn fire door, one of whom (Carl), is wrestling with the door handle his face turned towards the camera, and frozen in a contorted mask of rage. The image is brutally accurate in its portrayal of social polarisation and division in "the Site" and the ways in which these social dynamics led to the destruction of a key communal resource.

However, this is not say that the cause of these limitations and constraints
are to be found within “the Site’s” community. As previous chapters have argued these
dynamics of community life in “the Site” are themselves complexly underpinned by the
broader processes of impoverishment and exclusion which impact on this locality.
Similarly many of the problems and difficulties faced by those involved in the
community centre’s operation are directly attributable to wider structures over which
residents have little or no control either individually or collectively.

Even when funding was secured following four unsuccessful attempts and
- according to reports in the local press - protest marches and petitions, this proved to be a
bittersweet victory. Although ultimately just over three quarters of a million pounds
worth of funding was secured this was a quarter of a million pounds less than had been
hoped for (Steering Group Minutes 18/03/96). This meant that it was only possible to
construct what was then termed ‘the original’ scheme, rather than a ‘larger scheme’
which was popularly believed to contain plans for a youth wing and practical training
areas (e.g. garage workshops). According to Jeff (the first manager appointed to the
community centre), plans for the ‘larger scheme’ consisted of two wings planned to be
constructed around the existing infrastructure. One would be attached to the sports hall
and would house a weights room and additional storage space. The other would be
constructed around the main entrance and would contain three workshops, a classroom
and a youth centre. Jeff believed that the plans would also provide some space for a
garage/mechanical workshop (14/10/96).

Without the additional funding these facilities - which would have had an
obvious role to play in "the Site’s" economic regeneration - could not be built into the community centre’s original construction. Instead the community centre primarily housed social and recreational facilities such as a community cafe, coffee lounge and sports hall (see figure 7.1). Financial constraints were also evident in the sparse nature of the community centre’s internal furnishings and decor with, for example, the bare breeze block walls being left unpainted. Moreover although during its developmental phase further funding bids for initial revenue funding, internal fittings, equipment and furnishings were submitted to the Welsh Office and the National Lottery these were unsuccessful (Steering Group Minutes 18/03/96). The financial situation was further exacerbated during this phase by the discovery that the community centre’s proposed location was situated on a dormant landslip necessitating the sinking of exploratory boreholes and a minor shift in the centre’s location at a cost of £3000 (Steering Group Minutes 08/10/95).

This combination of factors ensured that the community centre began its operation on a shoestring basis and had a number of key implications for the difficulties which emerged in its subsequent operation. First these factors hampered attempts to make the community centre self financing. Although most parts of the building were capable of generating income, the sports hall was the key to this objective, as use of this space was charged hourly, at a rate higher than other parts of the building and additionally appeared most able to reflect and promote existing social infrastructures (e.g. as a setting for fixtures in local amateur football leagues, tournaments, and practice sessions for local teams). Yet the scope for this and the ability to expand the range of facilities was
Figure 7.1: Sketch Map Of The Community Resource Centre. (not to scale)

* Diagram is drawn from memory and is therefore accurate in relation to key, well used, spaces but less so in other not so well used spaces.
inhibited through the initial lack of revenue funding. For example, Jeff expressed frustration at being unable to offer facilities for gymnastic or martial arts clubs, due to a lack of mats. He estimated that purchased new these would cost £1700 but that he might purchase them second hand for £800. As funds were not available for this he sent "a begging letter....[to the Welsh Office].....with such a sob story it will come back tear stained, but with a letter saying no" (14/10/96).

Limited finances also appeared to be implicated in some of the friction and conflicts which emerged between different players involved within this resource. Thus during the initial phase of Reflect's operation from the community centre's coffee lounge (see below section) the central heating was turned off. When approached about this matter by "the volunteers", Jeff (the first community centre manager) claimed that this was due to the way in which the timer mechanism had been set and that he didn't know how to change the settings (14/10/96). Amongst themselves "the volunteers" expressed scepticism about Jeff's explanation and instead suspected that he was merely trying to save money. Later on in the fieldwork a similar situation inadvertently came to light during a meeting between "the volunteers" and another rival group of women who were seeking to have Reflect removed from the community centre and replaced by a youth club run by themselves. Both groups became angry when during their conversation it emerged that Jeff had taken bookings from both groups to use the sports hall to hold a fund raising rave within days of each other (07/11/96). This incident followed an altercation between Jeff and Steph when the booking had been made as Jeff had initially sought to charge Reflect £30 for the use of the sports hall. Steph had argued that Reflect
was entitled to a discount given the amount of money they had spent in rent on the coffee lounge and after threatening to go to a local paper with her story, Jeff had relented and agreed a figure of £15 for Reflect’s use of the sports hall.

However, although difficult financial circumstances were a key underlying factor in the community centre's troubled operation, the most immediately identifiable cause stemmed from divisions and power struggles evident within the community itself. In part these difficulties can be traced back to the community centre’s developmental phase and the ways in which notions of community participation were implemented at this time. To the extent that local community members occupied only four out of the twelve to fifteen places on the board of directors appointed to oversee the community centre’s construction and subsequent management, community participation was minimal (“Terms Of Reference” - June 1995). However, what was possibly more critical was the fact that these four places were occupied by key members of “the tenants” whose role effectively became defined as the mouthpiece for local community in “the Site”. With the remit for other members of the board (which included a local bank manager, community development consultant, and local representatives from organisations such as the probation service, social services community education and the Training and Enterprise Council) geared principally towards representing the interests of “organisations concerned in the future provision of services to the project” the role of involving or empowering the local community within the decision making process fell exclusively to “the tenants” (“Terms Of Reference” - June 1995). It was the tenants responsibility to consult with and provide information to the local community. Specific duties included
the establishment of an “information centre”, the publication and circulation of “regular
ewlinenewsletters/leaflets”, and “to hold general/area/personal meetings to listen to the
views/ideas of residents” and report these back to the steering group (“Terms Of
Reference” - June 1995).

This arrangement illustrates starkly the difficulties (described in earlier
sections of this chapter) of operationalising community in ways which are inclusive of all
community members. Although “the tenants” were undoubtedly members of the local
community, the hostile and conflictual relationships which existed between this group
and other groups (notably local young people) meant that they could not be said to be
representative of the entire community. Casting the tenants in this role had the effect of
further underpinning and legitimating their relatively powerful status within the local
community. Through their key role in the community centre’s development, “the tenants”
occupied positions on the board of directors, the ultimate decision making body with
regard to the community centre, and additionally were directly responsible for the
centre’s daily management during periods when no official managers were in place.
Moreover as is described in previous chapters in the wider sphere of community activism
within “the Site” “the tenants” constituted local representation on a range of bodies (e.g.
tenants association, forum group, board of directors) partially legitimised by the
patronage they received from various external statutory agencies. By way of contrast “the
youth” who frequently formed the subject of grievances aired through these bodies, had
no equivalent bodies of their own, and through aspects of their lifestyles lacked the
perceived legitimacy of “the tenants”. Theirs was therefore an identifiably powerless and
marginalised position in relation both to the community centre and also within “the Site” generally. One indication of the extent of this marginalisation was that the successful promotion of their interests was dependent upon the advocacy of “the volunteers” who campaigned for the establishment of local drop in centre for “the Site’s” young people. However although this group of local women started their campaign for a drop-in centre as active members of “the tenants” they found themselves alienated from this group through their pursuit of this objective. A further layer of complexity was added by the fact that in attempting to mediate between the interests of competing groups, the centre management found that they too were drawn into the conflict. Thus early on during his time in the post, Jeff described what he saw as the “logistical problem” which “the tenants” posed to the community centre’s operation: “I’ve literally got to drag control away from them” (1/10/96). Inevitably his attempts to do this brought him into conflict with “the tenants” and within days of this statement Jeff had been suspended for “arbitrary decision making” after “the tenants” made a complaint about him to the board of directors (5/10/96).

Competing Visions Of Community Activism: “The Tenants” And “The Volunteers”

Although sharing much of “the tenant’s” analysis of the problems posed by young people within “the Site” (see Chapter 6), “the volunteers” differed significantly in their views on how these problems should be addressed. Whereas “the tenants” approach was predominantly characterised by attempts to bring greater law and order to bear on “the Site”, “the volunteers” concerned themselves with addressing what they believed to
be underlying causes. Given their pluralist nature these are not easily summarised but it is possible to identify several broad elements to "the volunteers" analysis from "Reflect's" official documentation and from conversations with "the volunteers".

First, that "the youth" were being excluded from their own community, and as such Reflect began from the premise that "all young people have the right to give to and to be included within their local community.......that they belong to the community and the community belongs to them" (Reflect 1996 - constitution). Second that forms of behaviour problematic to both "the youth" and the wider community were the product of a set of circumstances in which there were few available alternative outcomes. Thus "the volunteers" sought to re-connect "the Site's" youth to both the local community and wider society, through the establishment of a youth drop-in centre whose broad objectives were to:

- "raise confidence and self esteem"
- increase the range of services/amenities/opportunities which young people had access;
- "to extend horizons of experience and expectation"
- facilitate the development of a space (in both a physical and social sense) through which "the youth" could "identify and articulate their needs and wishes" and implement these through an organisational structure which ensured their "full participation in the management of the project"

(Reflect 1996 - constitution and description of project)

These broad objectives translated into specific aims of acting as a broker of services, provision of counselling services, practical help, recreational facilities, and the creation of
Initially Reflect planned to utilise an empty three bedroom house which having been repossessed by the local authority, was falling into a state of disrepair, and which they felt offered “a chance to turn an eyesore into a much needed centre” (Reflect 1996 - communication with Area Housing Officer). The premises were felt to be well matched to the pluralist nature of the project as the house offered a range of spaces which could be put to different uses. It was envisaged that the three second floor rooms would provide private and confidential spaces in which counselling services could be delivered and visiting agencies could hold interviews. The three ground floor rooms were to function as more informal spaces, comprising a meeting room, television and video room, and kitchen offering cooking and laundry facilities. Whilst these were the uses initially intended, it is important to recognise that they were conceived flexibly, and could be adapted in accordance to changing circumstances. This was in accordance with a core aim of Reflect which was the establishment of a relatively autonomous space through which “the youth” could develop and act upon their own agendas.

Permission was obtained from the local authority to use the building rent-free subject to certain provisos (4), but before Reflect became operational it found itself the source of considerable local controversy, over plans to allow a drug support agency to operate a needle exchange scheme from the premises. In a letter inviting residents to a public meeting (17/07/96), this was justified in terms of the “problems....caused by finding dirty needles, especially around the two playgrounds.....a [weekly] mobile needle
exchange....has been in operation for six months, in which time there have been no reports concerning dirty needles” (Reflect 1996 - description of project). Those attending the meeting had reportedly been unaware of the scheme’s operation and had become incensed at a strategy which many perceived to be encouraging drug use. In an increasingly angry atmosphere the meeting had to be cleared by Steve Smith (the local community constable). “The volunteers” felt they had been denied the opportunity to present the wider aims of Reflect with the agenda being restricted to this single issue. Thus on Reflect’s official opening night several months later (05/10/96), Carol introduced a dance group formed locally, urging the audience to give them a warm reception, as during the earlier public meeting they had been “vilified” and “ridiculed”.

Following the public meeting the drug support agency ceased its operation of the needle exchange scheme due to fears about the safety of both staff and clients and Reflects intended premises were rendered unusable by an arson attack. Furthermore “the volunteers” claimed to have been ostracised by many members of the community, who having apparently interpreted the proposed drop-in centre as a rehabilitation centre for “junkies”, labelled “the volunteers”, “junkie sluts” and issued threats “to watch out for a knife in the back” (25/09/96). Additionally “the volunteers” claimed to have been informed by “the tenants” that they had been expelled for “bringing the association’s name into disrepute” (13/08/96). Although it later transpired that they were not formally expelled from the association (08/04/97), this distinction was irrelevant as “the volunteers” were by this time profoundly disaffected with “the tenants”, who were believed to have played a key role in inciting hostility to the project.
Reflect, “The Youth” And The Community Centre.

Fieldwork began in August 1996, in the immediate aftermath of these events, at a time when Reflect was seeking new premises, set against a reality in which the only (nominally) available venue appeared to be the recently opened community centre. At this point the official management had not yet been appointed and the centre was being managed by “the tenants” who it was believed would not permit Reflect to operate from ‘their’ premises. Consequently efforts were directed towards lobbying individual members of the board of directors perceived as sympathetic to their ideas, in the hope that the appointment of the official manager would help create a more favourable climate.

Whilst Reflect was not officially operational at this time, in practical terms it was functioning from Sian’s living room, in an albeit minimalist form. This was the location where regular planning/progress meetings and discussions were held with “the youth” (and significantly was the first place I was taken to upon meeting “the boys”). The atmosphere in these meetings was typically relaxed and informal with “the volunteers” and “the youth” talking freely and openly, and conversation frequently veering away from the meetings agenda, towards discussion of local happenings, social issues and humorous exchanges. For an outsider such as myself the impression gained from these meetings was very much one of a group of people who enjoyed each other’s company, and in terms of Reflects formal development, the existence of a broad consensus and shared goals. Indeed even when meetings had not been planned individuals and small
groups of youths would regularly visit Sian’s house for a chat, a cup of tea and
sometimes to seek advice. Sian’s living room had become somewhere to go.

With the benefit of hindsight this was arguably the most successful period of
Reflect’s operation despite the obvious constraints imposed by its lack of formal
premises. Unlike a host of paid professionals in guises ranging from detached youth
workers to school teachers “the volunteers” had succeeded in making meaningful contact
with “the youth” and were clearly held in high esteem by them. However, the fragility of
this relationship was to become apparent over subsequent months as Reflect moved from
an idea without premises, to a reality operating from within the community centre.

At the same time that Reflect was seeking to locate in the community centre,
relationships between “the youth” and “the tenants” were evolving within this space
which formed a template for future interactions. Like the conflictual relationships which
existed between “the boys” and certain other individuals and groups in “the Site” (see
Chapter 6), the undercurrents of conflict which surrounded the community centre were
made apparent from the start of the fieldwork. With no official manager in place “the
tenants” were responsible for day to day management, and as such were gatekeepers to
this resource. Whilst in performing this role “the tenants” did not absolutely bar access to
the local youth as a group

(5), their access tended to be restricted to the sports hall where a flat rate fee of £10 per
hour was charged. Even then facilities made available to other groups were often denied
to local young people. Thus when a group of young men from a neighbouring area
booked the sports hall they were automatically provided with football goals (05/10/96), something which was never made available to young people in “the Site”. Thus local young people were not absolutely excluded from the community centre but their access was temporally and spatially restricted to a defined space for particular slots of time, and even when gained did not necessarily entail use of all of the facilities.

The restricted nature of local young people’s access to the community centre’s facilities meant that their most typical use of this resource amounted to congregating around the covered entrance which at least offered some shelter from the elements. Their use of this space and its considerable irony was apparent from the very first day of the fieldwork, when a group of mainly young men were stood talking to one another and refining their footballing skills by using its outside walls for rebounds which they would then attempt to head or volley. Similarly the sense of acute resentment which these young people felt towards “the tenants” who controlled access to this resource was also made quickly apparent, as was the volatile nature of the relationship between these groups. For example within hours of first meeting “the boys” I was urged to join them in breaking into the community centre via a fire escape situated at its rear, their explicit intent being to annoy “the tenants” (13/08/96). Over the subsequent months of fieldwork breaking into the building via various fire escapes was a routine and partly ritualised component of interaction between “the youth” and “the tenants” in this space, as was the practice of banning any of those identified as participating in these incidents.

Other incidents which also occurred on my first day of contact with “the
boys" also provided a taste of things to come. Later the same day a heated argument took place between Rachel, and a mixed group of children and youths, which ended when a child unsuccessfully attempted to ‘nip’ past Rachel who was blocking the entrance. Following this the doors were again locked and Rachel disappeared into the interior of the building. The young boy, whose shirt had been ripped during his attempt to access the building, angrily approached “the boys” shortly afterwards asking “have you got a light? I’m going to torch this place”. Still angry he approached them again later in the afternoon. This time he was carrying a hammer which he claimed he was going to use to smash the community centre’s windows.

At this stage the community centre was not yet fully operational as the official management were still to be appointed and for much of the time its doors remained closed as members of “the tenants” involved in running the centre participated in various training events. It might therefore have been expected that as the community centre reached a stage where it became more fully operational that these tensions would begin to dissipate. Whilst to some extent this was the case during the community centre’s initial operation this proved to be short lived and as young people’s disillusionment intensified over subsequent months so did the severity of the actions which were taken against the building.

From the outset the community centre was subject to repeated break ins and minor acts of vandalism, but these initially took a more mischievous and symbolic form with little serious intent to either steal items of any substantial value or cause
serious damage to the building. Such actions were typified by the type of incident
described above where small groups of local young people would break into the centre
whilst it was being used, merely as a means of annoying “the tenants”. Thus although on
one occasion a fire extinguisher was stolen Jeff expressed the view that the break in was
not motivated by any real attempt to steal and was instead motivated by local young
people’s attempts to find somewhere warm and dry (01/10/96). However just two weeks
later the community centre was again broken into and this time two computers were
stolen from the premises (14/10/96). The increase in severity between these two attacks
upon the community centre formed part of a larger pattern of escalation. By the
Christmas of 1996 the community centre had been subject to numerous break ins and the
cumulative effect of acts of vandalism perpetrated against its fabric gave the building an
increasingly besieged appearance. The metal shutters which covered the building’s doors
and windows were strewn with graffiti and dented from the missiles which had been
hurled at them whilst the roof was covered with an assortment of such missiles. In the
most serious the community centre’s covered entrance was badly damaged when a stolen
car had been deliberately positioned beneath it before being set alight. Moreover by this
time Jeff’s contract had expired and had not been renewed by the board of directors,
meaning that the responsibility for the centre’s management once again reverted to “the
tenants” until a new manager could be appointed. Opening hours were now limited to a
few hours each morning and consequently Reflect had been cancelled until such time as a
new manager could be appointed (12/12/96).
Reflect In The Community Centre: The Transformation Of Concept Into Reality.

“The volunteers” hoped that the appointment of an external manager would break the deadlock concerning their lack of premises and in doing so, “the youth’s” minimal access to the community centre, proved well founded. As an outsider to “the Site” Jeff brought a different perspective, which was initially more sympathetic towards the concept of a drop-in service and the plight of young people: “these young people, its the first chance they have had to socialise......they're treated as second class citizens up here” (01/10/96). Within a week of Jeff’s appointment (06/09/96) “the volunteers” had negotiated access to the “coffee lounge” for a probationary period of three months, during which time Reflect would operate for two evenings per week between 5-8p.m.. This was obviously seen as a significant forwards step for Reflect’s development and as such the actual (6) opening night (10/09/96), was well attended and largely characterised by a jubilant and optimistic atmosphere. Whilst some of the young people used the project recreationally, sitting at tables playing cards or talking, others discussed plans for future events, projects and activities (e.g. setting up a dance group), and a group of young women busied themselves making friendship bands with the aim of selling them to raise funds. “The volunteers” initial nervousness dissipated as the session progressed relatively trouble free and the “coffee lounge” began to fill. By the end of the session the drop-in was so well attended that “the volunteers” who seemed to know most people in “the Site”, were seeing people who they didn’t recognise. For “the youth“, “Reflect’s” establishment in the “coffee lounge” embodied a structural shift in the conditions of their access to the community centre. They now had access to a space within the community
centre where they previously had not, and moreover this access was not dependent upon an admission payment.

However, whilst obtaining premises meant that one substantial obstacle to Reflect’s development had been overcome, it also presented myriad new difficulties challenges and barriers. Locating in the community centre entailed a compromise in which the actuality of Reflect became a much diluted version of its original conception. Limited times at which the “coffee lounge” was made available and limited funds of £850 (7), meant that Reflect’s hours of opening were dramatically fewer than anticipated, being reduced from 22.5 hours a week, to 6 hours per week (8). The age range of Reflect’s clientele was similarly truncated, with social services, the principal funding source imposing a 13-19 age limit, rather than the originally intended age limit of 11-25. More fundamentally the project had been initially formulated around the use of a building permanently and exclusively devoted to use as a drop-in centre, and one which offered a range of spaces rather than the single space of the “coffee lounge”. The room was insufficient and inappropriate for the range of services and amenities which had been originally intended. The role of Reflect as a “broker of services” became limited to a supply of leaflets, with any more active role hampered by the lack of a telephone (9). The counselling service which had been a core component of the planned project became extremely difficult to administer given the lack of privacy and facilities. Although Jeff offered the use of his office when the counselling services were called upon, but in practice when needed the office was often in use, and even when not in use, subject to frequent interruption. Even the tea and coffee making facilities became cumbersome and
convoluted in their delivery, with water having to be drawn from taps in the toilets, as the kitchen was felt to be “the tenants” territory and as such out of bounds to Reflect.

Additionally the coffee lounge was felt to be a drab and unwelcoming space, which with its fluorescent strip lights and unpainted breeze block walls, was likened to a “prison visiting room” by Steph who joked darkly that it was good practice for “the boys” (10/09/98). Furthermore the coffee lounge was designated a “multi-use” area, intended to cater for the needs of different and diverse groups from within the community. In addition to housing Reflect “the coffee lounge” was also the location for a daytime crèche, play scheme during school vacations, and was periodically employed for various other events. This meant that usage came with the stipulation that no permanent fixtures were to be added which when combined with minimal and insecure storage facilities (an unlocked cupboard in the manager’s office), severely restricted the range of facilities Reflect could hope to provide. In contrast “the volunteers” felt that this was not the case for projects operating with “the tenant’s” endorsement due to their monopolistic control over storage space. Ultimately Reflect’s facilities consisted of what could be carried, on foot, to and from “the volunteers” homes, and those which automatically came with the room. The latter consisting of tables, chairs, power points, heating (nominally), lighting, and a piano, which was both out of tune, and expressly out of bounds. On each session “the volunteers” brought with them tea and coffee making facilities, a small selection of board games, a stereo, some tapes and a range of literature/posters/pamphlets relating to topics such as safe sex, drug use and training/education opportunities.
Thus the physical nature of the room and the conditions attached to its use, exerted a powerful constraining effect upon Reflect's operation, not least because no scope existed to alter these circumstances. Indeed these problems surmounted those relating to limited funding and a more basic local scarcity of material resources. Bizarrely, as Reflect struggled to operate with minimal amenities, it was at the same time unable to take advantage of offers of a pool table, table tennis tables and a multi-gym, due to insufficient storage space and the 'no-permanent-fixtures' stipulation. Moreover Reflect was operating in a setting widely perceived as "the tenants" territory, whose continuing hostility, was by now firmly engrained in the consciousness of all those concerned with the project.

This dynamic of Reflect's operation interacted cumulatively with the constraining effects of the physical environment. Initially at least, the drop in centre could hardly have been in closer proximity to this rival group which held bingo sessions in the community cafe which was only separated from the coffee lounge by a sliding partition. The kitchen which faced onto both rooms (see figure 1), was used solely by "the tenants" and - although there can be no certainty over their motives - certain individuals could regularly be seen observing Reflect's activities from behind the mesh screens which covered the serving hatch when not in use. Constantly aware of the probationary and contested nature of their use of the coffee lounge, "the volunteers" felt themselves to be under continual surveillance by a group believed to be plotting against them.
The resulting development of a besieged atmosphere and siege mentality was at times manifested in fears which bordered on the paranoid. When Leanne noticed PA speakers suspended from the ceiling, there followed a half serious conversation amongst “the volunteers” about the possibility of these being used as listening devices. Although only half serious Leanne still approached Jeff to satisfy herself that this was not the case (25/09/96).

On other occasions the volunteers speculative fears appeared more plausible, yet still subject to considerable uncertainty. On Reflect’s official opening night (05/10/96), rumours were circulating amongst “the volunteers“, that “the tenants” had collected 400 signatures on a petition demanding Reflect’s removal. The official opening night was an important event for Reflect, as invitations had been issued to representatives from various outside agencies whom it was hoped would offer emotional, practical, and, perhaps, even financial support. Consequently considerable effort was made to present the project in its best light. The dance group performed for the visitors and a substantial buffet was provided, which at a cost of £25 bore testimony to “the volunteers” budgetary skills. However a noisy dispute occurred in the foyer, where two local women complained angrily that their children were refused access, as they fell short of the lower age limit by a few months. The dispute could be heard clearly within the coffee lounge, and many of the visitors drifted into the foyer area to witness it. Afterwards “the volunteers” felt certain that this was a staged event, designed to embarrass them at a time when the potential for this was greatest. Whilst they had no concrete evidence, it was also the case that no similar incident occurred before or after this time. Moreover the two
Such uncertainty, mistrust, rumour and speculation were central dynamics of community activism in “the Site”, and routinely served as the basis upon which decisions were made and action taken. In this context the very factors integral to fostering a sense of community in “the Site” (e.g. dense social networks and the associated depth of social intimacy) worked against effective community action. A key example of this can be seen in the way that upon gaining access to premises there was subsequently a fundamental transformation in the relationship between “the volunteers” and “the youth”. Having gained access to the coffee lounge “the volunteers” now found themselves charged with policing “the youth’s” behaviour, not only within the coffee lounge, but throughout the community centre.

A range of factors associated with the conditions in which Reflect first gained access to the community centre, were implicated within this transformation. Aware of the precarious nature of their premises, “the volunteers” were anxious to ensure that the behaviour of “the youth” would not provide reasons to support arguments for Reflect’s removal. This was evident from the first day of operation from the coffee lounge, when Sian told “the boys” not to arrive drunk or ‘stoned’ as Jeff might refuse them admission. In the event “the boys” did arrive obviously ‘stoned’ but were not challenged (10/09/96). The room was also subject to further formal and informal conditions of use which “the volunteers” were expected to enforce. In addition to those
previously described it was designated a “no smoking” area, despite tobacco consumption being widespread amongst “the Site’s” residents and almost universal amongst “the youth”. Additionally Jeff imposed what might be termed working conditions, as was exemplified by his insistence that the stereo was placed in the far corner of the room and kept at a low volume, or that nobody touched the piano. Whilst these operational conditions originated directly from “the management”, Jeff made it clear that their enforcement was “the volunteers” responsibility. Ultimately therefore “the volunteers” found themselves facing a set of circumstances where the short term aim of maintaining access, necessarily took precedence over the wider aims of the project itself.

Thus, whilst securing access to the “coffee lounge” was ostensibly a major step forward in Reflect’s development, use of this setting actually placed severe constraints upon the project and ensured that its reality became a pale imitation of its original intent. The actual outcome of Reflect in the community centre, was in effect a youth club, and moreover a youth club so minimally resourced as to barely deserve the title. This was something which the volunteers themselves recognised: “This is fucking shit, its nothing compared to what we had planned” (Sian - 14/10/96). Whilst initial plans detailed infinitely more comprehensive forms of provision, these proved impossible to deliver in the social and physical circumstances of the community centre. Here, a fundamental shortfall existed in the capacity of those engaged with Reflect’s development, to do so with any degree of autonomy.

This is not to say that this went without challenge, as attempts were
regularly made to define areas of autonomy. One example related to Reflect’s status in relation to the community centre, where “the volunteers” were anxious to ensure that the two were understood and recognised as separate entities. On one occasion when Sian was talking with John outside the community centre, she asked if he was going into Reflect but John claimed to have been banned. Sian replied “you might be banned from the community centre, but Reflect isn’t part of the community centre....he[Jeff] can’t stop you going in” (1911/96)(10). When John did go in Jeff challenged him, but backed down when Sian intervened on John’s behalf. However shortly afterwards Sian grew worried that Jeff may call the police as there was an outstanding warrant for John’s arrest, and he left the premises when she told him of this. Such instances demonstrate that even when possible to assert some degree of autonomy this could often prove a fruitless exercise in acquiring illusory power. In other instances “the volunteers” attempts to define areas of autonomy were blatantly disregarded. For example, when Steve Smith (the community constable), expressed an interest in visiting Reflect Sian claimed to have informed him that “you’ve got to take your blue boys uniform off......we’re not having any uniforms in there” (25/09/96). Even so Keith who had on previous occasions expressed the view that “their [the police] eyes are everywhere” (23/09/96), expressed his misgivings: “you’ve got to be careful Sian, some of “the boys” have got warrants on them” (25/09/96). When Steve did enter Reflect he did so in full uniform, much to the annoyance of John who reportedly taunted him with “[Steve] we all know you’re shagging Natalie Jelly Head” (08/10/96).

Thus the conditions in which struggles occurred guaranteed minimal
success, due to the precarious nature of access and Reflect's relatively powerless position within the established hierarchies. Moreover the dynamics of Reflect's operation within the community centre meant that the consensus and solidarity which characterised the pre-community centre phase of operation quickly eroded as "the volunteers" found themselves placed in a position of having to police "the youth's" dissent. A direct consequence of this was that "the volunteers" increasingly became numbered amongst those against whom "the youth" registered and displayed their dissent. Whilst from its inception Reflect aimed to control "the youth" through the encouragement of more 'socially desirable' behaviour, this was to be conducted through the creation of effective, accessible and appropriate alternatives. In the setting of the community centre this quite simply proved to be an impossibility and as this became apparent the relationship between "the youth" and "the volunteers" soured. In this phase of Reflect's operation the optimism and enthusiasm which had characterised Reflects early development, despite the considerable difficulties which were encountered at this time, were noticeably absent.


The fundamental discrepancies which existed between Reflect in theory and practice, were soon given substance in the emergence of an increasingly divisive and conflictual relationship between "the volunteers" and "the youth". Whilst this emerging dynamic was initially characterised by relatively infrequent, overtly trivial and individualised incidents, they were endowed with potent symbolism. Smoking in the
"coffee lounge", playing with the piano, repositioning the stereo, and turning up the volume are all capable of interpretation as acts of defiance, which symbolised far deeper forms of disenchantment with a project whose promises of empowerment and autonomy, had proven to be merely empty rhetoric. Moreover on occasion such strategies were successful in altering minor aspects of the status quo, as was eventually the case with the positioning of the stereo. Initially at Jeff's insistence the stereo had been placed in the far corner of the coffee lounge, next to the tea and coffee making facilities, but it was repeatedly moved (particularly by John) to a position near the entrance to the coffee lounge. Eventually Jeff appeared to grow weary of approaching "the volunteers", and the stereo stayed where it had been re-positioned. Equally the volume at which the stereo was played was another contentious issue which was eventually resolved through re-scheduling the bingo sessions so that they were not juxtaposed to Reflect's sessions.

Although significant such victories were incremental and did little to minimise underlying problems and stresses. These incidents therefore escalated, becoming more frequent, more serious and more identifiably collective forms of assertive action. Several features were evident in this process of escalation. Whilst initially these dissenting actions were almost solely perpetrated by males in the older end of Reflect's age range, they quickly became more generalised, bridging not only the gender gap, but also incorporating a greater age range. What was particularly noticeable was that those members of Reflect who had been actively involved with the project from its inception and whose previous relationship with the project had been typified by enthusiastic commitment, were amongst the first to publicly express their disenchantment in such
ways.

By mid October 1996 many of “the boys” actively avoided Reflect, choosing instead to congregate in public spaces, which although increasingly uncomfortable in the Autumn evenings were also largely unregulated. “The volunteers” began to express concern about the increasing distance between themselves and “the boys”, as even when using the facilities they were now sullen and non-communicative in “the volunteers” presence. Moreover “the volunteers” relationship with “the girls” was also deteriorating to the point where Angharad commented that (like “the boys”), “you can’t get a word of sense out of them” (14/10/96). Indeed at times “the volunteers” expressed difficulty in restraining their temper when certain of “the girls” began to flagrantly flout the community centre’s rules. For example, when Sam (a young woman who had been an enthusiastic participant in Reflect from the beginning of its development) sauntered up to Sian drawing on a lit cigarette during a time when “the youth” were boycotting the project Sian merely responded with “you know the rules Sam”. It was only afterwards that her she expressed her irritation at this incident saying that “I could have stuck that fag up Sam’s arse tonight” (12/11/96). What was particularly significant about these sorts of interactions between “the volunteers” and “the youth” was that the individuals involved were often those who had previously demonstrated an enthusiastic commitment to the project from the beginnings of its development. For example, only weeks earlier Sam had been one of the young women making friendship bands to help raise funds for Reflect, had also participated in the dance group on the official opening night and had even chided me for not attending meetings
when I returned to “the Site” after a temporary withdrawal from the field for ethical reasons (see Chapter 4).

The situation finally reached crisis point when events unfolding in one session (21/10/96) caused “the volunteers” to cancel the subsequent session and replace it with a meeting where it was intended to discuss the project’s future. The reason for this was that “the volunteers” felt that “the youth’s” behaviour during the previous session had crossed a critical threshold. The session had been particularly volatile with a phone being stolen from the foyer, Jeff’s car subjected to minor vandalism, and some audio tapes stolen from Reflect. This latter incident troubled “the volunteers” most of all, not because of the financial value of the tapes (which was minimal), but its apparent indication that “the youth” had lost respect for the project (and by implication “the volunteers”). The meeting which was intended to rectify this situation proved to be a dismal failure. Only four people attended the meeting, all of whom were young women who had been actively involved with the project since the beginning. They claimed that others wanted to attend but were worried about losing face in front of their friends (especially “the boys”). Sian went outside to encourage more people to attend but returned visibly shaken and angry, claiming that Derek and Bass had initially laughed in her face, and that Derek had then come close to punching her, accusing Sian of wrongly informing Jeff that it was he who had stolen the phone (something Sian vociferously denied).

After the meeting had been drawn to an early finish, (due to the lack of
numbers) “the volunteers” discussed how best to deal with the crisis and speculated about rumours that a rival group was planning to have Reflect replaced by a youth club run by themselves. Sian argued that now that they had lost the trust and support of “the youth” continuing Reflect’s operation was pointless. As for the rumour about a rival group seeking Reflect’s replacement Sian’s response was one of bitter resignation: “well we’ve achieved our ends. We’ve set up the drop-in and now we’ve turned it over to someone else to run” (23/10/96). Steph, disagreed arguing that these were “teething problems” and that they should persevere at least until the end of the period for which they had paid rent (by now March 1997). Although in the end a decision was made to continue the project into the near future in the hope that things would improve, the meeting marked a watershed from which point “the volunteers” increasingly discussed abandoning the project altogether, a subject which had previously not been on the agenda.

During subsequent sessions the situation deteriorated further and “the youth” appeared to be engaged in an active boycott of Reflect. None of the local young people who were originally involved with the project now attended and instead the project was attended only by a far younger clientele as “the volunteers” abandoned any pretense of an age restriction. Moreover during its sessions “the youth” who now congregated outside the community centre’s entrance subjected Reflect to forms of petty harrassment and intimidation previously reserved for “the tenants”. Stones would clang loudly off the coffee lounge’s metal roof and shutters, and on at least one occasion “the volunteers” had to leave the premises via a fire escape after finding themselves locked into the community centre by “the youth”. Throughout this time rumours circulated
amongst "the volunteers" about an attempted takeover of Reflect by a rival group who were also suspected of being behind "the youth's" boycott of the project in a bid to strengthen their cause.

These rumours proved to have substance when the rival group approached "the volunteers" directly (29/10/96). Significantly contact was initially made through the same flouting of rules with which "the youth" initially expressed their dissent. Two women entered an almost deserted drop-in, casting malevolent stares towards "the volunteers", and when this drew no response ostentatiously lit cigarettes. Angharad informed them of the "no smoking" rule and received the response "I thought this was meant to be a drop-in........where's all this counselling then?", at which point they got up and left. They returned later with several other local women to "talk tidy" and to "lay [their] cards on the table", admitting that they had approached Jeff to seek Reflect's removal, that they had received a favourable response and that they had indeed encouraged "the youth" to boycott the project. The reasons they outlined for this course of action were quite simply that they (and "the youth") were dissatisfied with the minimal amenities and the raft of petty regulations, which they believed were a product of Reflect's overemphasis on counselling. However when "the volunteers" expressed agreement about the regulations and lack of amenities and argued that these shortcomings were not of their own making, but of the particular dynamics of the community centre's operation the two rival groups found themselves in agreement and the meeting ended with plans for a further meeting the following week to discuss ways in which both groups could "pull together". As one of the women challenging Reflect claimed "we want the
same as you, we want the kids off the street”.

However, beneath these outward expressions of common purpose and agreement lay the familiar dynamics of suspicion and mistrust. Thus although the second meeting was characterised by the same sorts of outwardly positive discussions as the first, the tone could hardly have been more different when the meeting had finished and “the volunteers” were discussing events amongst themselves. Suspicions were voiced about the rival groups real motivations with one individual in particular being suspected of merely trying to place herself in a favourable position for any salaried post which came up within the community centre. Despite lengthy discussion “the volunteers” could not reach any firm conclusions either as to the rival groups actual intentions for the community centre. For example, contrary to the rival groups claims about having Jeff’s support, in conversations with “the volunteers” and myself, Jeff claimed to be “completely pissed off” with the “underhanded” methods they were employing (e.g. encouraging a boycott of Reflect) and pledged his support for “the volunteers” (7/11/96). Yet, “the volunteers” were of the opinion that Jeff himself could not be trusted especially given the revelations regarding the bookings he had taken for the sports hall which had emerged during their previous meeting with the rival group (see earlier section). The frequently voiced criticism that Jeff was attempting to “run with the fox and the hounds” was aired again as was the claim that Jeff was not averse to playing different groups against each other in order to secure his desired outcome. Bewildered and disillusioned “the volunteers” discussion ended with Angharad’s exasperated comment that it was impossible to decide “who’s telling the truth and who’s lying” and Sian’s comment that
she was willing to "just pack the whole thing in".

"The volunteers" doubts about working with the rival group were compounded the following week when an incident occurred in the community centre where one of the rival group's children allegedly called one of Rachel's grandchildren "a black bastard". When the child was reprimanded by Jeff, his mother was claimed to have intervened saying her child had every right to call Rachel's grandchildren "black bastards". Steph expressed her disgust at this incident and its implications for the woman's suitability to be working with young people: "These are the kind of people who want to run a youth club. What kind of message is that to send to your own children, never mind other people's". Despite criticising the lack of communication between "the volunteers" and the rival group ("people around here need to learn to talk to each other"), Jeff was equally scathing, castigating in the same sentence "the trash who can't even bring up their own children properly" (12/11/96).

Events took an unexpected turn the following week when "the youth" ended their boycott and started to return to Reflect. For the time being it appeared that the rival group had abandoned their plans for a youth club, and were content to allow Reflect to continue its operation. Far from being damaging the whole process appeared to have actually brought about significant improvements and changes to Reflect's operation. Coincidentally perhaps, on the very same day that the rival group approached "the volunteers" Jeff managed to conjure up extra storage and also managed to work out the timer settings for the central heating. Thus when Reflect resumed what approached to
normal operation after the boycott the room was heated and was now equipped with a pool table and table tennis tables which were constantly in use. Moreover the "no smoking" rule which had earlier been enforced upon Reflect's operation was flagrantly disregarded by both "the youth" and "the volunteers". For the first time in Reflect's operation from the community centre there appeared to be a real sense of ownership and autonomy, yes this too proved short lived. In December Jeff's contract of employment was not renewed and Reflect was unable to open again until a new manager could be appointed. Although Reflect recommenced its operation from the community centre when a new manager was appointed in the new year, the underlying difficulties which beset its operation and that of the community centre generally, continued. Reflect finally ceased operating in July 1997 and by the following winter the community centre had also closed down.

Conclusion.

More than anything else the biographies of both Reflect and the community centre demonstrate the debilitating effects which local patterns of social exclusion, division and conflict can have upon a communities attempts at regeneration. Despite the considerable effort expended by committed and active community activists both projects did little to substantially improve conditions within "the Site", and, given the dashed dreams which the demise of both projects represented, could quite conceivably have further exacerbated these conditions. It was certainly the case amongst "the volunteers" that their experiences of trying to set up and run a youth drop-in centre (unsurprisingly) left them feeling despondent and bitter, feelings which were doubtless
shared by “the tenants”.

Such experiences can only serve to confirm the hopelessness of trying to do anything which will improve conditions amongst all sections of the community, and deepen scepticism that any new initiative will bring any worthwhile or long standing improvement. This is perhaps especially the case for “the youth” whose failed attempts at inclusion through channels with perceived legitimacy, is likely to have only reinforced their sense of exclusion and alienation from wider society, but also, crucially, from the community they grew up in. As this chapter demonstrates only too clearly the continuation of these patterns of exclusion has implications not only for “the youth” but for the wider community as a whole. The fortunes of these polarised factions are inexorably interwoven, with the exclusion of one group intimately related to the continued exclusion of the other. Moreover leaving aside the implications for the communities own perceptions of itself, the failure of the community centre in particular is likely to have only further reinforced whatever negative stereotypes or preconceptions which powerful outside bodies may have held.

However although the most immediately identifiable causes of the demise of both the community centre and Reflect are to be found within the community itself, these social dynamics are themselves underpinned by wider structural factors. As is described in Chapter 5 at levels ranging from the inter personal to the communal the frictions and conflicts which characterise social life in the Site” are inextricably linked to the wider structural processes which produce the processes of social exclusion which impact upon “the Site”. In this context the community centre merely provided a
particular setting in which wider conflict over and competition for extremely limited material resources were played out. This situation could possibly have been avoided, at least to an extent, if it were not for the inadequacies of the funding processes and outcomes which brought the community centre into existence. Although it is only possible to speculate about this, it is entirely possible that a radically different scenario would have emerged if “the larger scheme” which was initially planned had come to fruition.

Finally it is worth considering the implications of the fact that interpersonal relationships within “the Site” were subject to continual and often rapid transformation. Throughout the fieldwork chapters this dynamic has been focused on in terms of its negative implications as is exemplified in this chapter by the breakdown of the relationship between “the youth” and “the volunteers”. However this dynamic also provides a basis for future optimism as the transitory nature of inter-personal relationships can equally be manifested in the dilution of divisions and the abatement of conflict if changes can be made to underlying structural conditions. Thus in the months which followed the closure of Reflect and the community centre, the relationships between “the volunteers” and “the youth” improved. More significantly given the depth of animosity detailed within this chapter, the relationships between “the volunteers” and “the tenants” also improved following the funeral of a local woman. Having no living relatives or close friends living in the area the funeral cortege was made up entirely of sympathetic local residents. These circumstances resulted in Sian and Angharad sharing the same funeral car as Rachel, and during the course of the funeral managing to resolve their differences (28/11/97).
Endnotes.

(1) This visit is also referred to in Chapter 5.

(2) The chemist is particularly significant given the estates reputation as having an endemic drug problem.

(3) The newspaper article is not referenced here in order to preserve “the site’s” anonymity.

(4) With the stipulation that if the house ever managed to be sold Reflect would vacate the premises.

(5) Certain individuals were however banned from the premises. This subsequently proved to be a consistent feature of the community centre’s operation throughout the duration of fieldwork.

(6) The official opening night occurred around a month later (05/10/96).

(7) £750 from social services, and £100 from the round table.

(8) 2 evenings per week between 5-8pm as opposed to three days and three evenings per week, between 10a.m to 3p.m., and 7p.m. to 9.30p.m.

(9) Although a telephone had originally part of the “coffee lounge’s” facilities the volunteers claimed that this had been removed prior to Reflect’s operation.

(10) The context of this incident was important, given that it came immediately after the period when “the youth” had boycotted Reflect.
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Chapter 8: Conclusion And Policy Recommendations.

There are perhaps two broad conclusions which can be drawn from this study of youth and social exclusion. The first is that individually and collectively the analyses of various aspects of social exclusion presented within different chapters of this thesis point to the deep rooted and apparently intractable nature of these problems in contemporary British society. In this respect this thesis differs quite radically from many contemporary studies of socially excluded young males. Although there are shared analytical themes of crisis, the crisis identified within this thesis is first and foremost a crisis of condition (i.e. of poverty and social exclusion) rather than a crisis of the prevailing culture as is contended by Murray (1990,1996) or Dennis & Erdos (1992), or even a crisis of masculinity as is claimed by Campbell (1993).

The second broad conclusion is of the fundamental and urgent need to adequately address the problem of young peoples’ social exclusion, not just for reasons of social justice, although this is a sufficient basis in itself, but because the problems of young peoples’ social exclusion possess enormously negative implications for the communities they are a part of and ultimately for society as a whole. Specific examples of this which can be drawn from fieldwork in “the Site” include the ways in which (as is described in Chapter 6) the fear and fact of criminal victimisation by local young people is a fundamental component of the exclusionary processes affecting this community more generally. Equally as is described in Chapter 7 the exclusion of local young people
played a fundamental role in the loss of a key communal resource in “the Site” which could otherwise have played an integral role in combating the generalised processes of impoverishment and exclusion within this community.

More specifically the fieldwork findings demonstrate the importance of recognising the internal social plurality of community, and the ways in which this can generate contradictions and conflict from which localised processes of exclusion can emerge. Although these complexities and paradoxes of community have achieved some recognition in sociology, notably in works such as Hoggett (ed. 1997), these discussions have often overlooked or failed to elaborate upon the various exclusionary implications which plurality can have for particular groups. Yet the need the for both recognition and further exploration of these dynamics of community is paramount given the current shift towards greater levels of community involvement in the implementation of key strands of social policy. As this thesis demonstrates it is wholly inadequate for concepts such as community participation to be operationalised in ways that they might be fulfilled by a single Tenants and Residents Association, or indeed any individual community group. Instead attention needs to be focussed upon devising the means to ensure that all elements of the social plurality that is inherent within community are presented with the opportunity to express their voice in the regeneration process and that this voice is afforded legitimacy. However, this will inevitably be a difficult and problematic process not least because those groups who are most likely to be marginalized are also likely to lack the organisational structures (i.e. formal associations, committees and so forth) that can bring pressure to bear upon the bureaucracies through which social policy is
conceived and administered.

The findings of this study also have a role to play in some of the more abstract theoretical debates about poverty and social exclusion. The principal contribution being of the need to rigorously counter those theories which seek to explain these conditions through concepts such as a “dependency culture” or the lack of a work ethic. This study has found absolutely no evidence to support such contentions, quite the reverse. For example, as is described in Chapters 5 and 6 “the boys” eagerly pursued rare opportunities for “hobbles” in the informal economy and were left disconsolate when these either failed to materialise or came to a premature end. The fieldwork findings also draw support from the findings of two large scale questionnaire surveys (Adamson & Jones 1995, Jones & Adamson 2001) conducted in the Rhondda and Cynon Valleys in 1995 and 2001. From a different methodological perspective these studies also found a deep rooted attachment to working for a living amongst Valleys residents despite the failure of the local labour market to provide the either necessary volume or quality of jobs. Thus rather than providing support for those who argue that explanations of poverty should be based within the behaviour, lifestyles or culture of the poor themselves, this findings of this study provides empirical support for those who argue that explanations contemporary poverty and social exclusion need to be grounded in workings of contemporary capitalism. In particular it provides support for Byrne (1997,1999) who argues that poverty and social exclusion are both inevitable and essential to the contemporary mode of global capitalism. Within this system social exclusion does not exist because the socially excluded are irrelevant or superfluous to the needs of capitalist
accumulation strategies, quite the reverse. As Byrne (1997, 1999) argues the socially excluded can be regarded as constituting a reserve army of labour whose presence exerts a dampening effect upon the bargaining power of employed labour and thus reinforces the imbalance in the power relationships between capital and labour. In such an analysis the socially excluded therefore play crucial roles in maintaining the conditions of low pay, under-employment and job insecurity which are key characteristics of labour market flexibilisation, particularly as this has occurred within Britain’s old industrial areas. However, as is argued in Chapter 2, one area of departure lies in Byrne’s failure to recognise the importance of the spatial dimensions of poverty and social exclusion, and in particular the important role of local specificity in the explanation of past, present and future trends. Notions such as the Dual City thesis may well be key explanatory tools but need to be formulated in ways which recognise the importance of local specificity and also need to be embedded within the sort of multi-layered spatial analysis advocated by Massey (1994).

Rather than seeking to modify and curtail these tendencies of contemporary capitalism the development of social policy over the last two decades has within a dominant philosophical framework of economic neo-liberalism actively and energetically reinforced these tendencies. As is argued in Chapter 3, in labour markets characterised by the dominance of capital over labour, the re-definition and modernisation of the social security system, has both reflected and reinforced this dominance. Whether by its capacity to depress wages through particular modes of provision, the fact that poverty has become a condition of entry and of continuing
is remote to say the least. It certainly does not feature in the manifestos of any political party which is a likely contender for government, and indeed such suggestions are tantamount to heresy for the “third way” politics of the current Labour government.

Thus these structural dynamics remain largely intact and have in some instances been exacerbated despite a full term in office for a Labour government which has pledged itself to tackling social exclusion. The ‘narrow’ (Levitas 1996) or ‘weak’ (Byrne 1999) conceptualisation of social exclusion which has been adopted by the Labour government, has been manifested in the development of policies directed almost exclusively towards the working poor. Even here policy has been of an incremental rather than radical nature. There is certainly nothing which even approaches the radicalism of Lionel Jospin’s use of a 35 hour working week as a means of reducing unemployment by almost a third in four years, or doubling minimum redundancy payments as a means of discouraging the withdrawal of mobile capital (The Observer 27/05/2001). Nonetheless these policy developments have been significant to the extent that they represent a departure from the policy trajectories established by previous Conservative governments. Employment protection measures which were previously regarded as restrictive barriers to free market enterprise are now being embraced. Thus employees now have a statutory right to a minimum wage, paid holidays, parental leave and trade union recognition, whilst measures such as the Working Families Tax Credit seek to support low paid workers with dependent children by guaranteeing a minimum weekly income of at least £200.
However, for “the boys” who formed the focus of this study such changes are supremely irrelevant. They are excluded from key pieces of legislation such as the minimum wage because of their age whilst measures such as the Working Families Tax Credit do not apply to them because (with the exception of Rob) they do not have dependent children (1). In any case the effectiveness of these measures is dependent upon the availability of employment which given the persistently high levels of structural unemployment in the Rhondda Valleys, and “the boys” lack of educational qualifications or vocational skills, still appears unlikely. For those who remain without employment - particularly if they are young and single - the trajectory of social security policy under the current Labour government appears to be little different from that established by earlier Conservative governments. Thus when launching new policy initiatives government ministers have been keen to emphasise the need for a “tough” approach against a rhetorical backdrop defined by such sound-bite slogans and banal statements as the “something for nothing society”, “those who can work should work”, or “a hand up not a handout” (Blair 1999). For young people the flagship of the Labour government’s anti-exclusion strategy has been the New Deal which in its coercive nature and low rates of training allowances both reflects and extends policies developed under previous Conservative governments.

Fundamentally, the approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion embodied within the “third way” politics of the current Labour government is based upon “equality of opportunity” rather than economic equality. However in the context of a society which falls short of approaching anything like a meritocracy, such an approach
would appear doomed to failure. Moreover even if a meritocracy could be said to exist in British society, its implications for poverty, inequality and social exclusion could well prove to be deeply unfavourable. For example such a concept might well be used in legitimating the plight of the poor and socially excluded whose condition could be viewed as a consequence of their failure to grasp the opportunities made available to them. As has been seen in this thesis the pervasiveness and dominance of stigmatising discourses which seek to explain these conditions through various forms of personal failure are a fundamental component of exclusionary processes (Young 1999). This is exemplified in such things as the construction of benefit claimants as work-shy, the construction of young people such as "the boys" as anti-social thugs or criminals, or in the construction of communities such as "the Site" as ghetto estates epitomising "Dangerous Britain"(Campbell 1993, Fraser 1996). Such depictions are inextricably bound up with processes of social exclusion to the extent that they reside within wider frameworks which are fundamentally underpinned by moral judgements and which effectively delegitimise the perceptions and voice of particular groups. Although the inadequacy of these frameworks is a recurrent theme within this thesis it is perhaps most apparent in Chapter 6 which examines "the boys" involvement in various forms of delinquent and criminal behaviour. The analysis of fieldwork material which is presented in Chapter 6 argues that these activities are best understood as being a direct product of and response to the conditions and relationships which define "the boys" social exclusion. Such an analysis stands in direct contrast to the notions such as "yob culture" or "thuggery" that continue to dominate the policy making agenda, and in doing so define the parameters of future policy development. However, the conclusion to be drawn from
this study is that this framework is itself implicated within the continuation and exacerbation of exclusionary processes and is therefore unlikely to generate effective policy responses. In no way does such a conclusion seek to condone "the boys" involvement in these activities which are in many ways harmful to other members of their community and to "the boys" themselves. Instead the conclusion to be drawn from this is that either condoning or condemnation is largely irrelevant to the search for policy solutions to these problems which needs to be based in a cool and objective analysis of their nature and causation.

Consequently one of the key conclusions to be drawn from the findings of this study is of the need to rigorously challenge such discourses through analyses which expose their superficial, simplistic and inaccurate nature. Such a conclusion reflects one of the key ways in which the concept of social exclusion differs from more traditional means of viewing disadvantage. Inevitably studies which take poverty or multiple deprivation as their conceptual framework will arrive at findings which primarily emphasise the need for the redistribution or greater allocation of wealth or material goods. Although, as is argued earlier in this chapter this is an obvious and fundamental conclusion to be drawn from this study (given the acute forms of material hardship and disadvantage which it details) it is also the case that the relational aspects of exclusion (Room ed. 1995) need to be both recognised and acted upon. Following on from this the broad, multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion opens up the possibility, and perhaps desirability of a wider range by a greater range of individuals and agencies, including academics and agencies. For example ethnographic social policy research could well
have a vital role to play in challenging the processes of stigmatisation and demonisation which are essential components of social exclusion. Ethnography’s concern with the close and detailed observation of social life as it occurs in its natural setting inevitably produces more complex accounts of social life than these crude and mono-dimensional stereotypes. For example the analysis of communal life in “the Site” which is presented in Chapter 5 depicts a level of community which is frequently believed to be lacking in wider society, and which is frequently yearned for in nostalgic calls for a return to a past “golden age” of community. Thus in this (and in many other) respect(s) the ethnographic data presented in this thesis is capable of producing analyses which fundamentally challenge the pathologising and stigmatising analyses presented by the likes of Murray (1990, 1996) and Dennis & Erdos (1992). Crucially this is achievable through an approach which produces “warts and all” accounts which do not simply gloss over negative aspects of social life but instead actively engages with them (Craine 1997).

Similarly the research process itself could play a role, albeit as one component of a much broader strategy, in challenging some of the key dynamics of social exclusion identified within this thesis. Thus although Chapter 5 detailed the highly intimate and close knit nature of communal life in “the Site” and the vital role which these social structures played in ameliorating the worst effects of poverty and social exclusion, it also argued that the basic inability of community to meet the demands placed upon it, was implicated in the emergence and exacerbation of deep rooted divisions. As was explored in later chapters, although in many ways underpinned by wider structural forces, these divisions and the conflicts which emerged from them were
the most immediately identifiable root cause of the localised processes of exclusion affecting young people in “the Site”. Indeed in this respect the close knit nature of community in “the Site” exacerbated the intensity and deep rooted nature of local conflicts whose apparent intractability was added to by the highly personalised forms which these conflicts took.

This is particularly exemplified in the complex relationships which existed between “the boys” engagement in various forms of delinquent activity, related divisions in the community and the localised exclusionary processes which affected “the boys”. In terms of both the immediately local and wider structural conditions of exclusion, these forms of delinquent activity were an immediate (if temporary) source of autonomous empowerment for “the boys”. However other members of their community including the locally powerful tenants and residents association identified these same activities and the behaviour and presence of young people in public spaces as key problems facing their community. Consequently through the conduit of the tenants and residents association (and its corollary “the blocks” forum) these sections of the community sought to develop both formal (e.g. housing allocations policy) and informal (e.g. in their role as gatekeepers to the community resource centre) means of excluding young people, particularly but not exclusively, for those individuals who were perceived as especially unruly or troublesome.

However the consequences of local division and conflict were not just evident in the development of exclusionary processes affecting young people. Rather the
inter-group conflict had exclusionary implications for all the factions involved. Thus on both an individual (e.g. in the prolonged victimisation of individuals such as Mary and Terry) and collective level (e.g. in the problems which beset and undermined the community centre’s operation) these processes of local division and conflict were not only integral to the localised exclusion of particular groups such as young people, but to the dynamics of exclusion within the community as a whole. Perhaps most fundamentally despite the existence of core areas of consensus and a shared analysis of the nature of the problems faced in “the Site” by the competing groups of community activists and the broader community, local community development and regeneration initiatives floundered. The most immediately identifiable or visible cause of this being the existence of these local divisions and the bitter conflicts which emerged from them.

It is therefore clear that finding the means to resolve or at least reduce these local divisions and conflicts is an essential pre-requisite to the development of locally based strategies to tackle social exclusion. Given the apparent intractability of the wider structural dynamics of poverty and social exclusion, the importance of finding ways of reducing or resolving these divisions becomes paramount as in the present and near future such locally based strategies appear to be the only realistic option. Yet this poses something of a conundrum as in communities such as “the Site” the particular and pernicious combination of the underlying structural dynamics of exclusion and their often profound influence upon local social relationships is implicated in the emergence and exacerbation of debilitating divisions which are also characterised by their apparent intractability. However, the local social relationships described in this thesis are also
characterised by their transitory and continually evolving nature. This is exemplified by such realities as the fact the group of boys who were initially encountered were no longer recognisable as a distinct group by the end of the fieldwork period, or in the transforming nature of the relationships between “the volunteers” and “the youth” which was described in Chapter 7. Perhaps most fundamentally in the months following the closure of the community centre and by implication Reflect, Sian claimed that she and Angharad had resolved their differences with Rachel during the funeral of a local woman.

This transitory nature to social relationships in “the Site” does therefore provide some basis for hoping that it is possible to overcome the local divisions and conflicts which underpin local processes of exclusion. However in doing this it may well be necessary to bring in external figures who are not immersed within these struggles and who will therefore not be automatically perceived as having a partisan role. Thus there is again a potentially critical role to be played here by academic researchers (albeit as one component of a much broader and multi-faceted strategy) taking on the role of action researchers seeking to identify areas of shared concern and using these in the mediation of conflict and division. An example of such an initiative is provided by a project based in Walsall which brought together prostitutes and local residents in art workshops which then identified shared concerns of safety (Big Issue March 12-18 2001).

If these deep rooted divisions which are the crucial underlying dynamics to local processes of exclusion can be overcome then there is a clear potential for the development of effective locally based anti-exclusion measures. In order to be effective
however such measures must recognise and seek to build upon the qualities and local forms of innovation which are present in excluded communities such as “the Site”. For example in this study of social exclusion in “the Site” the importance of local innovation is clearly evident in the fundamental and multiple support roles played by local social networks. If such qualities can be tapped, and, importantly, legitimised then there is clear potential for these qualities to be applied in ways which not only begin to tackle the immediately local dimensions of social exclusion, but also in mounting challenges to its wider structural dynamics.

A specific example of such a policy initiative which is capable of embodying and responding to these complex and multiple demands might well take the form of a locally based recycling initiative in which young people such as “the boys” collected and sold waste items which would otherwise be destined for landfill sites or waste incinerators. For such young people such an initiative could well address one root cause of their exclusion by providing them with paid employment, and moreover one which legitimised the “scrapping” which was a routinely utilised but inherently illegal survival strategy. On a wider basis this initiative could also contribute to solutions to the problems of litter and environmental decay which Valleys residents routinely cite as one of the worst aspects of their immediate locality (Adamson & Jones forthcoming) and by doing so play a role in healing the rifts which have emerged between younger and older generations. On a wider basis still such a scheme could contribute in however small a way to the processes of indigenous economic development rather than the inherently precarious employment generated through inward investment.
Endnotes.

(1) At the time of the fieldwork at least.

Bibliography.


