YOU CAN'T BEAT US!

class, work and masculinity on a council
estate in the South Wales coalfield

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to Siri Hannah

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R-M Diedrich

Ammanford

Ystradgynlais

Pontarddulais

Llanelli

Neath

Swansea

Port
Talbot

Maesteg

Bridgend

Merthyr
Tydfil

Ebbw Vale

Abertillery

Hirwaun
Penywaun

Tower

Aberdare

Cynon Valley

Fernhill *Mardy*

*Deep
Duffryn*

Rhondda Fach

Penrhiwceiber

Rhondda Fawr

*Lady
Windsor* *Abercynon*

Tymawr/Lewis Merthyr

Pontypridd

Newport

Cardiff

Barry

South Wales Coalfield

■ Colliery mentioned in the text ▬▬▬ Boundary of coalfield

Map: The Fieldwork Area and the South Wales Coalfield

You've come to the right place

Introduction

1

This is not just another book about miners and mining communities in Britain. Nevertheless, miners — a few of them still working in the coal industry, most of them unemployed or retired — play an important role in this ethnography of working class culture in the South Wales coalfield. The protagonists of this study are men and women living on a council estate in one of the former coal mining valleys. For them unemployment became a persistent reality because the economy of the South Wales valleys was totally geared to the needs of the coal industry. An industry that was nationalised after the second world war and slaughtered for political reasons by the Conservatives 40 years later. The pit closures of the 1980s were only the last act in a drama that has profoundly shaped the lives of the working class people in the area. However, these people have never been passive pawns in the global game of the capitalist economy. In their struggle against exploitation, domination and poverty they developed distinctive ways of making sense of the world in which they were living — ways that were, nevertheless, entangled in the discursive practices of the bourgeois capitalist hegemony.

In order to gain insight into the construction of these ways and their interdependence with the capitalist hegemony we need to look at the effects of power in the everyday experiences of working class people. Working class cultures in Britain developed against a considerably different economic, historical and cultural background. In this representation of the people on a council estate in the South Wales coalfield I, therefore, emphasise the distinctiveness of the discursive constitution of what they regarded as their 'culture'. Nevertheless, in comparison and contrast with other working class cultures in capitalist societies, the distinctive practices of power, domination and resistance constituting the reality of everyday life in the coalfield, can help us understand how working class people in capitalist societies deal with the reality of subordination. This account of a working class community shows that there are practices furthering the perpetuation of, as well as the resistance to, the capitalist hegemony which are interconnected and often contradictory. Connections and contradictions, perpetuation and resistance are effects of the discursive constitution of relationships of power in capitalist society.

One of the most important contradictions produced in the attempt of the working class to subvert the dominant discourses in capitalist society is the unintended reproduction of the relationships of dominance and powerlessness through practices of gendering difference. I, therefore, focus on the practices of (re-)producing and enacting the gendered power differential in the context of resistance to the capitalist hegemony. Men certainly played the dominant role at work in the coal industry and in everyday life in the mining communities. But are mining communities really the last bastions of "proletarian patriarchy", as Campbell (1986) suggested? Did those women and men who were deprived of power develop practices of resistance to hegemonic masculinity?

With regard to the study of masculinity and power anthropological research can further our understanding of these processes. As Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994a:10) argued,

ethnographic studies of the production of gendered difference provide new insights into the shifting and contingent relationship between men, masculinity and power which can be understood by looking at the enactment of hegemonic and subordinate masculinities. In the following chapters I will analyse the development of hegemonic masculinity and its enactment in everyday life in the South Wales coalfield in the context of a counter-hegemonic project to the capitalist hegemony that itself achieved hegemony on the local level in the mining communities. Considering the power differential in capitalist society, the local hegemony was constantly contested and has only been partially successful in subverting the meanings constituted by the dominant discourses of capitalist society. The miners' trade union and its local lodges at every colliery played the central role for the development of this counter-hegemonic political project. Their networks of power encompassed not only the collieries but also the mining communities and their social institutions. However, the closures of collieries all over the valleys led to a crisis of the miners' local hegemony. With the decline of the coal industry the relationships of power connecting the pit and the community, dominating all aspects of life in the coalfield, were increasingly difficult to maintain. The effects of this crisis were strongly felt in the key social institution, the centre of power, of the miners' hegemony in the community: the miners' club. Its influence was decreasing continuously. However, for many men, especially former miners and the few working miners, it continued to be the centre of communal life after work. It was the place where informal groups of men met and where male identities were negotiated. As the centre of power in the community and the most important stage for the enactment of hegemonic masculinity and collective identifications, the club was particularly important as a fieldwork site.

But why did I choose a post-war council estate, often portrayed as too fragmented to sustain collective identifications, and not a 'traditional' mining community as the site of my fieldwork?

"The bottom end of the mining villages"? Opening up perspectives

At the 5th EASA Conference in Frankfurt Signe Howell (1998:163) organised a workshop on the value of serendipity, where she argued that "the faculty of making happy and unexpected discoveries by accident" was a distinctive quality of anthropological fieldwork. As far as the choice of my fieldwork location is concerned it was one of those, almost accidental, "happy and unexpected discoveries" that brought me to the council estate. This approach to finding a place to do fieldwork demonstrates the strengths of anthropological research. It relies on the close and informal interaction with people, the ability to listen and the skill of the ethnographer in establishing personal relationships. It takes the perspectives of the people seriously and often makes them the starting point for the enquiry. Another great advantage of this approach to empirical research is its openness which makes it possible to integrate the unpredictability of human interaction. That I did not end up in a "traditional" mining community was an effect of communicating with people in the area whose views on the council estate raised a number of interesting new questions which caught my imagination. During the planning phase of the research project I knew the area only from the literature on mining communities and I could never have imagined doing fieldwork on a council estate.

On my first encounter with the field in spring 1995 my head was still swarming with images of 'traditional' mining communities in decline. Thus, it was not surprising that I found myself driving up one of the Rhondda Valleys towards Maerdy on a fine day in April. Maerdy was an archetypical mining community with a radical communist past — in the 1920s and 1930s it was called "Little Moscow" — and a pit that had closed in 1988. Long-term unemployment was extremely high and I quickly found an unemployed miner with whom I had a first informal chat. As we sat in the freshly redecorated living room of his small terraced house he told the story of the closure of the colliery and his life on the dole ever since. I was overwhelmed by his emotionally charged narrative. Although I had experienced unemployment myself, the frustration, the anger and the despair he felt left me struggling to cope with the encounter. My own experience of unemployment could never have prepared me for the vehemence of utter despair I was suddenly confronted with. But this encounter not only confronted me with the reality of unemployment and its effects on identity, it also put me on the track which would bring me to the estate because this unemployed miner told me that I should see Tyrone O'Sullivan at Tower Colliery. He would be able to help me because "he has done so much for the boys". Tyrone O'Sullivan was one of the miners who had bought their colliery a few months ago. The pit was the last working deep coal mine in South Wales. It was closed by British Coal (BC) in April 1994 but reopened again after eight months because 200 miners did not give up and managed to buy their pit from British Coal.

The next day I met Tyrone O'Sullivan at the colliery, explained my project to him and asked him if he knew people I could talk to. He remained sceptical but promised to think about it. When I returned, two months later, to start my fieldwork happy and unexpected circumstances helped me to establish rapport. The starting point for my enquiries was once again the colliery. Although Tyrone O'Sullivan was busy when I arrived at the pit he told me to come back an hour later. When I came back he was still in a meeting and I had to wait. I had already sat in his office for almost an hour when two women turned up and asked me if I was waiting for Tyrone. One of them was his wife who was waiting for him to take her home. So, we both waited for him and in the meantime enjoyed a chat about the pit, holidays in Germany, their children, and the work the women were doing in support of Cuban copper miners. Finally, she invited me to their house because they would go home as soon as Tyrone returned. After tea Tyrone told me about Penywaun (the council estate). He believed that it would be a good place to see how people tried to get back on their feet again and gave me the phone number of the Borough Council's Special Projects Officer who was organising a project for young unemployed on the estate.

When I called the Borough Council's Special Projects Officer, Liz, she immediately agreed to meet me at her office. I told her that I was interested in doing fieldwork on the effects of long-term unemployment on the estate and she gave me her view on the problems on the estate. She had done a study for the council's Housing Services Committee on conflicts and disputes on the estate and a critical appraisal of community development. In her opinion the people on the estate showed a "low morale" and hardly a sense of community. But the council was working on projects which could be the basis for the creation of a sense of community — especially for young people who were particularly affected by the catastrophic situation of the labour market. One of these projects was a Tenants' and Residents' Association which would get people involved in the development of the estate.

She then proposed a tour of the estate, so that I could get a first hand impression of what she was talking about:

> The council estate, Penywaun, is situated at the northern end of the Cynon Valley just outside the town of Aberdare.
>
> She turned into Penywaun from the main Aberdare-Hirwaun road at the local supermarket. On the right hand side was a street where mostly older people lived. This was supposed to be a "better" area, she explained. On the left of the main entrance road lies the working men's club and the small building of the community centre. Next to it stood a small container-like building, the bookie's office [betting shop] — as we passed it two youths (between 16 and 18 years old) went in.
>
> We now passed the centre of the old village — just below the club and the community centre — with the pub and the old chapel. She told me that they were trying to buy the chapel and have it converted into an enterprise centre by unemployed youths. We turned the next right and as we passed the pub, "The Colliers", she told me that it was regarded as very "rough" even by Penywaun standards.
>
> The street continued to, what she called, the poorest part of the estate [the so-called 'bottom end']. This street was littered with piles of rubble, wrecked cars and all sorts of rubbish. Wide lawns filled the space between the houses and the streets. Swings stood on a small green island in the middle of the street. Liz told me that the people used to sit here on Saturday nights around campfires. She seemed to be surprised that the people in this area had organised a large street party on VE Day [**V**ictory in **E**urope Day: in commemoration of the end of the second world war].
>
> To the north the estate was bounded by the disused tramway and the river. She explained to me that this was the place where the joy-riders dumped their cars.
>
> We left this part of the estate and drove back to the centre of the old village. Next to the school was an area with terraced houses — 1960s' concrete style, she hated this kind of council estate architecture — where the street was running round the back of the houses. She said that this was the area where most of the cars were stolen because the people could not see them.
>
> After we left this area we followed the "high street" of the estate to the shopping centre and the housing office. Inside the housing office compound — surrounded by a 10' high steel fence — was a container for the skills training project for the unemployed. The housing office appeared to me like a castle under siege. Opposite the housing office was the so-called shopping centre of the estate — a small supermarket, the post office, a newsagent, a fish and chips shop, and a hairdresser — it wasn't very inviting. In the middle of the day the windows were boarded up with heavy iron shutters and there was hardly anybody to be seen. Next to the shopping centre the street was lined with rows of house containing flats. This was the area where a considerable number of single parents had been allocated flats.
>
> After a brief talk with the Community Development Worker in the housing office she showed me the rest of the estate. … Between the shopping centre and the main road, further up the side of the valley, there were two different areas. In one those areas steel-framed houses — built as temporary accommodation after the second world war and not supposed to last 50 years — were still standing. Semi-detached houses with small front gardens dominated the other area — again one of the so-called "better" areas. The "better" areas seem to lie close to the main road passing the estate and the "worst" down at the bottom of the valley [Notes 20/06/95].

Apparently, the introduction to the estate by the Special Projects Officer was biased. Her views on the estate clearly reflected an ideology of crisis that has been fostered by community activists and local politicians for at least the last 25 years. In 1973 activists from the mining communities of the South Wales valleys met at "The Call to the Valleys Conference" to discuss the future of the whole region. They argued that the communities in the valleys had to be revived because "[p]eople are lethargic and apathetic, and no longer identify with the community in which they live. Small wonder, for they fell prey to forces beyond their

control, which have removed their local industry, taken away their leaders, and forced them to travel to work—leaving them with less time and less energy for community" (Ballard & Jones 1975:117). Furthermore, the dominant political discourse identified council estates as the breeding-grounds for crises and the dissolution of the social order.

These stereotypical identifications of people on the estate, that produced a geography of exclusion, sparked off a number of questions about the reality of life on a council estate as it was seen by the inhabitants. Was there really no feeling of belonging to a 'community' on the estate? I could not believe that the estate was just an accumulation of lethargic, fragmented and dislocated individuals producing no collective identifications. Living on the estate appeared to be a stigma, not only (re-)produced by powerful political practices but also by processes of collective identification in other mining communities — one miner, from another village, told me that Penywaun has always been "at the bottom end of the mining villages" (Notes 13/06/95). If this stigmatisation was a persistent reality, how could they live with it? Did they develop ways of countering it? Were they really so marginalised and powerless?

However, if I wanted to get answers to these questions I had to get direct access to the people living on the estate. During the first two weeks I talked with people who were active in the Tenants' and Residents' Association but everybody mentioned the club, and some of its influential members, as an important source of intimate knowledge about the estate. Two of the women who were active in the Tenants' and Residents' Association on the estate referred me to Dai, a retired miner, who was said to be "very much into Penywaun" (Anne 04/07/95). As it turned out, he really knew a lot about the estate and its inhabitants. Dai was among the first tenants who moved into the new council houses after the war. He was active in the local working men's club and had served on its managing committee. Furthermore, he had worked at the local pit, Tower Colliery, and his son Arthur was one of the few working miners still living on the estate. Through Dai I came in contact with the local working men's club which later became a key location during the five months of fieldwork on the estate — the short duration of my fieldwork was due to restrictions on research leave.

"I don't like academics because they demolish our heroes": some thoughts on fieldwork and the problem of representation

At the beginning of my fieldwork I spent a lot of the time explaining to the people what I intended to do. Some of them were used to journalists running around the council estate asking questions and vanishing as quickly as they had come. Perhaps it struck them as odd that I wanted to learn from them, to try to understand how they saw the world around them, and did not ask for a 30 seconds statement about the miners' strike, the murder on the estate a few years back, or the successful fight for Tower colliery. In contrast to the journalist "who moves in, gets what he or she is looking for, and moves out, the anthropologist, like the mole, comes to stay and is not easily chased away" (Driessen 1996:296). However, this also implies that the people whose lives we are invading have to get used to the nosy anthropologist. At the beginning they were not sure what to make of that middle-class intellectual, calling himself a social anthropologist — "Oh yes, I know what that is, I've

seen a documentary on TV about the ancient Egyptians", one of them said — who suddenly appeared in their midst and wanted to learn something from them. Right at the beginning of my fieldwork I was worried about how to get access to the people living on the estate — especially to the men with whom I wanted to work.

However, I soon met men who turned out to be positioned at the core of the local networks of power. One of them was Dai, another one was his son Arthur who was one of the miners who had bought their colliery. One day we were sitting in his kitchen, having a chat, when Dai told me that he had arranged a meeting with 'the boys' in the club for me. When I came to the club the chairman, Peter, showed me around and we talked over a pint about what I intended to do in Penywaun. Unfortunately Arthur had already left for home but Peter showed me where he lived and I decided to visit him at home. When I arrived he was quite willing to talk with me about the pit and the estate. After I had explained what I wanted to do on the estate and we had talked for quite a while in the sitting room of his house, he gave me the advice to "tread carefully". Arthur warned me that a lot of people on the estate would consider a stranger who was asking questions to be part of the media. For Arthur this was not a problem because he liked to talk and, as a miners' leader and one of the men who bought their colliery, was used to giving interviews.

Arthur:	… You might — understand — some people might feel a bit — I don't know what the word is — since they closed Tower, year last April, the media attention we've had around here has been tremendous.
R.:	Yeah.
Arthur:	If you're — so people are bit, what-'s'-name, towards people probin'. Because we had a murder on the estate back — a year ago, three years ago.
R.:	Yeah, I've —
Arthur:	We had the media, the cameras here, then, right. So we can be, shy away from the media people. Though you might not —
R.:	I'm not a journalist and, you know —
Arthur:	That's right. But people will, because you ask questions, askin' their views on things they will take a line on you. So you have to tread carefully as well. It's a little bit o' advice on my part. So people might, like myself, will just talk and talk and talk, you have to stop me sometimes. But some people that used to be pretty open, for the Welsh are known for bein' open and friendly — we had a lot of publicity the last two, three years. And people get — are fed up with it. In the beginnin' it was nice to have it said on the TV and that but it's worn off now, you know [Arthur 11/07/95].

The feeling of being misrepresented by outsiders — in this case journalists — and the loss of control over one's own representation appeared to be a fundamental problem. Journalists could not be trusted because they had the power to control the representation of the community to the outside world. They were uncontrollable by them and could take the control over their representation from them. During the miners' strike of 1984-85 the mining communities received a lot of attention by the media and as far as the miners were concerned the media coverage was regarded as strengthening the position of the Conservative government. Another problem was the media coverage of the murder of an old lady by two young girls on the estate a few years ago that had thrown a negative light on the estate. Moreover, the dominant image of council estates as presented by the media often reflected the stereotypical categorisations of the dominant political discourse.

Arthur:	I mean, obviously — over the years, the bills ha' been paid off. I bought my own house. It's a private, it was a private house. It was never a council house. And I had many chances to move from Penywaun, go somewhere else. I wouldn't move from Penywaun. All my family is there, all my friends are there. And it's got a bad name in the valley. People don't want to live there, move there from where they're living now. But it's like all housing estates you got a very small element that causes problems. The bulk, the bulk people —
R.:	Lots of the housing estates have a bad name. For example Penrhys —
Arthur:	That's right.
R.:	— or —
Arthur:	That's right, a number of years ago when we had Paul — this colliery had a couple of 'em down here. I would say about 9 or 10 men working here from Penrhys, on the estate. And they would never move from Penrhys. The same as me from Penywaun, you probably, live there —
R.:	I think, it's all about getting to know the place and people. If you —
Arthur:	It's the media, the media did that, see. The media — you have something happenin' in — an estate like that. The media draw it out of proportion. Not out of proportion — they report it, and they give the impression — there's something wrong with people — I can guarantee. They go and interview people round the estate. The bulk of people won't be interviewed. It's only the characters then.
R.:	Is it?
Arthur:	It's only the characters who get interviewed. So, they come out on TV as — right, being twp [Welsh for stupid], you know. You know, so you get a bad name for that as well. It's about people coming and realise that it's, we're just normal people. Not bloody — ah — buggers and so forth [Arthur 04/09/95].

The inhabitants of the council estate, who felt that they belonged to the place where they had lived all their life, were fed up with being represented as morally deficient and exotic in a negative way by journalists who were interested in stories they could sell rather than stories the people wanted to tell. Thus, getting people to agree to do a recorded interview proved to be difficult because the tape-recorder had become a symbol for stigmatisation and misrepresentation. Even those men who had talked freely with me over a pint in the local working men's club all those months did not want to be interviewed, although they knew that I was not a journalist.

I had spent quite some time with them in the club because after the first weeks in the field I started to visit the club regularly three to four nights a week and sometimes in the afternoon. Arthur had introduced me to his informal group of men which 'adopted' me. Thus, I regularly met with 'the boys' for a chat and a pint at their table in the bar. 'The boys' had known each other for most of their lives. Four men made up the core of the group; two of them former miners, one a working miner (all from Tower Colliery). The club's steward was usually also part of the group. Emrys, another working miner from Tower Colliery who was living on the estate, joined the group on those rare occasions when he visited the club. One night in the club the group was sitting at the usual table when Arthur repeatedly tried to convince the steward to give me an interview. However, the steward stubbornly refused and finally Arthur came up with an explanation for his behaviour. He told me that I was part of the media and that the working class was very sceptical about the media (see Waddington et al. 1991:126-136 for the media's loss of credibility in the mining communities). I disagreed with him and told him that using a tape recorder did not mean that I was a journalist and he could agree with that (*Notes 06/09/95*).

However, after three months in the field I was no longer frustrated by the reluctance of the men to do recorded interviews. As Driessen (1996:296) pointed out, in sensitive situations "note-taking and tape-recording during talks revives much of the initial distrust towards the researcher. Whenever people are willing to tell their story, one should listen to them with a minimum of interference. This presupposes a great deal of patience and integrity on the part of the fieldworker and trust on the part of the informant."

Trust was a sensitive issue and the men who had welcomed me in their midst were from time to time expressing a slight uneasiness because they did not know what I was going to write about them. They knew that once I had left the community and gone back to my desk at the university, it would be nearly impossible for them to control their representation. I repeatedly emphasised that I regarded my version of the life in Penywaun not in any way superior to their own version. I sincerely meant it and they accepted it. However, this was clearly a politically motivated illusion because I am aware of the power differential in the relationship between the ethnographer and the people s/he is working with. "At the autobiographical level ethnographers and informants are equal; but at the level of the anthropological discourse their relationship is hierarchical. It is *our* choice to encompass their stories in a narrative of a different order" (Hastrup 1992:122).

Arthur was also aware of the problem of appropriating their stories for a different narrative that was privileged by the dominant discourse of knowledge. He had read a number of books on the history of the South Wales miners and thought that these historical accounts, written by academics, were "cold" and totally divorced from the social imagination of the past he could identify with. But there was more to it than a disagreement on the form of the narrative. He felt that the control over the representation of their identities was at stake.

> When I told Arthur that I had an appointment with Hywel Francis (Professor at the Department of Adult and Continuing Education, University of Wales Swansea), he expressed his distrust of academics. "I'm very wary of academics. I don't like academics". Arthur asked me what I wanted of Hywel Francis and I told that I was hoping to get some useful information about historical sources from him because he had written books about the history of the South Wales miners, such as *The Fed* [Francis & Smith 1980] and *Miners against Fascism* [Francis 1984]. The Fed, Arthur said, was good for reference "but it's cold" because the text did not convey the feelings the people had in those days. Miners against Fascism, on the other hand, was a bit better because the letters, the miners who fought in Spain had written home, were included.
>
> Academics like Hywel Francis have betrayed their class: "they come from the working class but they forget their roots. They stand above us". Arthur said: "I don't like academics because they demolish our heroes. They rip everything apart and put it back together. But it's only one man's opinion!" [Notes 01/09/95]

The feeling of betrayal and the categorisation of Hywel Francis, who is the son of a miners' union leader, as one of *them* — a part of the bourgeoisie that was exploiting them — was an effect of the power differential in capitalist society working through the hierarchical relationship between researcher and informants and the respective knowledge they produce. As Strathern (1987:20) pointed out empirical research is "experienced as exploitation when people perceive that others have the power to turn data into materials whose value cannot be shared or yielded back to them in return. … Anthropologists [and not only them!] are thus seen to convert lived experience into items (units, constructs, concepts) whose usefulness,

as elements for their own models, they alone control."

   The people in the former mining communities knew how to cope with physical exploitation and had developed ways to resist it but the fact that they could also be intellectually exploited probably sank in after the 1984/85 miners' strike. On a visit to the estate, a year after the fieldwork, Arthur told me that he did not really trust academics because they used a different language to set themselves apart. In the back of his mind, he distrusted even those people, like me, he believed to be genuine (Notes 17/09/96).

   It was, therefore, not surprising that I was only able to do twenty in-depth informal interviews. Some of my key informants were interviewed more than once. Of the men I was regularly chatting and drinking with in the club, and who took me into their informal group, only two were interviewed. All the other men refused to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted in the private sphere of the informants' homes, never in the club. Two of the three interviews with the miners' leader, Arthur, took place in his office at the colliery — his "second home". The interviews with the Community Development Worker and the Mayor of the Cynon Valley were conducted in their offices. Most of the men who were interviewed belonged to the local elite. The four women I have interviewed were all engaged in projects that were threatening the male hegemony on the estate.

   Thus, the bulk of my data consists of written notes which I produced of the events I participated in and the conversations I had with people. Most of the notes were written from memory directly into my computer immediately after I got home. Making notes while participating was out of the question because this would have provoked almost the same reaction as a tape recorder — it would have turned me into a journalist in the eyes of my informants.

   In the text I, nevertheless, relied heavily on quotes from the informal interviews. For my analysis of processes of identification, the constitution of gendered identities and the effects of power, it was important to convey the rhetoric because "[d]iscourses take effect through their fragile, multi-layered forms of appearance" (Dracklé 1996a:38) in practices of performing identities. While conducting the interviews I tried to minimise my interference in the unfolding narrative of my informants — I rarely tried to guide them by asking questions that would provoke a change of topic. With the exception of Peter, the chairman of the club who performed as a club official, the topics and the way in which they were articulated did not differ markedly from everyday conversations. But the ethnographic encounter — and particularly the recorded interview, however informal it may be — is, of course, an active process of negotiation between the ethnographer and the people he is working with. The reality experienced in the field is "not the unmediated world of the 'others', but the world *between* ourselves and the others" (Hastrup 1992:117) which is "a joint creation of otherness and selfness" (ibid.:118). We should not imagine that the people we have drawn into this process are not aware of this:

> … I can convey to you my experiences of life and with some of your experience, you got through in the past, you can understand what I'm trying to say … and you put yourself in my position and you can understand [Arthur 04/10/95].

Throughout this book I have tried to convey their understanding of their positions by quoting extensively from the interviews I conducted with people on the estate. Though far

from rectifying the problem of the exclusive academic rhetoric and the power differential inherent in the relationships between the ethnographer and the people s/he is working with, I believe, that they can be read as a subtext conveying perspectives and ways of expressing them which are different from mine. However, to those readers who are unacquainted with the communicative practices prevalent in the South Walian working class in general, and miners in this part of the coalfield in particular, these practices would have been equally exclusive as my academic writing could be to the people on the estate. There is no way out of this dilemma but I understand this book as a layering of different points of view and different ways to construct narratives. As Skeggs (1997:167) pointed out, "[t]he working class are constantly aware of the dialogic other who have the power to make judgements about them. Privileged academics might produce more rigorous theory if they imagined a dialogic working class other, one that does and will make judgements about the adequacy and applicability of their arguments." Although I do not see myself as sitting in judgement over them, I am aware of the power differential privileging my academic version. In order to give them, at least, partial control over their representation in this book, the people I worked with were be invited to comment on the text (see chapter 9).

"Put that in your book": outline

That there is no way of denying that I have the control over the representation of the people on the estate. It is clearly visible in the structure of the text. I not only choose the quotations, I also contextualised them in a theoretically founded analysis. Furthermore, in chapter 2 I indulge in theorising, the most exclusive discursive practice in anthropology, in order to position myself within anthropological discourse. In this chapter (*Wild women in cowboy country*) I discuss the discourse theoretical framework for the analysis. In the course of the fieldwork it became evident that a distinctive and highly politicised miners' working class culture was still dominant on the estate. I argue that the miners and their trade union were engaged in subverting the bourgeois capitalist hegemony through their own political project. This counter-hegemonic project also attempted to establish a working class socialist hegemony. However, in the South Wales valleys they only managed to establish hegemony on the local level in the mining communities.

   The concept of hegemony and the development of hegemonic political projects, as developed in 'post-Marxist' discourse theory, forms the basis for the analysis of the complex, often contradictory, interrelated processes involved in the discursive constitution of mining community 'counter-culture'. I argue that the discursive practices of masculinity and respectability, two key discourses converging in the miners' local hegemony, not only constituted the basis for resistance but also contradicted the same practices of resistance. Through these discourses processes of 'othering' were set in motion which served to perpetuate the power differential imposed by the dominant discourses in British society. The analysis of the discursive practices shaping the life — and, at the same time, shaped by the life, in a dialectical process — in a former mining community can provide us with an understanding of the basis for the coexistence and mutual dependence of the oppositional bourgeois capitalist and the miners' socialist hegemonic projects. However, none of these projects was completely successful in delegitimising its necessary 'other'. They were not able to appropriate the 'other's' power to create and reproduce meanings and make them acceptable,

and even desirable, as 'natural' through ideological discourses. However, it will become evident, as the ethnography and analysis are unfolding, that the miners' hegemonic project was constantly struggling to fend off the attempts to undermine and redefine the meanings it had established.

To understand this struggle we have to explore the specific conditions for the development of the miners' hegemonic project and the formation of the local hegemony as they developed through time. Thus, the third chapter (*You can't beat us*) gives an outline of the development of the miners' hegemonic project through history. (Hi)stories, as the social imagination of past experience transformed into a quasi-lived experience, still intimately connected the present with the past. They were used to legitimise the construction of the council estate as a community by linking it to the occupationally homogeneous mining communities of the past. Furthermore, these transformations of past experiences into individual and collective social memories, provided important moments for identification with the local hegemony in the present. They were important reference points for the discourses of class and survival that extended the shared working class identity of the workplace into the community. But the social and economic conditions changed. The post-war area was a period of political victories and devastating defeats for the miners. The second part of the chapter traces the economic, social and political developments since the nationalisation of the coal industry after the second world war. The pit closures which started after the war soon developed into a serious problem for the miners' hegemonic project because the institutional basis of the power and control the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) had established in the workplace was continuously eroded with every pit closure. Nevertheless, the fight against the Conservative's attempt to break the power of the NUM — that was regarded as an obstacle for the hegemonic project of Thatcherism — in 1984/85 revitalised and, at the same time, weakened the working class 'consensus' constituted by the discourse of survival. In many coal mining areas mining community cultures were rapidly ceasing to be meaningful. However, in the area I studied the last deep mine in the South Wales valleys continued production until it was closed by British Coal in 1994. The fight against the closure of the pit and the success of the miners' employee buy-out — Tower Colliery was reopened in 1995 — proved to be a crucial factor for the revitalisation of the miners' hegemony on the estate. Tower Colliery became a symbol for the struggle against the marginalisation of the whole region.

However, marginalisation and stereotypical identification of working class people in Britain by bourgeois political projects that attempted to become hegemonic was a persistent reality for the people living on the estate — Thatcherism employed a rather radical strategy of exclusion and New Labour has continued to stereotype the disadvantaged but in a slightly more subtle way, much to the dismay of the people on the estate. In chapter 4 (*Just chucked them all together*) the effects of the stereotypical categorisation of council estates as embodiment of social disorder are explored. In contrast to the image projected by powerful political agents the inhabitants on the estate shared a sense of belonging to a 'community' rooted in the discourses of survival, masculinity and respectability. However, it was an exclusive community controlled by certain men and a growing number of the estate's inhabitants were categorised as not belonging, or refused to identify with it.

Thus, in chapter 5 (*The heart and soul of the village*) the practices of hegemonic masculinities and their contribution to the development and maintenance of the persuasiveness of the

miners' hegemonic project are analysed. The practices constituted by hegemonic masculinity involve the de-legitimisation of other (subordinate) masculinities — especially those developed in response to the realities of long-term unemployment, which have, nevertheless, not been accommodated by the miners' hegemony. Femininities were likewise constructed as subordinate. The miners' welfare and later the working men's club, as key social institutions of the miners' local hegemony, provided the central stage for the enactment of hegemonic masculinities outside work. After the pit closures the club was often the only remaining social institution geared to the needs of the miners' hegemony — and, thus, to the needs of the dominant men.

However, the crisis of the local hegemony opened up ways to subvert the meanings imposed by the male dominated miners' hegemonic project that will be explored in chapter 6 (*If you got a ship you got to have one captain*). In this chapter I focus on the male construction of gender relations in the mining community. Furthermore, the growing resistance of women, who explored different ways of subverting the male hegemony during the miners' strike of 1984/85, and ten years later in their attempt to become full members of the local working men's club, is a central theme of this chapter.

Finally, chapter 7 (*Empowering the marginalised?*) shows the connections between the development of gender relations and hegemonic masculinity in the South Wales coalfield and the political discourses of community and its development. In this chapter I argue that in the 1990s local politics were characterised by a competition between the dominant male elite and the agents of "empowerment" who appeared on the estate. Furthermore, in a short postscript written after a visit to the estate in May 2000, the reaction of some of the men to my representation of "their community" as well as some of the developments on the estate between 1995 and 2000 are described.

Wild women in cowboy country

Theoretical reflections on hegemony and working class culture

2

The title of this chapter "wild women in cowboy country" may appear to be rather unusual as the title for an introduction to the theoretical background of an ethnography of a council estate in an urban, coal mining area in Britain. However, when I told people in Swansea — Wales's second largest town situated at the southern fringe of the South Wales coalfield — where I was doing my fieldwork, the comments ranged from "it's rough" to "it's cowboy country up there" where the women were "wild". A colleague from the local university even made a comment on the bravery of attempting to work on a run-down council estate in the South Wales valleys. When confronted with those stereotypes the people on the council estate, which I had chosen as my fieldwork location, usually tried to play it down — "It's not so bad here, really!" — or countered it with a positive — "the best place on earth" — self-image. The stereotypical images of rough men and loose women were nothing new to them — "cowboy country" had even materialised when, in an attempt to develop tourism a rather short-lived "Wild West" leisure park was built on the site of the former Mardy Colliery in the neighbouring valley. They were well aware that council estates were predominantly portrayed as reservoirs of scroungers, drug addicts, thieves, joy-riders and the losers of the so-called underclass. They also believed that they only made the news if there were large scale riots, murder or if drastic measures against so called problem cases were implemented.

My first impression of the estate reflected these stereotypes because I was taken on a tour of the estate by the Borough Council's Special Projects Officer who painted a rather bleak picture of life on the estate. As I got to know the people and the locality in the following months I realised that there was a resilient and distinctive culture under the smooth surface of convenient stereotypical representations that were imposed upon them. But how did they manage to maintain positive, individual as well as collective, self-images in a context where they were constantly bombarded with negative images of themselves constituted by dominant discursive practices? I wanted to understand why they identified themselves and others in highly classed and gendered terms. The discursive practices I encountered in everyday interactions on the estate appeared to generate contradictions. The men I worked with vehemently resisted the negative stereotypes imposed upon them but, on the other hand, they also used these stereotypes to construct women and other men as different. Although they saw themselves as being engaged in resistance against the dominant discourse of capitalist society, they also appeared to reproduce it to some extent. But why and how were resistance and complicity connected and who held the power to define which representation counted on the estate? In the course of this book I will present their answers, as well as my answers, to these questions but first of all I will trace the connections between the categories of difference, the relationships of dominance and subordination and their constitution in a discursive field marked by social antagonisms and contestation in more theoretical terms. I will show that the South Wales coalfield is much

more than just a "rough" place or "cowboy country".

The dissemination of negative, stereotypical images in the dominant discourse about the 'other within' by politicians and the media was one of the reasons for the growing interest of anthropologists in the study of their 'own' society, as Cohen has so pointedly described it in the introduction to the second volume of the "Anthropological Studies of Britain" series. Cohen wrote that the stereotypical representations of rural communities in Britain were "… a caricature much exploited by politicians and the mass media, although thoroughly misleading and reviled by the members of localities, who see in it a gross misrepresentation of their special circumstances and of their distinctive cultures" (Cohen 1982b:1). Anthropologists were alarmed by the representations of local — not only rural — cultures, whose distinctive features were dismissed as anachronistic and declared to be an obstacle to modernization, and which were in danger of imminent destruction by the dominant political and economic forces. They were afraid that all that would remain of the diversity of cultures in the British Isles would be a culturally homogeneous nation-state serving the needs of the capitalist world economy. They envisaged a global capitalism, embodied in the "… 'centre' (the capital, Brussels, Wall Street, or wherever) …" (Cohen 1986a:viii), that spread a homogeneous identity through fashion, mass consumption and mass media (Diedrich 1993:38-39). These political considerations were one of the reasons for the revival of community studies in Britain. The community studies revival became a politically motivated celebration of the diversity of local cultures by anthropologists. It was, thus, not surprising that anthropologists focused on moments of resistance against the dominance of the central state and the continuing salience of local cultures (cf. Cohen 1982b, 1986b). As Russel and Edgar (1998:1) pointed out: "Anthropology, despite (or as part of) its colonial heritage, has always had a strong tradition of representing the minority, the underdog, the dependent and disempowered." However, anthropologists and other social scientists engaged in the study of subordinated or marginalised groups in Britain were also in danger of mystifying local, including working class, cultures as resistance to the urban bourgeois hegemony in capitalist society; a hegemonic project in whose (re-)production the anthropologists — as a part of the bourgeois elite with access to highly valued social, educational, and financial resources — themselves were to a certain extent involved in but which many of them, nevertheless, criticised as alienating and exploiting.

For the people in the mining communities, who were definitely in a less privileged position, the media coverage of the 1984/85 miners' strike was an example of the "gross misrepresentation" of their political struggle and fight for the survival of their distinctive cultures. Waddington et al. (1991:173) believed that the government's working of the legal and political system and media coverage of the 1984/85 miners' strike reinforced the "antipathy towards authority" in working class communities: "… there is the suspicion that they do not and cannot represent ordinary folk but operate on behalf of the powerful: them and not us." In this context the images of picket line violence and the campaigns against Arthur Scargill (cf. Milne 1995), the President of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), which provided the background for the demonisation of the miners and their trade union, also invoked a highly politicised *them/us*-dichotomy.

The stereotypical middle class representations of the people in the former coalfield of South Wales as "rough" and "wild" were not only informed by the media coverage of the strike and the visible decay of mining communities in the aftermath of the strike. They

were part of a process of 'othering' in which stereotypical images of miners oscillating between the working class hero or archetypical proletarian — a popular version especially among supporters of the 1984/85 miners' strike — and primitive villains — a long standing upper and middle class construction of the working class also popular among those opposed to the miners' strike — were produced.

Miners and the imagination of the working class

Miners are perhaps *the* symbolic incarnation of the working class. They are probably the most misrepresented part of the working class because, as Metcalfe (1990:57) observed, "[p]eople always expected miners to be something other than what they were." The political as well as academic representations of coal miners have for a long time swayed between the 'archetypical proletarian' and the 'primitive villain'. "This polarity is a warning that most accounts of coalminers are not interested in miners themselves, but in defining the moral character of capitalist society and establishing the boundaries of groups engaged in class struggle" (Metcalfe 1990:47). During the Thatcher era in British politics the image of the primitive villain was supplemented by the image of the scrounging and depressed long-term unemployed who refused to conform to the image of the industrious individual free to choose his own destiny. From another, oppositional perspective, the archetypical proletarian provided the raw material for the redefinition of the left-wing counter-image of the miners as the socialist radicals standing in the way of the Conservative Party's attempt to secure its hegemonic position. Irrespective of the political persuasion, miners and mining communities were an ideal plane for the projections of political strategies and ideologies because they could be 'othered' as exotic and as unintelligible as the "primitive" tribes on the other side of the world. Just how exotic they were thought to be is evident in the recollections (written in 1966 and published in Benney 1978) of Mark Benney who had written a book on the hardship of life and work in the coal industry prior to nationalisation (Benney 1946).

> Here, encamped on a vast raft of coal that outcropped in the Pennine Hills to the west and sloped down under thick Permian rock to the North Sea, was a tribe of Englishmen so distinctive in their way of life that, had they been situated on a remote island in the South Seas, they would have been subject of a dozen ethnographic monographs (Benney 1978:49).

Although anthropology has come "home" (cf. Cohen 1982a, Diedrich 1993, Jackson 1987) since the late 1970s, early 1980s, and has to a large extent deconstructed its own exoticisations of 'primitive' tribesmen, miners and mining communities in Britain have not become the subject of dozens of ethnographic monographs. The anthropological interest in mining was largely confined to the classical non-European fields of anthropology (cf. Godoy 1985) from Africa — e.g. the studies of the Zambian Copperbelt by the Manchester School (Epstein 1958) to Latin America — e.g. the ethnographies on Bolivian tin miners by Nash (1979 and Taussig (1980). By the time Benney wrote his recollections, the 'classical' ethnographic monograph on a mining community in Britain, "Coal is our life" by Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter (1956), was already ten years old. In the 1970s, after the successful strikes of 1972 and 1974, miners and mining communities in the North of England were

the subject of research in historical sociology (e.g. Moore 1974, Bulmer 1978). It was only after the one year miners' strike of 1984/85 that the miners suddenly found themselves in the spotlight of public and academic attention. For some commentators, particularly of the Conservative political persuasion, the miners were the dinosaurs of industrial society — a species which had to come to terms with the inevitable fact of extinction. However, the image of the archetypical proletarian was also infused with fresh meanings and the miners were represented as the embodiment of revolutionary class consciousness. The hitherto unusual active involvement of women in political processes in the mining communities inspired a new, feminist version of middle class proletarian romanticism: the miners' wives paving the way for the liberation of working class women from male domination (e.g. Campbell 1986, Stead 1987 — see chapter 6).

But even before the miners' strike of 1984/85 miners' lives had provided an important inspiration for the sociological imagination. The discussion of theories of class and the development of class consciousness often focused on the example of the miners. In anthropological studies of capitalist societies, however, the class dimension of social relations has often been neglected. Anthropologists have, in the past, left the field of class analysis largely to sociologists. In an influential paper on working class images of society Lockwood (1975) developed a tripartite model of the working class. His ideal model provided a framework for categorisation of workers according to the assumed intensity of their class consciousness into "proletarian traditionalists" — the most radical and class conscious part of the working class — "deferential traditionalists" — who were the "most socially acquiescent and conservative element" (Lockwood 1975:17) — and the "privatised worker" — who totally lacked any kind of class consciousness.

The "proletarian traditionalist" — his version of the archetypical proletarian — was inspired by the representation of miners constructed by Dennis et al. (1956) in their ethnography of miners in a Yorkshire mining community. It reflects the working class male's preoccupation with (self-)identitification as the 'real man' — or, one could argue, legitimates it by ignoring the fact of the gendered differences of power altogether. "Pride in doing 'men's work' and a strong sense of shared occupational experiences make for feelings of fraternity and comradeship which are expressed through a distinctive occupational culture. These primary groups of workmates not only provide the elementary units of more extensive class loyalties but work associations also carry over into leisure activities, so that workers in these industries usually participate in what are called 'occupational communities' " (Lockwood 1975:17). These occupational communities emphasise mutual aid, the obligation to join in a "gregarious pattern of leisure" and a public and present oriented sociability but they also set a limit to the individual's ambition to be different. "As a form of social life, this communal sociability has a ritualistic quality, creating a high moral density and reinforcing sentiments of belongingness to a work-dominated collectivity" (ibid.:18). Lockwood argued that both kinds of traditionalist workers are limited in their expectations by their communities because the communities tended to be socially isolated and stable. "Workers in such environments are as unlikely to change their patterns of consumption as they are their political loyalties, because in both cases they are encapsulated in social systems which provide them with few legitimate conceptions of what is possible, desirable, and legitimate" (ibid.:21).

His "privatised worker" type had little in common with the proletarian traditionalist and

was constructed to represent the typical worker of the "more modern industries". His social environment encouraged the development of a " 'pecuniary' model of society" (ibid.:21) which is an ideological reflection of instrumental work attachments and privatised community relationships. It does not lead to a class but rather a commodity consciousness. His attachments to fellow workers and the workplace are slight and his work situation is socially isolating and meaningless. He lacks the cohesive groups and, thus, is unlikely to posses a strong class consciousness. The tendencies of his work life are reinforced by a new form of community life, namely the social structure of the council or low-cost private estate. "In such communities, social life is very different from the communal sociability of the traditional working-class community. Unrelated by the ascriptive ties of kinship, long-standing neighbourliness and shared work experience, and lacking also the facility for readily creating middle class patterns of sociability, workers on the estates tend to live a socially isolated, home-centred existence" (ibid.:22). Lockwood constructs a dichotomy between the "traditional community" on the one hand, in which status is allocated through participation in several overlapping cliques, and the housing estates on the other, where status is allocated on the basis of conspicuous consumption. On a housing estate, he argues, the residents are only superficially acquainted with their neighbours and have usually no association with others in formal or informal leisure time activities; "… this situation in turn induces an acquisitiveness and a sensitivity to competitive consumption that are quite alien to the communal sociability of proletarian traditionalism" (ibid.:23).

Lockwood's model of the privatised worker, individualised and living in a fragmented environment, reaffirms stereotypical representations of council estates — the "cowboy country" conveyed by the media where each man is a law unto his own, unrestrained by the norms and values of the community. But there was a certain ambivalence inherent in the symbol of the "cowboy" who was constructed not only as embodying primitiveness and roughness but also as embodying an unfettered masculinity. This "Wild West" metaphor, used to impose stereotypical images of backwardness, roughness and fragmentation upon the working class community, was countered using the same symbolic repertoire rooted in stereotypical images of the North American "Wild West". It was also used to represent the effects of domination — powerlessness and the feeling of no escape — by the dominated.

> If there was a way and I had guns, I'd shoot them, and I'm not a nasty person. I bel… I wouldn't, but I think, right, there life is wrong — but I wouldn't do that — because they're killin' my people, because there's a class structure in this country — I don't know if you've heard of the class structure. […] We are the workin' class and they do no damage to my people! It's the same as the Indians, Geronimo — all them Indians, American Indians. […] It's the same feelin' they get, that you've nowhere else to go. So there is a time that will come when it's gonna explode, except the world will explode. We've got enough! And we just like — out and kill, I mean — what you gonna lose, what you gonna, in the long run, you know, nothing! A life of misery and poverty [Arthur 11/07/95].

The feeling of being condemned to a "life of misery and poverty" by *them*, the capitalists who imposed an unjust class structure, provoked a strong, emotionally charged response that was nevertheless expressed in terms of a class model of society. His people, the working class, had to be protected because they were confined by the capitalist system. He turned the "Wild West" metaphor on its head because he identified with the victims of

colonialism — usually presented as the 'bad guys' — who fought to regain their freedom and their dignity. The Chiricahua Apache leader Geronimo and his people, who, between 1876 and 1886, managed to resist the attempt of the U.S. Army to confine them to a reservation (Vogel 1974:337-338), became a powerful symbol but it's meaning remained ambiguous — Geronimo's fight was heroic but his life ended in misery and poverty. North American Indians are a global cultural stereotype often represented as the more or less tragic losers of the historical process (Krauss 1996:100). The symbolic equivalence between the native North Americans and the working class created by Arthur pointed to a similar experience with the rhetoric of domination. Not only the 'American Indians' found themselves in a precarious position between nature and culture which provoked admiration as well as the imposition of a 'superior' will (ibid.). Miners suffer from a similar stereotypical representation oscillating between the (natural) pole of the 'primitive villain' who needed to be educated and the (cultural) pole of the heroes of the class struggle.

Lockwood's image of the 'proletarian traditionalist' was definitely inclined towards the 'heroic'. But a council estate was not a home fit for heroes and his assumption of the development of commodity consciousness by the privatised worker was, thus, a reaffirmation of stereotypical representations of council estates. Furthermore, he reconstituted an indigenous explanation for the decline of community on a council estate in sociological terms. It is an explanation which we can call the "Three Little Bears" model. The story of the Three Little Bears — a variation on the 'Goldielocks' theme — was told to me at the beginning of my fieldwork by an unemployed man in the club who was not so sure that I was not a spy from the Social (the Department of Social Security: DSS). In his story Mama Bear, Papa Bear and Baby Bear came home and found their plates empty. Both Mama and Papa Bear shouted, "who's eaten my porridge?" But Baby Bear was far more concerned about the disappearance of a valuable household item and asked, "and who's pinched the bloody video?" In this story the character of Baby Bear was used to represent the commodity conscious youth. His parents, on the other hand, represented the more "basic", "traditional" worries about physical survival. On the estate the problem of competitive consumption was either constructed as a problem of disidentification of the younger generation with the discourses emphasising the survival of adverse conditions and the resistance to the bourgeois, capitalist hegemony (this 'discourse of survival' will be discussed in chapter 4; the analysis of the disidentifications of the younger generations will be part of chapter 5). The problem of disidentification was perceived as an effect of high long-term unemployment and the demands of a commodity consciousness produced by the dominant discourse of individualism which could not be fulfilled due to a lack of resources. This also became a problem for the maintenance of the dominant position of the miners and former miners on the estate when some of them used their redundancy payments to buy their homes, refurbished or extended them, or bought a car. For those unemployed who had not worked in the coal industry and were not eligible for redundancy payments the miners had broken the "we're all in the same boat"-consensus of the discourse of survival by publicly displaying difference.

However, the conflicts which accompany the changes in the meaning of consumption can neither be regarded as a symptom of a transformation of class consciousness into commodity consciousness nor as an effect of council housing. As I will show, the development of an occupational community is not tied to the assumed social isolation and stability of the 'traditional' mining community. It would be a gross misrepresentation to conceptualise

a council estate as either an accumulation of fragmented, individualised inhabitants or as all encompassing community. To write about a council estate in a coal mining valley as a self-contained whole would run "the risk of tribalizing people, instead of listening to them" (Baumann 1996:8). Nevertheless, a mining community has existed on the estate in the past and despite the fact that some of the inhabitants of the estate never belonged to it, it has, nevertheless, dominated their lives. Whenever I use the term 'mining community' in the representation of the council estate it does not refer to the estate as a whole but rather to this dominant group of its inhabitants. In this sense, then, the social collectivity — made up of networks of informal groups of men, kin and friends, with which the long-standing inhabitants, most of them former miners, identify themselves — can still be regarded as an occupational community despite the fact that it did not include all inhabitants of the estate. Even though the coal industry did no longer dominate the valley and only three inhabitants were still employed in coal mining the "… ties of kinship, residence and friendship help to bond an ongoing pattern of social interaction which may in time even become relatively autonomous in relation to the dominant local economic activity" (Bulmer 1975a:84). The continuity of these practices is an effect of the encompassing persuasiveness of hegemony which inextricably connected work and social life in the community.

Lockwood's conceptualisation of working class culture in terms of a polar ideal model demonstrates quite clearly how misleading such simplifying sociological accounts can be. Even for analytical purposes the hardly sustainable representation of workers as "encapsulated in social systems", like snails forever confined to their shells, distracts us from the dynamics of the perpetual incompleteness of the discursive as well as material realities of their lives. It represents an ideological closure. However, the impossibility of closure does not imply the unrestrained play of imaginations. Appadurai (1991) suggested that the transnational-isation of cultures has released the imagination of possible lives, hitherto constrained by the inertia of tradition, and created a problematic dichotomy between past and present. He argued that in an increasingly globalised world the media play a key role in the processes of opening up "prisms of possible lives" to more people — which, he had to admit, would not make the world a "happier place" offering more choices. "What is implied is that even the meanest and most hopeless lives, the most brutal and dehumanizing of circumstances, the harshest of lived inequalities is now open to the play of the imagination. Prisoners of conscience, child laborers, women who toil in the fields and factories of the world, and others whose lot is harsh no longer see their lives as mere outcomes of givenness of things, but often as the ironic compromise between what they could imagine and what social life will permit" (Appadurai 1991:198). I seriously doubt that the contrast Appadurai creates between the inertia of the past, sedimented in "tradition", and a flexible present opening up perspectives for the disadvantaged is an adequate way to represent the harshness of lived inequalities. Moreover Appadurai's bourgeois vision of the lived realities of disadvantaged, oppressed and exploited people around the world appears to be rather cynical. For the unemployed or the poor there is no irony in realising the lack of financial, educational and social resources excluding them from the worlds of the better off presented to them by the media — they remain impossible lives even though they are present right in their living rooms. Furthermore, by disseminating dominant stereotypes — scroungers, criminals, and problem cases — about 'disadvantaged' people the media contribute to processes of closing the doors to possible lives. The media also provide a catalyst for change by enhancing

the 'Baby Bear effect' of competitive consumption which does not make the impossibility of Appadurai's possible lives more bearable. As one of my informants put it:

> Well, that television tells them what they could have out of life, and they can't have it because they haven't got the what-'s-name. And it is calling them ineffective, useless because they're not part of that way of life. So, I think a lot of young people are very mixed up at the moment [Susan 20/09/95].

The destruction of the coal industry and the extreme rise of unemployment in many of the former coalfields in Britain has destabilised those discourses which had for decades persuaded the people in the mining communities — who were involved in their (re-)production — of a particular "givenness of things". But what has replaced the constraints imposed by what Appadurai has called the "inertia of tradition"? An open "play of the imagination" or the constraints imposed by the inertia — or apathy, as the people on the estate used to call it — produced by powerlessness, unemployment and poverty? Neither the "inertia of tradition" nor the open "play of the imagination" does justice to the lived realities of people involved in processes of identification as well as dis-identification within the discursive space constituting working class cultures.

Them vs. us: similarity, difference and ideological closure

The sudden attention paid to the distinctive cultures of the mining communities — cultures portrayed as dying after the eradication of the coal industry — inspired the inhabitant of one of the former mining communities in the South Wales valleys to make a rather cynical statement about the social scientists' interests in his community: "This village attracts the attention of sociologists and architectural schools in the way pathologists gather round a unique corpse. Of course it's easier to handle and dissect now" (Riley 1978). One of the aims of this book is to show that the communities in the former coalfield are far removed from being lifeless corpses, frozen in time, easy to dissect and preserve in pathologists' jars labelled according to categories of sociological ideal models. They are not in any way "protected from bourgeois hegemony by isolation and a cultural self-sufficiency" (Metcalfe 1990:47), as the "archetypical proletarian" model constructs them, but they are rather inextricably bound up with it in the struggle for dominance in the discursive arena of the capitalist state. That dominant and oppositional discourses are inextricably interwoven — and are, in a sense, dependent on each other for their very existence — is evident in the construction of categories of differences in working class cultures.

From the beginning of my fieldwork I was confronted with categories of them and us because as a middle class academic I was regarded as one of them. As I have already pointed out (Diedrich 1996:61-63) at the beginning of my fieldwork I was perceived as part of the uncontrollable outside forces — spies from the Social (fraud investigators from the DSS), social workers, Conservative politicians (usually also believed to be English), or journalists — which were perceived as threatening or at least misrepresenting working class individual or the whole community. When, during the second month of my fieldwork, the chairman of the local working men's club told a fellow committee man — "He's not English, he's not a Tory, and he's not a spy from the Social, he's all right!" — I was

relieved that I was obviously no longer perceived as 'one of them' but rather as someone in between 'them' and 'us'. However, the fact of the power differential based on my privileged position as an academic which was legitimised by the bourgeois hegemony remained. For the anthropologist working in the context of a British council estate it was even less easy to ignore the classed nature of his/her relationships with the subject of his/her research. Dunk (1994) who grew up in a working class context and decided to train as an anthropologist only after he had done manual work for a couple of years, saw the problem of class and the power differential between himself as an anthropologist and the subjects of his research quite clearly. He argued that the negation of class as a meaningful concept of differentiation "… reflects, perhaps, the dominance in the 'middle class' professions, of which anthropology is one, of the liberal ideology that 'we are all middle class now.' … anthropology is a discursive arena peculiar to members of the professional middle classes or those aspiring to that position. Anthropology was not invented by the working class, but by bourgeois gentlemen far removed from material needs. Its ideas and language are not part of the everyday world in which the working class lives" (Dunk 1994:13, fn. 7). He (1994:4) also believed that it is difficult for the social scientist not to perpetuate the stereotype of the "bigoted and authoritarian working man" or the equally problematic romantic images of the "real person" who is struggling to maintain his dignity in world that gives him no respect and who is trying to preserve the communal against the onslaught of the individuating and alienating structure of capitalism. Writing (about) working class culture is always problematic because one is drawn into a highly politicised contestation of the power to define what the working class and capitalist society 'are really like'. I am not concerned with what the "working class is really like" for the reality of class is to be found everywhere but in sometimes rather simplistic, ideologically informed representations designed to serve particular political ends, ultimately negating the complexity and ambiguity of identifications in terms of class. Assuming the 'true nature' of the working class, or even negating its very existence, would be just another attempt at creating an illusion of closure; and we would again be trapped in the logic of a specific ideological discourse constituting a specific truth.

To conceptualise ideology as "conventional hypocrisy" (Engels 1978:199) or as the "false consciousness" produced by a bourgeois market economy (Adorno 1979:465) reduces ideology to the veiling of the material basis. However, Dracklé (1991:33) pointed out that in the context of hegemony the analysis of ideology is concerned with how elites accomplish the consolidation of relationships of power in society through the production of meaning. The concept of hegemony implies that the dominated take part in the production of their own domination not because their reality is veiled by ideology but because they believe in the naturalness and normality suggested by ideological discourses. Ideological discourses produce an encompassing taken-for-grantedness and they are part and parcel of the production of symbolic meanings (see below p. 27). For Torfing (1999:302) ideology is "[a] totalizing and reductive aspect of discourse that involves the constitutive non-recognition of the contingent and precarious character of discursively constructed identities." Hegemony and ideology are inextricably linked in the production of relationships of power in a conflictual terrain and non-recognition is a crucial strategy in the power struggle that finds its expression in ideology. Social space is characterised by an infinite play of meaning but lived reality is constituted in a fixation of meanings in historically specific ways dependent on configurations

of power. The attempt to establish hegemony depends on a reduction of this infinite play of meaning in order to establish specific relationships of power. The ideological element of discursive practices is located in the process of fixing the meaning of culture and social agency within the "totalizing horizon" (Torfing 1999:114) of hegemony which, in turn, suggests a fixity and naturalness of particular discursive practices. This ideological closure is essential for creating and ensuring the persuasiveness of hegemony in the context of social antagonism. Social antagonism is produced by a negation of identity that constructs the excluded identity as a threatening obstacle to the full realisation of hegemonic meaning and options (cf. Torfing 1999:120). The antagonistic 'other' is constructed as a force that is preventing the individual from achieving his/her full identity. Consequently, "our constitutive lack as subjects" (Torfing 1999:129) can be projected onto a negating 'other' which can be held responsible for our inability to achieve a complete identity with our self. Zizek has shown how the responsibility for incompleteness of identity is projected on the antagonistic enemy in the case of class antagonism. He argued that as soon as the worker identifies himself as a proletarian he is engaged in discursively constituted social reality of fighting against the capitalist who is preventing him from realizing his full human potential. The ideological moment of this process lies "in the fact that it is the capitalist, this external enemy, who is preventing me from achieving an identity with myself: the illusion is that after the eventual annihilation of the antagonistic enemy, I will finally abolish the antagonism and arrive at an identity with myself" (Zizek 1990:251). The belief that a particular social arrangement exists which is able to produce the total closure and transparency of the community (*Gemeinschaft*) — and the subject — is the "ideological effect strictu sensu" (Laclau 1997:52, my translation). However, ideological closure is not limited to the dominant bourgeois discourse of class or non-existence of class.

In the dynamics of the construction of difference in working class cultures, expressed in the categories of *them* and *us* and somewhat imprecisely called a " 'them and us' philosophy" by Willis (1988:109-110), we can clearly make out the ideological aspect of discourse in a situation marked by class antagonism. For the working class school boys described by Willis the antagonistic enemy was primarily embodied by the headmaster and the teachers who imposed classed practices and norms upon them. Willis argued that for the young working class boys he was working with the " 'them and us' philosophy" implied resistance to imposed power as well as an acceptance of the power hierarchy as a given fact of life:

> In the moment of the establishment of a cultural opposition is the yielding of hope for a direct, or quasi-political, challenge. The 'them and us' philosophy is simultaneously a rescue and a confirmation of the direct, the human and the social, and a giving up — at any conscious level — of claims to control the underworkings of these things: the real power relationships (Willis 1988:109-110).

I can agree with Willis on the point that there is a moment of acceptance of the power differential of capitalist society as a given fact of life — the bourgeois hegemony could hardly be hegemonic if it was not able to persuade the dominated of the 'naturalness' of their subordination; and it does so through ideological closure. However, in some working class contexts characterised by organised resistance based on collective identifications and political mobilisations along class lines, like in the coal industry, a politically motivated,

active challenge to the bourgeois hegemony was developed. The idea that it could be possible for the dominated (workers) to gain control of "the real power relationships" and transform them to end domination was an important factor contributing to the politicisation of resistance. However, even the attempt to gain control of "the real power relationships" is not free from contradictions. Resistance is not a clear-cut process and subversion of dominant discourses is often partial. This was demonstrated by Bourgois (1996) in his excellent ethnography of New York street culture where he showed that practices of resistance enacted in search for personal dignity and the rejection of subjugation can also lead to degradation and threaten the community that provided the basis for their development. Lamphere's (1997) analysis of the attempt to establish a trade union representation in a HealthTech plant in the US where she stressed the dynamics of the ambiguous relationship between resistance and consent on the shop floor is another example for the ambiguity of resistance. Showing the ambiguous and contradictory aspects of resistance in working class cultures is certainly a strength of Willis's analysis. However, Willis's analysis of the *them/us*-dichotomy in working class culture denies the possibility of conscious political moments of resistance.

Waddington et al. (1991:148) characterisation of the politics in mining communities as a "traditional, and somewhat parochialized, form of class consciousness: an unpractised and largely untheorized brand of socialism based on a pragmatic distinction between us and them" echoes Willis's assumption of the lack of conscious political resistance. As far as the council estate represented in this book is concerned the local "brand of socialism" is far from being an untheorised merely pragmatic means of inclusion and exclusion on the basis of a *them/us*-dichotomy. It may not be theorised in the sense of a theoretical reflexivity, defined by the academic (sociological) discourse that informed Waddington's et al. general-ised characterisation of working class mining communities, however, it is an integral part of a complex, historically specific hegemonic project developed in the context of the mining industry. In the context of a former mining community the *them/us*-dichotomy represents much more than a pragmatic distinction or an unconscious "element of self-domination" (Willis 1988:113). As Richards (1996:30) pointed out, the ability "of mining communities to foster, from within, a genuine 'counter-culture' should not be underesti-mated". Nevertheless, there is a moment of identification with, and thus perpetuation, of the dominant hierarchy inherent in the discursive space of this "counter-culture" that I will trace in the discourses of survival, respectability, class and gender. This moment of identification is inextricably linked to the attempt to ensure male dominance by maintaining 'traditional' gender roles and a moral order articulated in terms of classed respectability. In contrast to Willis's assumption, the "counter-culture" of the mining communities in the South Wales valley clearly showed signs of being an active and conscious challenge to the dominant discourses of capitalist society. However, the political persuasiveness and the dominance of the "counter-culture" in the mining communities eroded. The social and political institutions which were crucial for its maintenance had, to some extent, lost their hold over the people in the valleys after the destruction of the coal industry. It may not be as persuasive as it has been in the past but it still dominates the lives of many people in the former coalfield of South Wales. Perhaps, the miners and former miners living on the estate are, as Richards (1996:3) has argued, "a group of industrial workers undoubtedly running against the tide of history."

As I got to know the people on the council estate in the South Wales valleys that I had chosen as the location for my fieldwork I was impressed by the resilience of the distinctive, highly politically aware working class culture in this former mining community. To me, the best way to make sense of their world and to analyse the complex discursive practices and webs of power relationships that tie them to their declared enemy, the capitalist system — and vice versa — appeared to be the concept of hegemony as it was developed in 'post-Marxist' discourse theory. I believe that the discourse theoretical concept of hegemony is particularly useful as an analytical framework for a representation of life in the former coalfield of South Wales aimed at conveying an understanding of the complex, often contradictory, interrelated processes involved in the politics of everyday identifications and dis-identifications shaping as well as shaped by individuals caught up in webs of power, domination and resistance. Furthermore, the notion of hegemony allows us to make sense of the contradictory relations between the acceptance of, as well as the resistance to, domination. It is the persuasive power of hegemonic projects unfolding in their constituting discourses which normalises or naturalises cultural practices into a horizon of taken-for-grantedness that makes the unconscious perpetuation of dominance and the development of practices of resistance by the dominated possible and liveable.

"It's simple, really!": the experience of hegemony

In the sense of a "lived consensus" (Vale de Almeida 1996:163) hegemony captures "… the expansion of a discourse, or set of discourses, into a dominant horizon of social orientation and action by means of articulating unfixed elements into partially fixed moments in a context crisscrossed by antagonistic forces" (Torfing 1999:101). Articulation stands for the practice of establishing relations between elements whose meanings have not yet been fixed, which results in a modification of their identity — they become moments, the fixed "differential positions" within discourse (Laclau & Mouffe 1985:105). According to Torfing the construction of a hegemony is the result of the articulation of discursive elements that takes place in a conflictual terrain of power and resistance. Hegemony and discourse are both mutually conditioned by social antagonisms. These social antagonisms are discursively constructed through hegemonic practices of articulation and help establish the boundaries of discourse as well as distinguish hegemonic articulations from other types of articulation. "The limits and boundaries of a particular discourse are established by the exclusion of a discursive exteriority that threatens the discourse in question. The exclusion of such an antagonistic force is the *sine qua non* of hegemonic practice of articulation" (Torfing 1999:43). A hegemonic project dominates all spheres of life and the dialectical relationship of similarity and difference, of identifications and disidentifications enacted and produced in it discursive space constitute the politics of everyday life. In his famous 'Keywords' Raymond Williams (1988:145) characterised hegemony as encompassing not only a kind of political control but rather "a more general predominance which includes, as one of its key features, a particular way of seeing the world and human nature and relationships." The ways in which the subjects are involved in the processes of making sense of the world around them, of themselves and others — and are 'made sense of' by the discursive practices constituting the world around them and ultimately themselves — can be conceptualised as

the experience of hegemony. This daily experience of the world is not restricted to the cognitive alone but takes the whole range of sensory inputs and emotional as well as rational reflections about them into account. The constraints imposed and the possibilities opened up by discursive practices which provide the framework for these processes of individual and collective identifications and agency have to be regarded as crucial factors for the way the experiencing subject makes sense of his/her life and the world around him/her — and, in the end, the constitution of the subject within the particular discursive space perceived as his/her life. Furthermore, "[s]ince discourse is by definition shared, experience is collective as well as individual" (Scott 1992:34).

Hegemony depends for its persuasive power "… on its acceptance as 'normal reality' or 'common sense' by those in practice subordinated to it" (Williams 1988:145). It is "a lived consensus" realising the negotiations of what should or cannot be accepted as 'normal' reality within a (historically) specific discursive space. Experience is a concept that is crucial for the understanding of how hegemonic projects manage to become hegemonic because in order to do so they must be lived. It helps us understand the complexity of the everyday political, the everyday practices of hegemony, and the individual as well as collective (hi)stories in the dialectical process of its production. Skeggs (1997:27) argued that experience "… is important as a practice of making sense, both symbolically and narratively as a struggle over material conditions and over meaning …". In her reasoning she followed Brah's (1996:116) understanding of "experience as a site of contestation: a discursive space where different and differential subject positions and subjectivities are inscribed, reiterated, or repudiated." The reflection on the conceptualisation of experience as a space of contestation was certainly promoted by the development of feminist theory. Experience was a crucial concept in the development of feminist theory. In contrast to a self-explanatory view of experience developed by some feminist perspectives (Skeggs 1995:15), Brah (1996:116) criticised the concept of experience that constructed it as a situationally constituted 'truth' because this concept prevented the questioning of taken-for-granted values and norms. She (Brah 1996:11) argued "… that experience does not reflect a pre-given 'reality' but is the discursive effect of processes that construct what we call reality." For her the experience of the stereotypical identification as a 'Paki' by others was a denigration and an insult that went beyond her individual and personal sensitivities. It became part of her reality because through the relational articulation of difference it inscribed an "inferiorised *collective* subject" in her body, thus exercising the power of the discourse through her. "The invention of 'I' and 'We' through embodied living subjects means that these constructions are experienced as 'realities'." Skeggs (1995, 1997), Scott (1992) and de Lauretis (1984) also understood experience as an interactive process producing subjectivities. For de Lauretis it was produced "… by one's personal, subjective, engagement in the practices, discourses, and institutions that lend significance (value, meaning, and affect) to the events of the world" (de Lauretis 1984:159). Scott (1992:25-26) as well as Brah (1996:116) proposed a concept of experience as the site of subject formation. They argued that the individual is not a fully constituted experiencing subject to whom experiences happen, rather it is "constituted through experience" (Scott 1992:26). Scott stressed the processual nature of identifications and insisted "on the discursive nature of 'experience' and on the politics of its construction." She argued that experience cannot be self-evident or straightforward because it is always subject to contestation and, therefore, always political (Scott 1992:37).

Hegemony is not just an abstract political process because it draws its power from being a lived space of discursively constituted meanings, values and experiences which implies the central position of human agency. Thus, the work of hegemonic agents — which Gramsci called 'organic intellectuals' — is crucial for the understanding of the development of any hegemonic project. In developing the concept of the organic intellectual Gramsci broke with the elitist concepts of intellectuals by Lenin and Kautsky because for him everybody had the potential to become an 'organic intellectual' and organise the masses (Torfing 1999:110-111). Gramsci developed a broad definition of intellectuals — "all human beings are intellectuals" (Gramsci 1986:226, my translation) — but he narrowed it down again to "the whole social stratum which, in a broad sense, practices an organisational function, be it in production, be it in culture or politics and administration" (Gramsci 1986:371, fn. 167, my translation). Intellectuals are constructed as reflecting ideas and performing in ways appropriate to their class, however, they Gramsci still sees intellectuals as specialised agents of the dominant group and "functionaries" of the "superstructure" (Gramsci 1986:228). Although Gramsci abandoned the disregard for the everyday discursive practices of the people and argued that "[i]ntellectuals and activist leaders should look for the wisdom that has been accumulated through traditions of local resistance against domination in even the most eccentric everyday discourses" (Smith 1998:52), a "residual elitism" (ibid.:53) can nevertheless be detected in Gramsci's concept of the intellectual who develops "a worldview that is superior in its coherence and systematic organisation to that of the masses" (ibid.:198-199). Smith's (1999) interpretation of Gramsci's "organic intellectual" transcends the concept of intellectuals as functionaries of the superstructure. He argued that these intellectuals transform personally and situationally specific experiences by creating a seemingly natural ('organic') link between these potentially disparate and fragmented experiences. Through these specific, politically informed identifications of people — as miners, mothers, etc. — they translate the personally and situationally specific experiences of these people into something more generically shared which is then tied to "systems of relevances" not immediately available at the level of daily experiences. Through these processes they "give coherence to their common experiences in a distinctive way" and they are engaged in the distribution and restriction of knowledge (Smith 1999:256-260). Thus, hegemonic agents are transforming individual experiences into discursively mediated collective knowledge which in turn also constitutes these individual experiences.

In the context of a hegemonic project aimed at subverting the dominant discourses of capitalist society the local hegemonic agents — in this case miners' trade union activists and the local working class elite which held key positions in the social institutions of the community — who played such a crucial role in developing and maintaining its subversive power, can be described as demotic intellectuals. The use of the term "demotic" (of the people) was inspired by Baumann (1996:10, 195) who used the term "demotic discourse" to conceptualise the local discursive practices aimed at subverting the dominant discourses of culture and community in his study of identity politics in the multi-ethnic London suburb of Southall. In contrast to Gramsci's "organic intellectuals" the demotic intellectuals do the everyday work of (re-)creating the persuasiveness of hegemonic which is not limited to the political education, organisation and mobilisation of 'the masses' for some kind of higher purpose but rather a process constituting the political of everyday reality. Demotic intellectuals are actively engaged in the processes of symbolisation by condensing meanings

in specific symbolic forms and connecting them to emotionally charged identifications which enhance their persuasive potential — an example of this was Arthur's comparison of the working class struggle against exploitation with the struggle of the native Americans and his identification with Geronimo as a heroic symbol of resistance. As Turner (1970:29-30) pointed out with regard to rituals, the condensation symbol brings, within its framework of meaning, the dominant norms and values in close contact with strong emotional stimuli. Turner quite clearly saw that the process of transforming the "irksomeness of moral constraint" into a "love of virtue" that appears to be natural, is an ideological closure — he argued that symbols contained an "ideological pole of meaning" that represents the "unity and continuity of social groups" (Turner 1970:29). Dracklé (1991:45) argued the symbolic arrangement of meanings within ideologies makes the empowerment of some people and the subordination of others in relationships of power possible. The effect of symbols is particularly deep because symbols themselves already mediate between abstract political and private relationships and because the symbolic dimension contains a moment of obliga-tion. The demotic intellectuals are actively involved in processes producing this "unity and continuity of social groups" (ibid.) as an ideology of shared identity. This requires intimate knowledge of communicative practices, values, emotional attachments in order to be per-suasive as a shared identity and, thus, appearing as natural through the suggestion of closure. The dialectical processes of difference and similarity in collective identity always embody a moment of the ideological because they involve a process of reduction and closure in the production of similarity between individuals, who, in order to perceive themselves as individuals need to construct themselves as different, despite the stress of the collective on similarity. But even a dominant ideological discourse will become open to subversion if it loses the power to persuade, to make its meanings appear as "the way things are done" as well as "desirable", and if the social groups lose their power to bind their members by appearing to be highly desirable collectives offering shared identifications.

The hegemonic agents, the demotic intellectuals of the miners' counter-hegemonic project, were key figures in the process of making certain discursive practices appear natural and desirable. They did the work of ideology. One of those demotic intellectuals on the estate was Arthur, a prominent local trade unionist, whose words still ring in my ear: "It's simple, really!" In our late night discussions in the club about anything from local to global politics he used to tell me that it would make no sense to argue, like I did, that things were complex or even complicated because he believed that they were simple and that we should express them in a simple way (see chapter 4). He also gave me an example of what he meant by expressing simple things in a simple way: we should not call capitalists "capitalists" but rather "greedy bastards". Perhaps much to his dismay, I argue that expressing antagonisms such as that between *us*, the working class, and *them*, the capitalist bourgeoisie, is a rather complex form of ideological discourse invoked to persuade by naturalisation and, thus, making it appear simple, really!

The social and political institutions of the mining industry and community provide an important framework for the discursive (ideological) production of this complex kind of simplicity. Institutions are attractive for members of a social collectivity because they "… order social life, provide predictability, and permit actors to exercise lower levels of attention than might otherwise be demanded by a complex social world. They provide templates for how things should be done" (Jenkins 1996:129) and are "… sources and sites of identification

for individuals" (ibid.:134). The social and political institutions provide the space for the hegemonic agents' attempts to produce almost irresistible moments of identification — individual as well as collective. The demotic intellectuals are engaged in constituting these institutions as "greedy institutions". The concept of the "greedy institutions" was developed by Coser who analysed the problem of organised groups to ensure loyalty and commitment, to bind people despite a multiplicity of competing appeals from other sources of power within society. He distinguished the "greedy institutions" (e.g. the Catholic Church or the Chinese Communist Party) from Goffman's "total institutions" (e.g. prisons, army camps, mental hospitals, etc.) because greedy institutions do not necessarily require physical isolation and external coercion for their (re)production. Greedy institutions tend to create and maintain symbolic boundaries to distinguish the insider from the outsider by non-physical means. They also "… tend to rely on voluntary compliance and to evolve means of activating loyalty and commitment. … Greedy institutions aim at maximising assent to their styles of life by appearing highly desirable to the participants" (Coser 1974:6). They expect total commitment and put pressure on their members not to form ties with other institutions.

As organised groups both the trade union lodge and the miners' welfare club are a particular kind of institution — an organisation — in which members combine in the collective pursuit of specific objectives. Organisations develop criteria for identifying members and certain ways of recruiting them, they are characterised by a division of labour with regard to specialised tasks and functions of members, and they develop specific patterns of decision making and task allocation (ibid.:136-137). The organisations of the mining industry and the mining community — the "institutional networks of hierarchical relationships, of sub- and superordination, of power and authority" (ibid.:140) — are the framework within which the demotic intellectuals establish and legitimate their power and authority. The successful outcome of the attempt to achieve a state of hegemony on the local level reflects the special historical situation in the coalfields where the strategically placed organisations of the trade union lodge and the miners' welfare club almost totally dominated the lives of miners. Mining communities provide a good example of these processes because "[t]he living and working conditions peculiar to the coal mining industry have unquestionably had a considerable influence on mineworkers' attitudes towards the industry and even towards society as a whole" (Morgan 1989:25). In the context of the occupational homogeneity of the mining communities, where everybody was dependent on a single industry and the majority of the men shared similar experiences at work and at home, a miners' (socialist) hegemonic project could unfold its full power of persuasion and coercion. However, despite the success of this hegemonic project on the local level the people in the mining communities always had to come to terms with the contradictory meanings and demands produced by the struggle for dominance between the local hegemony and the capitalist bourgeois hegemony in British society as a whole.

Smith (1999) has shown that the institutionalised collective identifications of the working class played a crucial role in the process of class formation. He traced the discursive 'making' of the working class to the bourgeois — hegemonic — political project of the late nineteenth century and showed that the complementary late nineteenth/early twentieth century versions of bourgeois intellectuals, believing in the necessity of empowering the proletariat through developing its capacity for collective agency, and the antagonistic

representations created by politically active parts of the working people converged in what became to be recognised as working class culture. It was not a culture based on primordialist identifications of mythical depths but rather one of a "selective tradition". "And to the extent that such a form of collective identity was to come into being and be resilient (as opposed to the more individual and specialized 'artistic' culture of the bourgeoisie) — that is to say, to the extent to which working class culture became synonymous with some kind of strength-through-unity, it owed this to the labour aristocracy, which ..." (Smith 1999:30) defined itself as representing and leading the working class. Its position, however, depended on its ability to create institutional spaces — collective organisations of the working class such as those of the trade unions, working men's clubs, cooperative societies — which became beacons that made organised labour visible across the class divide. "We see this dialectic quite clearly as those working people who had established for themselves organized institutional spaces thereby became visible to intellectuals" (Smith 1999:32). Rather than subsuming the lived realities of workers, which are reflected in collective organisation and political agency, under an ideal model, Smith argued that "... the experience of historically specific forms of social labour provides the principal *starting-point* for the ever-incomplete and ongoing process of the coalescing of collective identity and political will that we might call class formation" (Smith 1999:183). The complexity of the contradictory and antagonistic processes at work in the attempts of bourgeois and proletarian hegemonic projects to achieve a monopoly in the discursive production of meanings and the persuasiveness of the bourgeois project which managed to consolidated its dominance can be traced in the development of the discourse of respectability.

Respectability and the working class

The discourse of respectability circumscribes the attitudes, practices and representations which are deemed acceptable and of moral value in all spheres of life— public and private, work and home. It is crucial for processes of identification and the construction of the self in a working class context. In order to be considered respectable a man has to show an attitude to work based on thrift, honesty, reliability, and a willingness to work. But it is not only the sphere of work that is dominated by the prescriptions of respectability. In the community and in his home, the respectable worker has to show a responsible attitude towards his family — he has to take care of its well being, economic and otherwise — and take good care of the public representation of his moral worth by keeping the house and the garden as well as his and his family's personal appearance neat and tidy. The constitutive 'other' of the working class discourse of respectability is categorised as 'rough', 'the element' or 'the problem cases'. These people are judged as not conforming to the moral order prescribed by the discourse of respectability and are represented as people 'who have never worked in their life' or, even worse, are not willing to work. They can be the 'scroungers' who work the system — of the welfare state — to their own benefit but who do not deserve the assistance they get. Their lack of moral worth is also imputed from an untidy house and garden and they are said to neglect their personal appearance as well as their families. It is interesting to note in this context that Moore (1975:35-36) criticised the image of miner as the 'traditional proletarian' (rough, tough, hard-drinking and Labour-

voting) as a partial image because "… a substantial section of the miners were amongst the most 'respectable' part of the working class." Moore's criticism points exactly at the contradiction of the external, stereotypical image of miners and the working class in general and the internal (self-)image of the workers themselves that is, however, constructed along the same lines of differentiation as the one imposed from the outside.

As Crow and Allan (1994:33) have pointed out, the "division between the rough and the respectable sections of the working class is a well-established theme in the literature on traditional working class communities." In the Scottish working class community of Cauldmoss, Wight (1993:79-80) has found that the dichotomous categories of the "nice folk" and the "wasters" delineated the respectable from the non-respectable people living within the community. Moral repute was the most important way to certify respectability in Cauldmoss. The moral value of one's lifestyle was judged according to one's attitude to work, certain standards of housework and child care, personal appearance — which was seen as much as a sign of self-respect as a clean and tidy house — some restraint in drinking and gambling without being puritanical, and the maintenance of a certain level of consumption. Wight argues that the social standing — and the categorisation as well as the self image as respectable — of the people living in Cauldmoss was primarily deduced from manifestations of material lifestyle, such as clothes, cars and leisure pursuits. However, I disagree with Wight's (1993:184) rather crude reduction of the discourse of respectability to the demonstration of one's status through lifestyle which was principally expressed through consumption. It is evident from my own material as well as Dunk's (1994) study of a Canadian working class town that restrictions of one's ability to conform to certain consumption patterns, imposed by unemployment and poverty, do not necessarily prevent one from maintaining the status of a respectable person. Dunk, for example, argues that respectability was judged not so much by material lifestyle but more by personal cleanliness and care for possessions and property. "Noble poor people are clean and keep their homes or apartments neat" (Dunk 1994:111).

Neither Wight's assumption that consumption provides the key to understanding the importance of respectability nor Dunk's presentation of respectability as the regard for cleanliness and possessions are particularly helpful for gaining insight into the complexity of the discourse of respectability within a working class environment. Furthermore, both views cannot explain why Moore placed miners at the respectable end of the questionable rough proletarian/respectable working class continuum. I believe that we have to take a closer look at the discourse of respectability because it is inextricably linked to that of class and can be seen as a nodal point instituted by a particular hegemonic project which temporarily manages to fix the meaning of symbols of social difference. It provides symbolic resources for the representation of ideas about 'the other' — often perceived as threatening the hegemony. Furthermore, the contradictions which arise from its articulations can provide a key to the understanding of the production and maintenance of the local hegemony in working class communities and its interrelatedness with the discourses dominant in capitalist societies.

The concept of respectability seems to have emerged in the process of class differentiation during the mid-nineteenth century when the middle class attempted to define itself in opposition to the upper class as well as the industrial proletariat. Respectability was a condensation symbol in the process of the moral legitimisation and the categorisation of

people according to the increasingly dominant category of class. It became a way of 'othering' those perceived as undeservingly holding power and capital (the morally deficient but powerful upper class) and those who were assumed to be lacking the will, education and morality to deserve power (the deservingly powerless working class). The discourse of respectability was a key practice of articulation in the struggle of the middle class for hegemony. "Respectability was organized around a complex set of practices and representations which defined appropriate and acceptable modes of behaviour, language and appearance; these operated as both social rules and moral codes" (Skeggs 1997:46, references omitted). A dichotomy was constructed between the 'rough'/'non-respectable' and the 'respectable' that created a boundary between the proletariat and those defining themselves as belonging to neither the lower nor the upper orders of society. The boundaries of the discourse of respectability were drawn in terms of a new set of moral values and practices delineating adequate behaviour which suited the middle class and excluded those deemed incapable or unwilling to comply. Through this new concept of morality those identifying/identified as being middle class could place themselves at the centre of society. The individual as the embodiment of morality assumed a special importance and the discourse of respectability was not only inextricably connected with that of class, it was also bound up with the discourse of individualism. Individuality was constructed as being available only to the middle class itself. Strathern argued that the social landscape was shrunk to the interior person and the assumed internal processes were explicitly externalised in people's behaviour and work (Strathern 1992:101). She linked respectability to the way objects of knowledge were created by externalising the interior based on the assumption the 'real' nature lies within. "Morality made public became respectability" (ibid.:130) and "[e]xternal respectability displayed internal morality" (ibid.:105). As an example of his externalisation of inner moral worth Strathern used its expression in the idealised form of the popular English cottage. Here external form was copied in order to create an internal form imagined as domestic harmony (ibid.:103). "It was possible to achieve a resonance between an orderly, well-run and decent household and an orderly decent-thinking mind" (ibid.:106). Furthermore, the new morality also contained an element of emulation: the behaviour of others was to be treated as an example for one's own (ibid.:102). While moral worth was individualised the lower classes were subsumed under the masses and, thus, categorised as lacking individuality and moral worth (cf. Skeggs 1997:3).

However, due to the success of the middle class in implementing their hegemonic project, the discourse of respectability proved to be so pervasive that it was taken up by those it had been devised to exclude. "Notions of morality, decency, thrift — key values by which people lived — shifted in meaning between class, and gave everyone a vantage point from which to comment on their neighbours, whether or not they wished to imitate their style" (Strathern 1992:140). Skeggs (1997:2) argued that respectability was crucial for the emergence of the concept of class. While the category of class obviously belonged to the discursive domain of the political, the category of respectability was articulated in the discursive domain beyond the obviously political — the private, the personal, the social, the community, the religious, etc. — which seems to be more immediate to the individuals' everyday practices. The political dimension of respectability vanished behind the stress on direct social interaction and individual psychic constitution. The quite successful practice of masquerading the political dimension of respectability made its widespread acceptance —

even by those disadvantaged by it — possible. Respectability became a much more effective hegemonic practice of control because it could be disguised as transcending difference constructed in terms of class. However, in this process, which was strengthening its persuasiveness and pervasiveness, it seems to have lost its effectiveness as a means of constructing the 'otherness' of those excluded; an 'otherness' that is necessary to legitimate their powerlessness in the social and political hierarchy within capitalist society. Thus, in the process of middle class political consolidation, the discourse of class became increasingly important in defining 'the other' of the middle class because "… classed categorizations provide discursive frameworks which enable, legitimate and map onto material inequalities" (Skeggs 1997:5).

Despite the pervasiveness of the discourse of respectability the dominant meaning of respectability was neither simply reproduced nor simply resisted by the working class. Respectability may have become a focus for a growing sense of class identity and social superiority amongst the more affluent part of the working class — which felt it had to distinguished itself from the 'rough' working class — as Skeggs (1997:46) has argued. However, it was also transformed into a practice of articulation of working class resistance against the middle and upper class hegemony by redefining it in terms of a positive self-image of the working class in contrast to a negative image of the dominant middle and upper class. In this sense respectability became the focus for a growing sense of working class social superiority defined against an exploiting and, therefore, morally deficient middle and upper class and expressed in a *them/us*-dichotomy that can appear to be extremely contradictory in certain contexts.

Apparently there is a contradiction within and between the classed practices of respectability which is rooted in the complex inter-connectedness of relations of dominance and resistance. This contradiction arises out of the partial subversion of the dominant discourse of respectability through a symbolic reversal. It appears to be the case that the relevance of core moral values defined by the dominant discourse of respectability — such as the attitude to work, the public display of domestic and personal neatness and tidiness, or concepts of gender and gender relations — is not called into question by the hegemonic projects of the working class. What is reversed, however, is the hierarchy of mental/intellectual and physical work maintained by the dominant discourse that ascribes a higher value to mental/intellectual pursuits. Thus, the symbolic reversal is only a partial one. In his concept of the symbolic construction of community, Cohen (1985) has brought our attention to the importance of processes of symbolic reversal — conceptualised as a ritualized inversion or negation of the norm — for the maintenance of the boundaries of marginal communities threatened by an overwhelmingly powerful centre. "The inversion of the norm is not only limited to ritual, but may be found also in all manner of symbolic forms. For example, an increasingly common response to the imposition of stigmatic identity appears to be an assertion by those stigmatized of the characteristics which 'spoil' their identity rather than to mask them" (Cohen 1985:59, reference omitted). In the sense of an inversion or negation of the dominant meaning of respectability the process of deflection can clearly be seen as a process of symbolic reversal — even if it is a partial one. It is an inversion of the dominant norm, however, it is not a negation of it. Rather, it also involves an unconscious or unintended reaffirmation of the dominant norm through the acceptance of its legitimacy. The acceptance of its legitimacy manifests itself in the deflection to less powerful others.

Despite the fact that they are considered to belong to the working class, the stigmatising categories of the dominant discourse like the 'scrounger', deflected by certain groups within the working class, are applied to them. For this partial subversion through symbolic reversal I am using the term 'process of deflection' because the negative stereotypical images generated through the discourse of respectability by the middle and upper class and projected on the working class are, on the one hand, deflected back to their point of origin through a symbolic reversal and are, on the other hand, deflected away from those confronted with them to the even less powerful others within the working class. However, the process of deflection can, again, be only a partial redefinition of the dominant discourse because in order to deflect the imposed meanings of a dominant discourse the attacked, who consider themselves to be the 'respectable working class', have to identify, at least partially, with the prescriptions and representations of the dominant discourse that are thrown at them.

As Howe (1998:543) has pointed out the discursive strategies of men in employment and without employment "cannot unambiguously be defined as forms of resistance because they are equally forms co-operation and complicity. Images of the scrounger are not in any simple sense resisted, rejected or even re-interpreted by unemployed men. Rather, they are deflected away from themselves and directed at others." Unfortunately, his use of the term of deflection neglects the other crucial aspect involved in the process: the symbolic reversal. The process of deflection implies a twofold 'othering' of those who dominate — through a symbolic reversal subverting the dominant meaning — as well as those dominated — through the reaffirmation of the dominant meaning by deflection to the even more disadvantaged. The process of deflection can thus simultaneously represent a practice of resistance and a practice of domination.

Cohen, on the other hand, neglected the problem of the legitimation of the dominant discourse through deflection because he concentrated almost exclusively on the perspective of the community from the inside. From the inside the dominant discourse appears to be subverted because its symbols have been appropriated and re-inscribed with new meanings. The new meanings are not intelligible for the outsider but as long as their meanings remain locked up within the privileged discursive space of the local (working class) community they do not threaten the dominant discourse and cannot be identified as practices of resistance but rather as practices of acceptance of the dominant meanings. To the outsider the dominant meaning seems to remain largely intact in these processes of symbolic reversal and the dominant discourse can, therefore, retain some of its legitimacy in contexts in which it is not actively and publicly opposed.

Through the application of the dominant discourse to the powerless within the working class — e.g. women or the unemployed — men are perpetuating the dominant discourse. With regard to the categories of exclusion within the working class community — the 'rough' people or women — negative and stereotypical meanings are used in certain contexts and through their application the hegemony, which is resisted, is also — unconsciously — reaffirmed by the dominated. A good example of this contradictory usage which leads to reaffirmation is provided by Howe (1990) in his study of unemployed men in Belfast. "The discursive strategy followed by unemployed men in Belfast involves resisting the application of representations which cast them as 'scroungers' and 'cheats', but at the same time appropriating precisely these images so to describe other unemployed people. What appears to be resistance from one point of view becomes a form of co-operation

from another, and what seems to be subordination in one context becomes an attempt at domination in another" (Howe 1998:532). The problem of the discursive strategies employed by the unemployed is the use of the categorisations of deservingly or undeservingly unemployed. According to Howe (1990:191-192) there are two models of unemployment, the deserving or D-model and the structural or S-model. The D-model is based on a discourse of individuality and the distinction between deserving and undeserving unemployed and Howe argued that the category of the scrounger is part of an individualistic idea of deservingness. Scroungers — people often characterised as "having never worked in their life" — belong to the 'rough' people and are seen as abusing the welfare state for their own benefit and don't deserve assistance because it is assumed that they prefer not to work. In this context, unemployment "…is considered to be due to individual deficiency rather than to a structural deficiency". (Wadel 1973:41) Through the application of the D-model the structural problems of unemployment are reduced to a level of individual responsibility — thus legitimising the dominant discourse of individualism. The views of people believing in the D-model are based on stereotypes, local events and imputed personal characteristics of people they know. People subscribing to the S-model, on the other hand, see the unemployed as victims of social, political and economic forces outside their control. However, even the structural perspective does include stereotypes, local events and opinions about the personal characteristics of people. Howe argued that people who believed in the S-model, possessed a more integrated set of beliefs and that employed and unemployed who avoided the deserving/undeserving categories may have had an active background in union movement and probably claim to be socialists. In mining communities, where the miners' union and the miners' welfare club tended to dominate all aspects of work and social life, the structural explanations could become dominant because they reinforced the *them/us*-dichotomy and prevented fragmentation by ensuring the continuity of positive identifications for those who had to endure a life on the dole.

> Whether or not a man works is dependent on the capacity of owners of capital to cater for him. Thus unemployment often appears to the workers as a deliberate and personal act of will; many miners regard the chronic unemployment of the last depression as the planned outcome of Conservative policy (Dennis et al. 1956:34).

The application of the category of the scrounger within the context of a working class 'community' is not only a discursive strategy expressing an idea of deservingness but it can also be a means of internal exclusion and domination in certain contexts (Diedrich 1996:66-67) — e.g. in conflicts such as the disagreement over the running of the local working men's club (see chapter 5). Its power and effectiveness derives from the fact that a questioning of a persons' respectability and personal motives can involve a negation of a subject's identifications and self-image. But those men who subscribe to the S-model and are strongly rejecting the imposed image of the working-class scrounger as far as their community in general or the working-class is concerned, are caught up in a contradiction. This is the contradiction inherent in, what I have called, the process of deflection. As Howe (1990:190) argued, the unemployed sustain the saliency of a discourse which in the long term is disadvantageous for them by participating in the dominant discourse of employment. The attempt to get themselves classified as deserving, which implies an affirmation of their

status as respectable, by contrasting themselves with the 'real' scroungers contributes to the reproduction of their own subordination. It leads to a reaffirmation of the legitimacy of the category of the scrounger produced by the dominant discourse. Thus, the perpetuation of the dominant discourse is only possible if they do, in some way or another, identify with the prescriptions and norms set by the hegemonic project responsible for their domination. But not only the unemployed find themselves trapped in a dilemma. Even the men with a trade union background who claim to be socialists may be trapped in a dilemma that leads to an unwilling perpetuation of the dominant ideology. Although their explanation of unemployment is based on structural factors, such as capitalists in general and the Conservative government in particular to whom the stereotypical image of the scrounger is deflected, their adherence to the discourse of work and employment with its morally sanctioned ideal of the hard working man as opposed to the scrounger leads to a perpetuation of the discourse of respectability and its individualistic idea of deservingness that divides the community and consequently the working class. It is not the dominance of a particular moral order expressed in the practices and representations of work, responsibility and deservingness, constituted by the discourses of class and respectability, that is questioned but rather the inequality of the distribution of power to define it.

In the field of gender relations within the working class context men retained the power to define and thus to dominate. The discourse of respectability provided not only a framework for arranging the relations between the proletariat and the middle class, it also had profound implications for the construction of gender relations. Gender relations in working class communities are clearly male biased and the idea of domestic harmony — emulating the dominant ideal of middle class domesticity — was instrumental in defining women as subordinate to men and excluding them from the use of public space by confining them to the home. Female respectability was to a great extent dependent on that of the man — father and husband — to whom she was attached. The domestic space was the only space where women could demonstrate their own respectability. Moral worth was imputed to the good mother who cared for her children and kept the house in impeccable order. According to Skeggs (1997:46, references omitted) the domestic ideal "… was part of a wider, ongoing attempt to create a middle-class hegemony in which the practices of the newly forming bourgeoisie were defined against the condemned excesses and extravagances of the aristocracy. Ideologies of domestic responsibility and respectability involved a negotiation and redefinition of bourgeois beliefs and values. Thus distinctions could be constructed between all classes of women; but only those who achieved the domestic ideal could articulate their superiority." By conforming to the gendered prescriptions of respectability the working class women were at the same time confined as well as confining themselves to a social space deliminated by men. Women lived in a state of dual domination; they were dominated in terms of a classed as well as a gendered discourse. Respectability is a core concept for the gendered construction of subjectivity that is controlled by men and which produces women in most contexts as subordinate and, therefore, denies their 'individuality' and sometimes even their subjectivity.

Skeggs's (1997:162-164) study of working class women provides a good example of the power of the classed discourse of respectability to make its definitions count. The working class women she studied were never able to feel comfortable with themselves because they feared that others would find something wanting and undesirable about them. They were

limited by negative self-images — they did not see their bodies as valuable and themselves as interesting or assumed that they had entitlements — which severely restricted their ability to occupy social space and move through it in different ways. "Their attempts to claim respectability locked them into systems of self-regulation and monitoring, producing themselves as governable subjects" (Skeggs 1997:162). The construction of their own subjectivity was not based on being an 'individual' but rather on a notion of 'fitting in'. The women were not able to perceive themselves as individuals because they were denied access to everything that could make individuality meaningful. Skeggs's representation of the working class women is informed by her assumption that discourses of individualism legitimate powerful groups and are employed to justify difference on the basis of inequality. However, Skeggs (1997:163) sails very close to the wind of extremely stereotypical middle class dichotomies of the self-aware individual versus the dumb masses — which she criticises — when she writes that "[i]ndividuals are the product of privilege, who can occupy the economic and cultural conditions which enable them to do the work on the self. The 'individual' is part of a very different class project to the one these women are involved in." I do not question her assumption that working class women have never been positioned by the discourse of individualism in the same way as their middle class counterparts, however, as Jenkins (1996:18) has pointed out "…, there is more to individualism than the radical political ontology of liberalism." In a sense she confuses the awareness of individual distinctiveness with a particular political discourse of individualism that certainly "… is a dogmatic posture which privileges the individual over society" (Cohen 1994:168). It would be equally dogmatic to reinstate class as totally determining the self-awareness of individuals. Nevertheless, class is a dominant symbol, in Turner's (1970:44) sense, because it condenses and unifies in its practices of articulation all contradictions of human social life, between individuals and collectives and between different emotions and norms. Thus, class speaks of relationships of power. In contrast to other working class communities (e.g. Dunk 1994, Wight 1993) class was a key symbol in the process of constructing and maintaining the communities symbolic boundary on the council estate. Identifications in terms of class always stressed the collective, the shared moment of identity: "*We're* all the same here, *we're* all working class!" or "*We're* all in the same boat". Nobody identified him/herself by saying "*I am* working class". However, in a situation of social antagonism class identifications are always open to contestation — especially in times when the dominant political discourse, under the guise of a concept of globalisation, increasingly tends to mask difference, dominance and powerlessness and attempts to revitalise the middle class discourse of individualism.

I certainly do agree with Skeggs's belief that it is crucial to re-establish class analysis as a viable way to further our understanding of capitalist societies. However, she comes very close to essentialising class by suggesting that it is structural and making it *the* primary focus of identification. She argues (Skeggs 1997:94) that "… class is not just a representation, nor a subject position which can be taken off a discursive shelf and worn at will or a social position which can be occupied voluntarily." For Skeggs (1997:94) identities are reconstructed in a continuous process within a discursive space determined by class. They are re-produced as responses to social positions, through access to or exclusion from representational systems as well as through the conversion of forms of capital (in Bourdieu's sense). Although Jenkins (1996:97), referring to Barth, has pointed out that actors are able to make choices these cannot be interpreted as voluntary and free from constraints but

rather have to be seen as severely constrained by powerful forces outside the control of the individual actor. Nevertheless, class is only one powerful source of external control which constrains individual choice rather than de-individualises the self. The self is always a product of a dialectical process of (external) definitions offered or imposed by others and (internal) self-definitions created by the individual. It appears that Skeggs confuses self-definition with what Jenkins (1996:9) has called "[a]nother common-sensical strand in much intellectual debate" that constructs identity as referring "almost exclusively to the collective or individual *self*-determination of identity." Skeggs turns the class struggle into a struggle for the self in which the women "… have no discourses available to them to articulate it [class] as a positive identity. Their class struggle is waged on a daily basis to overcome the denigration and delegitimizing associated with their class positioning" (Skeggs 1997:95). Writing from a male perspective, Dunk (1994:99-100) expressed a different view on exclusion and the relationship of class and gender in a working class community, stressing the reproduction of gender rather than class inequalities: "In their treatment of women, the Boys are reproducing the system of inequality based upon gender which crosses all social classes. It would be wrong, however, to conclude from this that class does not matter." For him gender inequality manifests itself in certain practices which differ according to class.

It would be counterproductive to privilege classed practices over gendered practices or vice versa because practices of exclusion are dependent on the contexts of their articulation. The articulations of the working class women quoted in Skeggs's study clearly reflect the stereotypical representations of the working class by the dominant discourse. They saw the working class as: "poor", "hanging round the dole", the women as "common as muck" and the men as "dead rough", or as "the ones who are struggling" and the "ones who batter their kids" (Skeggs 1997:75). While the women in the working class community in the North West of England dis-identified themselves from the working class the discourse of class seems to play a rather different role on the council estate in the South Wales valleys I studied. Not only do the men have discourses available to them to articulate class as a positive identity (see for example Willis 1988) the discourse of survival also enabled women and men to identify in a positive sense with the working class — though those identified as 'rough' from within the 'community' and perhaps the younger generations (under 30 years of age) tend to be more inclined towards a disidentification with class. Thus, the meaning of class can be redefined in opposition to the dominant discourse. Individuality, which was denied to subjects subsumed under the working class masses by the dominant discourses of class and respectability, may be reclaimed by the dominated in the process of redefinition in terms of a competing hegemonic project — in the case of South Wales this could be called a socialist, anti-capitalist, or simply a miners' hegemonic project. The dominant discourse of individualism with its negative representation of the collective as the dumb, irresponsible, uneducated, exploitable and scrounging working class masses who cannot possess some kind of individuality is rejected through a process of symbolic reversal. The middle and upper class — *them* — is represented in stereotypical categories as well; they are also subsumed under a collective, but one that is seen as exploiting, anti-social, ir-responsible, arrogant, lacking practical knowledge, etc. Furthermore, to assume that indi-viduality has no meaning for working class subjects is problematic in the sense that it legitimates the concept of individuality devised to ensure the legitimacy and persuasiveness

of the middle class hegemonic project. However, there is no denying that the dominant discourse not only subsumes working class women, as well as men, under the masses, this process is also intensified by the working class men's deflection of these stereotypical identifications onto the women — representing them as "a lesser other" (Dunk 1994:99). It is on the basis of the working class discourse of gender that the women are not identified (externally, by the men) as individuals while the men have reclaimed individuality for themselves — this does not mean, however, that other classed discourses of gender are not representing women as "a lesser other".

The analysis of the gendered discourses of class and respectability shows that the ambiguity of processes of resistance and domination is a product of the complex play of meanings produced by the convergence of the discourses of class, masculinity, respectability and individuality into a specific hegemonic project and the ideological closures involved in the process. The discussion is thus focused on the development of a specific working class counter-hegemonic project that I have contextualised here in relationship to the bourgeois or middle class capitalist hegemony it set out to counter, that was, nevertheless constitutive for its very existence. Although, the miners' hegemonic project was inspired by the dream of a socialist utopia — or more down to earth, the desire to overthrow the so-called capitalist system in order to end exploitation, alienation and the oppression of the working class — it was largely confined to the universe of the coal industry and the mining community and should not be idealised as producing a class consciousness that is revolutionary. Although, very little remains of the coal industry today the influence of the distinctive social and economic environment created around the pit and the mining community can still be felt. I, therefore, use the term miners' hegemonic project to represent the political processes which have shaped the practices and the everyday reality of the people in the coal mining communities of the South Wales coalfield. One has to bear in mind, however, that the miners' hegemonic project described here tends to be a localised one which depended on specific historical processes for its emergence.

You can't beat us
The struggle for hegemony in the South Wales coalfield

3

You can't beat us because we've got so much history on our side.
Notes 06/95

On a Sunday in March 1985 a Special Delegate Conference of the NUM decided to call off one of the longest and most bitter strikes in the history of the British coal industry. For the miners of Tower Colliery, who had voted to stay on strike, the narrow vote of the national conference was a bitter disappointment. After 12 months on strike they were still convinced that the strike should have continued until the defeat of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government.

> I watched the conference on a Sunday on TV — and I, honest I cried, I'm honestly — they narrowly voted to go back to work. If the South Wales vote would have been to stay we'd have stayed out. And history tells us that if we had stayed out another month or two or six weeks the government was ready to fall, as far as closures is concerned, and the history proves that [Arthur 04/10/95].

The 1984/85 miners' strike had ended in defeat for the miners and a feeling of bitterness or even betrayal remained. For many of the militant miners in South Wales the defeat had not been inevitable. To them history, the social memory of past struggles, proved that the strike should have continued. Those miners' leaders — from local lodges to the national executive of the union — who gave in to the pressure of the Conservative government were accused of not knowing their history. They had not learned or forgotten the lesson that the endurance of hardship and the unyielding unity of the men and their communities had been a step towards victory in the past.

> We, Tower was demanding it, them to do it, to fight. You gotta fight! If you don't fight they take it one by one all the time, and these lodges would not fight, they would not fight. Looking back they'd been demoralised by the strike right. They didn't understand that we should have gone back to pits and start a guerilla, a guerilla war, right. … There were lessons to be learned from the past when, after the 26 strike — if you read your history, there was victory after '26, from 1926 up until 1939 when coal become important again, there was a bit of power with the union again. There was things that happened in that period there but the Federation [the miners' trade union: South Wales Miners Federation (SWMF)], as it was then, had victories and sit in strikes against scab union, Spencer union [South Wales Miners Industrial Union], that's created in South Wales in one or two pits — there was things that was done.
> Now we — I think perhaps, I obviously, that's right the way Tower is, was different, was — is, because we know our history and some of these people never read history or what I don't know. Or they believed some of the folklore that come by word of mouth on this. I'm reading exactly what went on you know. I'm reading our lodge minutes and so forth — but they — there was ways of winning [Arthur 04/10/95].

The belief that there were "ways of winning" the endless war against capitalist exploitation — not only by the miners but by the working class as a whole and not only in the South

Wales valleys but worldwide — was deeply entrenched in the discourses of the miners'
hegemony within the mining communities of the South Wales coalfield. Although, the
coal industry almost completely disappeared from the face of the valleys the struggle was
not over. However, the economic and social changes of the last 50 years have seriously
undermined the miners' ability to maintain their dominant position in the mining com-
munities. The invocation of a shared experience of victory in the past through (hi)stories
played an increasingly important part in legitimising the power still held by the local elite.
In this particular case a (hi)story was employed to demonstrate that the defeats of the
miners in 1984/85 and in the more distant past were only temporary set-backs and that the
anti-capitalist ethos, deeply rooted in the hegemonic social imagination of past and present,
could not be eradicated.

R.:	So, in the end, Thatcher really succeeded in destroying the NUM.
Arthur:	No, she didn't — she hasn't destroyed the NUM.
R.:	But she destroyed the, you know, the moral basis.
Arthur:	That's right she des… no, but the NUM is still here.
R.:	Yeah, the NUM —
Arthur:	Thatcher is gone. We will rebuild again.
R.:	— but the Tories are still there.
Arthur:	Yes, but you feel —
R.:	That's the problem.
Arthur:	— look at your history. In 1921 we had a hiding, in 1926 we had a hiding and before that we had hidings and went right down, boahm, right. But we returned and we will return again because — capitalist, Thatcher is capitalism — and capitalism is gonna lose in the end. There's no — if it's not the NUM who's gonna take up the fight it'll be some other form of union or political party will take it up because people in this country, at the end of the day, are the same as the whole world — will not allow capitalism to succeed in the end [Arthur 04/10/95].

The history Arthur referred to can be interpreted in terms of a pervasive social imagination
rooted in the practices of the local miners' hegemony. A social imagination (re-)produced
by miners, trade union activists and the people in the mining communities whose social
and physical environment was dominated by the coal industry. The history employed by
Arthur can be understood as the articulation of present day experience with the selective
and fragmented knowledge of orally or textually transmitted experiences of other people in
the past. It is an individual as well as collective practice that transforms the social imagination
of past events into individual and collective memories. Those "[m]emories are produced
out of experience and, in turn, reshape it. This implies that memory is intrinsically linked
to identity" (Lambek & Antze 1996:xii). By projecting one's experiences back in time and
space, present and past, one's own and the experiences of others, were reshaped by the
creation of a link between them. Through this link, past experiences — Arthur linked his
experience of defeat in the 1984/85 strike with the defeats of the miners in 1921 and 1926
— were transformed into personal memories that are key moments of identification. As
Lambek and Antze (1996:xx) pointed out, "the self of memory can be imagined as a player
in the larger narratives of community" — Arthur, for example, imagined himself as a
player in the continuing struggle of socialist trade unionists against capitalism. The social
imagination of the past can be individual in the form of biography, collective in the form

of a shared understanding of the history of a group, as well as 'demotic' (Baumann 1996, see chapter 2) in the sense of not being in tune with the dominant or official historical representations but nevertheless influenced by them (cf. Collard 1989:90). "As a type of discourse on both past and present it can assist in identifying the *meanings* people give to their conditions and social relations…" (Collard 1989:91).

In the former mining communities working class history, in the sense of a collective memory of past struggles, was still part and parcel of identification for many. Individual and/or collective experience was extended back in time. It was thereby turned into a quasi-lived experience which could be located in the embodied self and become a focal point for identification. The emotionally charged articulation of certain events, that happened in the past, in the present created a bond between a social imagination of past experiences (one's own as well as those of others) and a lived experience of the present. Samuel (1986:31) argued that the 1984/85 miners' strike had shown that "[m]iners have a profound sense of kinship with the past and (it could be argued) a mystic belief in oneness over time. To strike was to prove themselves worthy of their ancestors." Although their is little use in creating a 'mystifying' representation of some sort of miners' ancestor worship, Samuel's comment points to an important element in the construction of the pervasive social imagination by miners: the historical continuity, constructed through family and kinship links with the mining industry and the miners' union, as a point of identification.

Bulmer (1978:32-33) believed that the sense of a shared past was fundamental and a general sociological feature of mining communities. The social memories, individual as well as collective, of past struggles against the threat to the community, of strikes, mass unemployment, and pit disasters, created a strong identification with the local hegemony in the present. The bond was also strengthened by the occupational homogeneity and the continuity of shared work experiences within the family — despite the frequent resistance of fathers to their sons' wish to go down the pit, family continuity in mining had been the norm. In their classical sociological study of the Yorkshire mining community Ashton Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter emphasised the importance of the common memories of past struggles for the "conditioning of each miner along the lines of the general values and characteristics of the rest of his community" (Dennis et al. 1956:80).

Whenever the community was under threat, the social imagination of history was consciously invoked in memory and sometimes even publicly re-enacted — as in the case of Tower Colliery. In a region that had once been totally dependent on the coal industry for employment, a threat to the existence of the local colliery was seen as synonymous with a threat to the community. The symbols of the past, such as the flying of the first Red Flag on Hirwaun Common during the Merthyr Rising of 1831 or the Hunger Marches of the unemployed to London in the 1930s, were used by the miners in their fight against the closure of Tower Colliery in 1994. Public performances using these symbols were as much a message of determination to the outside world as an invocation, directed at the community, of the discourse of survival that shaped the representations of shared hardship, the spirit of solidarity and loyalty as well as the memories of victories achieved by the miners and their communities. However, the past could also turn out to be a "double image" (Richards 1996:33). On the one hand it was an image of the positive values of close-knit social networks, close families and comradeship. But on the other hand it was also an image of poverty, a hard life for the family, exploitation and adverse conditions at work. Richards

(1996:33-34) regarded the sense of history in mining communities as a product of adversities and the attempt to overcome them. The social imagination of the past was not only meant to preserve the dignity of the miners but also the motivations which provided the basis for the creation of important community institutions. These motivations were grounded in antagonistic discourses which challenged the dominant ones controlled by employers and the state. Thus, the social imagination of the past was an important factor for the (re-)production and legitimation of a counter-hegemonic project — Francis and Smith (1980:66) called it an "alternative culture" — initiated by previous generations, which had important implications for the mining communities' ability to defend themselves in the present. The so-called "alternative culture" — "alternative" with regard to the discursive space dominated by the bourgeois hegemonic project controlling the state and the capitalist economy — was the result of a social antagonism which led to the creation of a counter-hegemonic project. It was a continuously developing political project which dominated the South Wales coalfield for as long as it was totally dependent on the coal industry. It even retained some of its power after the demise of the coal industry. In times when the number of people who shared the experiences of pit work, the struggles of miners' unions and the community life of a mining community, constantly declined, social memories were crucial for the maintenance of this political project because they provided a focus for shared identifications. These shared identifications were transformed into an ideology of a shared working class identity called the 'consensus'. The 'consensus' was an expression of the persuasiveness of the local hegemony and, at the same time, a practice of applying social pressure to conform on the members of the community. Without the 'consensus' the local hegemony would have lost its persuasiveness and, ultimately, ceased to be hegemonic.

The process of (re-)producing the miners' hegemony within the mining communities depended to a large extent on the social and occupational homogeneity of these communities. Shared experiences of the miners at work, the social life centred on the local miners' welfare club and the shared experiences of family life, under the adverse conditions created by the dominance of the coal industry, were crucial for the identification with the collective constructed as the mining community. However, it is questionable whether the social imagination of the occupationally and socially homogeneous mining community will continue to be meaningful for a generation which, although it grew up in a context dominated by a hegemonic discourse maintained by its parents, cannot recreate it on the basis of its own experiences and everyday practices. The struggle of the miners of Tower Colliery to keep their pit open temporarily revitalised the meanings created through these discourses. But Tower Colliery was the only deep mine still working in the whole South Wales coalfield and in 1995 the life of a very large number of people in the area was dominated by the experience of unemployment. Large-scale and long-term unemployment was nothing new to the mining communities in the valleys but today — in contrast to the 1920s and 1930s — no industrial basis remained which could provide hope for the development of new employment opportunities on a significant scale in the future. In the 1990s the mining communities had once again become unemployed communities and the occupational and social homogeneity of the mining community was history. With the almost total disappearance of the coal industry the unique meaning of pit work, and the social world centred on miners' organisations and institutions was changing. For those few men who still worked in the last deep mine of the Cynon Valley and the large number of former miners, the

social imagination of the past retained its meaning as a working class history, a male history, a history of struggles against exploitation and oppression, a tale of the bravery of men to whom one could look up to. For them it continued to provide focal points for identification. However, the local hegemony and with it the social memories it facilitated was challenged by those members of the former mining 'community' — women, unemployed and the younger generation — who had, up to now, little chance to control it — in fact, they were effectively silenced by it. However, in the context of the perceived threat to the community by chronic unemployment and the still meaningful distinction between *them* — who control and exploit — and *us* — who survive and resist — there was very little room for the development of alternative views challenging a discursive framework legitimised by a comparatively 'glorious past'. Some members of the local elite who controlled the remaining institutions tended to dig in behind the 'traditional' or 'historically' legitimised ideologies and institutions of the mining community. They intended to save their community from the destructive consequences of industrial restructuring and the offensive of the Conservative political project. However, they also wanted to ensure the continuity of the local hegemonic project in order to secure their threatened identities as well as their positions of prestige and power.

The social imagination of the past, transformed into individual and collective memory, provided the focal points for this (hi)story of South Wales and the Cynon Valley. It may appear as a sequence of loosely connected spotlights on various events, however, in the minds of the people I worked with in the field they assume a coherence — a coherence, however, that was shot through with contradictions, ambiguous feelings and discontinuities. It was the symbolic construction of a working class (hi)story they could identify with.

"If you don't give people hope they haven't got a life": the social imagination of survival and resistance

Doing research in South Wales one cannot escape the popular stereotype of the South Wales coalfield as the home of a revolutionary, anti-capitalist working class — either represented as the "enemy within" or as heroes of the class struggle. However, as I have argued in chapter 2, the complex play of meanings and power involved in processes of resistance and domination produces contradictions. A closer look at the historical conditions that influenced the emergence of a working class identity in the South Wales coalfield shows that working class identity was — and still is — constructed in the context of a struggle for political dominance and power.

Francis and Smith (1980:5-7) argued that at the turn of the century the trade union movement and the mining communities in the South Wales coalfield were dominated by an ethos of respectability and conciliation that was rooted in the religious ideologies of Nonconformity. As Strathern (1992:99, reference omitted) pointed out, "Nonconformist moralising of this period developed initially as something of an 'oppositional culture', its face set against the perceived laxness of the gentry". However, this 'oppositional culture' was a product of the bourgeoisie's attempt to secure its own emancipation and power. In the South Wales coalfield — and in Wales in general — the emancipation of the bourgeoisie took a quite particular turn. In Wales dominance was not only perceived as a problem of class difference but also as one of ethnic difference — the upper class was not only

regarded as morally deficient but also as the embodiment of unjust English "colonial" rule. This construction of difference in ethnic terms proved to be inclusive. It provided moments of identification that transcended and obscured class boundaries because the Welsh bourgeoisie and the Welsh working class could be represented as victims of English, upper class dominance. Power and powerlessness were, thus, constructed as an effect of an ethnic power differential. At least until the early twentieth century, the influence of the bourgeoisie articulated through the religious morality of Nonconformism remained persuasive and pervasive enough to ensure the maintenance of a hegemonic 'consensus' which to some extent neutralised the attempts of potentially antagonistic forces within the working class to subvert the religiously legitimised dominant meanings. However, the persuasiveness of Welsh Nonconformism, that had produced a new indigenous Liberal bourgeoisie, was gradually undermined by the agents of a political project that started to develop within the trade union movement. They were increasingly successful in convincing working class people that Nonconformism and Welsh Liberalism were not able to provide answers to the problems of the perpetual crisis produced by exploitation and poverty and the "massive capitalist reorganization into combines and multinational corporations" (Williams 1991:232). As a consequence of these developments the rank-and-file miners became more radical in their outlook and actions than the established union leadership that was adhering to the norms and values constituted by dominant Nonconformist discourse.

The Nonconformist elites in the mining communities perceived these radical political ideas as a threat to the "stable paternalistic social order" (Francis and Smith 1980:12) of the closed Welsh mining community. Even within the emerging trade unions Nonconformist liberals, who rejected the idea of the conflictual model of class struggle, held the key positions. They were crucial for the control of workers through a 'consensus' based on the persuasive — Nonconformist religious — practices. Until the beginning of twentieth century, miners' union leaders in South Wales, such as William Abraham (Mabon), were prominent in religious life and favoured conciliatory attitudes towards the coal owners. They were not opposed to the capitalist market economy but rather to socialist and class-conflict approaches. It was only after the Cambrian Combine Strike in 1910-11 that they were replaced by more radical union men. During the strike it became obvious that the established leadership was alienated from the aggressive demands displayed by the rank-and-file miners because their "whole striving for 'Respectability' was designed to ignore" it (Francis & Smith 1980:13). The growing working class movement was, nevertheless, still profoundly influenced by Welsh Nonconformity. It is not surprising that miners' leaders like Arthur Horner had a strong religious background. Arthur Horner, who became the first Communist president of the SWMF in 1936, had started his career as a Baptist preacher. As a young man he was "desperately conscious of the poverty, the oppression and the injustice" in the coalfield and "saw in religion the hope and the opportunity to do something about it". He tried reconcile Christianity and Socialism before he reached "the point of accepting the materialistic conception of history and the struggle of the working class as the only way to emancipation" (Horner 1960:14).

Nonconformity which had dominated the coalfield until the first World War finally lost the high ground in the 1930s. For Rees (1976:13), who was a Nonconformist minister, "[i]t was the Depression of the 'thirties which thinned the ranks of the adherents in the mining valleys of South Wales." But it was not the economic depression that was responsible for

the continuing loss of persuasiveness of the Nonconformist hegemony. It was actively subverted by the miners' union and the meanings of respectability, masculinity and community were reconstituted through discursive practices of the miners' hegemonic project. Nevertheless, the "paternalistic order" of the valley communities was transformed rather than rendered totally obsolete. The socialist miners' hegemonic project which began to dominate the valley communities after the First World War challenged the established power structure and created alternative centres of power such as the trade union lodge at the pit and the miners' welfare institutes and working men's halls in the communities. The old elite of religious leaders in the communities gradually lost its power to a more politicised elite of trade union men. With regard to respectability, the bourgeois meaning was only partially redefined by adding collectivist moral values and social practices to the canon of respectability. In the process of subverting the meanings of Nonconformist discourse new contradictions were produced. The discourse of socialism retained the connections between respectability, masculinity and survival established by the religiously legitimated attempt to establish alternative meanings to those imposed by dominant "English" capitalism.

Thus, it is not surprising that Christianity and Socialism were perceived as two sides of the same coin, even in the eyes of a staunch socialist miner. However, the relationship between Christianity and Socialism was a contradictory one — and this is still evident in the South Wales mining communities today. Arthur protested when I told him that Rees (1975:184) argued that socialism was imported from England by English immigrants and severed the links between the working class and Welsh Nonconformism. He gave me his version that suggested a continuity of oppositional projects to the capitalist hegemony rather than a radical break between Welsh Nonconformism and the South Walian discourse of socialism.

> I would use — socialism come from the bible, from the religion. That's my personal view. Somebody read the bible, or read, whatever it was, and took it from there. That's my view because — I mean, if you go back in this country, socialism, the Levellers they were a form o' that, we had Owen, that fella Owen — with his — was form of it — they took root, it took root here in the minin' communities first — at that time in the last century. That's, that's when it took root in this country because of the poverty and they were looking for alternatives out of capitalism. And that's, to me, that's what, it took root — and it's such a stronghold in South Wales, more than anywhere [Arthur 04/09/95].

In the South Wales coalfield socialism appeared to be a convincing alternative to a life of poverty and unemployment that was the everyday reality for the miners and their families. The political discourse of socialism rekindled their imagination and gave them hope for a better future. It was, and still is, a persuasive framework for collective identification and political mobilisation.

> … if you don't give people hope they haven't got a life. They — you got to have hope. This is why people, turn — used to turn to religion, years ago, to hope — in the life after death. There's no life after death! The life's here now — the rich, bloody, people put that religion on the earth. The rich people put it there, right! To control you, to control us [Arthur 11/07/95]!

For Arthur the subversion of religious ideologies was inevitable because the hope they offered was a false one, aimed at controlling the working class and perpetuating injustice.

The representation of Christianity shows an important contradiction between the desire for continuity and the urge to develop meanings more in tune with the conception of everyday experience. On the one hand, Welsh Nonconformity was recognised as having produced an oppositional culture to capitalism in the past. On the other hand, it was also seen as part of capitalist practices of domination and an obstacle to the development of a 'real' counter-hegemonic project. This contradiction is part of the inherent conservatism, constituted in the discourses of survival and respectability, of mining community culture. The desire for continuity — generated in the process of transforming past experiences into individual and collective memory in the present — proved to be an obstacle to the radical replacement of meanings imposed by the dominant discourse. The meanings constituted in Nonconformist religious practices continued to be powerful. Nevertheless, after the success of the miners' political project in the South Wales coalfield "hope" and "socialism" became virtually synonymous and contributed to the persuasiveness of the miners' hegemony in the pits and mining communities.

Thus, it is not surprising that for Arthur "history" proves that "capitalism is gonna lose in the end" in spite of the fact that the miners have lost most of the battles against "capitalism" — represented by the coal owners and the state. In 1921 and 1926 the miners in the South Wales coalfield went on strike over massive wage reductions and were forced to return to work after long and bitter disputes. In contrast to Arthur's politically motivated positive turn to the (hi)story one of the men who had experienced the General Strike in 1926 and the following seven months lock-out stressed the frustration and bitterness involved:

> … we was on strike then for 9 months. … Well, right — but we didn't win, we lost, after nine months. — They couldn't do nothing, man! They couldn't do nothing! I mean — you know, we couldn't fight against them — 'cause we were practically down-and-out — after nine months now an' that. The men was glad to go back, although we lost … [Gwyn 03/10/95].

However, the strikes of the 1920s are not just imagined as "traumatic" defeats but, in a process of symbolic reversal, they are also interpreted as powerful demonstrations of the collective ability to survive. Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s many miners and their families had to "battle out the depression" as best as they could and life became a "struggle for bare existence" (Morgan 1988:231). The fact that many miners were unemployed for several years intensified the problem — in 1929 45.6 per cent of the miners in South Wales were unemployed and in some parts of the coalfield over 80 per cent of the men were on the dole (cf. Baber & Thomas 1980:525, 537-38). For many men it was impossible to find work either because no work was available or because of victimisation as a result of the strike in 1926. The experience of being on the dole led to increasing bitterness, depression, and sometimes anger and resentment. Many unemployed men were simply disillusioned with party politics and the inadequate response of the trade union movement to the problems of unemployment.

In the late 1920s, however, the development of a more unified approach to the problem of unemployment by a "united front" of political parties and other political organisations as well as trade unions succeeded in mobilising the unemployed. Large scale protests against changes in unemployment legislation and benefit cuts in the 1930s revitalised the

interest of unemployed miners in politics and their trade union. These protests took the form of "Hunger Marches" and where organised by the "united front" in South Wales and other parts of the UK. By that time the miners' trade union (SWMF) had recovered from the defeat it had suffered in the General Strike. Moreover, its dominant position in the politics and social life of the mining communities had never been seriously threatened because "[t]he totality of the commitment to the miners' cause was a form of class consciousness which translated itself into a community consciousness, so overwhelming were the miners in numbers and influence. It was a collectivist conception which burnt into the collective memory of the whole region …" (Francis & Smith 1980:55). The "slavery" of underground work, the poverty and hardship in the communities, and the humiliating defeats the miners suffered in their struggle against exploitation contributed to the strengthening of identifications with a collective whose most persuasive representation appeared to be the 'working class'. The pervasiveness of this working class identity was the basis for the recovery of the miners' trade union and its ability to mobilise the people in the mining communities in the 1930s — e.g. against the short-lived employer friendly South Wales Miners Industrial Union (SWMIU) and in support of the Spanish Republic.

After the Second World War the nationalisation of the basic industries by the Labour Party in 1947 appeared to be the light at the end of tunnel for most miners. The miners had argued for decades that public ownership would be the only viable solution for the problems of the coal industry. The principle of public ownership of the means of production had already been written into the rule book of the new National Union of Mineworkers in 1945. However, the SWMF, that became the South Wales Area of the NUM in 1945, was out for more. It proposed the complete abolition of capitalism and saw nationalisation only as one step on the stony road to socialism (see Francis & Smith 1980:418 for Arthur Horner's address to the 1944 MFGB Special Conference on Reorganisation). However, changes in the energy market and the return of the Conservatives to power in the 1950s quickly ended the short honeymoon of the nationalised coal industry. This period marked the beginning of the long decline of the coal industry and with it the decline of the miners' political project.

"When a pit dies…": The decline of the coal industry

The pit closures of the 1950s and 1960s had a devastating effect on the morale of the miners and their communities. The memory of hardship in 1920s and 1930s was still very much alive. For the miners there was more at stake than the economic viability of an industry. Pit closures were perceived as a threat to the distinctive culture of the mining communities. This was expressed quite pointedly by the miners' leader Will Paynter in his emotional attack on the narrow minded economic approach to pit closures:

> I wonder sometimes if those who decided policies to precipitate the contraction of the coal industry have any idea as to what a pit closure means to a community built around it. It is the death of a creation that gave the community life and sustained that life no matter how deprived and anguished it might have sometimes been. Closure represents a disaster as poignant and harrowing as a death in the family. For older people it creates a sense of helplessness and hopelessness. No fancy clichés of 'national interest', 'redeployment' and 'mobility of labour' or of 'increased dole payments' by the economists, the politicians or the technocrats can rationalize

out of existence these very real feelings (Paynter 1972:144-145).

Especially for the older miners the closure of a pit meant either transfer to another colliery, taking up other, often lower paid, employment outside the industry, or long-term unemployment. Commuting to a different pit, the loss of the security of long-standing relationships at work, and different working conditions in other collieries could become a psychological problem for the men; particularly those men who were transferred two or more times whenever their new pit was closed down as well — how difficult the adjustment to a new colliery could be for the men was described by Sewel (1975) in his study of the closure of Cefn Coed Colliery in the Dulais Valley in 1968.

While a transfer was almost the only option for older miners, many of the young, skilled miners left the industry to take up less dangerous, financially more rewarding and secure employment in the new factories which had opened in South Wales since the war. In contrast to the period between the wars the government's attempts to encourage a more diversified economic development in South Wales were creating more employment op-portunities outside the coal or steel industry. However, economic development, and with it the population, was steadily drifting away from the coalfield because the main developments took place in the Swansea and Cardiff areas where the locational disadvantages were least and communications with the rest of Britain relatively good. The steel and tinplate industry, modernised in the 1950s and 1960s, and the newly developed car manufacturing industry provided a substantial amount of industrial employment. Employment in the petrochemical, electrical and mechanical engineering, food and drink industries became increasingly im-portant as an alternative to the declining heavy industries. However, the new industries also brought a change in the composition of the workforce. Comparatively well paid, skilled jobs, "traditionally" an almost exclusively male domain, were replaced by unskilled or semi-skilled, low-paid jobs mostly offered to women. (Baber & Dessant 1980:599-613; Manners 1964:61-68; Mainwaring 1990:124-125; Morgan 1988:312-322).

Thus, the diversification of the economy, although it made alternative employment available, did not bring sufficient employment opportunities for those suffering from the decline of the heavy industries. Many miners had no choice but to stay in mining or join the dole queue. Within the coal industry decreasing real wages, the fear of further pit closures and the lack of alternative employment outside the industry created an atmosphere of growing discontent which found its expression in a number of unofficial strikes in the late 1960s. In 1969 the dispute between the NUM and NCB over the 40 hour week for surface workers was accompanied by unofficial strikes stopping production in a large part of the South Wales coalfield.

> It was Tower, it has always been Tower. Tower and Ceibr [Penrhiwceibr] to a certain degree. We were the leaders of the South Wales miners. Always, have been — going back, as far as — I have been a miner for 30 odd years it has always been Tower, has always been, in the forefront of any dispute. The surfacemen's strike was the main one 1969 — where we fought our own national executive over it, on a strike against their, wishes — and won — and have won the wages for the surface men. And I think it was only 5 pits in South Wales, and we had, about 30 odd lodges — or 30 odd mines in South Wales at the time. And only 5 of us did go on strike, we picketed the rest out — it was a nasty dispute. It wasn't very long, it was only a couple of weeks long but it was nasty dispute [Arthur 04/10/95].

The "nastiness" of the dispute was an effect of the confrontation between more militant miners and miners loyal to the union's national leadership that was condemning unofficial action propagated by the militants as a divisive force. The problem of maintaining unity under the threat of further pit closures — and the union executive was cooperating with NCB on the programme for the consolidation of the industry — put a strain on the relationship between the union leaders and the rank-and-file members, as well as the relationships between different coalfields. Nevertheless, the surfacemen's strike was a turning point in the history of industrial relations since nationalisation and a prelude to the miners' victories of 1972 and 1974. The miners, who had grudgingly accepted the need for a considerable number of pit closures in order to ensure the economic survival of their nationalised industry, were no longer willing to bear the burden of pit closures and wage decreases at the same time. The growing discontent of the rank-and-file miners forced the national leadership to rethink its adherence to the post-war consensus and to return to a more forceful, and inherently more controversial, representation of the miners' interests.

The question of decreasing real wages was back on the agenda in 1971 when the NCB offered a wage increase of only 6 per cent because of economic pressures and the NUM demanded a 35 to 47 per cent increase. The national strike called in January 1972 brought the British coal industry to a complete standstill. It disrupted industrial production in the whole country because the miners prevented the delivery of coal from stocks to power stations and the dockers at Newport and Cardiff refused to unload coal ships. As a result of serious power shortages the government was forced to declare a State of Emergency. As the strike continued, the serious disruption of the economy as well as the NCB's inability to finance an acceptable settlement from its own resources made government intervention necessary. As a result of an independent enquiry (the Wilberforce Report) the NUM was able to secure an agreement on almost all of its demands and after seven weeks the miners went back to work (Hughes & Moore 1972:123-144).

In 1972 the miners had achieved a victory. For the first time the long-standing differences in earnings within the industry were almost equalised. Low pay areas such as South Wales received considerably higher wage increases than the better off coalfields in some parts of England (Richards 1996:50, table 2). However, two years later the erosion of the gains from the '72 strike and the Conservative government's strict adherence to its restrictive 'counter-inflation' incomes policy provoked another national strike. After a ballot had produced an overwhelming majority for strike action the government unexpectedly announced a general election for 28th February 1974 which was fought over the miners' strike. When, after 4 weeks of strike and election campaign, a minority Labour government came into power the new Secretary of State for Employment, Michael Foot, negotiated a quick settlement with the NUM restoring the wage adjustment mechanism of the 1972 settlement (Ashworth 1987:329-341).

The events of 1974 were remembered in the mining communities as the first time a Conservative government was defeated by the miners. However, the repercussions of the successful strike were not felt until the next large scale national dispute between the union and a Conservative government. The determination of Margaret Thatcher's government to break the NUM in 1984/85 was interpreted by many miners as revenge for '74.

When Maggie Thatcher then, she started bringing the union down, right, 'cause the mining,

the NUM was the strongest in the country without doubt. They brought Ted Heath's government
down —but having said that they've never ever forgiven the miners for that, never ever forgiven
the miners for that [Peter 02/08/95].

But even under the Labour government, which had settled the 1974 dispute, wage parity
between and within the coalfields was eroded by the NCB's attempt to raise productivity
by introducing an incentive bonus scheme. The Area Incentive Scheme (AIS) was rejected
by the miners in two national ballots in 1974 and 1977. Despite the rejection of the
scheme on the national level several areas were seeking authority from the NUM national
executive to negotiate local incentive schemes. Within two months local incentive schemes
were introduced in almost all areas. As a result, the South Wales miners returned to the
bottom of the miners wage league. The brief period of almost uniform national wage levels
within the industry was over and the new AIS was seriously undermining the potential for
national solidarity on the wages issue (Ashworth 372-373; Richards 1996:50-54).

Thus, by the end of the 1970s the rather more optimistic picture of the future of the coal
industry was fading. Francis and Smith, who published their history of the SWMF in
1980, came to the conclusion that "[t]he next decade could be the most testing period in
the long and turbulent history of the South Wales miners" (Francis & Smith 1980:485).
They could not imagine just how hard and turbulent for the miners and their communities
the next decade would be.

"We spread our wings and then started going out": fighting pit closures in the 1980s

After the election of a Conservative government in 1979 a bitterness and militancy returned
to the coalfield not experienced since the 1920s and 1930s. During the 1980s "the failure
of coal nationalisation to plan an industry effectively and humanely" (Francis 1990:110)
became more than evident. The nationalised industries were soon to become the battleground
for the struggle between the working class movement and the Conservatives. Even before
they came to power the Conservatives, under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, had
already produced strategic reports outlining actions to be taken against potential political
threats to their hegemonic project. In one of the documents, the Ridley Report leaked to
the press in 1978, the coal industry was explicitly targeted:

> The group believes that the most likely battleground will be the coal industry. They would like
> a Thatcher government to: a) build up maximum coal-stocks, particularly in the power stations;
> b) make contingency plans for the import of coal; c) encourage the recruitment of non-union
> lorry drivers by haulage companies to help move the coal where necessary; d) introduce dual
> coal/oil-firing in all power stations as quickly as possible (Beynon & McMylor 1985:35).

Furthermore, the Conservative strategists proposed to refuse benefit payments to strikers
and their families, the prevention of picketing by a mobile police squad and the use of
scabs to cross picket lines (Waddington et al. 1991:7). The report provided a glimpse of
the relentlessness with which the dominant Conservative elite intended to secure its power
and squash the remaining resistance of the trade unions. When, in the 1980s, closure
programme after closure programme was announced by the streamlined NCB it became

obvious that the miners and their union were the prime target of the Conservatives.

Between 1974 and 1979 pit closures and job losses in South Wales had greatly exceeded the national average. Of 48 pits in 1974 only 37 were still in operation in 1979 and 3500 jobs had gone within five years (Richards 1996:87, table 4). Early in 1979 the NCB announced the closure of 10 Welsh pits (Morgan 1988:320). When the plans to close Deep Duffryn in the Cynon Valley were announced they were met with much more resistance within the South Wales coalfield and beyond than most previous pit closure announcements because the pit became the focus for a growing fear about more widespread closures (cf. NUM 1985:12; Allen 1981:304). Until the early 1980s pit closures had almost always remained local affairs and resistance against the closures tended to be confined to the communities directly affected by the imminent loss of jobs. Richards (1996:84-85) argued that the closure of a single pit did not provide a secure foundation on which to build collective resistance. For him the localised nature of protests against pit closures was an expression of the parochialism of the mining communities. Furthermore, the consensus between the NUM and the NCB established in the 1950s that the coal industry had to shrink in order to survive contributed to the lack of enthusiasm in fighting individual pit closures. However, in the 1980s the fear of further closures proved to be well founded because the NCB announced another wave of pit closures in 1981. But this time the whole South Wales coalfield came out on strike and was joined by the miners of threatened pits in other areas. The awareness that the future of the mining communities in the whole coalfield was at stake was spreading and culminated in what Emlyn Williams, the President of the South Wales Area of the NUM called "a demonstration for existence" (Francis 1990:112).

> The miners in south Wales are saying, we are not accepting the dereliction of our mining valleys, we are not allowing our children to go immediately from school into the dole queue. It is time we fought... (Emlyn Williams quoted in Francis 1990:112).

The feeling that not only their economic survival but the very existence of their identities was at stake certainly contributed to the vehemence of the battles fought in the years to come. In 1981 the Thatcher government felt it was not yet ready to take on the still powerful NUM and the closure list was quickly withdrawn (Beynon & McMylor 1985:36). However, what appeared to be a victory for the miners turned out to be only a short delay in the national closure programme. The NCB resorted to the much more effective tactics of closing the pits one by one. Between 1981 and 1982 the majority of the 23 pits named on the 1981 list had been closed but the resistance initiated on the local level in 1981 contributed to the overcoming of "… the parochialism which had traditionally hampered the miners' efforts to resist closures" (Richards 1996:91). During the following three years the tensions between the NUM and the NCB were mounting. The readiness of the rank-and-file miners to fight the NCB over pit closures was increasing — sometimes to the annoyance of the area and national leadership. When the closure of Blaengwrach and Ty Mawr/Lewis Merthyr collieries was announced in February 1983, the 29 miners who staged a stay-down strike at Ty Mawr/Lewis Merthyr colliery were almost immediately joined by the miners in seven neighbouring pits. The South Wales Area NUM called a strike ballot and by the end of February the whole coalfield was out on strike. From South

Wales the strike spread to other areas and the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the NUM finally decided to call a nationwide ballot. In the ballot 69 per cent voted against supporting the South Wales miners in their effort to prevent the closure of the two pits (Richards 1996:94) which caused a lot of bitterness among the South Wales miners. The events of 1983 had shown once again how divisive the issue of pit closures could be for the NUM if the pits were closed one by one.

After the Conservatives had won the general election in June 1983 the NCB announced another closure programme aimed at reducing the workforce by approximately 65,000 men until 1988. They provoked the NUM even further by appointing the known hard-liner Ian MacGregor as the new NCB chairman in September 1983. Consequently, the tensions between the NUM, the NCB and the government reached a breaking point. After the NCB refused the NUM's demand for a substantial pay increase the union imposed a nationwide overtime ban from the end of October which the NCB intended to break. A number of clashes at the local level in the Yorkshire coalfield marked the overture to the longest and most bitterly fought disputes since 1926. Even though the Yorkshire area was officially on strike from the 9th March 1984 most of the other areas were still reluctant to follow. Even in South Wales only 10 of 28 lodges voted for the strike in pithead ballots. The reluctance of a considerable number of miners in South Wales to join a strike over pit closures in Yorkshire was due to the events in 1983. The men still resented the lack of support given to them by other areas when South Wales had fought against pit closures in the previous year. But those lodges who voted in favour of the strike quickly set up picket lines at the pits that voted against it. Although the picketing led to conflicts between the supporters and opposers of the strike, within a week the whole coalfield was at a standstill (Richards 1996:96-103). "It is important to note, moreover, that from such initial misgivings emerged an intense loyalty to the national strike that was to remain unsurpassed by any other area in the British coalfield" (Richards 1996:103). Furthermore, it was remarkable that a strike that was not fought over wage issues but over the potentially divisive issue of pit closures finally commanded such a high degree of loyalty on the part of the rank-and-file miners in South Wales.

Arthur: Well, obviously the strike in 1984 started in March, obviously. The build up to it was goin' on for about three years previously with some wild-cat strikes and so forth. And, I think it was 1982, we had a strike, oh '83 sorry, we had a strike — when Thatcher did the so-called U-turn and she, when she was going to permit pit closures. She's — we talked more or less to a body, there was so much fight left in us at the time that she was frightened then. She realised that she'd have to prepare a lot more and she did, looking back in retrospect then, right. I mean, at the time we — ah — what we wanted, the South Wales miners wanted to carry on the strike until we, we just defeated the Conservative Party 'cause we realised they will come back again onto us on a later date. So it was, all it was, there was a pit up in Yorkshire, I can't remember the name of the pit now. And they went on strike. And I think it was, we had met on this, Tower lodge committee met and the lodge — we decided that we would have to picket some of the South Wales pits out. We knew there was about 5 to 6 pits that were as strong as Tower. So we phoned them and met their — two, three of the representatives of their lodge in the Ambulance Hall in Hirwaun on the Sunday morning. We decided what, we split the pits that was left in South Wales between. So we decided to call out a general meeting on the Sunday night — which we've done — where all the men

were present 'cause in thi… you, you could feel the atmosphere at the time, you knew, you knew what was happenin'. We had a full a general meeting and we decided to go on strike by a vote of hands, a show of hands. Under some rules you could go into it with a union vote. So, we decided to send pickets the following morning. And we sent like 300, 400 pickets out on that Monday morning and we covered about ah, I think it was nine or ten collieries, Tower did, that morning. We had the most pickets out on the road out of all the collieries. And we go on, stopped within 2 days, or whatever it is, every pit in South Wales we stopped. Then we decided to go out into Nottingham and places like that — ah — it's North Wales, places like that, it's only, we spread, we spread our wings and then started going out and so forth. That's, that's what I feel when the strike started.

R.:   That was in '83?

Arthur: No '84, that was '84.

R.:   That was '84, yeah.

Arthur: That's how Tower initially — 'cause we started the ball going in South Wales. 'cause Yorkshire had called for strike, right. And they called for assistance of all the other areas. Ah, they would be un… some in South Wales wouldn't call for strike because the previous year it took Yorkshire a fortnight to come on strike when we was on strike over pit closure, you know, and the rest of it and so forth, right. And they had the, oh we're not goin' on strike if they're not goin' on strike with us caper — ahm — which is crazy, I mean — the reason why they didn't call for strike is that the National Executive had decided — that we will — in 1983 we'll go on strike at such and such a date — and the South Wales miners jumped the gun. They were out 2 weeks before everybody else and so, Yorkshire called on a Monday for a day or two in '83, and this is why Thatcher had done the U-turn. So I think the South Wales miners although we had jumped the gun, we had done the right thing in a sense. The only problem was that the National Executive at the time and the Area Executive made us go back to work. We wanted to have it in writing and a proper coal policy. And of course — oh, we speak with Thatcher and all this bloody nonsense. And the rank-and-file realised, especially the activists, we realised that it was a load of rubbish, that we hadn't defeated her. That's all she's done is take a step backward and to prepare for —

R.:   The next —

Arthur: — next — thought it before. Anybody who understands politics or the Conservatives should realise that, you know: if you got them down, you gotta keep them down. Never let them get back up. And that's what happened in '83, you know [Arthur 04/10/95].

In the mid-1980s a direct confrontation between the Conservative government and the NUM seemed to become unavoidable. However, the divisive issue of pit closures and the difficult transformation from the truce of the post-war politics of consensus to the return of open 'warfare' between the unions and the government also became an internal problem for the NUM. The different perspectives of the union officials, on the area and the national level, as well as those of militant lodge officials and rank-and-file miners, the differences in traditions and political views between the areas and the political changes within the Labour Party had a lasting effect on the politics of the NUM. It was the influence of the activists on the local level which convinced the rank-and-file miners to go on strike despite the fact that their actions could start a conflict with the area executive. For the activists in a number of militant South Walian lodges any attempt at appeasement on the part of the union "was a load of rubbish" (Arthur). They believed that the Conservatives had only postponed their closure plans — Thatcher's so-called U-turn — because they

were not ready to confront the still powerful NUM. The militant lodges in South Wales "jumped the gun" and their leadership felt that it was their right to do so. Consequently, the local activists saw themselves as the vanguard of the working class movement. They believed that their assessment of the politics involved, especially those of the Conservative Party, were more realistic than that of union officials on the regional and national level. As demotic intellectuals they knew how to create an emotionally charged atmosphere that was conducive to the mobilisation of the rank-and-file miners. For many miners voting for strike action was not an easy decision. A strike was the last resort because it brought a severe disruption of daily life. Furthermore, the positive outcome of a strike was far from certain and nobody could be sure if the loss of wages, the accumulation of debts and the psychological strain for the strikers and their families could be made up. As Samuel (1986:7) pointed out "…miners are not a peculiar species-being. They are not less attached to material comforts than the rest of us, and they don't take more easily to being poor." Although the dominant representation of South Wales miners — generated within the communities and imposed from the outside by the dominant discourse — constructs them as being a 'militant lot' intent on fighting the capitalist system, the average miner, however, seemed to have had other priorities in life than the class struggle.

> Everybody's got to live! And the average man — I don't get oh, throughout the world, the average man don't want strikes, he don't want nothing. That's all he wants is to fetch his wage packet home on a Friday, put it on the table over there, fill the food cupboard and have a couple of it left for enjoyment [Dai 06/07/95].

Nevertheless, the persuasiveness of the local hegemony was still strong enough to ensure the compliance of the majority of the miners once strike action had been initiated by the local leadership. It is not surprising that Samuel (1986:22) came to the conclusion that the "animating spirit" of the 1984/85 strike was a "radical conservatism", which meant that "[j]ob security, personal dignity were, on the miners' side, the issues at stake in the strike; family, hearth and home among the most potent of its mobilising appeals; 'old fashioned' values its continual point of reference" (Samuel 1986:23). However, it probably was the same "radical conservatism" that led to the break-away of the Nottinghamshire Area of the NUM. The Nottinghamshire miners did not join the strike because the National Executive of the NUM refused to hold a national ballot. Instead they established the Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) that was considered to be a 'scab union' by most miners loyal to the NUM.

Thus, a certain reluctance of the rank-and-file miners had to be overcome and the trade union activists used the growing feelings of anger and fear, which were an effect of the threat to the identity of the people in the mining communities posed by the loss of their jobs, to mobilise the men. In addition to that they relied heavily on the salience of the "consensus" among the men created through the discursive practices of the miners' hegemony on the local level. They appealed to the shared experience of mutual trust in the abilities and integrity, and loyalty of the men on the team that was crucial for the survival of the potentially dangerous work underground. Honesty, loyalty and solidarity were key values constituted by the hegemonic discourses of survival, respectability and masculinity, at work and in the community.

But with the mining industry, I do, I'd say, I haven't that much experience in outside industries, but with the mining industry there's, you know, comradeship. There's no unity, anywhere in the world, in any industry it could be, wherever you're coming in, like it is in the mining industry 'cause you all rely on one another. Like the union helped today up in Hirwaun, you don't have to worry about me, that's it, that's the way of the mining village… [Peter 02/08/95].

The adherence to the "consensus", as a morally legitimised discursive practice, was inextricably connected to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity. Informal groups of men were a key to the success of the miners' hegemonic project and its articulation through the "consensus" because they provided a focus for collective identifications and a space where deeply rooted feelings of emotional attachment or belonging could develop. The close relationships between men in the teams working underground and the informal groups in the community provided a basis for the feeling that the local leadership could be trusted to lead the men in a direction that was in their best interest, as one of the Tower miners explained:

It was an active pit and it was always in — on the front line. We've always been in the front line 'cause we always had a strong lodge in Tower, always been a strong lodge, and always lead the men — the right way. They didn't tell the men no lies. They were tellin' the men the truth, that was that then [Emrys & Sarah 11/10/95].

The union activists or demotic intellectuals on the local level were the key to the continuity of the miners' hegemonic project. The power of the NUM in South Wales was totally dependent on the local lodges at each of the pits. However, this also meant that the local lodges could act on their own assessment of the political situation, which they often did. The area and the national executive of the NUM was often confronted with the fact that a local initiative for strike action was quickly spreading throughout the South Wales coalfield when militant activists called on the other lodges to honour their moral obligations to act in solidarity as miners and members of the working class movement. Nevertheless, only 10 of the 28 pits had voted to go on strike in 1984. This was not only perplexing, considering the militancy and vulnerability to closure of the pits in the South Wales coalfield, it could have endangered the success of the national strike (cf. Richards 1996:102). However, in the militant pits like Tower Colliery, the activists were aware that the confrontation of the miners with the government would end in utter defeat if the opposition to the strike could not be overcome. They "spread their wings", as one of the activists from Tower Colliery (Arthur) put it, extending their physical presence to cover the coalfield and other regions. It was a show of strength to the government, the union leadership and the reluctant miners at the other pits. It worked because it was an appeal to the moral integrity and the loyalty to the collective felt by the miners working in the collieries that had voted against strike action. The physical presence of pickets at the pit gates effectively stopped the miners from working because, as a miner from one of the pits that was picketed out told Richards (1996:103), "… we recognised that if there was one picket outside a gate … that our loyalty to that person … whether right or wrong … we would never cross a picket line." Allen argued that "there are strong compelling pressures on workers to close their ranks during periods of conflict" (Allen 1981:182) and that in a strike situation "solidarity is sought by compulsion as well as persuasion; it is enforced if it does not come voluntarily" (Allen

1981:181). Those who refused to conform were punished by ostracism, humiliation and sometimes even physical attacks. For some miners fear may have played an important part in their decision to go on strike because crossing a picket line would have turned them into scabs. They knew that as scabs they would be socially ostracised not only for the duration of the strike but for the rest of their lives — not only at work but also in their communities. Even ten years after the strike scabs were still talked about with contempt — a fact that was also observed by Richards (1996:164-165).

> The men talked about Sam from a neighbouring estate who was a scab during the strike. He used to go up there and work at night, they said. But Arthur, Phil and John could not agree if he was working at Tower or somewhere else. Arthur said that he was working at Tower in the washery and that he had never been a member of the NUM. John said that someone had made a point of picketing in front of his house when Sam wanted to go out for a game of darts in the club. John, 'I pass him without saying a word', and Phil added, 'I wouldn't say a word to him' [Notes 23/09/95].

Margaret Thatcher and 'The Last Crusade'

The appeal to the collectively shared moral values of the miners and the implicit threat of sanctions against scabs was successful in overcoming the initial resistance against the strike — except for the Nottinghamshire Area. Furthermore, the government's radical strategy and the demonisation of the miners unintentionally contributed to the strengthening of loyalty and solidarity among the miners. A few months into the strike, in the summer of 1984, Margaret Thatcher openly declared war to the NUM by comparing the struggle against the striking miners with the Falkland war. She branded the NUM as "… 'the enemy within, which is much more difficult to fight and more dangerous to liberty'" (Thatcher quoted in Milne 1995:26) than the Argentinians. The miners were demonised as a threat to liberty, democracy and individual freedom because they were, for a number of reasons, the most serious obstacle to the further consolidation of the Conservatives' power.

First of all the government was afraid that in case of a confrontation the miners could succeed in cutting off the coal supply to Britain's power stations and thereby bring the whole country to a standstill. An acute shortage of electricity would either force the government to negotiate or end in another humiliating defeat like the one in 1974 — which was the Conservative's worst case scenario. Thus, "… the overriding aim of the British government's entire energy policy from 1979 onwards was to destroy for ever the power-base of the National Union of Mineworkers and exorcise the Tory nightmares of the early 1970s" (Milne 1995:10).

Secondly, the social imagination of the miners' strikes of the past provided important symbols the people in the mining communities could identify with. A particularly powerful symbol was the Conservative Party which was 'othered' as the traditional foe of the miners. During the strike "a lot of miners were politicized — [the strike] reminded them what our forefathers went through … and what a Tory Government is all about" (Richards 1996:168). But the social imagination of past strikes also informed the articulations of collective identity within the Conservative 'community', as Schwarz (1985:47) has so pointedly de-scribed: "The imagined, mythological history depends less on an unencumbered chronology than on the epic moments of danger and trauma when the very existence of cherished

values seemed most in peril. 1926, 1972 and 1974 can form the backbone of this history too. Out of this evocation of the past arises a very particular demonology in which the miners play the leading part."

Thirdly, the socialist hegemonic projects fostered by militant trade unionists which dominated the discursive space of many mining communities threatened the pervasiveness of the discourses legitimating the power of those dominating the distribution of power and resources in capitalist society. During the area of Thatcherism a political discourse gained prominence that privileged the individual over society. It emphasised individual responsibility, the merits of the free market economy and at the same time denied the collective responsibility of the state. The Conservatives' anti-collectivist crusade found its most poignant expression in Margaret Thatcher's notorious statement of 1987: "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families" (quoted in Strathern 1992:144). Margaret Thatcher's negation of the relevance of a collective and a social dimension beyond the nuclear family can be interpreted as the attempt of the ruling bourgeoisie to regain the power to define which had been undermined by the (socialist) discourse of collective responsibility and social justice. It was a discourse that gained considerable influence in British society after the war — the nationalisation of the coal and steel industries or the implementation of a National Health Service, for example, were important symbols of the collective responsibility of the state. The rhetoric of individualism was an attempt to regain control over the definition of meanings of crucial signifiers so that they could be appropriated by the hegemonic project of the Conservatives. Social justice and collective responsibility were presented as values of the past and whoever held them up was either standing in the way of progress or a 'born loser' who did not know better. Solidarity and loyalty to a collective were presented as out-dated virtues obstructing the free play of allegedly beneficiary market forces. Paradoxically, the 'new' meanings advocated by the Conservatives were constructed with reference to the 'old' values of Victorian society (cf. Samuel 1986:5) in a process of selective imagination. The Conservatives' notion of popular capitalism was a pursuit of possessive individualism which implied that individuals participate in the new order through atomised consumption of material goods, benefits and values (Jessop et al. 1988:177).

The 'war' against the National Union of Mineworkers was an example for the ruthlessness of the Conservative political elite in the struggle to create a new order it could dominate. The fact that a significant number of miners and officials — particularly their President Arthur Scargill, who was singled out as the henchman of the empire of darkness by the Tories (cf. Milne 1995, Samuel 1986) — within the NUM adhered to a socialist concept of society with its emphasis on the collective and a concept of social justice which implied the collective responsibility of the state was seen as a threat to the power of the dominant political circles. Its hegemonic position on the local level in some of the coal mining areas — at work and in the communities — was considered to be an obstacle to the successful implementation of Conservative discursive practices and, therefore, threatening the pervasiveness of the hegemonic project of the Tories. The miners' strike of 1984/85 created a situation that represented a potential threat for the balance of power in the political arena — a balance that had shifted to the advantage of the Conservative Party. The political dominance of Conservative ideology was also strengthened by the developments within the Labour Party where the 'modernisers' were abandoning the anti-capitalist political

project. They tried to reconcile the party with the dominant discourse in an attempt to capture the votes of the growing middle class. In a situation in which the persuasiveness of the ideology of the capitalist market-economy began to have an effect on the opposition conceding defeat to the NUM was totally out of the question. The development of the Conservatives' hegemonic project depended on the negation of radical oppositional discourses maintained by militant trade unionists who refused to fall prey to the persuasiveness of the dominant discourse. A victory for the miners would have threatened the political survival of the Conservative Government because it would have strengthened the position of the radical opposition within the unions and the Labour Party.

The frequent employment of metaphors of war by both parties to the dispute shows quite clearly that more was at stake than mere political strategies. The dispute was affectively charged to such a high degree because socio-political projects for hegemony involved were inextricably bound up with collective as well as individual processes of identification; or as Samuel (1986:27) put it: "The miners were defending their work not only as a source of livelihood but also as a dignity and a resource, a title to collective identity." Furthermore, the government's massive use of force against the picketing miners and the surveillance operations in the mining communities became part of the physical and psychological experience of many miners and their supporters. The physical reality of the massive police presence in the coalfields, the feeling of being under siege and the negative coverage of the picket line skirmishes between miners, supporters and the police by the media helped to maintain unity and solidarity in the mining communities.

A particular feature of the 1984/85 miners' strike was the overwhelming support it received not only in the mining communities and from the left throughout the country but also from those disillusioned with the Conservative government. For the miners the support they had received during the strike was "marvellous". Although support was coming from all kinds of people and organisations the local communities had to bear the brunt of the burden. The working men's club on the estate became a food centre for the distribution of food donated to the miners and their families. The food centre was run by a committee headed by the chairman (Peter) and the vice-chairman (Dai) of the club and a "women's strike committee" (the role of the women during the strike will be discussed in chapter 7). Men and women developed a new way of working together for a common cause but the involvement of women in the public and political sphere also provoked quite a number of conflicts.

Nevertheless, the activities of the women also united the people in the mining communities across the divisions imposed by the maintenance of 'traditional' gender relations and made new forms of communal action possible. For Richards (1996:149) the strike and the development of a support movement around it represented a shift to a new form of struggle because "an industrial dispute was transformed into a communal act." Although this has been the case in many mining communities even in the South Wales coalfield, that was 'known' for the closeness of its mining communities, the support for the miners was not always "marvellous". Quite a few myths were created about the support the miners received during the 1984/85 miners' strike. While the estate was represented as one of those places where the support was "marvellous", one of the activists in the women's support groups, living in the next village and married to a Tower miner, voiced a different opinion about the amount of backing the miners received in her village.

Susan: I mean, there were one or two shops here that, you know, would give what they could. But I wouldn't say on the whole that Hirwaun supported the miners. I mean you can make it into a fairy tale or you can tell the truth and I — and it, there was not the support that I saw in other villages, in Hirwaun … I mean, I have heard these wonderful stories about the village during the strike but —

R.:   There's quite a lot of them around, yeah.

Susan: Well, I just don't know where it was then! You know, people say, oh yes, you know — and you know, I —

R.:   I think it was ah … different in different places.

Susan: Different places there was good community spirit but — oh, it wasn't here! I mean, we had factories on the estate and things. I never known them to collect and such for the miners, you know. I mean, there was contribution given of unions. But I didn't see factories say, oh, this is for the miners. It, you know, it surprised me. It didn't at the time because there was so much going on, you weren't but sitting and reflecting and, I done a lot of, there's been a lot of this year particularly, people have been doing university papers on the miners strike and the women's movement. There's been a lot of it! And sitting down with other people from other areas even 11 years later I still find there was no community spirit in this village. Although the myth is that it was [Susan 02/08/95].

In the light of the huge amount of support the miners received from outside the mining communities the difficulties in mobilising people in one of the 'traditional' mining communities were indeed disappointing to those involved in the local support groups. What seemed to be particularly disappointing for Susan was that some people did not seem to care about what happened to the miners. In a community perceived as a 'traditional' mining community — it "has always been a great thing" with the local pit — the apparent loss of persuasiveness of the discourse of survival (see chapter 5) had been almost unthinkable until the reality of change became obvious during the strike. Although the strike revitalised the discourse of survival the differences in the level of support between the mining communities in the valleys show that the miners' hegemony had lost part of its hold over the people when its industrial and trade union base was eliminated. It was evident how important the local pit had been in shaping the collective consciousness of the mining communities. Most villages had lost their local pit long ago and their occupational structure was far less homogeneous than it had been before the war; most of them could hardly be called mining communities any more. As the strike began in 1984 only 2300 men (c. 7.2 per cent of the male population of the Cynon Valley was working in three pits) were still employed in the mining industry (Cynon Valley Profile Scheme 1989:20, Welsh Office 1984:185).

  For the majority of people living in the South Wales coalfield in the 1990s mining was more part of the individual and collective social imagination of the past than a lived experience. However, there were few people living in the valleys of the former coalfield who did not have a family connection to the mining industry. The experience of being dependent on the coal industry, and the hardship this dependency produced, was very much part of family memories and individual and collective self-images. The 1984/85 strike proved that these images were still very powerful and could be used to mobilise the people living in the coalfield in times of crises. However, Waddington et al. (1991:167) argued that the reaction to the strike in the mining communities was not simply a re-invocation of a traditional image of community but rather a rediscovery of its image and, therefore, "a remaking of community." In some locations the experience of the strike and the active

involvement in collective action gave the discourse of survival, as a crucial practice of articulating collective identity as community, a new lease of life. Despite the fact that the strike ended in defeat for the miners it was also a celebration of the mining communities' ability to survive extreme hardship by mobilising feelings of belonging which bound individuals to the collective through practices of solidarity.

> It united everybody — it made the women more active — now, I think, it's a hell of a job for the woman not to be active like because, you know, they got so deeply involved, you see, so much hardship they have — you can't make up, the kids, you know, and no wages for 12 months. It's very, very hard, like. I've seen the expression on the boys coming here, they're not boys, men, coming here after six, seven months you could see a strain on their faces, you know. And of course that did go on, there was more of a strain at the end. We delivered the food parcels here and no one went without a food parcel [Peter 02/08/95].

Considering the changes that continuously undermined the 'counter-culture' of the mining communities in the valleys and the hardship the miners and their families had to endure it is remarkable how long unity and solidarity were maintained. The fact that the women got involved in the strike in ways that were novel to them contributed to the resilience of the strike movement. It made collective identifications possible which had hitherto not been accessible to women. But the strike also created a crisis in gender relations in the mining communities. Miners, like Emrys, whose wives were working during the strike, had to come to terms with the fact their wives assumed the 'role of the breadwinner' — and this posed at least an implicit and temporary challenge to their understanding of gender relations. However, in times of crisis the local hegemony was flexible enough to tolerate a temporary suspension of male dominance if it would enhance the chances for survival.

Sarah:	When I was working full time, then, wasn't I.
Emrys:	Hm.
Sarah:	And so every week then … now of course his father had only just died. It was, he wasn't having no money from anywhere. His mother was only having a pension. So, then I give him £25, 'cause we were saving. We were getting married the following year. So, I give him £25 a week and we go out, and one night somewhere. 'cause that's all, you know, you want go out and have a couple of drinks and a game of bingo, you saw him go, right.
R.:	I mean, wasn't that strange, not to earn your own money?
Emrys:	Oh aye, [laughing] it was, aye! Very strange!
R.:	Aye, that's …
Emrys:	Yeah. But we survived, see Rich [Emrys & Sarah 11/10/95].

The miners and their families managed to survive but when the national executive of the NUM decided to call off the strike in March 1985 they were left with ambivalent feelings about the dispute. On the one hand, they were relieved that the hardship was over and that they had survived 13 months on very little money but, on the other hand, they also felt bitterness and anger about the way the strike had ended without a positive result for the miners. They realised that they were defeated by the government and that the pit closures they had fought against would surely come. They were not only impoverished but demoralised as well.

However, demoralisation was not only the result of the failure to stop pit closures. The

militant 'activists' felt that they had been betrayed by certain influential circles within the Labour Party who collaborated with certain officials of their own union. Some of them argued that these officials were responsible for the defeat of the miners because they were only interested in their own political careers. Dai was convinced that it had been a mistake to call off the strike and that people like Kim Howells were to blame for the defeat of the miners (Notes 08/08/95). Kim Howells, who was a research officer for the South Wales Area NUM at Pontypridd and its press spokesman during the strike, grew up on the estate. Whenever his name was mentioned the atmosphere changed and the conversation was suddenly dominated by extremely negative emotional outbreaks. Arthur accused him of having stabbed the union in the back during the miners' strike. Both he and Peter saw him as one of those working class people who "forgot their roots" (Notes 28/07/95, 01/09/95). One reason for these rather drastic comments about Kim Howells was the feeling that he disregarded the moral obligations of masculine loyalty to the collective (the community, the union and the working class). What enraged the militant miners on the estate was his involvement in the attempts to end the strike orchestrated by the Labour Party leadership early in 1985.

>*Arthur:*   Kim Howells was the one that organised the meeting in Llanwonno on New Year's Day where a number of prominent NUM members from all over the coalfield attended. Some executive members of the South Wales area. I tend to think that — though Kim was there organising that meeting or seemed to be organising that meeting it come from higher up then. It could well have been Kinnock. It seems to be — 'cause we've found out since that it, this type of meeting didn't only go on in South Wales, they went on in nearly every area, coal area in the country. So it is — some national form of committee then that set it up. And this is why we think it was the Labour Party and Neil Kinnock.
>   …
>*R.:*   Was it shortly after that meeting that the decision was taken to go back to work?
>*Arthur:*   No, this was on January the 1st — New Year's Day. It was in March — was it March the 6th, March the 6th they decided to go back to work. In a conference in Porthcawl — all full lodge meetin' — all full lodges went down to this conference. And even there, at Tower on that morning before we went there, we had a meeting with the full workforce. And the workforce voted to stay on strike. And we voted in the conference to stay on the strike. Mardy voted to go back to work. We was told in conference by the Mardy official that we hadn't got… if we didn't go back to work within the next week there will be mass return to work by the Mardy men within a fortnight [Arthur 04/10/95].

Apparently, the decision to end the strike followed a similar pattern as the attempts to start it but this time the pressure was put on the militants who were reluctant to concede defeat to a Conservative government. After almost a year of relatively unquestioned unity the conflicts between the local lodges in the South Wales coalfield re-emerged. Samuel (1986:21) argued that the decision to return to work was made on the local level "— South Wales in particular — and then imposed on a reluctant national leadership." Nevertheless, as Arthur's story shows, the situation was not as clear-cut as Samuel suggested. The fact that there was a split between moderate and perhaps even demoralised lodges — including Mardy lodge which had a reputation as a traditionally militant lodge — who believed that it was impossible to continue the strike and the militant lodges, like Tower lodge, who were arguing for a

continuation of strike action weakened the resolve of the miners as a whole. The militant activists knew that if one pit returned to work others would soon follow and force the militant pits to give up the fight.

In this struggle Kim Howells was instrumental to the Labour leadership's successful attempt to sway the opinion of the miners towards ending the strike without a settlement. Kim Howells "became the first NUM employee — if a rather lowly one — to break ranks and publicly float the idea of a return to work without a settlement in the final months of the 1984-5 strike" (Milne 1995:278). Milne (1995:281) made it quite clear that the reason for Kim Howells's rise within the Labour Party was indeed the backing he received from Neil Kinnock (the then Labour leader) whom he had served so well by openly criticising the NUM's president Arthur Scargill during the strike.

The party political establishment on the national, regional and local level followed a different agenda than the miners and their union on the local level. While the union activists still adhered to the moral prescriptions constituted by the discourse of survival which ensured loyalty, unity and solidarity in the pits and the communities, some of those who had moved up in the party political hierarchies were engaged in the (re-)production of a different discourse. The potential conflicts between the 'grass-roots' politics of the demotic intellectuals, the union activists, and the politics of those performing in the party political arena were manifest on the estate itself. James, a former Labour Party councillor, held a rather different view of the political implications of the strike. He was convinced that the strike could never have been won by the miners.

> *James:* … now, I won't be popular by saying this but I would hold the then leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers equally as responsible […] for the demise of the coal industry because its then and present leader Arthur Scargill, you know what I'm referring to, was determined to have a show down with government and which of course was led by Margaret Thatcher. […]
>
> *R.:* They didn't have a choice! They could either make a stand or —
>
> *James:* They could make a stand knowing full well from the outset that there was no way that the government were going to submit to their demands. And it was an issue of the then Tory government fighting the NUM. Now as you probably recall — now, the miners' strike lasted over a 12 months. Now before that 12 months had reached its half way period — well, miners who had been employed in the coal industry up to the commencement of the strike were convinced that things were going their way to such an extent that the strike would only last a couple of weeks, couple more weeks before the NUM would win the day, as it were. And my reply to this particular individual was, never in your life and I mention his Christian name, Dai … But my reply to him was that rather than concede defeat to the NUM — Margaret Thatcher was so determined that she would bring this country to its knees prior to conceding defeat to Arthur Scargill, and the events have proved that. But eventually the NUM had to virtually forget all about their industrial action and get back to work. And of course having stood up to the NUM, which was all powerful up to that day, now, the then Tory government and — well, I, we've suffered them for 17 or 18 years, through our own damn silly fault. I'll be perfectly honest and frank with you [James 06/09/95].

Apparently, the leadership of the Labour Party now saw the miners' hegemony at the local level as an obstacle on its way to power in Westminster. The activist miners of the militant pits, however, still believed in the salience of the socialist (miners') hegemonic project that

was to some extent revitalised by the strike. James's comment about the miners' responsibility for the continuity of Conservative rule points to an important problem in the relationship between the miners from militant areas and the Labour Party. In the 1980s the dis-identification of the Labour Party leadership with the socialist hegemonic project alienated the militant miners because it threatened their identity as well as their power. The Labour Party was now often perceived as being openly engaged in the (re-)production of the capitalist system. The way in which the Labour Party had exerted pressure on the NUM to end the strike was an eye opener for many miners. They realised that some of the people who presented themselves as sharing the same political commitments and values were in fact involved in the (re-)production a different political project. The events of 1984/85 made it obvious that the concept of socialism they believed in was no longer part of the political project the Labour Party was representing.

> … I mean, if you want a Tory government, vote for Tony, vote for Blair. Because Blair is a Tory, see! I mean, it's like me then, right. I've always been brought up with a socialist family, always vote Labour, right, but Tony Blair was fetched up in a Tory family! So, you know, I mean — it's like — it's your neighbour come in here and there was a two pound bag of sugar on that table and I said, 'oh, I've run out of sugar', you'd give him half of it. Tony Blair wouldn't do that! Neil Kinnock never done that. Have a look at Neil Kinnock. Where is he today? He gained — the Labour — his wife and his son out in Europe, a million pound a year. Is that socialism? That's not socialism! [Dai 06/07/95].

The local concept of socialism was inextricably connected to the discourse of survival and their experiences of collective action at work and in the community. Socialism was a hegemonic model for everyday practices of loyalty and solidarity and, thus, part and parcel of collective as well as individual identifications. That Tony Blair was characterised as a Tory, a Conservative, who would not share with those in need showed the alienation of the rank-and-file members on the local level from the political elite of the Labour Party. The critique of Labour Party leadership was a symbolic expression of the growing alienation of the working class movement from the Labour Party. As a result of the economic and political changes between 1985 and 1995 the distrust of politicians was growing and the interest and involvement in politics was declining. Furthermore, the move of the 'new' Labour Party towards the acceptance of market-oriented capitalism increased the feeling of powerlessness associated with the decline of the miners' hegemonic project.

Eternal Vigilance…: The Last Deep Mine in South Wales

Between 1985 and 1995 the worst nightmares of the miners became reality. The NCB employed an increasingly radical approach towards the union and industrial relations in the coal industry were deteriorating rapidly. The post-war system of consultation and co-operation was demolished by management. "If, however, a harsher working environment had not already reawakened dark memories in the coalfields of the interwar period, then the second major manifestation of increased management power could not have failed to do so" (Richards 1996:210). The pit closure programmes were implemented and all the remaining pits in South Wales were closed within ten years after the miners' strike. To some extent the Conservative government had succeeded in weakening the resolve of the

NUM as well as breaking the resistance of the rank-and-file miners. Although some of the militant lodges were still arguing for a more coordinated action against pit closures the majority seemed to be thoroughly demoralised by the defeat of 1985. However, the militant activists in some of the remaining union lodges in the coalfield refused to give up the fight for their industry because they believed that the "war" could still be won.

> We, Tower was demanding it, them to do it, to fight. You gotta fight! If you don't fight they take it one by one all the time, and these lodges would not fight, they would not fight. Looking back they'd been demoralised by the strike right. They didn't understand that we should have gone back to the pits and start a guerilla, a guerilla war, right [Arthur 04/10/95].

Activists, like Arthur, refused to submit to what they perceived to be an unjust capitalist regime that was exploiting them. However, the NUM was considerably weakened and many of the rank-and-file miners could not see a reason to continue the fight because they believed that their industry was doomed. Thus, resistance was waning and restricted to the most 'militant' pits; and even they were no longer able to turn the tide. Of the five pits producing coal in the Cynon Valley after the strike only two remained in 1987. In January 1986 Penrikyber Colliery at Penrhiwceibr was closed after a long and bitter struggle. The pit's NUM lodge was regarded as one of the most militant ones in the coalfield and the resistance against the closure was fierce. However, in the aftermath of the miners' strike of 1984/85 the men finally decided to give up their fight against the closure because they were faced with a dilemma. The NCB offered redundancy payments, which could amount to considerable sums of money in some cases, on a 'take-it-now-or-lose-it-all' basis and many men who had not been able to repay the debts accumulated during the miners' strike had almost no other choice but to accept the NCB's offer and give up the fight for their pits (cf. Thomas 1991:59). During the last two decades of the nationalised coal industry the miners were kept in a state of constant insecurity and fear for their jobs. No miner could be sure which pit would be closed next but they knew for certain that they would join the dole queue in the near future. Of dozens of pits in the Cynon Valley only Tower Colliery and Abercynon/Lady Windsor survived the pit closure programme. Lady Windsor was closed in 1988 without much resistance from the workforce.

In the 1990s the death knell for the nationalised coal industry was sounded by the government. The Conservatives were relentlessly pushing their privatisation plans for the nationalised industries forward and the remnants of the coal industry were prepared for the big sell-off. In a report by the merchant bank N. M. Rothschild, that was advising the Conservative government on privatisation, none of the remaining pits in South Wales — including Tower Colliery — were declared to be economically viable. Only 14 pits in the UK were categorised as profitable enough and, therefore, fit for privatisation (The Guardian 08/10/1991, The Financial Times 16/10/1991). When, in 1991, Michael Hesseltine announced another round of pit closures aimed at streamlining the coal industry for privatisation 20 pits were to be kept in production. Of the 51 collieries in the hands of British Coal (the state owned successor to the NCB) that were still producing coal 10 were to be closed immediately — among them two of the three remaining pits in South Wales — and a further 21 pits were threatened with closure but were still under review. This time, however, Tower Colliery was the only pit in South Wales that was to be spared — but not for long.

Over the years the colliery had become a receiver pit and younger miners from closed pits all over the valleys had been transferred to Tower Colliery. The pit remained in production for another three years before British Coal (BC) announced its decision to close Tower Colliery in spring 1994. They argued that further production at Tower would be a "…'high risk' because of poor geology and falling demand for coal of Tower's quality in South Wales" (British Coal, News Release 2905, 5 April 1994). The miners refused to accept British Coal's assessment of the situation because they were convinced that the closure was motivated by political rather than economic considerations and decided to fight against the closure. They had known for some time that the pit closure programmes of the previous years and the government's attempts to streamline the remnants of the coal industry for privatisation would some day also affect them.

Arthur: I think, we knew full, back about in the late '80s. I did — the murmuring, they would leak, jokingly leak, that they would privatise the coal industry. I think, it was said for years and years by the Conservatives. But I think they wouldn't have enough courage or making sure there'd be no massive fight back because — I think, of the pit closure programme in the late-'80s with the Conservatives, the way they were going. They had lost that jingoism that had given them the power — the Falklands war and all that — country behind them and all them, they're doing marvellously, right. I think they'd lost that — So I think they were very cautious before they went to privatise the coal industry. But in 1992, I think it was Parkinson, I'm not quite sure, or was it — I can't remember — in one of the Tory Party conferences one of them got up and made this statement about privatisation. I watched it, I and Tyrone did, and we discussed it as a lodge. So, we knew they're gonna come for us. So, we started then, we organised meetings up and down this country, especially in the south. That was our, that's always been our area. And we assumed, which you should never ever do, assume, we assumed the lodges in the other parts of the coal field were doing the same in their patch.

R.: But they didn't.

Arthur: But as it turns out, we look back in time, they haven't moved off their arses, right. But we had meetings all over to south of England. I think, I don't think we had a weekend or many nights — we were out, some of us talking, all way down the south of England, London, Somerset, Devon, Yorksh… ah Cornwall, Kent, all of the areas down there — Essex, Sussex that we had meetings. Every weekend we had meetings down there. Whenever there was little dispute anywhere down that part of the world, we'd take our banner down. And we would join the picket line, or what have you and talk about pit closures. So, we've done a hell of lot of work. So, of course 1993 come and then we reali…, they realised then it was definitely coming, not the exact date but it would come and so forth. And even — we worked harder again. We had a march to London where eight of us marched, we didn't march all the way, I gotta be truthful to you, right. We had a minibus there and we marched through all the villages and towns and in between when there was no house and so forth, we get into the minibus, 2 miles into the next one. So, we did march a fair bit of the way. We had blisters on our feet — and all way to London. Went all through the Tory shires and — there we went — and we went to London. We had a marvellous reception by some of the MPs, some of the Labour MPs in the Houses of Parliament but we had a bit, a good bit of, especially in South Wales, media attention and so forth. 1994 come, January, February we was doing all these things again — still doing all these things. The managers of the colliery were talking to some men on the coal face blah, blah, blah, whatever, management will oppose buy-out and this is what we should do but do come with us. They were testing the water if you were willing to go with them and so forth.

So we was guarded with them but at the same, wait and see, we gonna fight privatisation, still fighting privatisation. A time might come when we know whether we're gonna succeed or we not gonna succeed. In the February we went to a conference up in Sheffield and we realised, Yorkshire mainly, 'cause that was the biggest area that was left, there was nothing there. They hadn't been canvassing, gone to any of these demonstrations. Whenever there was a strike in some other industry they hadn't sent their banners, they hadn't sent their assistance. They hadn't supported anybody outside their own industry since, probably, before the miners' strike. So, we, then we realised, we was on our own. It was, we were realising that's all it was, Tower. We were left, we was — so, we come back, me Tyrone, Phil, Phil and Hopi, I think that was the four of us. And we had a drink somewhere. We had a chat about it all. We were honest to ourselves — we bared our souls — but there was no one else for us to go. We couldn't, there's no way we could've generated a strike within the coalfields, no way. If we called a strike, I want picketing. We were honest to ourselves because the vice-president at the time, told us straight, no you won't get the men out here. So we —

R.:   That must've been very frustrating for you.

Arthur: It was, it was. We was first of all, I was shocked because if you've ever been to a Yorkshire conference or listened to the Yorkshire miners, they're so macho-man and they're all of this — and that's all, you know, they wouldn't — the delegate who got up and speak and could fight, but they'd be on their own. There would no troops behind them. When we got up and spoke on behalf of Tower we made sure our troops were behind us before we mentioned the word strike or overtime bans and so forth. I mean, it's a complete loss of time, you was honest with people. So we know where we stood [Arthur 04/10/95].

That the miners of Tower Colliery failed to mobilise what was left of the NUM areas to join the fight against pit closures was even more disappointing to them because they believed that the Conservative Party had lost some of its hold over public opinion in the UK. The NUM, on the other hand, had virtually lost all of its former power. It had, in a sense, shrunk in membership and influence within the trade union movement, the Labour Party and the political arena in Britain.

It is interesting to note that the disappointment over the lack of backing the Tower miners received from the other areas of the NUM was couched in terms of a critique of those union activists who could not live up to the masculine ideals of toughness, honesty and loyalty they invoked in their public performances. As far as the NUM as a whole was concerned the 'war' was over because there was virtually nobody left who was willing to fight. For the Tower miners this meant that they had to rely on their own resources, and the support they could mobilise in their communities and among those who still sympathised with the cause of the miners. One of the resources left to them was "history" in the sense of creating a continuity between the struggle of working class movement and the fight for the pit. It was a continuity most miners believed in and the motto of Tower Lodge (South Wales Area NUM) "Eternal Vigilance is the Price for Peace", that has a prominent place on their banner, speaks of this perceived continuity between past, present and future. Thus, as part of a media campaign for Tower Colliery the miners staged a performance that brought one of the most prominent characters in their (hi)stories, the 21 year old miner Richard Lewis known as *Dic Penderyn*, a martyr of the Merthyr Rising of 1831, back to life.

In the new visitors centre [the miners had set up at the pit in 1995 to convey their version of pit and working class history to the growing numbers of visitors from all over Britain and the world] there were pictures and cuttings from newspapers showing the fight for the pit mounted on cardboards standing on the floor in every room. In one of the rooms pictures of a demonstration were showing Arthur dipping a white bed linen into a bucket containing some red liquid. While we were looking at the pictures Arthur started talking about the Merthyr Rising of 1831 where the workers of the ironworks had dipped a sheet of white linen into sheep's or calve's blood on Hirwaun Common and marched to Merthyr Tydfil. As far as he knows, that was the first Red Flag in history. During the fight for the pit the miners of Tower Colliery staged a symbolic re-enactment of the "invention" of the Red Flag on Hirwaun Common, now right in the middle of the Hirwaun council estate. Arthur was proud that his role was to act as Dic Penderyn and dip the white linen into the bucket that Tyrone was holding. The press came in droves to record the protest and Arthur believes they only came because they had told them that they were killing a life sheep to dye the flag with its blood. But that was only a joke to get the attention of the press [Notes 15/10/95].

Dic Penderyn was a man and a miner the men at the pit identified with. He stands for the explosively growing working class population in the valleys during the first part of the nineteenth century whose life was characterised by hard physical labour, exploitation, poverty and appalling living conditions in the mining communities (see Grant 1991; Lowe 1994; Rammell 1976; Thomas 1976). But after the boom years of the 1820s tensions were rising under the surface of the industrial boom towns. On the one hand, the workers, suffering from the effects of the economic crisis, were ready to assert their rights; on the other hand, the bourgeoisie was demanding a reform of the political system in order to translate its economic achievements into political power (cf. Evans 1986:204-221).

In the iron metropolis of Merthyr Tydfil the economic and reform crisis developed into a violent uprising when William Crawshay, one of the most important ironmasters, cut the wages of his iron workers and sacked 84 puddlers in the summer of 1831. Mass meetings and demonstrations were held in several places in the Merthyr and Cynon Valleys. When a large crowd marched on Merthyr demanding political reforms as well as higher wage the authorities panicked and sent for troops to regain control of the town. A number of demonstrators were killed or wounded but the soldiers lost a considerable number of weapons to the angry crowd. It was estimated that around 300 to 400 armed workers held the town of Merthyr and the surrounding area for four days, during which they had beaten the regular troops and yeomanry twice (Williams 1978).

The crowds moving on the hills and drilling with their new weapons were more ominous than the thunder-clouds above them. At embattled Hirwaun, angry and determined men enacted a full ritual of vengeance. They sacrificed a calf and bathed a flag in its blood. The bearer carried the banner, still wet, with blood streaming down his arms. When it reached Merthyr, there was no-one to challenge it (Williams 1978:141-142).

It was William Williams, a sacked Crawshay puddler, who carried the Red Flag to Merthyr. But the Red Flag did not fly long over Merthyr because 800 soldiers laid siege to the town and the Merthyr Rising was squashed. Twenty eight people were tried for riot, among them the 21 year old miner Richard Lewis, better known as *Dic Penderyn*. Although Richard Lewis was innocent of stabbing a soldier he was sentenced to death and hanged in Cardiff as an example. "As *Dic Penderyn*, this man was to live on in the minds of his

countrymen as a martyr. He has so lived nearly 150 years; today, he lives more vividly than ever" (Williams 1978:173).

The events that were unfolding in Merthyr Tydfil in the summer of 1831 occupied a prominent place in the social imagination of the past constituted by the miners' hegemonic project. Men, like Arthur, could identify with a narrative which represented the people involved in the rising as "angry and determined" fighters for freedom who were virtually unstoppable. Although the workers were defeated in 1831, the rising and its consequences were of particular significance for the working class movement in South Wales. For miners and trade unionists like Arthur as well as Welsh historians like Gwyn A. Williams (1978:30) the Merthyr Rising marked the emergence of the working class in South Wales. The social imagination of the Merthyr Rising shows that through the transformation of past experiences into individual and collective memory a continuity was created. In the context of the miners' hegemony emotionally charged identifications with the rebels of the past naturalised its dominance in the present — we have always been exploited and have always resisted. Like the Welsh volunteers of the Spanish Civil War, *Dic Penderyn* is presented to the outside world as a symbol of the dignity and determination of the miners. That he was not present when the Red Flag was 'invented' on Hirwaun Common in the summer of 1831 did not really matter. It was far more important that he was a miner and a martyr of the working class. By associating him with the 'invention' of the Red Flag he could be recreated as a symbol for the continuity of the miners as the vanguard of the working class movement. For Arthur being able to act as a 'working class hero' re-affirmed the legitimacy of the working class struggle. 'Embodying' *Dic Penderyn* was a symbolic act of empowerment for him as an individual and for the miners of Tower Colliery as the collective he represented. Furthermore, by linking him to the creation of such a powerful symbol of the working class movement, the Red Flag, the relevance of the fight for Tower Colliery for the working class movement as a whole — which had suffered severe blows under 16 years of Conservative rule — could be demonstrated. In the 1990s the 'working class hero' *Dic Penderyn* became a symbol for the unbroken resistance and determination of the Tower miners.

When British Coal announced its decision to close Tower Colliery in the Spring of 1994 an overwhelming majority of the miners decided to oppose the decision and fight for their pit. In a general meeting the men decided to make use of the Colliery Review Procedure to oppose the pit's closure. Once a pit was in the Colliery Review Procedure the union's area officials were responsible for the compilation of technical and economic reports supporting their case that were submitted to BC. If BC insisted on the closure plans the union could appeal to an arbitrator (Allen 1981:302). During the process the pit was secure from closure and the men remained in employment.

Arthur:	… in the middle of March, I think it was, they said they're going to close the colliery — so — and obviously we held a general meeting.
R.:	Ya.
Arthur:	But we voted to a man that we oppose the closure. Strike action, whatever it would take. Whatever it took we would go and have a little fight. And that's when the running battle with British Coal took place. Ah — it's coming to April now when they officially, they told it — we went to a meeting down in — it was, just a general review meeting down in Newport, in Miners' House in Newport. Ian

	Marsh was the senior British Coal representative there and there was a Tower Lodge, whole Tower Lodge Committee went — sorry, five of us from Tower Lodge Committee went. And he announced there that he would like to give us three days notice of a closure, a closure meeting where you have to put, he put a proposal to us about closing Tower Colliery.
R.:	Yeah.
Arthur:	We decided there and then we didn't want to see disgrace — under the law we would meet him the followin' morning down there. But we decided to take the full lodge committee right, three granted. And we went down there and they give us the reasons for closing Tower Colliery was — they couldn't sell our coal — the conditions of the colliery, right, and all these different things, I mean, they argued there, right, I got up and lost my temper and as a face captain I been in work, I been a miner for 30 years in the coal faces so I knew, I knew the conditions of the faces better than the manager anybody else in that room, right, so I stated. And that face, I said to him is — you could produce som'ing a ton a year of that face if need be. But we can't sell it. Well, Tyrone [the lodge chairman] got up there and, and stated blah, blah, blah with the markets and everything blah, blah, blah. But they wouldn't have it. So we told them we're not accepting the closure but we wish to go into the Colliery Review Procedure which protects you — You can go in there for about a year and they couldn't close the colliery within the year, right.
R.:	And the lodge could that?
Arthur:	Through, through Scargill [the NUM].
R.:	Right.
Arthur:	There was legal — to go to court and all this bloody type, but I mean, we got in that Colliery Review Procedure. Once we got into the Colliery Review Procedure the manager would give it, called us down — following morning and gave us a list of all the men in the colliery. What rates they're supposed to be on and what rates he would put us on. Because, you can understand, we hadn't a wage rise through British Coal for about 4 or 5 years. We had local wages, increases at the colliery. They weren't wage increases as such but there was seven grades on the surface and seven grades underground. So we used to knock our boys up.
R.:	Yeah!
Arthur:	And through local negotiations, right — But he's, under the law he'd reckoned he could put them down to the proper grade, that they signed on, right. It wasn't a national wage — there was a national wage constellation agreement and so forth. We hadn't gone through that procedure because we wouldn't meet British Coal because the UDM [see page 54], they want us with them the same time, we wouldn't sit on the same table with them [Arthur 04/10/95].

British Coal used every possible method, including the threat to withdraw additional redundancy payment offers, to get the miners to agree to the closure of their colliery. On the 13th April the lodge officials were told that BC would pull out of the Modified Colliery Review Procedure and production at the pit would continue until privatisation in December (cf. British Coal, News release 2912, 15 April 1994). However, the continuation of production under different terms and conditions for the workforce involved a 25 per cent cut in wages and a loss of a considerable amount of redundancy payments for the majority of the men. In a meeting to discuss the new situation on the 19th April the majority of the men voted to end their resistance against the closure because they could not afford to work on reduced wages for the rest of the year and lose a considerable amount of their redundancy payments. "So at 12.30pm we went to the meeting with the men and as history will show, the men could take no more, could lose no more and they voted to close the pit" (Tower Lodge

NUM 1994:5). Finally, with the closure of Tower Colliery on the 23rd April 1994 the era of coal mining in the South Wales valley seemed to have come to an end.

> Having read the account of the death, no murder of Tower, I hope people everywhere will not let these things happen again and allow any employer anywhere the right to destroy jobs and lives while we stand by and watch. We must all stand up and fight back and protect others. It was never as the press stated that we just gave in. It was a much braver stance than that (Tower Lodge NUM 1994:5).

For many miners the day the pit closed marked the end of their working life. They had to face the demoralising prospect of long-term unemployment and felt that their loyalty to the industry had been betrayed. Emrys, one of the miners that were made redundant on that day, told me: "They day they closed Tower I cried. The fucking government put me on the dole and it wasn't right" (Notes 08/09/95)! What remained was a feeling of powerlessness and despair.

> *Emrys:* The ah — personally, myself — we was, we knew in the back of our minds — that they wanted it, to privatise Tower colliery, in the back of our mind. But we didn't know which way they'd gonna do it. So, it was the saddest day in my life. Mind, don't get me wrong, when our pit closed, it's the saddest day in my life because I've worked 20 years underground and — they said now, so long, we don't want you here at all. And down the road I'd to go and that was the saddest day in my life.
>
> …
>
> *Sarah:* Well, what happened was, you had a meeting, wasn't it. You went up the pit — you didn't really know it was closing the morning you went to work.
>
> *Emrys:* No.
>
> *Sarah:* And you had a meeting, they all had to go to Penywaun club for a meeting. And I was looking at the Teletext to see what the latest was all time. The next thing, he came home then and he said, the pit is shut. Well, he didn't say it like that, he'd tears in his eyes and he went upstairs. Then, after he composed himself, then he come down and said about it. There was no more the lodge could do for them, you know. They had to put the boys in a position — when they threatened them with losing so much money — and a lot of the boys had big mortgages and children to bring up. So, they thought if we stay another week or two, or whatever, we — could lose it all. So, that's what it boiled down to. The frightenedness was put on them again [Emrys & Sarah 11/10/95].

Not only their livelihood but their whole identity was threatened by the closure. The close relationships between the men at work which were reinforced by the informal groups of men in the communities were bound to be affected. For many miners it appeared to be the end of the world as they knew it.

Fortunately, the 23rd April 1994 did not mark the end but rather a new beginning for the miners of Tower Colliery. A group of union activists got together after the agreement to closure had been signed by the NUM Area President — for, in a final symbolic act of resistance, the lodge officials had refused to sign their pit away — and decided that they had no choice but to continue fighting for their jobs. They formed the Tower Employee Buy-Out (TEBO) team which went out to beat the Conservatives at their own game of privatisation. They did not want to end up on the waste heaps of Thatcher's post-industrial

Britain, denigrated as scroungers because they could not find another job. However, they not only wanted work. They also set out to prove that there were alternatives to the powerlessness and individualisation propagated by the dominant discourse.

Dai: But the Tory government didn't want — ah — they could see more profit in importing coal then — importing more coal. They could see more profits importing coal than what they could diggin' it and finding employment for our own people, right. So, they shut them all. But they couldn't, the last one in the Tower, they were so strong up there and they had a hell, a lot support up there that it come to be the last pit in South Wales. So, the men there's out — and fair play to the men — you got to say this, you got to give them all the credit in the world. A lot of them had been there for years and they were havin' twenty-, twenty-eight-thousand pound redundancy pay. But they didn't want that. They wanted work! So, it come round that they was gonna lose — if they didn't accept the package by the Tory government they were gonna lose about 11,000 pound. So, anyway, low and behold, they had a meeting and they decided, well, we don't, we lose 11,000 pound but we still fight for our jobs! When it goes to — that — the Tory government, and they were gonna lose a damn side more than that. Well, a lot of peop… a lot of them couldn't afford to lose it. So, they had to accept it in the long run. Well then, there was five or six of them got together and they was to have an ah, about this buy-out. So, they — eventually they — got, these five or six, ah I mean, Tyrone, Phil, my own son, ah John, Ken, a fireman, that's the ones I knew. There was a few more in — an' they decided to call a meetin' and go in for the buy-out — which they done. Well, if you stop and think of — which way they done it and you got to take your hat off because they're all colliers — and — you know, they went to the right people and then the right what-'s-names, and eventually they bought the pit! And believe you me, what they have done since they were what-'s-name, they bought the pit — they've gone up there now and they've bought that pit! That pit and all that ground is theirs. And they've made a profit. And God, and God help 'em, they have made a profit, they made a good profit! They've all worked hard for it, right. But they're not greedy men! They're not greedy men! They also created unemploy… ah employment for people outside the village. 'cause for every man you work underground there's five or six jobs created outside the industry. So, they're hopin' as it goes on, the more contracts they get, the more employment they get. They, they had a lot of support, a lot of help all right throughout the world. Because people can see — and what they done up there is unbelievable.
R.:   Yes.
Dai   It is, it's unbelievable, it's unbelievable! What a handful of men have done! There's only about one hundred and some odd of them up there, what they have done — believe me, they, if anybody gets to have a medal, them people do. Because it has showed what the Tory government, Hesseltine and Margaret Thatcher and the bloody lot 'em, what they couldn't do, these boys have done [Dai 06/07/95].

The struggle for Tower Colliery, and the success of the miners who finally managed to reopen the pit in 1995, showed the apparent contradictions which arose from the actions taken in the process of "running against the tide of history" (Richards 1996:3). In the course of saving Tower Colliery from closure the miners on the Tower Employee Buy-Out (TEBO) team had to make use of the instruments provided by the capitalist economy and, subsequently, were forced to act within the framework imposed by the privatisation policies of Conservative governments. Although the miners strongly disagreed with Michael Hesseltine's claim that the Tower buy-out demonstrated the success of the privatisation — 'a

country of shareholders' — policy of the Conservatives, it was difficult to deny that they now owned a private enterprise competing in the capitalist market. It came as no surprise that Arthur Scargill, the radical left-wing President of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), was very critical of the attempt to gain workers control over the means of production by using the instruments of the market economy promoted by the Conservatives.

> The miners are well aware, however, that there has been criticism that the buyout was not in line with socialist views. Some have even accused the men of having turned into capitalists. 'The pit is owned by the employees — that's the first change to capitalism', says Mr O'Sullivan. The pit has to compete in a capitalist environment, but that does not automatically turn the miners into capitalists hankering after profits. 'You can compete with honesty and integrity.'
> 'The Tower men look after the valley and its people — that's socialist', says lodge chairman Mr Roberts after pointing out that the buy-out was the only way to keep as many jobs as possible. 'The coal is still the people's coal', he also insists (Rottmann 1995:8).

In a sense, then, the miners of Tower Colliery leading the buy-out team were caught up in a dilemma. On the one hand, they were fighting for their own economic survival as well as the survival of the miners' hegemony in the former mining communities — and they succeeded in recreating Tower Colliery as a symbol for the continuing salience of working class 'counter-culture'. On the other hand, they were unwillingly perpetuating the dominant discourse by successfully competing in a capitalist market economy whose 'laws' they could not control. There was no easy way out of this dilemma. The success of Tower Colliery could be — and it certainly was — symbolically employed to reaffirm both the dominant discourse of the capitalist market economy (the colliery as a *private enterprise*) and the antagonistic discourse constituting different meanings of equality, solidarity and a socialist ideal of society (the colliery as a workers' *cooperative*) that was the backbone of the local hegemony in many mining communities in South Wales. Their intention to compete "with honesty and integrity" was not only a way of articulating their own moral worth in contrast to the capitalist 'other', it was also a public identification with key values of respectability and masculinity. As a highly politicised symbol the pit was thus used in the struggle for dominance in the discursive arena. Furthermore, it was a symbolic resource in the struggle to maintain a distinctive (predominantly respectable, masculine and socialist) identity within the context of a local hegemony that was increasingly difficult to maintain.

   Even the determination of the activists of Tower Colliery will, in the end, not be able to reverse the process that turned the miners' hegemonic project into a shadow of its former strength. However, the miners demonstrated that their adherence to collective responsibility was not as out-dated as the dominant political circles wanted them, and the general public, to believe. Nevertheless, the grand days of the NUM were over and Francis came to the conclusion that "…the miners through their union had for decades provided a focus and often a socio-political core to the valleys. But that core was inextricably linked to *work*. With its disappearance the NUM was unable, and still is unable, to adjust to a new situation" (Francis 1990:113). Although the NUM ceased to be a significant political and social factor on the national and regional level, the fading echoes of its former strength could still be felt on the local level in the valleys of the former coalfield. The success of the miners of Tower Colliery infused the discourse of survival with new meanings. That some of the union activists engaged in the fight for the pit lived on the estate and that the local

working men's club provided the meeting place for the miners during the fight for their pit contributed to the fact that a council estate could be represented as a close-knit mining community. A phenomenon that was also observed by Samuel (1986:5) during and after the strike, when "[h]ousing estates were talked of as though they were villages, places of hereditary settlements where generations of miners had lived". For him it was a sign for the creation of a particular mythology invented to conjure up lost collective identifications. For the generations of men who grew up on the council estate, worked in the coal industry and created their networks of informal groups of men centred around the pit and the local club, the feeling that they were part of a community despite the fact that it was located on a potentially fragmented council estate, was far more real as an everyday practice than Samuel's mythological figment of thought alone could have been.

Just chucked them all together

Power and resistance on a council estate

4

The making of a 'community'?

After the miners' strike and the pit closures the representations of mining communities in the South Wales valleys were dominated by images of closed collieries, mass unemployment and dying mining communities. Especially the council estates in the former coalfield were regarded as symbols for decay. The people living on these estates, who were rehoused from the slums of the industrial revolution in the 1940s and 1950s, seemed to have ended up in the slums once again — but this time they were the slums of a de-industrialised area and there was little hope for economic recovery. Vandalism, joy riding, drug abuse and murder made the headlines of the media and council estates were represented as no-go areas for decent people. They were part of a geography of exclusion constituted by a political discourse that was mapping social difference on places like council estates. The stereotypes of run-down and rough council estates had far reaching consequences for the people living on these estates. Regardless of their self-identifications they became known to the outside world through stereotypical identifications imposed upon them. Furthermore, the powerful negative external identifications projected upon the people living on these council estates could only be partially resisted and deflected — part of the stigma stuck to them and fused with their self-images.

Apart from the media and the state, the local welfare state bureaucracy played an important part in the politically motivated 'othering' of council tenants. The welfare state bureaucracy inscribed classed categories of difference onto the estates — sometimes even under the guise of empowerment. Right at the beginning of my fieldwork the Special Projects Officer of the Cynon Valley Borough Council, who was planning so-called community development projects in the valley, told me that she had found a 'low morale' on the estate and that there was no 'community spirit' because the fluctuation of tenants was high. The housing department had great difficulties finding people willing to move to the estate, especially to the so-called 'bottom end' area. While she was driving me around the place she explained that only people with relatives already living in the area were willing to move to this particular part of the estate. Her explanations were meant to be an introduction to the social problems of the estate for the interested anthropologist but the rhetoric she employed in describing the state of the 'community' revealed how the dominant political discourse on council estates was constantly reproduced even by those people who imagined themselves as assisting the underprivileged. A report the Special Projects Officer had submitted to the council's Housing Services Committee provided a good example of the (re-)production of the dominant discourse. In the report she argued that the estate was one of the "peripheral estates with little sense of community, and a culture which seems unlikely to spark enterprise, self-confidence or any sense of shared identity and where there is no focus on the future" (Cynon Valley Borough Council 1994).

However, the reality as it was constructed by those people who regarded themselves as belonging to the 'community' appeared to be rather different. In spite of a certain degree of fragmentation, due to the fluctuation of tenants, one could clearly make out a shared feeling of belonging to what many outsiders saw as a rough place and a run-down council estate. Arthur, one of the last working miners in the area, who grew up on the estate and has lived there ever since, expressed a strong feeling of belonging to this place and shared this strong identification with many of his friends and neighbours — he was not the only one on the estate who told me that he would not leave the estate even if he got the chance and had the financial resources to move.

R.:	So, you moved to Penywaun when you were 3 years old.
Arthur:	Yeah.
R.:	Into one of those steel-frames?
Arthur:	Yeah, tin houses they call them in Penywaun, tin houses they call them. They're only supposed to be up for so many years.
R.:	Yeah, and they're still there.
Arthur:	See, with the old prefabs they were there for so many years as a temporary — after the war, you know. They brought in, Labour Government, they decided to erect pretty council houses. The metropolitan council it was. So, of course the local authority as it was then built them houses. Because prior to that Penywaun was mainly an old village, mining village, whenever it was —
R.:	And very small.
Arthur:	It was small, there must have been like — in the years — there must be, say, 80, 90, 100 houses in all, all told, you know. Of course it is spread, it's the biggest council estate in — so, you can imagine when I grew up, with 15 now, but they built these houses, they brought all different families from all the other villages around, from the whole of Cynon Valley, and just chucked them all together. You can imagine, the fights and the squabbles goin' on there until people settled and found out, you know, and realised that they're all the same. There's no difference between anybody, really, you know. … And, that's actually what it was. Of course it was mainly, predominantly miners' families. I would say, something, 30 to 80 per cent of men and boys were workin' in the pits. Not just Tower, I mean there was so many pits in Cynon Valley then. I can't remember them all, there were a whole lot. We had pretty buses and the boys were still working here on the Phurnacite Plant. The Phurnacite Plant there were 500 men. So, this small Valley — there was a load of boys or men from Penywaun working there. … Looking back, it wasn't bad, I suppose. It wasn't bad, you know what I mean. Enjoyed it like. I enjoyed it in Penywaun, I wouldn't bother to move to anywhere else [Arthur 04/09/95].

The Penywaun Arthur was talking about was not one of those 'typical' mining communities with their endless rows of terraced houses that were built a hundred years or more years ago around a company pit. It was a council estate at the top end of the Cynon Valley, erected in several phases around a tiny mining village. A small part was built before the war but the bulk of it was built between the mid 1940s and the 1960s. Over half of the 1300 council houses built in the Cynon Valley between 1945 and 1956 were erected in Penywaun (Rees 1975:39). People who had lived in the slums and overcrowded terraced houses of the mining communities all over the valley were allocated new houses on the estate in the 1950s and 1960s. Some of them were categorised as problem cases by the

local authorities and others as respectable working class families who should get the chance for a fresh start under improved conditions., However, the consequences of relocating people from different communities were not so much the concern of the council. James, member of the urban district council from 1952 to 1974 who has lived on the estate since 1947, explained to me that the Aberdare Urban District Council's policy at the time followed the rather "optimistic line" that a new environment — those "pretty council houses" — would encourage the people "to mend their ways" and become respectable members of the community.

James: And of course it was in, in a good many cases it meant that the — that it was regarded as the — that the rougher element of these particular villages and the people most requiring housing accommodation were the first occupants of the local authority housing that was built, say, from 1946 onwards.

R.:   Like, as far as I know, people who lived in Green Fach.

James: That's right, yes, yes, yes. And of course that was reputed to be a very rough area, rough, tough area. But it didn't always follow that the people that were actually allocated housing would remain as the rough, tough individuals that they were previous to being absorbed into a council estate. Now, the then Aberdare Council never adopted an attitude whereby in their wisdom or otherwise, they would more or less assemble all the rough, known rough, tough elements from the various villages in one particular area of an estate. And the purpose of that being that the then Aberdare Council, and of course I was pleased to be part of it, took the optimistic line that given a new area to live in and a new house to live in would more or less encourage people to mend their ways as it were. And in a good many cases that I am aware of it worked that way. Of course you did have the odd few people who just wouldn't accept that they were being moved for their benefit in a any way and were a source of nuisance. But, and of course now, at that time there were particular families who, for obvious reasons will remain nameless, for obvious reasons — Now, some of the members of one family in particular were miscreant in every way and almost every edition of the local press … But I was going to say that one particular family had one particular individual — was forever in trouble. And of course publicity was given almost every week to his misdeeds. … But on the other hand, now, even such families as that now, repaired their method of living to such an extent that they've been absorbed into the village and are wonderfully responsible, as far as the village is concerned. I wouldn't criticise them at all. But of course you had the odd people who would insist on doing wrong … [James 06/09/95].

The political rhetoric of the former councillor's explanation is revealing. The local council's housing policy was certainly intended to improve the housing conditions of those who could not afford to move out of the derelict and overcrowded Victorian slums of the old mining communities. But it was also a means of controlling the so-called 'rough element' which refused to conform in some way or another to the moral norms of respectability. There was one particular area in the centre of the town of Aberdare, called Green Fach, which had a reputation of being extremely rough and to some extent uncontrollable, from which a number of people were moved to Penywaun. According to my landlady, a retired nurse, the council had brought all the rough people from Green Fach to Penywaun and 'let them loose' which was the reason why they have had trouble on the estate from the beginning. With the transfer of the so-called rough element to the new estate the stereotypical image of the rough place was transferred as well. One miner, who was not living on the

estate, told me that Penywaun has always been 'at the bottom end of the mining villages' and that the local authorities had moved those people to Penywaun who were no longer wanted elsewhere in the valley.

The relocation of these people followed a strategy that was based on what Cole and Furbey (1994:125-126) characterised as a rather conservative and paternalistic attitude of many Labour councils preoccupied with the support and, if necessary, the control and disciplining of the nuclear family. The paternalistic attitude of the local council, an institution that was intent on maintaining the dominant bourgeois idea of moral order, was clearly expressed in James's condemnation of the 'odd few people' who could not accept that the council knew, in its paternalistic wisdom, that their relocation was in their own interest. The provision of new homes for the 'rough element' among the 'decent' or 'respectable' people on the council estate, was clearly influenced by the intention to maintain the moral order prescribed by the dominant discourse of respectability. It was hoped that the influence and social pressure of those who were assumed to be respectable tenants would be an incentive for the 'rough' tenants to 'mend their ways', so that they could be absorbed by the 'community'. However, this proved to be problematic. The categories of 'rough and 'respectable' were assumed to possess a universal significance and, as Torfing (1999:175) pointed out, "… the universal emerges out of the negation of the particular identities, but its content is fixed in and through political struggles for hegemony, in which particular demands are universalized and others are marginalized." There was, thus, scarcely any room for the persuasion envisaged by the council because persuasion implies relationships of equality. However, equality was impossible to achieve because the *a priori* negation of the identities of those categorised as 'rough' was to some extent shared by the 'respectable' tenants already living on the estate.

The "optimistic line" followed by the Labour controlled Aberdare Urban District Council was a rather crude attempt at social engineering. It did not really address the social problems of mining communities beyond the provision of new dwellings. The public housing projects, erected between the wars, demonstrated that the social problems of the slums of the coal-boom could not be solved by erecting "pretty council houses" and leaving the relocated inhabitants to their fate. For many families the transfer to a council estate meant that they were cut off from established social networks of kin and friends. The mistrust for the new unknown neighbours only deepened the initial isolation (cf. Teichmann 1997:105-106) and the development of a sense of belonging, and with it a sense of community, was a slow process. The social problems that the relocated council tenants had to face in their new environment were often regarded as less serious by local politicians. Although politicians claimed that council estates were a way of achieving a greater degree of social justice post-war housing policy was rather pragmatic (cf. Cole & Furbey 1994:63-66). It was governed by the need to meet building targets and its solution for social problems appeared be the relocation of the so-called problem cases to newly built council estates. Cole and Furbey (1994:112) argued that "… the new estates were often conceived with little understanding of the practical considerations of tenants' incomes, kinship ties and responsibilities, social networks and employment opportunities." In addition to that most of the new estates lacked the social facilities, such as miners' welfare halls or pubs, that the old mining communities had provided.

> What wasn't allowed for, of course, was the — in the existing communities there were facilities. There were miners' halls and institutes for all, you know, places for people to go to. There was no provision for these community facilities when the big estates like Treneol, like Penywaun were built. Similarly in other valleys you have Penrhys. Even in the '60s, Penrhys wasn't built until the late '60s, I mean, and yet the same mistakes were being made then. Fernhill in Mountain Ash again, you know, no facilities. There's been community centres built in later years but they should've been there at the outset [A Cynon Valley Borough Council executive 31/07/95].

The lack of 'places for people to go to' continued to be a problem on many estates throughout the 1960s and 1970s. When Rees (1975) wrote his study of the Cynon Valleys in the early 1970s, some estates, such as Perthcelyn built on the mountain overlooking Penrhiwceibr, still lacked social facilities. However, he believed that Penywaun, the largest council estate was an exception because it was a "neighbourhood in itself, having its own schools, shops, welfare centre and other amenities" (Rees 1975:39). Having been built around the tiny hamlet of Penywaun, the estate did at least have a pub, the Colliers' Arms, which still existed in 1995. In addition to that it did have a small miners' welfare, dating back to the 1920s, that was remembered as lacking a bar. A new miners' welfare club, including a bar, was built in 1960 and proved to be extremely popular with the male population and the vast majority of the men became members. The club played a crucial part in developing a sense of belonging because it provided a social centre, a constant reference point, where the inhabitants could socialise. It was an institution they could identify with. Initially, the club was a miners' club built with the assistance of the Miners' Welfare Fund and dominated by miners. In the 1960s the majority of the male population were still employed in the coal industry or came from a mining community background. Their shared, strong occupational identity helped to provide a basis on which a sense of belonging to a community could develop. In addition to that, the second generation of inhabitants, who had grown up on the estate and were allocated their own houses when they got married, created new local kinship networks. Kinship networks and networks of friends — especially the informal groups of men — provided the basis for the development of a sense of belonging to the locality — at least for those people who were part of these networks.

"This is a poor community": the discourse of survival

Nevertheless, the initial feeling of being 'chucked out there together' by the council, regardless of the consequences, abated only slowly. A frequently given indigenous explanation for the development of 'community' in this 'artificial' environment created by the local authorities was the awareness of their structural position as miners, working class people, and council tenants, which distinguished them from the rest of society.

> I mean — see, when you work — in a community like Penywaun then, everybody is in the same boat then, you know. You get the odd one or two that's stickin' out but the majority of people are all in the same boat then [Dai 06/07/95].

Phrases like, "everybody is in the same boat" (Dai, see above), "we're all the same here, we're all working class!" (Peter, Notes 28/07/95), or "there's no difference between anybody, really" (Arthur, see page 76), were frequently used symbolic expressions of equality and unity, of identification with the collective, in the face of a power differential that located them at the powerless end of the hierarchy. The expression of equality and unity was rooted in the shared experience of work and a strong trade unionism in the coal industry. But equally relevant was the shared experience of poverty, as the result of low wages and large families, and the subsequent dependence on social welfare in the form of comparatively cheap council housing. In a discussion about my research with a couple of old age pensioners in the club one night, they told me: "This is a poor community, put that in your book!" This explicit self-categorisation as a 'poor community' also carried with it a notion of equality — the shared experience of equality in poverty.

Poverty was not only an adverse state of existence but also an important category of distinction. The ability to survive the hostile conditions created by it was presented with pride. The experience of poverty was part of everyday reality in the present and inherent in the social imagination of the past the people in the former mining communities identified with. But the perception of shared poverty was also inextricably connected to the experience of solidarity as the condition for the survival of hardship. The General Strike and lock-out of 1926, the mass unemployment of the 1920s and 1930s and, more recently, the return of mass-unemployment after the long wave of pit closures and the longest miners' strike in the history of the South Wales coalfield in 1984/85, were kept alive in the social imagination of hardship. These images were instrumental for the confirmation of the crucial importance of solidarity for the survival of the working class community:

Peter: I moved down here in 1947, that's — I've been living here since 1947, you know. Like I say, I wouldn't go, I wouldn't wanna go nowhere else. They're the greatest bunch of people in the world in this village by here. They've seen hardships, there's a lot of them are seeing hardships now — but if there's somebody in need, say particularly a child, and you wanted to do fund raising for the child, as I told you before, you get all in the house in a capacity of about 300, 250, 300 people. And we can pack that out — particular if this was for a cause like a child — numerous occasions we've — last one there was a little girl up there we spend for her, it goes about 650 pound. But when you're talking about that, you're talking about 99 percent of it from the village, who got bugger all themselves anyway, you know. So we're asking people to help someone who got nothing, who haven't got anything themselves but they're always responding — marvellous, salt of the earth they are without a doubt!

R.:   And during the strike there was a lot of solidarity from, not only from mining families but from the whole community or — ?

Peter: There was — I've seen women went around in torrential rain collecting who have no brothers, who have no fathers that ever worked in the industry, mining industry. That's how it brought them all together. …

R.:   Yeah, I see.

Peter: And it's united this village, they were all united before, you know. We're a very close village, anyway.

R.:   Ya.

Peter: You know, I can walk anywhere, any street in Penywaun because it's — a lot of kids even, I don't know half of them when you walk through, all it is — and their parents and their grandparents, I know who it is, I know who of — here's a lot I

don't know. But I got a lot of respect for this village. There's no place on earth
like it. You know, we can, they can talk from now to doomsday they never gonna
say anything else. You get, you got an element on, in this village, you got them
everywhere. You go to residential estates, you got them there, you know. So, it's
not — [Peter 02/08/95].

Peter's description of the inhabitants of the estate as "the greatest bunch of people in the
world" who "are all united" was very much part of the symbolic repertoire of the local
hegemony. As the chairman of the local working men's club and member of the local elite
Peter stood at the forefront of creating, maintaining and managing the public image of the
community's symbolic boundary. His influence on the men and his central position in the
local networks of power made him a demotic intellectual. To him his people — "the salt of
the earth" — and his place — "there's no place on earth like it" — were only imaginable
and representable as a close and united community. Surviving the hardship of poverty and
the ability to act in solidarity was a practice that was regarded as necessary to attain the
status of a respectable person. The pervasive concept of equality in poverty was constituted
by the discourse of survival. Through this discourse the meanings of poverty, hardship,
solidarity and the acts of creating and managing them could be condensed in symbols
whose flexibility was a prerequisite for the persuasiveness, and thus the pervasiveness, of
the miners' hegemony in the locality. The invocation of memories of the crises that have
threatened the survival of the mining communities in the past was a practice that facilitated
the (re-)production of the discourse of survival, and through it the 'unity' of the 'village'.
Especially the 1984/85 miners' strike was used to demonstrate the importance of unity and
solidarity for the survival of the community in the public sphere. The strike had once again
united the people in the (former) mining communities whose communities had been
fragmented by changes in the occupational structure, unemployment, emigration and — in
the case of council estates — the council's allocation practices. The experience of hardship
and solidarity during the miners' strike of 1984/85 was a chance to revitalise the persuasiveness
of the discourse of survival.

But even those members of the local elite, such as the miners' leader Arthur, who did not
see the estate as a homogenous community, emphasised the willingness of the people to
show solidarity and unity in times of crises and the emotionally uplifting quality of these
activities. Crises were events that enabled the powerful local elite to (re-)create — however
temporarily — the persuasive qualities of the lived consensus without which the hegemony
could not be maintained. The so-called "consensus", the lived agreement that made the
maintenance of the hegemonic project possible, was perceived to be the basis of a 'close
community'. It was a key expression of the persuasiveness of the discourse of survival.
Although the "consensus" was an effect of the ideological discourse naturalising the desire
to conform, it was also subject to constant negotiation. One night, after a lengthy discussion
of various topics — ranging from the problems of unemployment, the "bloody Tories",
corrupt politicians to the dangers of the "bloody Yanks" and their CIA — with a group of
'the boys', Arthur summed it all up, saying: "You see, we're all in consensus" (*Notes
14/07/95*). The importance placed on "consensus" was also evident in Arthur's view of the
people's reaction to the hardship of the one year strike of 1984/85. It was simply "marvellous"
and despite the fact that a few inhabitants did not agree with *the* miners they "never had no

arguments at all" about it with the majority.

R.:	… Has it ever been a close community?
Arthur:	Oh yes!
R.:	And do you thing that it's still a close community?
Arthur:	I think Penywaun now — If I look down on Penywaun now to — this is my personal opinion of Penywaun — I don't believe we're a close community as a whole. All there is, you got pockets of streets where the community is. It's here, there, and everywhere, right.
R.:	Yeah. That was my impression —
Arthur:	You could turn us right away and mix them all together. Now, and that's a job for the future — perhaps not for me, but for somebody else, in' it. But I think it's always been like that. Because, as I said, when I was a kid Rhydywaun and Penywaun. There was a Rhydywaun community and there was a Penywaun community. This village was split in half then, anyway, right. So, I don't feel — oh — I don't know. Know, the miners' strike in 1984?
R.:	Yeah.
Arthur:	Well that was marvellous 'cause there were many of them knock all the doors. Collecting tins, and food, and so forth. And we had a marvellous reception. I was a few times there. Couple of awful buggers but we all get a couple of awful ones. But we never had no argument at all, over that [Arthur 04/09/95].

In spite of the normative pressure generated by the ideology of "consensus" the estate as a whole could hardly be seen as a unified entity or community. As Arthur pointed out, people felt that they belonged to different parts of the estate as well as different groups. Most of them were, nevertheless, still willing to act according to the "consensus" in times of crises. It was not surprising that a different view was presented to me by the Community Development Worker, who had worked on the estate for the last three years. As an outsider she was not entangled in the ideological 'consensus-fundamentalism'. In her opinion the estate was split up into different physically locatable groups or 'communities':

> No, it's not a close community at all. It's funny, it's got like areas. Penywaun 's got it's own, it's got areas, it's very split up [Margaret 26/07/95].

It is apparent from these two different (insider and outsider) perspectives on the estate that, despite its social and physical fragmentation, 'community' could still be found on the estate. It could be found among those who were brought up on the estate, have lived there all their lives and established extensive networks of kin and friends, among those who were (and still are) employed in the mining industry, and in some of the streets and neighbourhoods. It could also be found where people were persuaded into believing that they shared experiences and could develop a feeling of belonging and shared identifications. The local hegemony, however, was more or less controlled by the group which had dominated the estate in the past: the miners and former miners. It was this group that emphasised the importance of the "consensus" and created a social imagination of continuity that linked the estate to the relatively homogeneous mining communities of the past. But even within the comparatively more homogeneous mining communities the "consensus" was not shared by all. The symbolic unity of the "consensus" was (re-)produced by those who regarded themselves, or were regarded by others, as 'respectable' men — and who constructed the core community.

The rough and the respectable or how to create a slum

However, behind the publicly declared (symbolic) unity and equality complex internal differences and categorisations emerged. A key category in the process of internal differentiation on the estate was 'the element' or the 'rough people' as the negative equivalent of the 'respectable'. People categorised as such did not directly share in the process of constructing, negotiating or re-affirming the "consensus" and were depreciated as a "damn nuisance", or constructed as a potential threat to those men controlling the discursive space of the local hegemony. The threat, that their disregard for the "consensus" and the established networks of power posed, was accommodated by representing 'the element' as a small, unsocial minority endangering the 'unity' of the community — 'the odd few' or 'a couple of awful buggers' — and a as a general problem of the larger society — 'you got them everywhere', even on middle-class residential estates.

Moreover, the closeness and unity of the 'village' turned out to be an imagined unity with regard to the estate as a whole. There was a core of individuals and families who had lived on the estate all their life — many of whom had bought their houses from the council in recent years. But the reality of a council estate was characterised by a continuous movement of people to and from the estate. Houses were allocated by the council's housing department and many of the inhabitants, especially the so-called 'rough' people, had little choice where they were allocated a house. Thus, as a council estate, Penywaun was far less homogeneous with regard to the occupational and social structure than 'traditional' mining communities had been. It was, nevertheless, imagined as a largely homogeneous (mining) community by some members of the local elite. However, other long-standing members of the community did not regard the estate as homogeneous because the allocation of housing was controlled by the local council. They argued that this kind of external control lay at the root of the estate's problems. They believed that the council's allocation practice led to the segregation of those families, who were regarded as problem cases, in particular areas of the estate. Once these areas had established a bad reputation it became increasingly difficult to prevent further ghettoisation — more and more 'respectable' people refused offers of a house in the area. The ghettoisation was partly a product of the assessment practice of the local housing office. Assessment by a housing officer preceded allocation and it was a process governed by moral judgements about eligibility and need, closely connected to stereotypical categorisations of people as 'undeserving', 'rough', 'problem cases', or positive categorisations as 'deserving' and 'respectable'. The decisions, made on the basis of these assessments, to offer the applicants desirable housing in a 'respectable' area or undesirable housing in a 'rough' area had far reaching consequences for the self- and external identifications of the people placed in these areas. "The end product is a spatial arrangement of public housing which identifies individuals as of greater or lesser social worth according to where they live, and places them where they live on the basis of the identification of their worth. This is another way in which identification becomes mapped on public space" (Jenkins 1996:162). Stereotypical identifications mapped on public space tended to spread to other spheres of social life. Activities, like the application for employment, which involved the negotiation of identity were particularly problematic

because the self-images of the council tenants were *a priori* contested by stereotypical external identifications. They tended to intensify the exclusion of the already marginalised inhabitants of council estates who quickly found themselves caught up in a catch-22 situation.

> **Fiona:**   … Erw Las down at the very bottom end of Penywaun. That used to be the very rough end, but I find with the councils, as well, they're puttin' a lot of problem families into Penywaun. And I think councils can create ghettos. The council has created a lot of this in the years gone by, you know. They've created the ghettos. They put the problem families into Penywaun. You get — we had a murder here — two years ago. And they were taken out — and a lot is happenin' wi' others, and now burglars that — there's problems on the estate, and these prob… these families have to get out of the estate — that's causin' problems when they were put in. But it's got to the point where she's [her daughter] goin' to interviews for jobs and I just say to her, don't say your from Penywaun, you've got to say you're from Rhydywaun, because they haven't got a chance. You've only to mention Penywaun and that's it. It's the black listed area and that's it [Fiona 02/07/95].

By the 1970s and 1980s the reputation of the so-called 'bottom-end' of the estate (the area around Erw Las) had changed from an 'elite' area to a 'rough' area — a clearly visible sign of its changed status were houses that were in a state of total disrepair and boarded up to prevent further damage. My landlady, who had worked as a district nurse on the estate in the '70s and '80s gave a rather drastic description of the state of the tenants and their houses at the bottom end of Penywaun that showed quite clearly how extreme stereotypes became mapped on the area.

> She told me that they were given nice, beautiful houses in the beginning which already started to look 'awful' when she went down there. She said it was terrible down there and the houses were in a terrible state. 'It was a slum!', the floor was sticky, you couldn't walk on it and they had no gas then, only fires. They kept the coal in the bathroom and didn't use the coal shed and the children were all covered in grime. You can't blame the people. They didn't know better, they had always lived like that. They only needed educating: 'You can't take a pig into a palace, can you, it will still be a pig' [Notes 19/07/95].

The council's rather "optimistic" attempt to give the so-called rough people a chance to "mend their ways" by placing them among the 'respectable' people seriously backfired. A number of the 'respectable' tenants moved out because they did not want to be identified with an area that had acquired an increasingly bad reputation. A 'ghetto' was created instead which caused conflict and friction between the established core community and the newcomers. In the eyes of the established inhabitants the local authorities or *the* government were to blame for this. With regard to those families who were stigmatised by the council as problem families when they were moved to the estate, the externally imposed stigma was reproduced locally, within the community. Some of them were soon categorised as 'bad families' — as 'rough' and definitely not 'respectable' — by established members of the community. They were regarded as not having the right attitude to work and as not being able or willing to keep up with the required level of care and cleanliness.

Although the state of the houses in the 'bottom-end' had improved significantly since the 1980s the stigma of the 'rough place' still lingered on. This seemed to be a problem of many working class communities. Wight, for example, observed the same persistence of

stigmatised identifications related to certain places in a Scottish working class community: "Even within such a small place as Cauldmoss fictitious descriptions of these roads gained currency amongst folk living a few hundred yards away: some women talked of how 'half the windows are boarded up, no glass in them at all', when at that time none of the houses were in that state" (Wight 1993:76). He argued that incomers were at a disadvantage because they were allocated hard-to-let council houses. In addition to that they lacked the advantage of involvement in the social life of the community that could generate the moral repute necessary for them to be categorised as belonging to the respectable. All of this contributed to the identification of them with the stigma attached to the area: a process which also had a negative influence on the self identifications of those living in a 'rough area'. Thus, creating a 'ghetto' was a process that was not only facilitated by external forces but also by internal forces intent on safeguarding the local hegemony.

In the case of the 'bottom end' of the estate, the mapping of difference onto public space revealed the ambivalence of the categories through which difference as well as equivalence were articulated in everyday practice. This particular area of the estate had previously also been marked as different. However, in the past it was regarded as the area where the better-off miners' families lived. Despite the fact that respectability was internally not so much perceived to be a question of income but rather of attitude — the discourse of survival constituted poverty as an including rather than an excluding category — there have always been groups and individual inhabitants on the estate that were perceived to be slightly different as far as their incomes and financial resources were concerned. The most likely reason for this was the smaller size of their families. Although the wages in the coal industry increased after nationalisation bringing a large family up still put a strain on the household's finances as long as the children could not make a contribution to the household income. Having a large family also meant being restricted to a low level of consumption. People who had only a few children and had more money to spend were regarded as some kind of 'elite'. However, they were, at the same time, also considered to be 'no different' because they identified themselves with the dominant core community and fulfilled important criteria for being included: they were miners, respectable working class people who took care of their families and did not set themselves apart by publicly displaying markedly different attitudes. They lived the "consensus" and accepted the moral order of the local hegemony which collapsed difference in terms of income and consumption into a politically informed chain of equivalence or as Dai put it: "We all had to bloody realise that we was all the same." Although they were included in the category of the respectable their representation as different could be interpreted in terms of a perceived threat to the unity of the community and even the working class as a whole. It was a threat generated by the dominant capitalist society because the higher amount of money available to them could further the desire to move upward in the social hierarchy and become one of *them*. The image of the 'traitor to his class' who moved upward and forgot his working class 'roots' was always present, not least because of the ambivalence inherent in the, however modified, (re-)production of the discourse of respectability that is, ultimately, a practice consolidating the middle class hegemony. The categorisation as 'the elite' and simultaneously as 'no different' reflected the competing interpretations based on the externally defined, but extremely pervasive, representations of the discourse of respectability and the internally defined representations constituted by the discourse of survival — a discourse that was,

however, totally entangled with that of respectability.

R.:	But I got the impression that, you know, that some people think that the people who live down —
Dai:	Erw Las.
R.:	— yeah, down Erw Las and over there — are different and that a lot of problem cases live down there.
Dai:	No, that is because — Erw Las, all that area down by there, years ago was the elite of Penywaun. I know hundreds of people down there and what happened was the council seen it fit to put problem families in and lo and behold they all went down that area. Lot of them went down that area. And they what they tried to do was, they used to put a bad family, then, in with the good people. But they put so many bad people in that they created a ghetto. That they created it theirselves and it hit back on 'em because — I could take you down there now where there's three, four, five, six houses have been pulled down because they were so bad. But I can take you to that same area — and between the '50s and '60s, I could tell you where people were living down there, right. Dai, Ron, all of them down, Bill, they were all livin' down there and they're no different to me or anybody else. And they were all miners, they would all fetch their families up, and if you spoke to them, their children today they would tell that that street down there used to be the elite street of Penywaun.
R.:	Why the elite?
Dai:	Ah, not the elite — that's the way we put it — you know, no different — how can I put it then, well, they only had one or two children, they never had the big families then. And that's why we call them elite then. You know, when you got a big family going back then, when you had a big family everybody came to put you down 'cause you had big family, oh, they got bugger all, right. That is what — take myself, Jim, that's two of us, Pete, we all have big families then. And because we had big families they thought, oh, we was nothin' then. But it didn't work out that way. It didn't work out that way, you know. See, a lot of people don't remember — that we know all these families then, exactly the same as we do then. And we, I never forget my airs and graces. I never forget my airs and graces, meself personally. I know I was, I lived in a council, I'm glad to live on a council estate. I mean, why we all come to a council estate is, 'cause we couldn't afford anything else. That's why we come to a council estate. Anybody who's livin' on a council estate, they would drop them all, all these that's bought their houses. Why they come to a council estate is because they couldn't afford anything else. I mean, we was all in the same boat. When we come up here first none of us had bloody carpets on the floor, none of us had televisions … . See, a lot of these people don't, they don't know what them had. I mean, for donkeys years we never had a carpet upstairs and we have a carpet upstairs now and a carpet by here. Never had carpets when my kids were small. I never had a washing machine, never had a fridge, never had a television. We all had to bloody realise that we was all the same. There's one little wireless coming over the top on a relay system. Two channels on it. That's what we all had. We couldn't afford nothing else. And they don't like it because I remember them things. And I do tell 'em! I'm not ashamed of it. I'm not ashamed of it. I think, myself personally — we all used to have inspectors come, you know, right, coming to inspect the house. They come inspect my house any time they like. It's always clean, ' know, it wasn't posh. They do always scrub, Missus will always scrub the floor or the kids would always scrub the floors. We always had plenty of grub in the house even though we might have a bloody bit of cardboard in our bloody shoes or only half the trousers. And that's what people forget.
R.:	Ya, I see.

> **Dai:**   See and that's why people run these estates down. When you take — I mean, any estate, I don't care where you go, I mean, Caefelin Parc people goes up there, they pay top prices for the bloody houses, and these are better houses, some of them. My own daughter is livin' in one in Cwmdare. I wouldn't live up there for a pension [Dai 06/07/95].

Dai was speaking from the perspective of somebody who identified himself as a respectable working class man and a miner. However, when he moved to the estate in the early '50s, he fulfilled the criteria for being externally identified as part of the 'rough' working class — particularly because he came from Green Fach, one of the slums of the industrial revolution that was considered to be extremely rough. The reference to the inspectors of the council's housing department clearly showed that his self-image as respectable was continuously contested by outside forces with considerable power over the life of a council tenant. The remark recalling the experience of the housing inspectors' visits was a symbolic expression of the feeling of being controlled by a powerful outside force. Its power and its ability to control manifested itself in the 'legitimate' invasion of the private space of the home by uninvited strangers. Moreover, these acts of control were associated with a feeling that one's moral worth was judged and a constant fear of a negative verdict that could resulted in the humiliating experience of being categorised as non-respectable. Although the inside of the house was considered to be the female domain — the man was in charge of the public presentation of respectability by keeping the garden — the wife and the whole family played a crucial part in the process of articulating a man's respectability. The gendered spatial division of domestic sphere into the female private space of the interior of the home accessible only to the family, friends and invited guests, and the garden visible to all as a male public space, reflected the gendered division of social space that pervaded all aspects of social life on the estate. A man's respectability, nevertheless, depended to some extent on his wife's ability to conform to certain standards and to keep the home neat and tidy. For those identifying themselves as respectable people keeping the house and the garden in impeccable order was an important public symbol of a family's respectability.

"It's like a slum and he don't do his garden"

In Penywaun, as in Cauldmoss (Wight 1993), maintaining a tidy garden was one of the few domestic tasks — certainly the most public one — that directly expressed men's respectability as well as his masculinity. "The constant concern to maintain the neatness of one's garden illustrates how aesthetics are socially determined, in this case shaped by the imperatives of social status: to demonstrate that one was 'nice' and not a 'waster' " (Wight 1993:133). The importance of the public display of respectability for male identity as well as the restrictions on the way it could be expressed emerged clearly from a dispute over the proposed enclosure of the front gardens of a large number of council houses on the estate in the summer of 1995.

   In July the local Tenants' and Residents' Association (TRA) — supported by the Community Development Worker and the Special Projects Officer of the Borough Council — went around the estate showing an exhibition, that was put up in a van, and asked the

tenants to fill in a questionnaire concerning proposals for environmental improvements to the estate's infrastructure and layout. One of the projects put to the tenants was a proposal for the enclosure of the area in front of the houses in certain areas of the estate in order to create little private front gardens. In other streets — those streets not considered to be part of the slums and those streets where a large number of owner occupiers lived — the tenants already had their small enclosed front gardens. The idea, to give those deprived of front gardens their own gardens proved to be quite popular with the tenants. However, the local Labour councillor and Mayor of the Cynon Valley, Tony, was convinced that the enclosure of the front gardens would create problems for himself and the council. A month earlier I had already witnessed the conflict between Tony and the tenants at a meeting of the TRA. In a very heated emotional discussion in which Tony expressed his doubts about the feasibility of the plan one of the tenants told him: "It's not what you want, it's what the tenants want!" She almost shouted at him that they could look after their own gardens and that they did not need somebody else to tell them what to do (*Notes 27/06/95*). During the whole meeting he appeared to be on the defensive. He talked little and when he spoke he kept his voice low. In the interview I conducted with him and his wife a month later he presented his position with much more confidence — most likely because he felt that he did not risk an open conflict in this context. His reasoning still followed the lines of the stereotypical rough/respectable dichotomy that had was the reason for the emotional outbreak of one of the tenants in the TRA meeting.

Tony:	… I'm not happy with everything that they [the TRA] are coming up with — take — they wanna fence, where we got open plan — where we as a council, we cut the grass and maintain it, they wanna fence it all off. I disagree with that because as it is it's looking pretty now — the way it is. Not everyone would look after their gardens. Most people would but there's the few that wouldn't. And what I said, if you had a community ahm communal garden, as I say, a block of houses would have the communal gardens and if they wanted lawn we could still go in and cut it. — There's a lot of, there's one or two people that where up in the house over my statement on that — so, you know, who are you to say that? Well, I'm elected member on the — and I represent everybody not one or two.
R.:	But —
Tony:	Now the thing is if you got like say a single parent family or — they can't do their back gardens at the moment without — to the front.
Brenda:	Can't afford to the mowers, can they.
Tony:	Certainly, if you gonna fence it off that means they got to buy equipment then, you know, to look after the gardens. Who's gonna supply the money for that.
R.:	But the majority want their own —
Brenda:	I'll accept that.
R.:	— front garden and —
Tony:	Well, I haven't seen the results of that yet. They, when was it — last week?
Brenda:	It was 92 per cent, I think.
Tony:	Well, if it's the view of 92 per cent, obviously I will go along with it. Then when things go wrong then, I will turn round and say well I told you so. Now, they expect me then to go to the new authority and say we want money to put this right. And they get, and I know they gonna tell me, well those people decided that's what they wanted and that's what they've got.
Brenda:	On the other hand, mind, why shouldn't they have their own front gardens, we've got them. We got our front garden, I don't share with anyone.

Tony: It is the way the village was planned.

Brenda: But of course the original bid for the council was communal. It was communal that was on the plans, i'n' it. It was communal blocks.

Tony: Well, I, I —

R.: I mean, if the people want their own front gardens and say that they want to look after them themselves —

Brenda: But can they afford to buy it, a lawn mower?

R.: I mean, that's up to them then, isn't it?

Tony: Yeah, but it's great saying it but can they, you know, say right we give them the front gardens, we fence them off or run walling and then they can't afford to maintain it after. They haven't got the money.

Brenda: And then somebody complains then to him, oh, so-and-so is not looking after their garden, will you report them.

Tony: You know I'd love to see everyone have their own gardens and looking beautiful. Like, I know I got me own problems. I got my own garden — if you've seen, you've seen my house, haven't you? My lawn mower broke down the day I couldn't afford a new one strait away. My garden is getting in a bit of a mess. So, I'm working. What about the people that's not working? How can they afford to buy the equipment? I just hope they prove me wrong, that's all.

Brenda: On the other hand if that's what they want you're there to represent them.

Tony: Because I know, if we do that project and it goes wrong it's gonna be very difficult then for me to put it right, financially.

R.: Yeah, but as long as the people involved want to have their own gardens, I mean, they won't agree with anything short of having their own private garden.

Tony: Well, they have got their private gardens at the rear of the property and — we give them the front. Now there is one gentleman now from Erw Las he got a beautiful garden, we give them an award here in the council for his design and development of his garden. Now, I've seen other gardens and beautiful gardens and next door is a mess. The fence, you know, pushed over by or the weeds — they're not looked after, I get complaints about the state of the gardens here.

R.: But they're not the responsibility of the council any more, if they're private gardens.

Tony: Ah they're not, see, they're council tenants.

Brenda: He still gets complaints from people that they don't look after their gardens. So, if they don't he's gonna — they gonna come to him, aren't they! But if it's their choice, it's down to them.

Tony: Well…

R.: And the council has got to do something about it? If you get complaints do you have to do something about it, if they're council tenants?

Tony: Yeah, that's the — actually, rubbish that is. If it's rubbish now, we got to go in and pay for the — So, you know, it's creating and expense for the council then. Well, it's create — it's gonna be great for the people, the genuine people who — that will look after their gardens and it will be, you know, hopefully I'm proven wrong. Now, you gonna get the odd one or two no matter what you say that aren't gonna look after their gardens.

Brenda: I think let them have their own gardens [Tony and his wife Brenda 31/07/95].

A number of people in the club and visitors of the exhibition complained that Tony was against the enclosure of front gardens in the bottom end area because he thought of it as "a slum" and was accused of having said this in public. When the exhibition was shown in Erw Las, a street in the bottom end area, the people who felt denigrated by his remarks reversed the stereotype by accusing him to be the scrounger, abusing the privileges of a

councillor and working the system to his own benefit.

> When I arrived in Erw Las the van was already full of people. The special projects officer (Liz) and one of the women from the TRA and two women who lived down here were sitting in the van. A number of heated discussions between the local women who came to see the exhibition about the opinions of outsiders on Erw Las broke out. They complained about overspilled drains and broken gullies as well as cracks in the walls of their houses that didn't get done by the council. One of the women, in her mid-'40s, from Erw Las said: "They always let us down. You're Erw Las. Even our own councillor!" They were talking about Tony [the local councillor] who was literally pulled to pieces. Another woman complained that he had called the people of Erw Las "dirty buggers down there". A younger woman (28 years of age and living in Erw Las for 6 years) said: "The council likes him better than anybody else. I've seen the council at work [in his house]. They complained that he would get everything done and that he was living in a big 3 bedroom house. And there was yet another story about Tony: A couple of women made angry comments about him because there was always a picture of him in the local paper (Cynon Valley Leader) but: "He didn't want his photo taken down here" [and he was asked to]. One of the women involved in the TRA told me that he was said to have repeatedly made nasty remarks about this part of Penywaun in the pub.
>
> Shortly before they packed in for the day an older woman told Liz and the woman from the TRA that she had never had any trouble with the kids here and she's been living here for 20 years. She wouldn't want to move from here: "Some people take to it. They don't want to leave. There's a lot of families [kin in different houses] living here." An old age pensioner said 48 years ago there were only 8 families living here but then they had started building the whole area up. The people were nice and friendly then but nowadays you have to lock the doors even if you're leaving the house for only a short while [Notes 12/07/95].

It was impossible to find out whether the councillor had actually called the area "a slum" or not. Some people could not believe it because he had grown up in the 'bottom end' himself and his parents were still living there. But other people believed that he could be foolish enough to voice such an opinion. Although he was very guarded in the interview I conducted with him, the rhetoric he employed to express his disagreement with the idea of private, enclosed front gardens revealed his stereotypical categorisations of the people living in the 'bottom end' area. In the interview, which took place in the council offices, he did not call the area a 'slum' or people living down there 'dirty buggers'. However, the way in which he constructed his arguments on this, and other, occasions was interpreted as a betrayal of the "consensus". The seemingly logical connection he made between the lack of financial resources of the people living "down there" to buy the necessary gardening equipment and their inability to keep their own gardens neat and tidy, was bound to cause trouble with the tenants because it put their respectability into question. He argued that because of the high number of unemployed living in the area he was afraid that the council would have to foot the bill. In his explanation he used a structural model of unemployment — they cannot afford it because they are dependent on benefits — but he also resorted to a model of individual deservingness (moral worth) — 'the genuine' vs. 'the odd few'.

Clearly, the "genuine", the respectable people took care of their possessions and were concerned about the public display of respectability. But he was convinced that the "odd few" would spoil the whole project. The 'bottom enders' who identified themselves as respectable were bound to feel denigrated by the use of stereotypical identifications inspired by the dominant discourse of class and respectability. In the councillor's representation respectability was not presented as a matter of attitude but rather as a matter of income —

and even class, in the sense of a common sense connection between a higher income and a higher class status. Apparently his arguments, and even more so his polemic, against the enclosure of the front gardens were perceived as active disidentification with the ideology of unity and solidarity constituted by the discourse of survival — the fact that is was an attack that was launched by somebody who was to some extent still regarded as a local boy made it even more particularly problematic. Although the contradictory identifications of certain people or groups according to both a structural model and a model of individual deservingness (moral worth) was a common feature of internal interaction, conflict and the deflection of externally projected stereotypes, it was considered to be absolutely illegitimate as a public comment on a 'community' that tried to keep up the image of unity at the public face of its symbolic boundary. Furthermore, what made the local councillor's position in the dispute over the front garden enclosures somewhat precarious was the ambiguity of his position. Despite the fact that he was still counted as a local, as a politician he was also identified as an outsider, as one of *them*, and his loyalty to the 'community' could easily be disputed by applying a generalised stereotype of politicians: "That's all they [politicians] are, it's crooks, gangsters, right" (Arthur 11/07/95).

Apart from the widely shared image of politicians as people who work only for their own benefit or the benefit of the dominant class there were a number of local and personal reasons for negating his authority. The fact that he, as local councillor and Mayor of the Cynon Valley, held considerable power that could not be controlled by those men who held positions of power on the estate posed a potential threat to the local hegemony. For working class politicians the rise in the political hierarchy opened up new experiential spaces that were divorced from the everyday life of the working class communities where they got involved in the (re-)production of antagonistic discourses. Many of the men who were meeting in the club felt that he was dissociating himself from social ties to the community and perhaps even to the working class. In the case of a Labour MP, who was born and grew up on the estate, this feeling led to the exclusion of the person in question as "a traitor to his class" (Notes 13/09/95). The critical attitude towards politicians and the fear that upward social mobility would endanger the consensus and lead to a dissociation from the group and class, found its expression in practices of resistance. One way of expressing resistance was the symbolic reversal of classed stereotypes projected on the 'community' or some of its members, another way was the use of ridicule.

On various occasions the councillor was made the object of ridicule. The people saw him as the notorious "donkey with a Labour badge" or attacked his masculinity by declaring that he was only a figurehead and his wife, Brenda, was "the brains" of the family and that "he's thick as two planks" — there is a saying in the valleys, expressing the conservatism inherent in the 'traditional' adherence to the Labour Party, that you could put up a donkey with a Labour badge and it would still get all the votes. In the dispute over the front garden enclosures Will, a committee man of the local working man's club living in the 'bottom end' area of the estate, used the garden, as public symbol of respectability, against the councillor by accusing him of neglecting his garden — it looked "like a shit tip". Considering the accusations heard all over the estate he also seemed to imply that Tony was taking unfair advantage of the privileges of his office — his house and his garden were later done by the council while others were still waiting for repairs to be made to their houses. Will took great pride in his well kept garden and identified himself as a respectable

man. He reacted to the stigmatisation by the councillor by making a mockery of him. The councillor was undoubtedly obsessed with publicity and there was almost no edition of the local paper without a picture showing him with his chain of office. In the dispute Will used the councillor's obsession with publicity to negate his authority and to demonstrate his own respectability. He threatened to have a picture taken of himself in a mayoral pose in front of his house but instead of the mayor's symbol of power, the chain of office, he would put a chain of hanging baskets with flowers around his neck. However, even Will did not totally reject the representation of the area as a "slum". He deflected the negative identifications onto those people living on the estate he considered not to be respectable and held the authorities responsible for the infiltration of a respectable area by the rough outsiders.

Will:	… And of course you got some then that they're fetching in from the other places, down around by there. What they're doing is creating a slum in a sense then. They're fetching people in from the Swansea Valley, all over the place, ones that've been causing trouble, that the neighbours don't want. And they're shippin' them in and they've admitted that they puttin' them down that end. They're keeping that like a dirty end then. Chuck them all down there then and that's how they're doing it.
R.:	I mean, I've heard that Tony said —
Will:	Oh aye —
R.:	— about the bottom end, he said it's —
Will:	Not worth doing up.
R.:	— yeah and it's like a slum.
Will:	Aye.
Gwyn:	Aye.
R.:	And, I mean, people living down in Erw Las —
Will:	There was a hell of a row. I was one, I was one that went down that night. I heard about it, so I went down to where he had that, ' know, a van, i'n' it. I heard he said this now. What he said was, there was house down there like, you seen the front of my house, did you?
R.:	Yeah.
Will:	Seen the amount of gardens I've done?!
R.:	Yes.
Will:	Well I'd liked to have had mine fenced off but where I came from, and if you can imagine then where I came from Incline [Row] — That experience is still with me, right. I was born in a slum and as I said, if you want to I can create a slum for you 'cause I knew how to create it then, right. If I had the money and I was to put brick walls around the front of the house. That would be the worst thing that I could do 'cause what I do then, I would stand out like sore thumb to all the poorer kids around the back. And they'd come out and start stoning my house and — I know that because I've lived in that experience, i'n' it. You see why I wouldn't fence mine off. I could fence it off if I had the money I wouldn't still do it. But when he came about now that they all gonna fence them off, I thought, oh great. At least now they're fencing them all off and nobody then could pick my house out and say, who the hell he thinks he is, he's fenced his off, right. Of course then I heard now that Tony stated, that they wasn't gonna do it from the Colliers' [Colliers' Arms: the pub at the top end of the area] down because they wasn't fit to do — the house.
Gwyn:	Ohhh.
Will:	Oh, Christ if he did — I went down looking for — follow that now and the van

had gone ten minutes before I gone down there. And it had gone early, right, from there. So I phoned him up. Now, when I phoned him up his Missus answered. So I said, could I speak to Tony, I said, 'cause I remember him as a kid, Christ, I have been drinking with him. Not that he would, he's trying to what I have — his bloody garden was like a shit tip, right.

Gwyn: Now this Tony you're talking about is a cowin' fool.

Will: Aye, he's going by here now, i'n' he.

Gwyn: Aye.

Will: So when you were here I phoned him up now and she answered. She said, he's not here at the moment, she said. She said, can I take a message, then I said, I'd rather speak to him. Oh, oh all right, she said, when he's not here, I can deal with his business. Oh I said, if that's the case then, can you tell me, I said, did Tony make a statement saying that the Colliers', from there down will not be fenced off because it's not fit to set. Oh, I've had a lot of complaints about that, she said, but he didn't actually say that. What he said was, listen to that I said, hang on now you've gone off the question. I asked you a question but you would like — all politics now is it — you've gone around it in a different — you haven't answered me. What you've done, I said, is put me in her way.

R.: Yes, that's what they usually do.

Will: No, she said, I see what your complaint was. Now, I said, look, I said, I'm not worried about your complaints, I am asking you one question that I want you to answer me: did Tony, or did he not, state that from the Colliers' down it wasn't fit to do. I think you're gettin' a bit stroppy now, she said. I said, I'm not gettin' a bit stroppy, I'm raising my voice now, I said, because I cannot get a straight answer out of you. You're evading the questions, I said, you were going on to other things.

R.: Hm!

Will: Did you attend the first meetings, she said. No, I said, I haven't attended any meeting. Well, here you are then, she said, why are you so interested in it now. Because, I said, now I hear the statement of what he said. And I said I've lived in my street by here, I said, for 28 years now, I said, i'n' it. I've always looked after my garden, I've always looked after my house. Well, I tell you this now, I said, you're putting all shit people down around the back of us now, I said. I said, maybe it's hard and unfortunate for them, that they haven't worked, a lot of them don't want to work anyway. But, I said, that's their worry about, but what I'm on about, I said, if you wanna create a slum, I said, tell Tony to come down to my house, I said, I make a list up for him, I said. I show you how to create a slum because I was in the bugger, I said, i'n' it. So right, oh you are getting stroppy now, she said. I'm not getting stroppy, I said. I seen him the other day, I said, having a photo taken outside his house, I said, with his chain [chain of office of the Mayor of the Cynon Valley] on, ' know, what they got now.

Gwyn: Aye.

R.: [laughing]

Will: And I said, I can remember your garden like a shit tip over there, I said. But I said, all of a sudden you had it done up. Oh, she said, oh, you, you, you, you are gettin' stroppy. You tell him to come over here, I said, with his camera and I'll sit outside my house, I said, but instead of having a chain, I said, I put all hanging baskets around my neck. You have it on the front page then, stating that this man now don't need to have his [front garden] fenced off because it's like a slum and he don't do his garden and God knows what else. I said, I have all the bask… — oh bugger you, I said, so I put the phone down. Anyway he come over the house in night I was up at club with you I think then. And he'd come over the house and there was a note put through the door. That he had come, right, and that he would call again. He never did call again. But what he don't realise, see my mate

now, is on the council. And my mate happen to go in the office now about two days after and she was in there now and she was telling her friend, oh she said there was some lunatic on the phone the other night. He reckoned he was gonna come over the house and put some hanging baskets around my neck.

All: [laughing]

Will: Well, my mate now was laughing like hell, see 'cause he said, I was laughing now but I couldn't tell her, he said, i'n' it. So he said, for Christ's sake, don't let on, he said, I told you. But he said, anyway, and I'd reckon that I was gonna put the hanging baskets round her neck. It wasn't that, I said, I'd have — and what I told her was I'd have the Aberdare Leader up an' all for them to come and take photos of me sittin' outside my house with hanging baskets round me and all my flowers and say it's this man's garden we're fencing off. So, I never heard no more from him again now — bit down the back of me now, I know for a fact then, there's one boy now, he's moved in again down there now. He's — that's all he does, break in old peoples' houses and since he's been back down there, that's all we're having is break-ins again. But who is to blame? You know who is to blame! … You were saying how things have changed, like. The reason, I think it's changed is because in the old days the poor then were all poor then ' know. I gather they were all average but today now you've had so much redundancy money and then for a minute the ones that had nothing got [£] 30,000. They go bananas! Their kids, boaah, have what you want, here's some money for you, shut up and leave me alone, I'm over the club or whatever. Here's a couple of quid for you to spend it. And those kids then have been brought up with money and all of a sudden they say, Dad, 100 pound for me to go to town. I haven't got money, my bloody money is all gone. Where do you think I got money from. And then you got, ' know, the friction in the house. So these kids then can't take it out of their parents, they go to somebody else and that's what I reckon it is. It's the redundancy money causes a lot of difference to what it did in '30s then. When you was sacked in the '30s, as he said —

R.:   You didn't get anything, yeah.

Will: The people in the concrete works, said to him, sorry there's no more work left, that was the end of that. He never had no redundancy.

Gwyn: No, no redundancy.

Will: But the redundancy has caused a lot of — friction, I think. … [Will & Gwyn 03/10/95].

In his rather emotional response to the councillor's identification of the area as not respectable Will used the same dichotomy between the rough — he called them 'the shit people' — and the respectable to deflect the stereotypical identification away from people like himself. The ascribed lack of 'care' and 'cleanliness' was not the only criterion for the identification as 'rough' and the exclusion from the respectable. The strongest stereotype used in legitimising their exclusion was their alleged unwillingness to work. The attitude to work was the crucial criterion for being identified as respectable, being a 'real' man, and deserving assistance in times of need. The scroungers, on the other hand, who allegedly haven't worked a single day in their life, did not deserve the benefit payments they could claim because they "don't want to work anyway". However, being unemployed — even long-term unemployed — did not necessarily lead to a categorisation as a scrounger who was not willing to seek work. Although unemployment was affecting a large proportion of the inhabitants of the estate, the identification of individuals as workers or unemployed was not a major cause for the growing fragmentation of the 'community'.

"There's a hell of a change down here."

An important factor for the growing fragmentation, mentioned by Will (see interview above) fuelled by extensive unemployment were the miners themselves. The de-industrialisation and the loss of thousands of jobs for the male population had a profound influence on the living conditions in the former mining communities. After the large-scale pit closures the miners' hegemony lost some of its persuasiveness. The discourse of survival, which generated the image of the community as united in poverty, hardship and survival, became severely dented and worn. In addition to that, the unemployed ex-miners were acting in contradiction to the "consensus" of equality in poverty. They were threatening the unity and solidarity that they defined as essential for the persistence of the 'community'. Since the turn of the century the coal industry and the miners' union had dominated life in the mining communities. In spite of the constant attacks on its growing political influence by the bourgeoisie the miners were able to push their own hegemonic project forward. The union pervaded all aspects of life in the valleys whether at work or in the community. The tightly knit networks of social relationships created in this context facilitated the imposition of conformity and the naturalisation of the locally dominant moral prescriptions. Through persuasion the amount of pressure exerted on individuals to comply was considerable. Any negative articulations directed against the "consensus" were quickly sanctioned — sometimes even by rather extreme measures like throwing stones through the windows or setting cars on fire (Notes 24/09/95). After the pit closures the influence of the union on the former miners and their communities decreased rapidly. Without a job and with their redundancy money in the bank some former miners felt no longer obliged to refrain from publicly displaying their newly won consumption potential.

> No, because they had all the redundancy money, didn't they. — They had, say 27,000, slammed it into their houses, painted, you know. A lot slammed it in that way. They didn't have that here, did they. There wasn't so — you know. But — there's more work in there [in the Rhondda Valley] than over here [in the Cynon Valley]. You had the odd few, that 'd slammed their money back into the pit. Then that was — around here — they slammed their money back in. Well, a lot of them slammed it into their house since the pits closed down, you can see that. That they slammed their money into their houses and bought the house or paid off the mortgage, did their house up. I can see that. You know, you can tell — I can say, oh he's been an unemployed miner now he's hav… you can see that. If — their new car and whatever. But, then, the money won't last, was it, the money don't last [Anne 02/07/95].

One of the reasons for the different attitude towards the spending of redundancy payments seemed to be based on the belief held by many miners that they deserved the money. They had worked hard, in dangerous conditions, and when their industry was demolished had fought for their redundancy payments. However, in Arthur's justification of redundancy payments to the miners one can also find an element of glorification of the miners' struggle. He represented the miners as different from other sections of the working class that were categorised as "gutless".

> *R.:*   Yeah, all right. … There's one thing, you know, do you think that the redundancy

payments which the miners got might have caused some resentment because other people didn't get any redundancy money?

Arthur: Oh Jeff… Jeffrey called it resentment — but it's, that's their fault.

R.:   Yeah?

Arthur: The reason why the redundancy payment was so high in the mining industry — because they were afraid of us — The people didn't get redundancy, they never fought, so they knew they didn't have to pay them nothing, to buy them. They do away with them because they were gutless. They didn't fight. They have paid us — and it was double it if we had fought, tried to fight back, because they were afraid of us. That's as simple as that. It's not complicated. If they thought they had a way without paying us any little penny, that's what they would have done. But they knew the only way out was to pay off 'cause … if there was no redundancy payment they would never ever got away with what they done with the British coal industry. Now other people when they lost their jobs in these different factories at different things, right, they never fought, never ever fought, and that's why they never got a penny out of it. I don't feel guilty over it, right. And anybody says to me, well, you got our money. I've done nothing, I tell them straight, 'cause I fought from the day I started in this, see, and not just for myself, I fought for the health service and anybody else who was on strike out there. You never ever fought for no bugger, right. … And that's as simple as that, Rich, that's my opinion, and I know I'm right! I know [he was laughing] [Arthur 04/10/95].

Thus, redundancy payments after the pit closures produced a twofold effect. Firstly, the miners were able to distinguish themselves from other unemployed on the basis of the image of the tough fighters of the working class movement deserving a special treatment even after they had lost their jobs. Secondly, the redundancy payments appeared to have radically altered the consumption patterns of many ex-miners and caused some resentment in the unemployed who had not worked in the mining industry and therefore did not receive some kind of financial compensation for the loss or their jobs. However, redundancy payments produced only a temporary change in consumption patterns because first of all, for as long as the redundancy payment lasted they were not entitled to state support and, secondly, many of the miners were not able to find a new job and became long-term unemployed.

Like I say, you have the redundancy but — that's really a massive — you know. If you go having another job perhaps it wouldn't have been so bad but if you got to live of it — then there's a limit of time how far, how long it's gonna last [Peter 02/08/95].

Although the financial advantage of unemployed miners was only temporary, their public display of difference threatened the maintenance of the increasingly fragile unity or as Will put it quite bluntly, "They go bananas!" and as a result "… stand out like sore thumb to all the poorer kids around the back" — a position that Will was keen to avoid. The problems which arose from the public display of new material inequalities were also evident in Dai's (a retired miner and union official: see page 86) comments on the people who had more money and had bought their houses. He argued that they tended to forget the reasons why they had moved to a council estate in the first place. In his eyes their negation of their own poverty in the past described a process of dissociation from the "consensus" and was, therefore, endangering the survival of the community. Thus, mining communities that had provided the arena for the competition between working class and bourgeois

hegemonic projects had to face a new threat, one that was weakening the local hegemony from within. Many (former) miners were, on the one hand, still profoundly influenced by the miners' hegemonic project which to some extent continued to dominate the discursive space of the former mining communities. On the other hand, they disregarded the moral prescriptions constituted by the discourse of survival because they publicly displayed their greater potential for consumption.

The process of dissociation from the ideology of equality in poverty appeared to be accompanied by a shift from collective identifications towards more individualistic identifications. The lack of spaces for the (re-)production of collective experiences, like the workplace, the individualisation associated with unemployment — especially long-term unemployment — as well as the Conservative discourse of individualism (cf. Cohen 1994:171, Jessop et al. 1988:177-178) that was forced onto the working class, changed the perspectives of many former miners. One of the effects of this process manifested itself in the articulation of material inequalities as a new way of constructing difference according to consumption. The meaning of the "keeping up with the Joneses"-effect was slowly being subverted. The community seemed to be in a state of flux, shifting the stress from the emulation of immaterial values of respectability towards the material manifest expression of individual worth through consumption.

Will:	There's a hell of a change down here. It seems to be all mixed up now.
Gwyn:	Aye 'cause in them —
Will:	I don't know, I, can't say like, I, he [his father] lived in the '30s, i'n' it. But I mean from what I had seen of it that is the problem. 90 per cent of them in them days were all the same — equal! No man had much more than somebody else did. And if you did you shared it with next door. Today now, the person next door if he has new windows today you gotta compete with him. If you don't he's gonna be better than you … [Will & Gwyn 03/10/95].

As a result of the weakened hegemony the local working class elite lost some of its power to define, and social control became less effective. The growing fear of being shopped (denounced) for hobbling (working on the side) to the Department of Social Security (DSS) by neighbours, shed some light on the increasing individualisation and competition on the estate. A growing number of tenants seemed to feel no responsibility to any kind of collective (the neighbourhood, the community, the union lodge or the club). In the past the majority of the male population worked in the coal industry and the union lodge and the welfare club were powerful and persuasive enough to fuel collective identifications even on a relatively inhomogeneous council estate. Today, however, the influence of the one remaining institution, the club, is considerably reduced and only backed up by a smaller group of men. For those inhabitants of the estate who still believed in the moral prescriptions constituted by the discourse of survival it seemed that individualistic concepts of competition, fostered by the bourgeois hegemonic project of the Conservatives, suddenly got out of hand. When the relative equality of access to financial resources was disappeared because of the redundancy payments which only benefited the miners and the financial restrictions imposed by unemployment became more pressing, fragmentation increased. In addition to that, Will believed that there was a connection between the increasing violence of younger people and the individualising pressure to compete, especially in the consumption

of material goods.

Will: But I think, I be honest, mind, I think — ' know, like they say today then about, ' know, the violence. They can't then see why it increases — ' know the violence an' all this, why it's increasing an' all that. And they don't know why. Is it to do with the families — that's me only theory that, I seem to think then, is in the '30s everyone, well the biggest part of the people then … were equal, weren't they. More or less the same.

Gwyn: Now what …

Will: Children was, you know, was all the same. But today now because of this redundancy — people have finished, all of a sudden they got money that they never had before. They've gone — I've seen people they had a chance then to buy their own houses and a lot of people bought their own houses. But when they had their redundancy instead of being happy now with just this house they built a big extension on the back, costin' them tens, 12,000 an' all that. Then all of a sudden they couldn't get a job elsewhere now — for all that money went. And, I say now, they have their houses taken off them. In the meantime, when they had that money, as I said, they'd seen to the kids they all get another bloody feat, here is a tener, bugger off to town an' all this, i'n' it. Those kids obviously had more than what my kids had to go to town 'cause I was working I didn't have the money to give them. They could see a difference now with these kids had money. They didn't have the money. Then you had all this — they come and say, Dai next has had a new suit an' this, ohhh he said, it, it — why can't I have it, a new suit. Well, I'm working. Ah but his father is not. Ah but his father had redundancy. He had 30,000. I haven't had no, what they call, i'n' it. Then you'd have the friction in the house. These kids, you know, will have a friction against one another. That's why I reckon it is. I reckon the government caused a lot of the friction by ah — know, the redundancy.

Gwyn: Aye.

Will: Was a lot ah — a hell of a lot to do with it.

R.:   Hm, hm.

Gwyn: Oh, aye.

Will: It may have, even you lot then. You imagine you now, say you had 30,000 when you've worked in a pit now, same as you next door, but he had a little bit more time off. He only had 20,000. Thing is now he's not talking to you because you've had 10,000 more than him. Then you've got, in the old days, when they were all the same, nobody shopped one another. You know, shopped you because you was doing a little job. But today now they've created such a, what they call now, the government, that I haven't got no money and they all of a sudden now I see you next door, oh he's going there today, he's hobblin' there now, wa'n' it. Pick the phone up, now i'n' it, shop him now to the social, you know. And that's what happens. It's a different — I don't know — the government have caused a hell of a lot of it.

R.:   Yes!

Gwyn: It's the people then have only just been led on there.

Will: But in them days there was — they didn't have this redundancy.

Gwyn: No, no.

Will: And that to me was the biggest bedbug of all because, I will be honest, I admire the miners. It's no one I admire more than Arthur but I do often think why did Arthur have an extra amount of money and yet when I finished on the buildings, why won't I have it. I worked just as hard, I never had a penny.

Gwyn: No, no, no.

Will: And I got a bit of bitterness in me then against, not against the miners, 'cause

when they were on strike me and my mate was the biggest one for keeping them. Know like, you're going up the club now in the afternoon there'd be a few miners there, I was working then. Oh boys, drink up, and I'd buy 'em beer. But I can remember buying one bloke beer regular and he had, when he had his redundancy and I had finished work —

Gwyn: He never offered you —

Will: I walked in, I never had a pint back of him. And I never forget that. It's still stuck in the guts like.

Gwyn: Was also —

Will: I also remember, mind Arthur when he was off, I used to take him veg up from the garden, i'n' it. Arthur as soon as he finished work, started back to work. He hadn't started back a couple of weeks, I was in the club there, I can remember it now, Arthur come over, drink for me and the Mrs. an' all that. What the hell are you doing Arthur, you only just — I haven't forgotten what you did for me — know, when I was off. Know, Arthur is one in a million.

Gwyn: Aye that's a — that's what I say.

Will: I got a whole lot of respect, an' what you got, for Arthur. You wouldn't have Tower now, if it wasn't for the likes of Arthur fighting for it.

…

Will: I'm only saying now I got a little bit of bitterness in me — to say that I worked all my life from the time I left school at 15 — I went straight — I finished on the Christmas — you had a fortnights Christmas holidays, wa'n' it, if you was in school. I finished on the Christmas and I was starting work on the New Years Day in the shop fitters. As I said, I worked for 3 pound then it went up to, I think it was 5 pound odd or something —

Gwyn: Not a difference ah —

Will: Is it, you know — you worked hard like. There was no union — they didn't believe in union. If you complained you was out through the door. You, you couldn't say nothing, you worked long hours. I'd go to work in the morning, i'n' it, 7 o'clock my mother wouldn't know whether I'd be coming home that day or the following day because, perhaps you go out to do a shop fitting job and you'd be out. But all I'm saying is, the bitterness, know like you was saying the difference between the 30s and now, I reckon is through a lot, is through the government causing that through, know, this redundancy caper [Will & Gwyn 03/10/95].

For Will disregarding the fundamental rules of reciprocity appropriate to rituals of social drinking meant a dissociation from the moral foundations of the "consensus". That some of the miners in the club did not feel obliged to buy him pints when he became unemployed, and they had received their redundancy payments, was interpreted as yet another symptom of the rise of individualism and the decline of the value of solidarity. He, nevertheless, did not blame the miners in general for the changes and the growing inequality. On the contrary, his admiration for the miners — his father and many of his friends were miners — showed that the discourse of survival, which fostered a mythical image of the tough and righteous men fighting for all the working class, was still very powerful. Instead of seeking the reasons for the changes which caused a feeling of bitterness towards the miners the blame was transferred to the Conservative government. The Conservative government and the bourgeois elite was held responsible — apparently not without good reason — for increasing fragmentation and individualism within working class communities which threatened the identification with and the loyalty to the collective. The destructive influences of capitalist society, dominated by the powerful and persuasive Conservative hegemonic project,

were experienced as the direct application of force — e.g. the poll tax, benefit cuts or large scale surveillance of unemployed in order to prevent the so-called benefit fraud — but also indirectly as subverting the local hegemony. The success of the Conservative's hegemonic project in dominating the political discourse in British society, and subverting the local hegemony, was considered to be the reason for competition, fragmentation, individualisation and the resulting feeling of powerlessness.

Thus, his critique of the miners disappeared behind the *them/us*-dichotomy and the conflict was once more deflected onto the antagonistic 'other'. Through the construction of a powerful force outside the community intent on destroying or exploiting it, the unity of the 'community', however fragile and temporary, could be maintained. The discourse of respectability was a key to understanding the identifications, relationships and practices of working class people because it was, as Skeggs (1997:1) pointed out, "… one of the most ubiquitous signifiers of class." It did not only provide a framework for internal differentiation but it was also a way of contextualising the local hegemony within the discursive space of British society as a whole. However, the process of deflection through the construction of a classed *them/us*-dichotomy raised questions regarding the power relations between the mining (working class) 'community' and the wider (capitalist) society: who are *they* and why are *they* different to *us*?

They don't know what it's like: the 'them'/'us'-dichotomy in Welsh working class culture

We have seen how powerful the representation of the 'other' in the discourse of survival can be for the development of practices of resistance and for glossing over the apparent contradictions arising from processes of deflection rooted in the discourse of respectability. The crucial representational device employed in the processes of 'othering' as well as positive self-identification is the *them/us*-dichotomy. It is inextricably connected to the concept of class — or, more precisely, to the local concept of the working class. As I have shown in the previous chapters, the local concept of the working class developed in a particular, historically distinct, discursive field in which the discourses of socialism, survival, respectability and masculinity converged in a hegemonic project, initiated by socialist politicians and trade union leaders, and maintained by trade unionists, rank-and-file miners and the people in the mining communities.

Demotic intellectuals, mostly trade union activists and miners, who occupied the key positions in the social networks at work and in the community, played a crucial role in the (re-)production of those discourses that achieved dominance in the (mining) communities. These discourses converged in a socialist hegemonic project which, although it attempted to dominate the whole society, managed to establish only fairly localised forms of hegemony. At the local level the persuasive power of socialist ideology, boosted by demotic intellectuals, was experienced in the practices of interaction in an occupationally and socially homogeneous environment. Solidarity and mutual help in times of crisis as well as the seemingly clear-cut 'othering' of *them*, constructed as the antithesis to *us*, and a feeling of hope that the future would see an end to the dominance of *them* over *us*, were key expressions of the hegemonic ideal. The articulations of the categories of *them* and *us* were based on a complex and

sometimes contradictory local concept of power and its distribution in society. A concept of power that was inextricably connected to the concept of class constituted in a field of contestation created by the antagonism between the socialist hegemonic project and the bourgeois capitalist hegemony (see chapter 2). Class categories provided the framework for the construction of similarity and difference in terms of the collective categories *them* and *us* for both sides. But class, as a symbol of difference and similarity, that was crucial for (self-)identification, cannot be separated from the problem that "… working class people would not earn a living if they did not enter into some sort of dependent and exploitative relation with capital" (Narotzky 1997:218). The "exploitative relation with capital" provided a crucial component for the constitution of a classed power differential. In the Welsh context this was also connected to the construction of ethnic categories of difference.

On the one hand, the stereotypical image of the 'rough' and 'primitive' proletarian was added to the colonialist stereotype of the Welsh as 'primitives' produced by the discourse of national identity in the dominant English society. On the other hand, the stereotyped 'primitive', 'Welsh' working class identified the capitalists — they experienced in everyday life as the embodiment of the capitalist economy — who were exploiting them, not only in terms of class as the 'fat cats' of the upper classes but also in terms of ethnicity as 'English'. 'Ruling England' was a condensation symbol expressing the effects of the power differential as well as legitimating resistance against oppression by any kind of state bureaucracy (see Diedrich 1993, chapter 8 for a discussion of the concept of "ruling England"). It was also a way to conceptualise relationships of dominance and subordination which often rendered them powerless in their interaction with state agencies. Even the local authorities, dominated by the local Labour Party, were seen as part of an alien(ating) apparatus of domination. At the beginning of my fieldwork I had to suffer the consequences of these categorisations when I was confronted, one afternoon in the club, by two old age pensioners who thought that I was working for the local council — they had seen me at an exhibition organised by the Tenants' and Residents' Association, the Community Development Worker and the Borough Council's Special Projects Officer (see page 87). They believed that I was one of those outsiders who came to the estate to dominate and exploit them and I had great difficulties convincing them that I was not working for *them* (the Borough Council or the DSS). They told me:

> "We've always been exploited by those English bastards. If you had a big posh house up there and I had small house down here, you wouldn't like being told what to do by those bastards up there, would you?" I replied, "No, I wouldn't", and he said, "See, you don't like that. Those English bastards do that all the time. They're exploiting us" [Notes 17/07/95]!

While England was a symbol for capitalist society and the coal-owners, the men who believed in the salience of the local hegemony identified with South Wales as the centre of an anti-capitalist hegemonic project. Arthur, for example, was proud that "South Wales is socialist" — in contrast to England that "has never returned a Labour Government". For him "being Welsh mean[t] being socialist" but he nevertheless regarded himself, first and foremost, as an "internationalist" (Notes 11/09/95). For many working class people in South Wales ethnic identity has, in a sense, for a long time been "a sedimented element of Welsh working-class consciousness", as Adamson (1988:23) argued — it was, however, a

distinctive "working class consciousness" that was constructed as *Welsh*.

Nevertheless, in the context of the English-speaking mining communities of South Wales Welsh ethnic identity was often regarded as part of an ideological discourse controlled by Welsh nationalists. Welsh nationalists were perceived as being engaged in a political project that was undermining working class unity. A unity that was, according to the key discourses of the socialist hegemonic project, a prerequisite for the successful struggle against capitalist exploitation. Welsh nationalism was resisted because it was considered to be part of the bourgeoisie's attempt to undermine the persuasiveness of the miners' (socialist) hegemonic project. Thus, the category of *them* did not only include capitalists and Englishmen but also Welshmen from North Wales — defined as the stronghold of Welsh nationalism — who were constructed as "conservative" nationalists serving capitalism by dividing the working class — Phil: "They're all conservatives up there [in North Wales]!" (Notes 11/09/95). They were othered by the men as "very Welsh", "unfriendly" and, of course, "totally different" (Notes 14/07/95). In the South Wales valleys identifications in terms of ethnicity were problematic because the appeal to Welshness was central to the nationalists' strategy of political mobilisation. One of the most divisive factors has been the language issue. Aull Davies (1989:50) argued that the Welsh language was "of central importance to the contemporary nationalist movement in Wales". But most of the people I met on the estate did not speak Welsh and felt that their self-identification as Welsh was negated by the dominant discourse of Welshness. They often felt "ostracised" (Notes 06 & 07/10/95) by Welsh-speakers because they did not speak the language (for a more detailed discussion of ethnic identity and language in South Wales see Diedrich forthcoming).

> "Large numbers of people, who in fact constituted the majority, were perceived as in some basic senses, un-Welsh, and the perception acquired retrospective force. The very name which contemporary and official Welshness bestows on the huge majority of the Welsh people is negative; they are *di-Gymraeg* (Welsh-less). The more arrogant, extreme or paranoid exponents of Welshness simply refuse to see any 'culture' at all in English-speaking Wales, or else they dismiss it as 'British' or even 'English'. The victims of this myopia cultivate an equally contemptuous and dismissive response" (Williams 1991:236).

The Welsh identity many English-speaking Southwalians could identify with was constituted by the discursive framework of a political project that dominated everyday life through the hegemonic practices of the mining community. Ethnic identifications were only part of public performances of identity in specific contexts: e.g. rugby internationals. We have to take into account, however, that the valleys of the South Wales coalfield, in spite of the pervasiveness of the miners' hegemonic project, have never been a homogeneous, monolithic cultural block. In some parts of the coalfield, especially in the Welsh-speaking valleys, ethnic identifications played a more important role alongside class identifications — because they were able to speak Welsh, they were identified as 'truly' Welsh by the dominant discourse of Welshness.

Considering the dominance of class identifications in public performances of identity it is not surprising that ethnic identity was the "missing dimension" in recent studies of the South Wales Valleys (Roberts 1994:77). Roberts also believed that research was focused on class consciousness and thereby had missed a significant factor in the changing construction of identities in South Wales. He argued that the ethnic identifications had become increas-

ingly important in the South Wales coalfield because the decline of the mining industry, the return of high unemployment and the development of new social divisions, led to a new phase of identity construction in the valleys (Roberts 1994:86, 92). According to Roberts an increasing number of Southwalian working class people identified themselves as Welsh and this changed the balance between class and ethnicity in processes of identification. However, that he divided identity into mutually exclusive components of class and ethnic identity made his approach problematic. Being Welsh and being working class were not mutually exclusive self-images; their public performances were dependent on context. Nevertheless, the men on the estate, who regarded themselves as belonging to the *core* community, identified themselves primarily in terms of class rather than ethnicity. Both class and ethnic categories expressed the power differential between the dominated and the dominant. In processes of symbolisation the constituting 'other' was always located in English, capitalist society. Roberts may be right in arguing that the framework for processes of identification has changed because ethnic categories regained influence when the miners' hegemonic project started to lose its hold over the people in the mining communities. The fact that the Welsh nationalist party, Plaid Cymru — seen as the political embodiment of nationalism — gained ground in the valleys indicated that the public performance of ethnic identifications has become more acceptable. A Plaid Cymru councillor, who was living on the estate, and described to me as a respectable and responsible man by the men in the club, believed that the image of Plaid Cymru had changed:

> I think within the, sort of, Cynon Valley, I think that's moved on. They don't call us Tories any more. I don't think so anyway. They don't see us as Tories [Edward 02/10/95].

Although the public performance of ethnic identifications has become more acceptable in the English-speaking former mining communities in South Wales classed practices still dominated everyday life. It was in these practices that the local hegemony was, and to some extent still is, discursively created, reaffirmed and sometimes modified but rarely substantially challenged from within. However, the legitimacy and persuasiveness of the miners' hegemony on the local level has always been challenged by the dominant discourse of capitalist society — as a socialist hegemonic project it aspired to challenge the dominant capitalist society on all levels by transcending the local. Although hegemony was achieved locally, it remained under continuous pressure from antagonistic hegemonic projects on the national, and even international level. From the early twentieth century socialist ideas dominated the political discourse in the South Wales coalfield and the miners and their union were at the forefront of the struggle for political dominance. The fact that the miners' union controlled the social life of the mining communities by providing institutions for leisure activities, such as the miners' welfare clubs, encouraged the incorporation of socialist ideas into the local discourses of 'community' in many mining communities. Under the influence of the political discourse of socialism, the counter-cultures of the coal mining communities found a powerful means of expressing their difference and their opposition to the dominant discourses imposed upon them by the ruling classes and the capitalist coalowners. The local counter-culture became a focus for processes of classed identifications and a space for communicating and performing these identities because the political discourse of socialism provided a convincing framework for the articulation of

people's experiences of daily life in the mining communities. The discourse of socialism proved to be persuasive because it provided the miners with a framework for making sense of their experience of exploitation, alienation and subordination — and at the same time it also constituted their experience as one of exploitation, alienation and subordination. The demotic intellectuals active within the miners' union and the community played a crucial role in the process of integrating socialist political ideology with local practice. The miners' hegemonic project was successful in establishing local dominance because it worked through the informal groups of men which provided a focus for identification and, thus, a space where a feeling of belonging to a distinctive collective could be (re-)produced. Through this process the experience of 'poverty' was integrated with the more abstract concept of the working class, and the values of loyalty and solidarity experienced at work and in the community became entangled with the ideology of workers' unity. A hegemonic discourse was created in the gendered spaces of men at work, and at home in their communities. It linked categories of distinction — couched in terms of class differences — with concepts of masculinity the men could easily identify with. As Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter (1956) have pointed out, the pride of the miner

> "… in being a worker and his solidarity with other workers is a pride in the fact they are real men who work hard for their living, and without whom nothing in society could function. It has always been a favourite point of Socialist speakers to tell their audiences how indispensable they, the workers, are in comparison with the 'parasites' of the upper classes. The 'parasites' are marked off essentially by the fact that they get a living without working" (Dennis et al. 1956:33-34).

The ability to invest the alienating situation of exploitation at work with positive meaning by identifying themselves as "real men" — in contrast to *them*, who were only "parasites" — was an opportunity for boosting self-esteem through a symbolic inversion of the power differential. One could argue that this ensured the continuity of capitalist exploitation, and in a way it did because it made life more bearable by providing positive moments of identification. However, it also provided the basis for resistance and the persuasiveness of the miners' hegemonic project. Thus, the interpretation of who was a "parasite", who was scrounging or working the system to his advantage, depended on the position — constituted by specific discourses — one was speaking from, the symbolic meanings (re-)produced in the performance of identities as well as the rhetoric one was employing. For a well-off Conservative MP or sometimes even a local government official, who may have risen to middle class status out of a working class community, unemployed men or single parents living on a council estate appeared to be, or were made to appear as, scroungers working the system to their benefit. However, speaking from the position of a council tenant in a former mining community — whether unemployed, single parent, dependent on a low-paid job or even in permanent employment — exploiting the system to one's own advantage was a distinctive characteristic of *them* — the Conservative MP or the local government official. The stereotypical images were resisted by the dominated and sometimes the 'upper class' rhetoric of exclusion was deflected back onto *them* — as the case of the Conservative MP, Matthew Paris, shows. The fact that a politician, one of *them* up there, had claimed that it would be easy to live on unemployment benefit, and had failed to live up to his bold claim, was relished by the men on the estate with obvious pride in their own abilities.

Moreover, his utter failure to live on unemployment benefit for a week, exposed on an ITV 'World in Action' programme shown in 1983, was exploited as a source for the symbolic reversal of the Conservative rhetoric of the scrounging poor exploiting the system.

> One night in the club, the boys were talking about an unemployed man John had met in town. His wife was working and they had only £90 a week between them. John complained that *they* [my emphasis] expected them to survive on £90 a week: 'that's ridiculous', he said. Each of them had £45 a week and they had to pay the water rates, electricity and everything. Arthur, then, came with the story of a Mr. Paris, an MP, who had swapped houses with an unemployed man and had not made it on £45 a week. He even borrowed money from the camera man. Phil and Arthur could not reach any agreement on his name or whether he was a Liberal or a Tory but John finally intervened and said that you could live on £45 a week provided that you did not need shoes or clothes and don't have to pay your water rates [Notes 22/09/95].

Two days later the same story was told to me again with the same emphasis on their own ability to survive the hardships of poverty. I was having a conversation with two unemployed men in the club when

> Taxi told his buttie, Will, that he was skinned: he had not been able to buy more than five pints this week – Will told me later that if his buttie could not afford to buy a pint he buys it and that his friend would do the same for him if he was short. They both agreed that they could survive on very little money while those people who were born rich could not. 'The rich couldn't survive, they don't know what it's like', one of them said and continued with a story about a man – the MP mentioned above – who had swapped houses with an unemployed. 'He couldn't survive, he didn't last three weeks.' They both agreed that, 'we could swap houses any time because we know what it's like. Say, a rich man if you took all the money from him and put him down here, he would hang himself' [Notes 24/09/95].

The story of the "rich man" who could not survive highlighted the moment of shared experience expressed in the phrase, 'we know what it's like'. It was a self-affirmation of their own abilities, a boost to their self-esteem through a symbolic act of resistance. The "rich man's" weakness was exposed and his subsequent defeat was expected to be total — this found its most powerful expression in the no-way-out-metaphor of the suicide. The moral hierarchy imposed by capitalist society was turned up side down, presenting the morally suspect losers as the morally superior survivors, and the achievers as the *real* and *total* losers. This reversal was also observed — though not interpreted as such — by Wight in his study of the Scottish working class community of Cauldmoos.

> "In 1983 an ITV 'World in Action' programme particularly caught the imagination of the people in Cauldmoss. The Conservative MP Matthew Paris attempted to live for a week on Unemployment Benefit, having claimed that it would not be difficult, and the television cameras recorded his failure. What most struck the people in Cauldmoss was the way he ended up penniless in a working man's club 'mooching a drink'. They considered this thoroughly demeaning: instead of remaining at home discreetly, the obvious strategy to retain one's dignity, he seemed to flaunt his poverty by passing his time in the club unable to buy a drink" (Wight 1993:205).

Although the two accounts of Matthew Paris's failure emphasised different aspects of his behaviour both of them represented his failure as a loss of dignity and a loss of respectability. Even in the Cauldmoss case the men indirectly commented on the lack of knowledge and

masculinity of one of *them* — he did not 'know what it's like' and, therefore, could not act in an appropriate manner. Paris not only failed because of a lack of knowledge but also because he could not mobilise the solidarity of the collective. He did not belong to an informal group of men and was not part of the social networks centred on the working men's club. In contrast to Cauldmoss, however, poor and unemployed men on the estate who belonged to an informal group of men were not required to refrain from visiting the club. They were not excluded from the key social institution of the mining community that was a central place for the public negotiation of masculinity and respectability.

The heart and soul of the village

Maintaining the fragile local hegemony

5

Consuming passions: drinking and male sociability

The way in which the struggle for hegemony and the competition of different hegemonic projects shaped the life of the people in the South Wales coalfield is evident in the development of the central social institution of mining communities, the miners' welfare or the working men's club. According to Rees (1976:16) the institution of the working men's club originated in the religious and social quest of Nonconformity. The clubs were established by the Chapels in order to fight what they saw as the religious indifference, ignorance and intemperance of the working class that spent its leisure time in the pubs. Furthermore, the clubs were clearly part of the attempt of the new Welsh bourgeoisie — itself a product of Nonconformism — to control the growing working class and consolidate the bourgeois hegemonic project. The early miners' institutes in the Cynon Valley were financially supported by the middle class elite of colliery officials, clergymen and local businessmen (cf. Davies 1994:25). Davies's (1994) history of the Cwmaman Institute shows quite clearly that Nonconformist ideals were a major influence on the development of working men's clubs. "This is evident well into the 1930s and should be seen not as any superficial pursuit of respectability, but as part of a genuine Protestant culture that placed importance on individual worth and personal growth. In this respect the nonconformity of Moreia Aman, Seion and Soar had much in common with the aims of democratic socialism. Both sought to raise the lowly and make them heirs: the one of faith, the other of knowledge. The Miners' Institute at Cwmaman as elsewhere originated as a blend of these ideals" (Davies 1994:29). The rhetoric employed by Davies, himself a member of the institute, in his history of the Cwmaman Institute also shows how influential the bourgeois hegemonic project was in shaping the world of the South Walian working class through the discourses of Nonconformity, class and respectability. Even after the decline of the Nonconformist Chapels, and the domination of the political and social fields by socialist trade unionists, its direct influence could still be felt because the miners' hegemonic project only partially subverted the key discourses of class and respectability (see chapter 2). This was also apparent in the succession of the Chapel by the working men's club. The clubs not only replaced the Chapels in most mining communities as the most important social institutions of the mining communities and centres of working class men's leisure activities, they also took "… over the respectability and status of the Nonconformist Chapels in most of our industrial conurbations. They imposed Nonconformist patterns of behaviour on their members, and people are barred from the clubs if they are 'rowdy' and 'awkward'.—'They have their rules, and if someone behaves badly he is expelled' " (Rees 1976:16). Although the meanings of loyalty, solidarity and belonging were redefined through political rather than religious discursive practices, there was a continuity in the desire to maintain what was considered to be the 'stabilising function' of a clearly defined set of moral values and

norms prescribing appropriate behaviour. Resistance, however, also manifested itself in the context of the working men's club in the rituals of masculinity enacted in social drinking. The gathering of informal groups of men and the drinking of alcohol, so massively opposed by the Nonconformist code of conduct, were important moments for masculine self-identification, and identification by others, as 'real' men. Thus, it is ironic but hardly surprising, that, when the Chapels gradually lost their role as key social institutions in the mining communities, a "… middle class temperance crusade was transformed into a system of working class drinking clubs …" (Rees 1975:65). In the miners' welfare clubs and miners' institutes the sale of alcohol was a relatively late addition, which nevertheless strengthened their position in the communities. As places of male sociability, of political education and cultural pursuits they became the focus of social life in the working class community (see e.g. Bulmer 1978; Dennis et al. 1956; Rees 1975, 1976) — women were excluded but the club, nevertheless, profoundly influenced their lives. In addition to the miners' trade union lodge at work "… the importance of the working men's clubs lies in providing a setting and a means for the development of a collective consciousness" (Thorpe 1978:112).

  Drinking has often been described as one of the main rituals of working class male sociability. It is a social activity that, as Vale de Almeida (1996:89) pointed out, is not necessarily or basically motivated by the desire for a state of intoxication. In the Portuguese "café culture" described by him "[i]t also expresses a political ideal, that of the fundamental equality of men: as a community, as a social group (the workers), as a gender. It constitutes an alternative to the absence of reciprocity in the wage relation between the employer and employee" (Vale de Almeida 1996:90-91). Social drinking in a mining community was an important practice that provided a setting in which the discourse of survival and its male bias could be enacted and (re-)produced. It was a "a major cultural feature among the men" and it was nearly impossible to avoid getting involved in it "because of the strength of the cultural expectations and the sociability which it ensures" (Warwick & Littlejohn 1992:78). It was certainly very difficult to avoid drinking in a working men's club as I have experienced myself. Although I lived only half a mile from the club the footpath between my home and the club ran across the bottom of the river valley. At night it was unlit and difficult to negotiate, especially in wet weather. The only other way to reach the club involved a two mile detour through the next village and I, therefore, preferred to take the car. Thus, I had to show restraint in drinking alcohol in the club and I usually drank only shandy (a mixture of beer and lemonade). One night I declined the offer of a third pint and the boys were rambling on about Germans who were known to be heavy drinkers. It was only after I mentioned that I had to drive home that my moderate consumption of alcohol was more or less accepted. Nevertheless, some of the boys, especially the club steward, were looking forward to testing my stamina during the annual trip of the club to Blackpool. On this trip, which included the wives and some unmarried women, relaxation was sought by visiting working men's clubs for drinks, a few games of bingo and a show in the evening. Bingo and beer were on the agenda at least twice a day, around noon and in the evening with a pause for a meal and a brief nap in between. The amount of alcohol consumed, especially during the nights out, was considerable. However, in the large working men's clubs visited for the shows the usual drinking ritual of buying rounds was suspended. On these occasions everybody put a ten pound note in the kitty which was then used to

purchase beer until it had to be refilled. The women did the same, however, they were not only physically separated from the men — in the nightly shows women and men sat at opposite sides of the table — they also had their own kitty and their consumption of alcohol was definitely more restrained. In fact, it is considered to be inappropriate for a respectable woman to drink large amounts of alcohol, especially in public — to some extent, however, the annual drinking sprees of the club in Blackpool were an exception and a ritualised suspension of the norm. 'Traditionally' respectable women drink only half pints of beer. Men rarely had half pints. If a round was called and they had not finished their glasses they got only a half pint glass to top up their half empty pint glasses. The gendered symbolism of working class social drinking seemed to be so ingrained that, on the trip to Blackpool, if any of the women got a pint glass they used to pour the beer into their half pint glasses before they drank it. While it was not so unusual any more for women to drink pints of beer the moral prescription of restraint in public still applied. When my girl-friend was visiting me in the field I ordered two beers in the club and automatically got a pint for me and half for her. When I mentioned this to Arthur he said to me that it was because she was not a regular and that even some of the women drink pints:

> They know, in' it, that what's-his-name, drink pints. That all comes from the strike because I remember a Sunday morning — it was in the summer during the strike and we was in the club — I was upstairs and was it six or seven women come in to do some work upstairs with us — to get — we had restrictions going upstairs. And they said to somebody of the boys, I can't remember, come on boys we'll have a pint, went downstairs to have pint and they really come, they made it. And they would come back and everybody with bowels full, heavy up to that but nobody said nothing. Nobody said nothing to them, bloody — but that was the first time when, you know, ah — have a drink in the bar on a Sunday morning. And then, after that then when it started with the men's room, the pool room, the back room. It just spread form there — they go anywhere now. You know, Penrhiwceibr Legion, they're not allowed in the bar, even today [Arthur 04/09/95].

Although Arthur claimed that even women drank pints in the club today, it was no accident that he constructed his explanatory sentence in the masculine form ("what's-his-name"). Women were able to gain access to exclusively male spaces within the club during and after the 1984/85 strike, however, the practices of the gendered segregation of leisure time activities and the symbolic expressions of difference were a persistent reality for both men and women in the context of the club — the majority of the women I observed drinking ordered only half pints. It was not surprising that in Arthur's comment on the regulars — it was not entirely clear if he referred only to the women we were talking about — who drank pints, the masculine form was used unconsciously. Whenever women were present in the bar — except on bingo nights — many men felt slightly uneasy.

For the men, however, being able to drink large amounts of beer in a rather short time was regarded as an appropriate expression of one's masculinity. As Wight found in Cauldmoss: "Being able to 'take' a lot of alcohol, whether in the form of spirits or strong beer, earned masculine esteem…" (Wight 1993:158-159). But the inevitability of drinking large amounts of alcohol — usually beer — was not only a question of confirming one's masculinity, it was also the outcome of the adherence to the code of reciprocity involved in male drinking habits: the buying of rounds. Buying rounds of beer was a ritual of male sociability in clubs

and pubs. Every participant in the activities of the informal group of men automatically ordered a new round of beer when his turn had come. It enforced a kind of conformity because everybody had to consume the same amount of beer. With respect to the rules of reciprocity in the rituals of social drinking Cauldmoss seemed to be different to the local club on the estate. Wight described the morally sanctioned necessity of direct reciprocity which led to an exclusion of those who lacked the financial resources for buying rounds. For fear of being accused of scrounging those people, mostly unemployed and dependent on benefits, refrained from taking part in the usual leisure activity of social drinking — a behaviour that was also observed in Northern Ireland by Howe (1990). Moreover, for unemployed men the masculine " 'work hard, play hard' ethos" in working class culture could, in combination with a lack of money, produce almost unmanageable conflicts between the practices of male social drinking and moral obligation to provide for one's family (Willot & Griffin 1996:87). For respectable men, not taking care of one's family was considered to be as unmanly as not taking part in social drinking. In Penywaun the observance of the obligations of reciprocity was an important criterion for judging a man's moral conduct. However, it seemed to be far less exclusive for some of the men who were unemployed and therefore short of money. The usually strictly applied direct reciprocity of the male drinking code, the buying of rounds, was in some cases handled in a more flexible way. Among friends and members of a particular informal group it could be temporarily replaced by indirect long-term reciprocity in order to prevent the exclusion from the activities of the group. On a Sunday early afternoon I overheard a conversation between two unemployed men in the club in which Taxi told his buttie, Will, that he was "skinned". He had not been able to buy more than five pints this week. Will told me later that if his buttie could not afford to buy a pint he buys it and that his friend would do the same for him if he was short (Notes 24/09/95). In times of crises men suffering from a lack of money were not automatically excluded from the usual leisure activities. But delayed reciprocity requires trust and the adherence to the moral prescriptions constituted by the discourse of survival. The failure to fulfil the obligations that were part and parcel of the practices of loyalty and solidarity was a source of conflict and could lead to the exclusion of particular individuals from the informal group. In the case of the miners' strike of 1984/85, when the miners were constantly short of money, the practices of loyalty and solidarity were put to the test. Although, from the perspective of the miners, the solidarity they had received was predominantly seen as marvellous, from the perspective of those not directly involved in the dispute but nevertheless willing to help, not everything had been so marvellous. The assistance offered during the strike raised expectations as to the fulfilment of the obligations of reciprocity in the future. That some miners did not take these obligations seriously when they appeared to have recovered after the receipt of redundancy payments caused a good degree of resentment. Will, a very active member of the club who had never been a miner but, nevertheless, offered his assistance during the strike, was one of those people who were disappointed by some miners' attitudes towards loyalty, solidarity and reciprocity.

Will: And I got a bit of bitterness in me then against, not against the miners, 'cause when they were on strike me and my mate was the biggest one for keeping them, ' know like, you're going up the club now in the afternoon there'd be a few miners

there, I was working then. Oh boys, drink up, and I'd buy 'em beer. But I can remember buying one bloke had beer regular and he had, when he had his redundancy and I had finished work —

Gwyn: He never offered you —

Will: I walked in, I never had a pint back of him. And I never forget that. It's still stuck in the guts like.

Gwyn: Was also —

Will: I also remember, mind Arthur when he was off, I used to take him veg up from the garden, i'n' it. Arthur as soon as he finished work, started back to work. He hadn't started back a couple of weeks, I was in the club there, I can remember it now, Arthur come over, drink for me and the Missus, an' all that. What the hell are you doing Arthur, you only just — I haven't forgotten what you did for me, ' know, when I was off. ' know, Arthur is one in a million [Will & Gwyn 03/10/95].

Will accused only a minority of the miners of ignoring their moral obligations. However, the fact that the miners — who were regarded as the embodiment of manly practices of loyalty, solidarity, and reciprocity — did not act accordingly and undermined them made him feel bitter. At the same time their apparent indifference gave him the opportunity to stress his adherence to the practices of loyalty and solidarity anchored in the discourse of survival as well as his identification with the collective self-image of his group of men by declaring that he had been an ardent supporter of the striking miners. Finally, his story can be interpreted as a reinforcement of the discourse of survival through the confirmation of his and Arthur's — who was a respected miner, union activist and club member — respectability by pointing out that both of them kept up the moral obligation of reciprocity. Thus, the rituals of social drinking became a symbolic expression for the values of loyalty and solidarity in a process reaffirming the legitimacy of the key discourses of survival, respectability and masculinity.

Despite the fact that social drinking became one of the most important functions of the working men's club, the preoccupation with respectable leisure pursuits was still reflected in the rules and regulations for club members today. The official aim of the local club on the estate, as laid down in the rule book (Rule 1: Name and Objects), was to provide the means of "social intercourse, mutual helpfulness, mental and moral improvement, rational recreation and the other advantages of a club" for working men — this was the standardised phrasing of the aims of working men's clubs affiliated to the Working Men's Clubs and Institutes Union. The emphasis on improvement and the rationality of recreation showed quite clearly how pervasive the dominant middle class discourses of respectability and class were in one of the most important social institutions of the working class. In their classical study of a coal mining community in the 1950s, Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter (1956:143) argued that the reality of club life bore little resemblance to the aims laid down in the rules: "The reality is somewhat different. The means of social intercourse are certainly provided, and there is a certain amount of mutual helpfulness, but the clubs can scarcely be said to be seriously concerned with either 'mental and moral improvement' or 'rational recreation' " (Dennis et al. 1956:143).

Frankenberg (1966:137), however, criticised Dennis et al. for their "largely unsubstantiated" view of working men's clubs as "thriftless cooperative societies for the purchase and sale of beer". He wrote (ibid.) that in his experience in South Wales — he had worked as Education Officer for the South Wales Area NUM — "clubs can provide companionship,

a pleasant physical background, and a sense of belonging which inspires in many of their members remarkable loyalty and enthusiasm. The fact that the members run them themselves through an elected committee, and the profits are 'ploughed back', enhances their ability to engender this *esprit de corps* and differentiates them from the pub." Jackson (1968:68 fn. 1) also disagreed with Dennis et al. because he believed that working men's clubs were "a real achievement within a style of living" and that they "exercise a far more immediate influence on working-class behaviour and standards than for example, the more conspicuous co-operative societies, or the daily press. The clubs remain as organisations of working men, embodying, strengthening, and passing on their style of living" (Jackson 1968:68). Jackson's interpretation was confirmed, in a more refined analysis, by Bulmer (1978:32) who argued that the club lay at the centre of the community's inter-locking social networks. It was the centre for communal sociability — one has to bear in mind, however, that the club and with it communal sociability was controlled by the men. In the mining communities of the South Wales valleys the relationships between men at work and in the community were not significantly different. "No sharp distinction exists between the people with whom a miner interacts at work and those he encounters in the village, in pub, club or chapel — at least as long as he is working in a local colliery. The shared experience of the coal industry unites miners in a recognition of themselves as members of a distinct social collectivity" (Sewel 1975:48). The miners' welfare club was *the* institution outside the pit where the distinctiveness of the miners, as well as their masculine identities, could be articulated and where collective identifications could be developed and re-affirmed. "The social club can be considered as a social organisation, with its lavish facilities and up-to-date premises, and quite attractive appeal. It also has the attraction of the freedom of association which it allows. It permits the individual to identify with it …" (Rees 1975:195)

With the closure of many local collieries, the transfer of miners to pits in other areas, and the growing tendency for young men to seek work outside the declining coal industry, the local club lost some of its significance because it was no longer the place where the social networks of work overlapped with those of the community. On the other hand, it became even more important for the maintenance of social relationships which could no longer be reaffirmed at work. In the mid-1990s, the club represented an 'island of continuity' — a continuity, however, that was fragile and difficult to maintain — in an occupationally fragmented community. Although only roughly a third of the male population were members of the club in 1995 it continued to be an important institution, providing a place where men could socialise, that organised help in times of crisis and provided an important institutional framework for the (re-)production of discourses legitimising the miners' hegemony. It provided not only an opportunity to buy cheap drinks but also a framework for the sharing of collective experiences between men. Thus, after the demise of the coal industry and the loss of the common workplace, the club assumed a special position in the life of men who were connected through the ties of their informal groups that met in the club on a regular basis. For those who still believed in the salience of the miners' hegemonic project the club continued to be the focus of collective identifications. The club was the place where the bonds created at work were reaffirmed. As such it was part of the almost totally encompassing structural framework of the miners' local hegemony.

Talking shop: the collective identifications of work

The experience of work had always been crucial for the creation of a powerful bond between the men and this was reflected in the topics of conversations of men after work: "No one who has spent a few evenings talking with miners in their clubs can help noticing the peculiarly obsessive hold their work has on them" (Benney 1978:56). Talking about the pit, the strikes and male solidarity bridged the gap between the few working miners and the majority of unemployed or retired miners which constituted a large part of the regular visitors of the club on days when there were no bingo sessions. During the time of my regular visits to the club, the evenings when the men were not talking shop were rare. Either the problems of the only working pit, Tower Colliery, were discussed or one of the boys found a loose threat which he could connect to a story of their past experiences of work and struggles. Of the group of five men which regularly met in the club — and adopted me — Phil and John were ex-miners who had worked at Tower Colliery and Arthur, who was a member of the Tower Employee Buy Out (TEBO) team, was still working as a miner. Whenever he had a break from his bar duties, Mike the club steward, who was a close friend of Phil, sat with the group as well. Will, an unemployed carpenter and committee man who was very active in the club, also spent time with 'the boys'. A number of other men, some relatives, some unemployed, some miners or former miners, also joined the group from time to time. The miners and former miners formed the core of the group. They shared the experience of underground work at the local pit as well as the political and moral values constituted by the discourse of survival. The other men were more or less marginal to the core group. The usual topics of their conversations revolved around the quality of the beer, the affairs of the club committee, local events — especially those involving well known members of the community — but also sports, television and politics. What bound all of them was the mutually shared interest in the affairs of the club and the social networks of the core community of long-standing inhabitants and club members. The club provided the space, in a physical as well as a social sense, where the men could gather and discuss everything that mattered to them with their friends. It was the place where they could share their experiences with former workmates as well as other men not involved in mining. This was a factor that gained in importance especially after the occupational structure of the community became more fragmented.

  Willis (1988:26) argued that the informal groups of men supplied the individual with those contacts which allowed him to build "alternative maps of social reality". They were crucial for the development of a class culture that was distinct from the dominant culture because they formed networks with other groups and provided spaces for the exchange of knowledge. For Willis this showed that "cultural values and interpretations" circulated in working class culture in an informal way. Dunk (1994:7) also argued that informal groups of men were "… a central feature of male working-class culture." He believed that they could be understood as oppositional to the formal structures of school in childhood as well as work and bureaucracy in adult life. As oppositional practices they were part of an ongoing struggle to gain informal control of the labour process. The basis for this struggle on the shopfloor was the informal group that was engaged in informally resisting the intensity of exploitation. For Dunk, 'the boys' found meaning and satisfaction in the social

aspect of the job rather than work itself and he argued that "it is through the cultural practices of the informal group that an alienating situation is invested with meaning" (Dunk 1994:8). In Dunk's Canadian case the group was always in flux. It was made up of a relatively stable core group of friends and some men who were marginal but affiliated to the group. "Membership in one group makes one part of a larger community, an extended informal group" (Dunk 1994:9). Thus, the informal groups of men were crucial for the development of a collective consciousness.

Although I agree with Dunk's interpretation of the role of the informal groups of men in working class culture it is not entirely applicable in a coal mining context. In his case the group was occupationally more fragmented than the groups of men in the mining community had been in the past. Although occupational fragmentation became a reality in the former mining communities, the strong identifications produced by/within the context of the coal industry continued to bind the men even after they had left the industry. For 'the boys' in this Canadian working class community part time work with periods of unemployment was the norm. In contrast to the coal industry in Britain, trade union membership was not the norm for Dunk's Canadian working class men. Hence, their only way to express resistance and gain some control over the labour process was through informal ways. In the South Wales coal industry, however, the local NUM lodge had gained some influence on the labour process, at least after nationalisation, and coordinated resistance at the pit — that is not to say that informal resistance did not take place. In the coalfield work and leisure were overlapping rather than separate social spaces. They represented two aspects of the social and political networks that were encompassing the lives of miners. Furthermore, formal structures were not necessarily resisted. One has to differentiate between the resistance to formal structures that were imposed or perceived to be imposed from without — such as school, the welfare state bureaucracy, etc. — and those constructed as internal to local working class culture. These could, nevertheless, sometimes also be perceived as imposed — depending on the context and the position of those men whose actions were restrained by them. In the mining community the informal group was part of the formal structures of the union at work and of the club in the community. As a part of the space in which the men could construct their identities these formal structures were mostly perceived as of their own making, as maintained by their own choice and as alternative and oppositional to imposed formal structures. However, the changes in the occupational structure, the loss of power and influence of the trade unions, the subversion of the discourse of survival by the individualising power of the dominant Conservative political discourse seemed to encourage a development similar to that described by Dunk.

From confidence to crisis: the changing role of the working men's club

Although the club's importance had declined in recent years it was at least a place where the informal groups of men could meet. The inhabitants of other council estates in the valley were less fortunate because when their estates were planned and built in the 1950s and 1960s virtually no attention was paid to the provision of leisure facilities for the new inhabitants (see chapter 4). The social importance of the local club was also reflected in its

prominent physical location. It was towering above the council estate next to the main entrance road. The club was a rectangular concrete building that was in line with much of the 1960s architecture of the estate. It was built with the support of the Miners' Welfare Fund and opened in 1960 as an addition to the small Miners' Welfare Hall that had served the miners of Penywaun from the mid-1920s and is remembered as lacking a bar.

   Coal mining was one of the few industries where the provision of social welfare facilities and the establishment of welfare funds was implemented on an industry-wide basis. The harsh working conditions and the pressure of the miners' union led to the establishment of the Miners' Welfare Commission in 1920. It was financed by contributions from both the coalowners and deduction from the miners' pay packets. Within this framework the Miners' Welfare Fund was intended to provide "for social well-being, recreation and conditions of living" of miners and their communities, which included education but not housing (Church 1986:145). After nationalisation miners' welfare was divided into 'colliery welfare' — including transport to and from work, pithead baths, medical support, canteens, etc. — which was the responsibility of the NCB and 'social welfare'. 'Social welfare' became the responsibility of the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO) that was governed by a council in which the NCB and the unions were represented equally. "The CISWO is also an important provider of recreational facilities and activities, with a strong emphasis on communal provision. Its self-governing miners' welfare clubs, usually nowadays licensed premises, are important social centres, often with provision for sports and games" (Morgan 1989:50). Furthermore, it was responsible for cultural activities, convalescent homes and aid to sick and invalid persons. (Morgan 1989:26-27). Thus, the miners' welfare clubs were originally not part of the network of male drinking clubs but rather centres for assistance as well as cultural and sporting activities.

Tom:	… you know, the Welfare was still here but obviously, you know, what happened then, you couldn't consume alcohol on Welfare premises, right. So what the club done is, bought a section of land of the Miners' Welfare Association, right, so obviously, where they erected a small, oh it was only a small, small building at first which — they started selling, you know, liquor and what have you — you know.
R.:	That was the main purpose of it in 1960 — to have a place were you can sell liquor?
Tom:	Yeah, yeah. … and of course, you know, you could fetch a pint of beer outside but you couldn't take it over a certain line, you know, gotta stay within — inside there because you not, you weren't allowed to drink or sell on Welfare premises [Tom 18/09/95].

Considering the importance of the consumption of alcohol — mostly in the form of beer — for the 'rituals' of male sociability it was not surprising that the chief attraction of the new club was the bar. The men came in droves and membership rose quickly. According to the club's contribution books club membership reached its peak in 1972 with 952 members and stayed on a high level of about 850 men throughout the 1970s. This period in the history of the club was remembered as the boom years when the men were said to have queued for membership.

   Now one time here there was a queue from here to Aberaman for membership, waiting for

membership. They wouldn't accept no one under a three mile radius you know —
…
There is now no three mile radius any more because, like I say, 35 years ago it was the new club then and everybody wanted to go in the club, everybody wanted in the club and there was a limit — how many they could take, like [Peter 02/08/95].

The club was very much a local institution and the restriction of the catchment area to a three mile radius around the estate ensured local dominance. Between 1963 and 1965 75.3 per cent of the clubs' members were living on the estate, 2.5 per cent came from a small estate between Penywaun and the next village, 6.1 per cent from the next village and 3.1 per cent from the town of Aberdare. Although the three mile radius restriction was lifted, the spatial distribution of membership had hardly changed 30 years later. In 1995 79.4 per cent of the members were living on the estate, 6.7 per cent in the next village and 3.0 per cent in Aberdare.

When the club opened in 1960 the majority of the members were employed in coal mining. However, an analysis of the contribution books (1960 to 1995) shows that the number of miners declined sharply from 402 (57% of all full members) in 1963 to 149 (16% of all full members) in 1972 — until 1972 miners paid a reduced membership fee because the miners' welfare fund had partly financed the club. The contribution for miners was temporarily reduced again in 1984 and 1985 because of the miners' strike. During the 1984/85 miners' strike only 39 members were still employed in the coal industry. The decline in the membership of miners reflected the massive pit closures in the area but it did not mean that they had dropped out of the club all together — when they found employment outside the mining industry they lost the special status entitling them to reduced contributions and they were no longer distinguishable from the other members on the contribution books. While the number of miners had declined dramatically since the mid-1960s overall membership had risen considerably. It remained on a high level until 1980. In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, however, the development of club membership was influenced by a number of disastrous events.

In 1978 the club was hit by a serious crisis when financial irregularities were discovered and the half-finished extension to the main building burned down. As a result of the crisis the paid full-time secretary and the whole managing committee were suspended and later replaced by a new committee. However, the events of 1978 uncovered something far more problematic than the destruction of the extension by a fire and the fact the club was in serious debt. Not only the growing number of pit closures threatened the distinctive local cultures of the mining communities. One of the key institution of social life in the community "was in a shambles"; an institution that was regarded as a cornerstone of the local hegemony had been turned into a "madhouse". The club even made it to the front-page headline of the local paper (Aberdare Leader 2nd November 1978). The public presentation of the club's problems, and the suspicions against its full-time officials and the committee, seriously damaged the club's reputation. In the light of the accusations made against prominent officials and members it appeared to be a place where the moral prescriptions of respectability had been seriously violated. Within the community the fact that trust and loyalty — fundamental moral imperatives constituted by the discourses of survival and masculinity — had been betrayed left a feeling of bitterness. However, for Arthur the thought that the

miners — and especially those he was working with at the colliery at the time — who had served on the committee could have been involved in the betrayal of their workmates and fellow club members was unthinkable. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the rumours, the investigation of the financial affairs of the club and the suspension of club officials were only the tip of the iceberg. The events of 1978 also appeared to have been an act in a different drama, namely the dispute between different groups of men over the way the club should be run. First of all the committee was regarded as "very hard" in handling disciplinary matters. Secondly, an important point of disagreement was the way in which the club's financial resources were managed. Many members could not understand how, what they had believed to be, a rich club could have gone down hill so rapidly and they were afraid of the possible consequences.

Dai: … see, when we opened that club in April 1960 everything was great. We all had a few bob. And the club, we only started off with — not until that, and everything seemed to come right for us. … Well, as years went on we put one extension on and we put another extension on and then somebody wanted to make it bigger. And that is where we went wrong. We were too big, see. I mean, when we started, when that club was opened first there was only the one room and a little lounge in the back.

R.:   Only the bar?

Dai: Only the bar, see, and a lounge, a small little lounge. Well, as more people come into it we had to exten… we had to expand bit and we had to go bigger, right. So, when we went bigger then somebody suggested puttin' a double-decker there and puttin' livin' quarters there and — it went too big, it went too big! And the last committee — not the committee that is there now, we had a committee there and they had one or two — miners they were, ex-miners they were — they couldn't grasp then — I don't think anybody had any real money out o' it but they drawed money from the Cardiff Corporation, they drawed money out of Cynon Valley, instead of borrowin' money and leavin' that there as a windfall, see. And that is when, that was when the club went wrong because we could all see the recession comin' you know, but these people, because there were so many goin' there, they thought, oh, it's gonna last forever. But it, you know, when they were, when we got into the recession — you got to, it's like a loan on a house, you got to tie your own. But when you're handlin' other people's money, it's easier to chuck other people's money away than when it is your own.

R.:   Yeah, that's right, yeah.

Dai: You know, when you're usin' other people's money, and ah — there wasn't ahm — how, how can I put it, I mean, there wasn't ahm — the know-how then as far as ahm — Jimmy, ' know, Jimmy used to be our treasurer over there one time. … Now he was a, our club chairman, we sit down and have a chat before we'd go into anything, you know. And we'd look at the long term policies of anything we used to do, like. We'd have a finance committee meeting, you know, and somebody say, well, do you think this would go or that would go, you know. And ahm — the youngsters haven't got that, they haven't, we had ahm — how can I put it to you, old hands like Jimmy and ah — old hands would come on, they knew what it was like in the '20s. And they could see it comin' then.

R.:   Ya.

Dai: They could see it comin'. I mean, you take the club now — the club, every afternoon when, when we as all workin' we'd all pop in there for a pint on the way home from work. And with Peter, never missed a — such a name and his buttie. If they're workin' days just come home they'd walk up and they were workin' in Bwlffa then. They'd go in the club every afternoon, two or three pints, see. Ah …

	Bowen from down the bottom, I could name them all, go in there. Two or three pints before they went home. Well, that don't happen now.
R.:	No.
Dai:	It don't happen now, I mean, what you got in the club now are all the retired men that got nowhere else to go then. I mean, you go over there this afternoon you'll see Tony, Bill, Will, Charles — all the, they'll all be there because they got nowhere else to go, see. You know, they do a couple of waters, don't they — that is why there's only half a dozen or so there in the afternoon. I mean, that used to be full on a Saturday afternoon and a Sunday afternoon it used be heavin' there. I mean, know the bar —
R.:	Yeah.
Dai:	— you couldn't get in there on a Sunday mornin'. That's 'cause it was heavin', they used to come from everywhere on a Sunday mornin', see.
R.:	Yeah but —
Dai:	We used to have a show — we used to put shows on there Saturday, Sunday and have a dance on Friday night and the club would be heavin'. If you wasn't there, I've seen my Missus on a New Year's Day, everybody round here, going over there at half past four, quarter five, it would open at six, queuing up to get in, in the heyday, you see.
R.:	But now it's only full when there's bingo on — on a Tuesday, on a Thursday.
Dai:	Oh bingo is Tuesday and Thursday. But you take tonight there won't be so many there tonight. I mean, Sunday night has always been a good night there. But years ago, I mean, we all used to go over there — Monday you have a quiz night there, right. Well, the snooker section was goin', the football section used to be strong. You had 3 or 4 buses followin' the football section round. Ah , it was the same with the snooker section in themday, see [Dai 08/08/95].

Many members believed that the bad publicity resulting from the events of 1978 was one reason for the decreasing attractiveness of the club especially for the younger generations. During the 1980s the club lost half of its membership: of the 849 members in 1980 only 407 were still members in 1990. In the 1990s club membership stabilised, albeit on a low level, at about 400 full members. Except on bingo nights — when the club (bar and hall) was full — there were rarely more than 20 to 30 people — mostly men above the age of 30 — sitting in the bar and a group of younger men playing pool billiard in the upstairs lounge. In addition to the 400 male full members the club had about 200 women as associate members who had no right to vote or to be elected to club offices. The women were organised in a sub-section of the club known as the lady's section (the changing role of women in the club will be discussed in chapter 6). Apart from the so-called lady's or women's section the club provided the framework for a number of autonomous sub-sections organising the members along the lines of special interests. The sub-sections included the 'traditional' male interests in mining communities such as sports (e.g. football, pool billiard, darts), pigeon racing and gardening. They had their own funds and were organised along the same lines as the club including a managing committee. While the gardening section was said to have 'no problem' (Dai 08/08/95) — self-grown vegetables were an important and affordable supplement to the diet — other sub-sections seemed to suffer from a lack of interest, especially among the younger people, in the affairs of the club. The pool (billiard) team, however, was an exception because it was one of the few activities of the club attracting young people.

> Phil, an ex-miner down by here, he was the chairman of it [the football section] for donkeys years. And, you know, they used to sell tote tickets and all that money would go into like that, used to be run like, like the club then. The club itself was the mother club then. See, I mean, you take it, in Penywaun club — the mother club, right. Then you had a football section, you had a pigeon section, gardenin' section, cards and dominoes sections, so we had everything in that club. And, but everything was run — you'd run your own side of your club then — but the mother club, say you folded up, all the money and everything would go back to the mother club then. And what it used to be then if one section had a what-'s-name — there was always a management man sittin' in on them, he really wouldn't have a say in it, but he'd report back to the management committee side of it. And this is what is lackin' today, like, you know, lackin' guidance they are, that's my personal opinion of it. You know, enough people are not takin' enough interest in the club [Dai 08/08/95].

But why had the people lost interest in the club? In addition to the internal problems of the club, the decline of industrial employment in the valleys, the changing structure of the labour market — more and more women were entering paid employment while men tended to be unemployed for much longer periods — and the disidentification of the younger generations with the sedimented local hegemony were a serious challenge for the club.

The lost way or "You can't even get them there today"

Although the club's membership was down by almost 50 per cent on the boom period, one explanation for the club's continuing importance could be the fact that it was the only 'self-governed' social institution in the community. It was positioned at the centre of what remained of the local networks of power and was one of the last bastions of the declining local miners' hegemony. The emphasis on continuity with the 'glorious' past may have been one of the reasons for the loss of attractiveness for the younger generation. However, Francis and Smith believed that the far-reaching structural changes in the South Wales coalfield had already started to transformed 'club culture' beyond recognition twenty years earlier.

> The most obvious effect following a colliery closure was the virtual collapse of a welfare scheme so that by the end of the 1960s the whole philosophy of 'miners' welfare' with its emphasis on educational, sporting and cultural pursuits had for the most part given way to bingo and drinking. As a means of survival welfare halls became clubs and during the strange metamorphosis, they seemed to lose their way (Francis & Smith 1980:454).

The image of the miners' welfare clubs that Francis and Smith invoked is romanticising the nature of male leisure pursuits in the past. I doubt that anything has given way to drinking because drinking has always been an important part of male leisure activities — whether the men were engaged in political discussions or simply watched a football game on TV. Although the club played an important role for working class education and cultural activities for the majority of men it seemed to have been the place where they could maintain social relationships with other men, which was usually done over a pint of beer. That the role of the miners' welfare or the club has changed is undeniable. However, we have to take a closer look at what they, according to Francis and Smith, seemed to have lost and what encouraged these transformations.

Within the community one could indeed find men who believed that not only the club but also the community had lost its way. There was a group of middle aged and older men for whom the club still represented the "heart and soul" of the community. On the other hand, there was the silent majority of predominantly young people on the estate who rarely visited the club because they believed that the club, in its present form, had little to offer them apart from cheap beer. However, not only the younger generations seemed to have lost faith in the club.

The conflict between the depressed, who believed in the decline, and the 'conservatives' who held on to the values and institutions of the miners' hegemonic project is evident in the different views on the estate and the club voiced by the chairman of the club and the chairman of the community centre.

> I want to emphasise that, the fact is that — we're only a little village, we have 1300 homes, right. This club here is the heart and soul of the village. And, well, like I say, they're salt of the earth, I can't say more than that [Peter 02/08/95].

In the interview from which this quote is taken the chairman of the local working men's club expressed his pride in belonging to what he believed to be a small but very special "village" — by using the term "village" to describe the estate he invoked the image of a "community" that resembled Tönnies's ideal of *Gemeinschaft* (cf. Diedrich 1993:6-7). The image of the "village was an expression of the opposition to stereotypical images of 'rough' council estates imposed by the dominant political discourse. Furthermore, the metaphor of the "heart and soul" implied the deeply felt emotional attachment of himself, and of a considerable number of people living on the estate, to an institution that had played a central role in the life of most of the estate's male inhabitants. For generations of men — mainly the men aged 30 and older in 1995 — the club was almost synonymous with 'community'. This is hardly surprising since the club had always been the centre of their life outside work. Although the views on the state of the estate as a place of collective identifications — symbolised as a 'community' or 'village' — differed considerably among the male population the club was often used as a symbol for positive as well as negative assessments of the current situation. When I asked one of the members, who had served on the club's committee in the past, whether he thought the council estate is a community, he answered by using the club as a symbol for the community and its perceived decline.

Tom:	Penywaun **was** a community! But I don't know what it is now. I don't know because — everybody wants to do their own thing today, you know.
R.:	It **was** a community? I mean in the late '40s and '50s —
Tom:	Oh yeah!
R.:	— a lot of different people from all over the area moved —
Tom:	Well, yeah.
R.:	— were moved in —
Tom:	As Dai will tell you, over the club, in those days, you know, if, you know, if you wasn't there half past six in the night then sorry you wouldn't get a bloody seat in there. But now you can walk in the club and, well you know, you've seen it yourself you can sit anywhere you like, you know. You had the community spirit years ago — you haven't got it today. — I know unemployment has got a lot to do like, it's not a lot of money around but they're still —

> R.:   You said it had a community spirit but, I mean, did that show — were the people
>   more active?
> Tom: Oh, you know, they were more active, you know, well, even in the Welfare here,
>   you know, you had different things going on every night. Over the club you had
>   go as you please, see, to get people of the floor, and show bands were plentiful.
>   But even with the — years ago, you know, even if you didn't have a show there
>   you could, say, it was go as you please there tonight. You would fill that hall over
>   the club and people would get off the stage and give you a song. In the, you know,
>   you can't even get them there today. Can't even get them there [Tom 18/09/95,
>   my emphasis].

There is a marked difference in these two representations of the club and the council estate. While the chairman's positive image of a people embodying unique qualities was very much in line with the discourse of survival, Tom painted a rather more bleak picture that was much closer to the images of disorder, alienation and apathy projected on the estate from the outside by the media, the authorities and social workers. His version also reflected the views of many disillusioned and embittered people who felt that they were condemned to lead a life of misery and poverty. While the chairman of the club almost always emphasised the collective aspects when he talked about 'his village', Tom emphasised the changes which had led to what he believed to be symptoms of processes of individualisation and fragmentation. Both versions reflected views that were also voiced by other people on the estate, however, the chairman's version was the dominant representation constituted by, as well as constituting, the discourses converging in the local hegemony. However, the different representations of the estate point to a conflict that has to be contextualised on a level of personal relationships and networks of power within the community as well as on a level of far-reaching structural changes.

With regard to the first level, their respective versions were articulated from different positions within the local networks of masculine relationships and power. Despite the fact that Peter and Tom had both worked in the coal industry they were identified by the other men in markedly different ways. Peter had been a miner all his working life and his status as a hard worker who subscribed to the values constituted by the discourse of survival was not put into question. Tom's working life took a different course because he had to leave the coal industry as a young man because of an accident in 1965. He has lived on a pension and invalidity benefit ever since. His life was dominated by the so-called "system" — the experience and discursive practices of the welfare state bureaucracy — that was regarded as denigrating and, the longer a man was subject to its influence, detrimental to one's masculinity.

> After I had interviewed Tom some of the men felt that they had to give me their opinion of him
> so that I could see his comments in the 'proper' light. Mike told me not to take Tom seriously
> because, "he's a liar, he takes advantage of the system" and Phil added, "he invented the cowin'
> system." Finally Mike said, "he hasn't worked since he was 17" [Notes 19/09/95].

Nevertheless, Tom got involved in the maintenance of the miners' hegemony in an important position. He served as a member of the committee of the club for a number of years and had been the chairman of the community centre for a considerable time. To be able to do something and take part in the 'legitimate' activities of the men living on the estate clearly

helped him to preserve his self-esteem. As Hayes and Nutman (1981:44) pointed out, for working class men work is virtually synonymous with activity and being without work was perceived as boredom. Many men used the expression "sitting round the house" which showed their fear or experience of immobilisation not only in a psychological sense but in a physical sense as well. "Sitting round the house", not knowing what to do, and not being able to do something that conformed to the dominant practices of work, was the worst case scenario for most men in the community because it could end in a process of (self-)identification as somebody 'not willing to work' or, even worse, a 'scrounger'.

> So I'm fortunate enough I'm lucky to be — I was on the committee of the Penywaun Club there for, you know, for 11 years. And then, fortunate enough that I can do something like this. You know, so I'm not sitting round the house all day, you know [Tom 18/09/95].

Although he could count himself lucky because he had access to 'manly' tasks to keep himself occupied, the fact that he was not working, in the sense of being in paid employment, left its mark. Despite the fact that Tom, as a committee man was not forced to sit in the house but took part in the activities of the respectable men, he was not regarded as belonging to the respectable local elite because he lacked the access to the collective experience shared by the other men. The experience of work was regarded as an essential element for the confirmation of masculinity. His behaviour in the club demonstrated the ambiguity of his position in the social networks of kinship and friendship among the men. When he visited the club he almost always sat at a side table next to the entrance to the bar and was not integrated into one of the informal groups of men. Furthermore, that he — in contrast to Peter who held on to an image of a 'glorious' past — admitted a feeling of helplessness in the face of massive changes which affected the 'community' also appeared to reflect his ambiguous position within the local social networks. In a sense, his interpretation of the current situation seemed to be less constrained by the prescriptions of the discourse of survival. This may have contributed to the ambivalence of his position. He was to a large extent excluded from the dominant group centred around the club that defined who could be deemed worthy to be included or had, for some reason or another, to be excluded.

Again, exclusion was articulated by disidentifying the person in question as a 'real' man through the questioning of his willingness to work as well as through the process of deflection. The disidentification of Tom as a man was evident in Mike's rather generalised characterisation of him as "a liar" which categorised him as somebody disregarding the moral values of honesty and loyalty essential for manliness. The demonstration of honesty and loyalty — as practices rooted in the discourse of survival — was of particular importance for the processes of identification with an informal group of men. To disregard them was to provoke conflict and perhaps even exclusion from the informal groups of men. It could make life in the community very difficult. The fact that Tom controlled one of the communities' social institutions as its chairman may have had a positive effect on his self-identification but it did not improve the identification of him by other men.

| R.: | — but the relationship between the club and the community centre seems to be a bit strained. |
| Arthur: | Because you got the vice-chairman of the community, the vice-chairman of the community centre used to be vice-chairman of the club, and he wasn't a very |

good vice-chairman of the club. He was a very selfish man — He's got a bad back, you see. He was in the mining industry, he's on a pension, he's havin' his coal and he's done that when he's about 19, 20. And there's nothing wrong with him. So, I mean, and he's always been in these little jobs and that and he'd have a couple of bob for his beer. He always — and some of the decisions he made as the vice-chairman of the club — He put people out the club for silly, stupid little things, childish. He's got — a sexist remark again is coming to me — he's got a brain like a woman. That's what used to be said in here, right. Sexism there, right. But that's the way, that's the way I think and he's not very well liked as such to a certain degree by a lot of people. …

He tried, he used to try to run the committee [of the community centre] like the club, you see. Like, he tried to make a profit every year, you know, and that type of thing. Crazy, I mean, it was there for the community [Arthur 04/10/95].

So, how was Tom constructed as different? Arthur provided some important clues to the processes of masculine disidentification in the context of a mining community. First of all he characterised Tom as "selfish' because he allegedly claimed the benefits for disabled miners even though he seemed to be able to work. For the men his ability to work was proven by his taking of 'odd jobs' and the lack of restraint he showed in consuming beer in the club. Furthermore, the allegation of selfishness was also evident in Arthur's comment on the way Tom ran the community centre on a profit making basis. This was considered to be totally inappropriate for an institution that was built by the community in order to serve the whole community. In this context Tom was 'othered' as one of *them*, a 'typical bourgeois profiteer' who was only interested in the exploitation of people and resources for his own benefit and negated the virtues of collective solidarity. As such, he not only positioned himself outside the "consensus" but posed an active threat to the persuasiveness of the discourse of survival.

His alleged irresponsibility was demonstrated by the remarks about his handling of disciplinary matters in the club. Although no single member of the club committee had the power to ban a member, Tom was said to have possessed this power and abused it. Arthur systematically dismantled Tom's respectability. At the beginning he was still a man, though a "selfish" one abusing the power he had been given by the members of the club. After Arthur had recollected a number of events that he considered to be examples of Tom's unmanly behaviour, he came to the conclusion that Tom could not think like a 'real' man but rather thought and acted like a woman: the ultimate disidentification of him as a man. Childishness and silliness, the lack of rationality, and the inability to act responsibly in a position requiring integrity, disqualified him in a way usually reserved for the stereotypical legitimation of male dominance over women (see chapter 6).

Phil's comment that Tom had acquired expert knowledge in a field that was regarded as not fitting for a 'real' man pointed in the same direction. Calling him someone who "takes advantage" or even "invented" the system placed him in the same category of men who were stereotyped by the dominant political discourse as 'scroungers'. In Tom's case we can see the process of deflection at work again. The internal conflict between the men was articulated using a stereotypical representation of the inhabitants of council estates imposed from the outside — the man who was not willing to work and preferred to take advantage of the system. It was a representation that Mike and Phil would vehemently resist if it was used to describe them or men they regarded as respectable. Tom's claim that he belonged

to the respectable men of the community was rejected by them using imposed categories. The use of these stereotypical categorisations of working class people as scroungers in internal conflicts kept the discursive practices of the bourgeois hegemony alive and legitimised them in a working class context. An important reason why the imposed stereotypical category of the scrounger fell on fertile ground in the working class community was the lack of an alternative discourse of work — that was, of course, bound up with that of respectability — in the context of the miners' hegemonic project. Despite its antagonistic position to the bourgeois capitalist hegemonic project the idea that the individual's attitude to work (paid employment) was crucial for his identification as worthy and masculine was not questioned. Moreover, the dominant discourse was constantly reinforced by the enactment of its gendered practices.

It's a man's world: becoming a miner, a man and a member

For the men who had followed the way prescribed by the structural dependency on the coal industry, the dominance of the trade union and the 'counter culture' of the mining community, it was sometimes hard to accept the radical change that had transformed the valley beyond recognition. The reality of the omnipresent coal mining industry was far more than just a determining factor for the formation of structural constraints. It provided the field for the production of a unique culture and a powerful hegemonic project aimed at replacing the imposed constraints of the capitalist hegemony — this process, of course, involved the imposition of other constraints. It was the almost totally comprehensive cover of all aspects of local life that influenced the development of a deeply felt emotional identification with a job that was hard, dangerous and characterised by exploitation. However, by reproducing the dominant gender division and by failing to establish dominance beyond the local level the miners' hegemonic project was bound to end up legitimising those practices of the capitalist, bourgeois hegemony it had set out to subvert. Nevertheless, the discourses converging in the local hegemony produced powerful incentives for the young men to follow the ways of their fathers and become miners. Becoming a miner was an almost infallible way to ensure one's identification as respectable. Furthermore, it opened up new opportunities to enhance one's prestige by becoming a member of the ruling body of *the* social institution of the community. Just how important the club has been as a focal point for identification in the past was expressed by Arthur, who told me that the club had provided an important incentive for him to become a miner:

> … All people you looked up to were miners. All the committee men with the club has grown well enough and big enough. And it was a trust… to be on the committee of the club. You was somebody. He's a committee man! And they were all miners, 100% miners, you know. So, of course, when it come to — I went in there — you wanted to go down the pit. You wanted to — [Arthur 04/09/95].

In the 1960s most of the local boys became members of the club at the age of 18. At a time when the club was *the* social institution in the community, membership, like starting work, was an important symbol for the transition to manhood. By becoming members the boys — most of them already working since the age of 15 — could now take part in the leisure

pursuits of men in their own right. However, before they became members they had to go through a lengthy and highly formalised ritual of initiation: the application procedure. After the application, which had to be proposed and seconded by members of the club, was handed in the applicant was interviewed by the club committee in order to establish his respectability and, thus, his suitability for membership.

> At 18 I was made a member. You had to fill a form in — a proposer and a seconder. And you had to appear in front the committee. And you'd sit there, and they'd all be there, I mean, they ask you questions: are you working? — and obviously, everybody was working in them days — are you married? — and all these things, you know. And they get up on me, say, who proposed him, they say, blah, blah, blah. Who seconded him, they say, blah, blah, blah — and there's the rule book. Abide by the rule book. If you don't abide the rule book, you won't be in the club long and blah, blah, blah, right. And you were a member of the club. Of course all 18 year old boys of Penywaun were allowed to become members — automatic now, but if you're older than that, you gotta go through a longer procedure. Now, you know, it's a load of potch up there. They check, you know, they don't check on you, now [Arthur 04/09/95].

The fact that the respectability of young men who wanted to become members was no longer rigorously checked reflected the structural changes that transformed the mining communities after the pit closures. In the 1990s employment could no longer be taken for granted. According to the official census data 20 per cent of all young adults on the estate were unemployed and 8.1 per cent were working on a government scheme (Rhondda, Cynon, Taff 1995). Another sign of the structural changes was the transformation of the club from a miners' welfare club to a private company in 1992. The chairman nevertheless believed that "the men are still the same" and that "nothing has really changed". Pictures of past miners' strikes were hanging on the walls of the bar and the hall. In addition to these memorabilia a plate reading "Built with the Assistance of the Miners' Welfare Fund" — only recently re-discovered after a redecoration of the club — mounted above the bar was a constant reminder of the 'glorious past'. The pictures and the plate were symbolic expressions of the feeling of attachment to the miners' distinctive version of working class culture. But the continuity of the 'traditional' miner's masculine way of life which had its roots in the social relations at work, the power of the union and the shared leisure activities of the informal groups of men had become increasingly meaningless for the younger generations.

> I don't think the kids today are interested, to be honest, there is a — I mean, you got youngsters going to our club, 18, 19, they go for snooker and pool, i'n' it. But they haven't got the club at heart really. They don't stop and think, well, when we get older this is where we gonna go like, this is our club, they don't, I don't think they are [Linda 16/10/95].

But will they really return to the club when they grow older? For most young people on the estate the continuity of lifelong residence in one locality that characterised the expectations Linda's generation (the people who were in their 40s or 50s) was an almost impossible perspective. The young people were either forced to leave the community in order to find employment or had to stay and find their everyday experiences dominated by the reality of their parents', and later their own, long-term unemployment. Canaan (1996:122) argued that particularly the "young unemployed working class men, for whom present and future

full-time employment could not be guaranteed, lacked the linchpin of their hegemonic form of masculinity — waged labour — and the prestige that went with it. They could no longer afford to drink heavily in pubs or go to football matches. If traditional forms of working-class masculinity were bolstered by both the money and prestige of a job, then these young men lost both." The lack of financial resources prevented not only their full participation in the traditional leisure activities of men but also blocked their access to the 'glittering' world of consumer society.

Arthur:	… if the father or the mother is unemployed, right, they can't afford to give these children money to buy these fancy shoes and shirts and guises and all these type o' things, right. So, of course the jealousy comes in. Now, why is he, and why is she going there, why are they working there —
R.:	Yeah, that's right.
Arthur:	— and they got this money coming in, and I gotta go by here. And of course you have the other ones that goes on the job creation schemes. Now, if they come from a family where there's no work there and they bring home £30 a week with £10 extra or whatever it is, right, their mother want a share of that to keep the house running. It's just common sense, or the men wouldn't let them in the house. So, they haven't got the money to spend. And so you get this jealousy come in. And whatever education you give them children in school you're not gonna prepare them for that. You'll never prepare them for that. So they gonna think for themselves, pfff, buggers, I want the same as him, I want the same as her. So, they go out and steal it. Or they go down this drugs bloody avenue, or this drinks avenue. And they steal then to ah for drink and drugs and all these other different things. Or they pinch cars for joy rides, for the thrill. So, there's something exciting of it 'cause the life is so dull. But they don't get up till one or two o'clock in the afternoon. And they watch cartoons and they go out then about eight or nine in the night and stay out until three or four in the morning, right. So that's what they'll do, talk on street corners, and somebody says, 'Oh, let's go and pinch a car, let's go for a joy ride or whatever' and all these things. All these things happenin' — so it, so you — whatever education you give in school or your parents give you, your not gonna be prepared for some of that. Because it's very hard to understand. If you talk with a lad out — I can convey to you my experiences of life and with some of your experience you got through in the past, you can understand what I'm trying to say —
R.:	Ya.
Arthur:	— and you put yourself in my position and you can understand: 'yes, I can understand.' But if — you can hardly tell a child or, and that's what they are at 15, 16, 17 years of age, children: 'Don't do this, don't do that because I've been down, partly down that road myself.' But I was lucky I had a job. So I didn't have to go all the way down that road. They can't identify with you 'cause they —
R.:	Yeah they have to make their own experiences.
Arthur:	That's right.
R.:	I mean, that's very important.
Arthur:	That's right.
R.:	But it's, as you said, you're not really able to understand something until you have some experience —
Arthur:	… We started off somewhere and why did we end up here [Arthur 04/10/95]?

In Arthur's opinion it was the lack of the experience of work — that was central to his generations' masculine (self-)identifications — that made it difficult for the 'youngsters' to

identify with the older men. This inability to identify, or sometimes even active dis-identification, pointed to an important factor that can further our understanding of the reasons for the decline of the miners' hegemonic project: it's inherent 'conservatism'. For many miners it was extremely problematic to accept the changes they perceive as a devaluation of concepts and values they had always regarded as the core of masculinity and respectability. Concepts and values whose constant articulation had structured their lives and secured their dominant position for as long as they were able to ensure the persuasiveness of the miners' hegemony. The discourse of work, and the evaluation of masculinity associated with it, occupied a large part of the discursive space of the local hegemony. Here, the (re-)production of the concept of work as hard physical labour, skilful application of knowledge, responsibility for the economic well-being of the family was enacted and inscribed in the male body.

The emphasis on hard physical labour as a prerequisite for becoming a 'real' man seemed to be totally at odds with the reality of a de-industrialised South Wales that the younger generations had to face. The continued stress on the physical hardship of labour as a symbol of masculinity was a reflection of the inherent 'conservatism' of the miners' hegemonic project and its refusal to challenge the dominant gender division. To some extent it also served to repress negative feelings towards the work of the miner. However, the biographies of miners often show that ambivalent feelings towards the work underground were quite usual. None of the miners and former miners I met told me that their fathers had wanted them to go underground because their fathers were painfully aware of the dangers and hardship of working underground. They knew that a miners' life was also a constant struggle against exploitation. In spite of all these negative evaluations they, nevertheless, believed that surviving these adverse conditions had made 'real men' out of them.

Dai:	I didn't want anyone to go into the pit. I never forced one of them [his children] to go in the pit, see.
R.:	Why?
Dai:	Well, it's a hard life! See, when you go down the pit it's a very hard life. Ahm, how can I put it, I'll put it this way then — now, when my father died — my own father died, I was only four years of age. And he died at 32 years of age with chest trouble, right.
R.:	At 32?
Dai:	At 32, right. … My mother remarried, right, and she married a collier, a miner again. … And they didn't want any of us to go in the pits because it was such a hard life. But I come home one day, I was only a youngster, and I heard they're startin' a pit when I come home and I said to my mother — 'how are you home', she said. 'No', I said, 'I finished there'. Ouh, there was murder in the house. I said, 'don't worry I got a job on Monday'. 'Where'? 'Well down the pit.' Ouhh, there was murder in the house. Anyway I went to work and — [Dai 08/08/95].

They also praised the close social relationships that developed between the men working in the pits.

But with the mining industry, I'd say, I haven't that much experience in outside industries, but with the mining industry there's, you know, comradeship. There's no unity, anywhere in the world, in any industry it could be, wherever you're coming in, like it is in the mining industry 'cause you all rely on one another. Like the union helped today up in Hirwaun, you don't have

to worry about me, that's it, that's the way of the mining village — and when, it was the 1984 strike then — for the villages most particular our around, and a lot of the villages around here, it united everybody [Peter 02/08/95].

As Sewel pointed out, learning the trade of the miner was regarded as an indispensable part of socialisation into the masculine culture of the mining community: "It is in the colliery that the younger worker is not only taught what is expected of him as a miner but also the standards of behaviour that are appropriate to a 'man'. An irresponsible adolescent becomes a man who recognises and accepts his obligations and responsibilities" (Sewel 1975:72). Another important factor for the reproduction of the 'traditional' order was the influence of the peer group. When the majority of one's friends was starting work in the local pit it was difficult to escape the pull of the group one identified with. Becoming a miner ensured the continuity of social relationships, of collective identifications with the peer group and of residence in a tight-knit community. The lack of employment opportunities outside the local coal industry left the individual with scarcely any options if he did not want to sever his long-standing social ties.

Furthermore, in the mining communities work was the primary activity that shaped a man. Not any kind of work, however, but hard, physical labour — almost exclusively found in the local coal industry. Being in employment or at least showing the willingness to work were essential signifiers of a man's respectability. But the times of abundant employment in the coal industry were long gone and the lack of employment opportunities today, especially for young men, was seen as the root of the problems of drug abuse, theft and a lack of discipline, that would almost inevitably lead to chaos.

Peter: … You got these youngsters, [they] have their home in the roads, they got no work, they have no prospect of work you know, they're pinching bloody cars — one thing or another — but in none of them — What we're very strong in, in the club, is discipline. You've got to have a strong discipline, all right. I'm not saying we don't have problems here with some of the youngsters but normally we get them in front of us, we lay the law down to them and teach them what's expected of 'em as members and I would say 95 per cent of them, you know, don't offend, not in the club anyway. Once they're out there, they're not down the club premises they …

R.: But there are few youngsters in the club, you know. Every time I come here there are mostly people from, lets say 35 onwards.

Peter: Yes that is, that's right, you would be correct in sayin' that with 35, obviously it's 35, I mean it's 30, 35 something like that. The youngsters probably would have come — you know, and where is more discipline in pubs? Obviously more discipline in clubs. And what they youngsters resent — the authority of discipline, you know, but you got have it. It's a thing you got to have. We don't want the old age pensioners coming by here, obviously — women and men have a game of bingo and see two bloody youngsters squabblin' or creating bloody nonsense, have a go there, upsettin' them. We don't talk like that, we'd rather not have them here. We don't want like that here anyway. You know, there's a facility here for 'em, if they wish to use it, as members you're entitled to, you're welcome. But we will not tolerate any abuse of the club or any abuse of the rules. I did tell them all that with the youngsters, that's what they need in front of the committee and say to them look — these are the rules of the club, if you accept the rules o' the club, because if you don't then you won't become a member. And if you do accept them then we expect you yield to them. There's no waiving from there — they, what

they do — yet they get a fair hearing — there's no vendettas or anything like that. I've seen me having a couple of arguments with youngsters over — out, gone through the door, they've gone out, that's the end of it, forgotten. And they go up the stairs and they bring me a pint or perhaps I buy them a pint if they haven't got it like, you know. But there is no malice, anything like that, like [Peter 02/08/95].

Discipline was a crucial component of the patriarchal moral order. The resentment of it by the "youngsters" appeared to be motivated by a fundamental doubt as to its legitimacy. It was thus not surprising that in the mid-1990s far fewer of the local boys became members of the club and the procedure for checking the applicants' respectability was simplified. Applicants were no longer interviewed by the committee. Most of the time the committee men relied on the judgement of the proposer and the seconder, who had to be "…able from personal knowledge to vouch for his respectability and fitness as a member" (Club Rule 7: Admission of Members). If the applicant was not known to some of the committee men further information regarding his respectability was given by establishing his kinship links to known members of the club or the community. This was always done by recalling his patrilineal kinship links — he is the 'son of' or the 'brother of' a well known and respectable member (committee meetings: Notes 02/08, 13/09, 11/10/95). The committee men who did not know the applicant trusted in the personal judgement of those knowing him and his family. Usually the judgement of a fellow committee man was not questioned.

The application procedure was part of the attempt to maintain the patriarchal order. It quite clearly shows the preoccupation with the local discourses of respectability and masculinity. It was the committee of the club that made "the laws" and, if necessary, laid "the law down to" any offenders.

"You need rules or everything would end up in chaos": the work of the club committee

As a social institution of the local hegemony the club played a key role for the (re-)production of the patriarchal moral order. The club was governed by rules whose strict application was regarded as crucial not only for the working of the club but also for the maintenance of community. The chairman was the embodiment of these rules and whenever he talked about a specific problem he stressed that "you need rules or everything would end up in chaos" (Notes 02/08/95). The emphasis on the adherence to rules as opposed to a state of uncontrollable anarchy clearly was a gendered practice. Male dominance was often clad in metaphors of order and chaos. Chaos would result if the men relinquished their control over the club to women or if the younger generation would have its way. The older, respectable men were represented as the embodiment of self-control and responsibility which were crucial for the maintenance of the moral order. Women and 'youngsters', on the other hand, were regarded as less in control of themselves. Therefore, they had to be taught by the older men. Apparently, the concepts of order and the prevention of chaos were also part of the gendered discourse of knowledge. For a large number of men it was indisputable that only a man could posses the knowledge and skills required to run the club or serve on the club's committee — however, some members also thought that the chairman was too skilful in doing this because they believed that he liked to manipulate

people. Women, on the other hand, were constructed as not being able to posses the necessary knowledge and skills. The metaphor "he's got a brain like a woman" employed by Arthur to categorise a former committee man who was accused of not being able to live up to the responsibilities of the office (see p. 123), shows quite clearly how the discourses of knowledge and gender were mutually reinforcing male dominance (see chapter 6); a male dominance that appeared to be threatened by the disappearance of the single occupation community, by unemployment, and the changing views of the younger generations and women. For the men the weakening of male dominance could only lead into chaos and the dissolution of the traditional moral order of the miners' hegemonic project. However, chaos could also be the consequence of the activities of men, especially of members of the club committee. This 'masculine chaos' was not perceived to be the outcome of a lack of skill and knowledge but rather as the result of moral deficiencies of particular men. A rather drastic example of this was the financial collapse of the club in the late 1970s. In order to prevent chaos from threatening the survival of the club its committee was expected to provide firm guidance to the members.

All affairs of the club were managed by the committee which consisted of the officers of the club — the chairman, the vice-chairman and the secretary — and the committee men. They were elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Some of the committee men determined club policies for almost the whole period between the crisis of 1978 and my fieldwork in 1995 — Peter, chairman of the club in 1995, had served as a club official for 17 years, most of the time as chairman. The committee met every fortnight in the office of the club. On a fine day in the hot summer of 1995 the chairman and myself were sitting in the upstairs office doing an interview. I had already spent two months in the village, had become a regular visitor of the club and had been adopted by a group of men, who I met several nights a week for a couple of pints and a chat in the bar. But the day of the interview was the first time that I was allowed to enter the club's office. The club's office on the first floor of the club building was its 'seat of power'. This room had a particular structural and symbolic significance for the members. The office was usually referred to as "upstairs" which was far more than a pointer to its location. 'Upstairs' was used as a metaphor for authority and it was the upstairs office that symbolised the power and authority of the club and its all male committee. The phrase "let's have him upstairs" was synonymous with summoning somebody to a committee meeting for discipline. Moreover, the upstairs office was also a significant part of the gendered practices of exclusion. Women, who could only become associate members, were usually regarded as intruders who had no business whatsoever in the office. It was the realm of men and was vigorously guarded.

While women were generally excluded from the 'seat of power' it also seemed to have lost its attraction to the men. It was quite common to hear complaints about the lack of enthusiasm among the members to actively participate in the management of their club. According to the club rules twelve committee men are required to attend the meetings in addition to the officers of the club. However, during my fieldwork only between four and seven committee men really attended the meetings. It was said that in recent years it became increasingly difficult to find members willing to share the responsibilities of the committee men because, as a former committee man told me, "people are not takin' enough interest in the club" (Dai 08/08/95). When the club was still a miners' club in the mid-1960s being a member of the committee carried a lot of prestige in the community,

even with the younger generation (see page 124).

The lack of enthusiasm for the work of the committee was a result of a number of changes which transformed life in the former coalfield. It may be part of what was perceived as the phenomenon of widespread 'apathy' said to have developed when long-term unemployment became the dominant reality for many men on the estate. As studies of unemployment have shown (cf. Howe 1990, 1998; Wight 1993) the local concept of 'apathy', as the loss of interest in public activities, is a way to make sense of the withdrawal of the unemployed from social activities in the public sphere. Withdrawal was a result of the problems involved in fulfilling the expectations of others who are working and maintaining the increasingly fragile self-image of the respectable unemployed. Thus, by adhering to practices of identification constituted by the mutually reinforcing discourses of work, respectability and masculinity, the club was itself instrumental to the creation of the reality of exclusion. This led to the withdrawal described by the term 'apathy'. It was a process fuelled by the stereotypical representations — of those already afraid of or experiencing a growing discrepancy between their self-identifications and the identifications by others — produced by the dominant political discourse, as well as the 'conservatism' of the established local elite, and the lack of an alternative discursive framework for processes of (self-) identification within the local hegemony. Through this process the discourses dominant within the community and those imposed by the wider society were mutually reinforcing one another. The fact that a growing number of men had to face exclusion, or would exclude themselves because they were afraid that they could not live up to the expectations of significant others, did not seem to provide an incentive for a re-evaluation of the dominant local practices.

The club was the primary space for the articulation of these practices and in the process of maintaining them it appeared to be particularly resistant to change. There were a number of members of the club who, despite the fact that they respected the work the chairman, Peter, had done for the club over the past 17 years, believed that his style of running the club was too conservative and autocratic. The critique of the chairman points to a problem that may prove crucial for the future development of the club as a relevant social institution. The majority of the ruling elite and a very large proportion of the members themselves did not believe that anything had to change. They believed in the salience of the discourses of survival, respectability and masculinity as they had been articulated and perpetuated in the context of the club for as long as they had been members.

> It was a miners club. So, obviously, they wanted miners to control it. It's just to make sure that you was the right type of person to become a member of the club, in them days. Because, they turned many people away, mind you. In that time, in that period — if you name a period in the Aberdare Leader for fighting, or what have you — and you'd be taken to court, you'd be up there with committee as well, after you, after you're sentenced by the court. And you were probably put out of the club for a number of months 'cause you brought the club into disrepute. All these different things, I mean, all that things have died now. I mean, people have a little common sense and understand that what you do outside the club and away is nothing to do with the club, you know. But, in them days, in them days it was very — I can remember Jack Michael gettin' the sack from Dunlops, sort of factory who was making pillows and that. And he was caught stealing two pillows from there and he'd gone into Aberdare Court and they chucked him out the club. I mean, it is crazy, you know. My father then put a big sign up in the garden demanding that Jack Michael be reinstated in the club because it had nothing to do with

the club, whatever it was. And when they had him in front of the committee, he shouted at the chairman: I don't know what you shout about, in the war years you was a black market profiteer. You used to go pinchin' blankets and sellin' 'em on the streets, you know. But my father was given 6 months out the club then, for my father went round then, and the committee had to go to the council 'cause he had a big sign in the garden callin' the committee rotten. I remember that, aye [Arthur 04/09/95].

In the past when the majority of the men were working in the coal industry and belonged to the club the committee was the institution in charge of maintaining the moral order and of sanctioning any infringements outside the place of work. At work the local NUM lodge possessed the power to define and was responsible for the provision of guidance in moral as well as political matters. The overlapping networks of power at work and in the community ensured the legitimacy and totality of control. The loss of control, it was feared, would lead to chaos. The emphasis on the need for rules to prevent chaos, as expressed by the chairman, did to some extent reflect the feeling that the power to control, and thus the authority which ensured the persuasiveness and pervasiveness of the local hegemony, had already been lost. With the decline of the coal industry the local union lodges disappeared and the overlapping networks of power at work and in the community dissolved. This left the club in charge of maintaining the moral order constituted by the discourses converging in the miners' local hegemony. The members of the club were expected to conform to the rules deemed essential for the maintenance of this 'traditional' moral order.

In order to ensure conformity the club committee relied on a formally as well as an informally defined set of rules. First of all there was a written rule book which provided the legal framework for the running of the club. It did not prescribe the rules concerning the appropriate conduct of a member. It, nevertheless, specified who had the right to define these rules and apply them. Clause 15 of the club's rule book states: "The committee shall have the power to reprimand, suspend (for a period not exceeding 12 months) or expel any member who shall infringe any rule or bye-law, or whose conduct, whether within the club-house, or elsewhere, shall in their opinion, render him unfit for membership…". The rules were thus negotiated by the committee men; it was their opinion that counted. As Rees (1975:197) pointed out, "[t]he life of the club is not based on written rules or abstract situations, but on humanity, compassion, personality and precedent." Although there were no written rules, the internally negotiated and orally transmitted 'laws' of the club, were constructed within the framework provided by the discourses of survival, respectability and masculinity constituting the moral order of the whole community. It was in the club that the moral order found its most obvious expression. Disregarding 'the law' or the authority of the committee men — the guardians of the law — inevitably led to the initiation of a process aimed at rectifying the infringement of the norm and teaching the offender what was expected of him.

The excessive consumption of alcohol was the most frequent reason for the violation of the club's rules. Although consuming large amounts of beer, using strong language and the — not always civil — display of one's virility were regarded as important for the articulation of a man's identity (see for example Willot and Griffin's (1996) analysis of meanings of drinking and fighting in working class culture) there were limits. Drunkenness was tolerated only as long as the drunkard could keep his behaviour within reasonable limits and did not cause a nuisance to the other men. The disregard of the authority of a committee man and

verbal abuse in case of a conflict were considered to be serious transgressions. In this case intoxication was not considered to be a legitimate excuse because a respectable man was expected to maintain self-control or to refrain from drinking more than he could take. The inherent contradiction between the prescriptions of self-control and restraint and the male drinking rituals as well as the sometimes rather extreme public displays of male identity was often a reason for the development of conflicts. The informality of the club's rules opened up a wide range of possibilities for interpretation based on contextual identifications of the men involved. If a committee man was present and became part of the conflict by asserting his authority, the thin line between a heated exchange between men and the verbal abuse of a committee man could be easily crossed. To a great extent it depended on the position of the alleged offender in the informal networks of men and the assessment of his respectability if his behaviour could be tolerated or if he would find himself in front of the committee. If a committee man accused a member of "behaviour unbecoming a member of the club" the offender would receive a letter from the committee stating the charge brought against him and summoning him to the club committee at the next meeting.

These committee meetings followed a specific agenda. First of all the minutes of the last committee meeting were read and signed by the chairman after the committee had agreed that they were correct. The second point on the agenda was a report by the chairman about the day-to-day affairs of the club. At this stage the applications for membership were presented by the chairman and discussed by the committee. Afterwards the finance committee gave its report about the state of the club's finances. Finally, disciplinary matters were discussed. Disciplinary matters took up a large amount of time in each meeting of the club committee. The decisions reached by the committee were based on what the men believed to be — and through their actions defined as — the 'consensus'; which goes some way towards explaining why the decisions of the committee were seldom questioned and its authority rarely challenged.

In contrast to the informality of social interactions in the club the disciplinary procedures were highly formalised. Before the offender was brought into the committee room the committee man responsible for the accusation gave his version of the events to the committee. In the meantime, the chairman browsed through the offenders' disciplinary record — all disciplinary actions taken by the committee were recorded in a separate book — and read it to the committee. The chairman and the vice-chairman were sitting behind the chairman's desk and the committee men took the chairs standing along one wall of the office. The secretary, who kept the minutes, sat opposite the committee men at a table along the other wall. When an offender was brought in he was told to take a chair in the middle of the room facing the chairman's desk. The offender was thus surrounded by committee men on three sides.

> The chairman recalled the events that had led to the accusation of "behaviour unbecoming a member of the club" by a committee man (Will). The committee man was requested to give a summary of the events leading to the accusation. Will told the committee that the member had been found drunk and causing trouble several times in the past. On Sunday he had started to swear at people in the hall during bingo and had hit the walls of the small pool room afterwards. Will got fed up with his behaviour and threw him out. The chairman then told the committee that this was not the first time this particular individual had to appear before them and asked the secretary for how long he had been refused beer at the bar until now — apparently for 3

weeks. The chairman stressed that this had done him good because since then he had won the pigeon races a number of times.

After this short recapitulation of the events, the accused was brought into the committee room. He was a man in his mid-thirties and appeared to be very nervous. He was told to take a seat in the middle of the room opposite the chairman's desk. [The accused acted like a naughty schoolboy in front of the headmaster. He sat with a straight back and his attention was fixed on the chairman.] The chairman told him in a stern voice, infused with his authority, that he had been accused of rude behaviour by a committee man and that such behaviour could not be tolerated. As a consequence he had already been banned from the bar for three weeks.

The accused admitted that his behaviour was wrong but he also told the committee that the committee man who had accused him was guilty of immoral behaviour himself. He denied having hit the walls of the pool room and said that he could bring witnesses. The chairman became angry and asked him quite harshly if he wanted to bring witnesses and postpone the hearing. The man was pushed into a defensive position by the chairman's harsh reply and quickly confirmed that he would agree to the verdict of the committee but had not been the only one whose conduct was questionable. The committee man then admitted that his actions had not been entirely correct but stressed that he had been totally fed up with him.

The offender was dismissed and the chairman took control again asking the committee men for their opinions. The committee men voiced conflicting opinions. The secretary, the chairman and one of the committee men said that they wanted to temporarily lift the ban and grant him parole. Will, who had brought the case before the committee, argued that he thought that the man had learned his lesson and that a ban of 21 days had been enough. The other members could not agree with Will and the chairman told the committee that they could not have a minority telling the majority what to do. But it was also good practice of the committee to follow the vote of the committee man who had brought the case before the committee. He asked if everybody agreed on that and all agreed. The offender was brought back in.

As soon as the offender had taken his chair again the chairman started his speech on morals. The chairman told him that causing a nuisance and pestering members could not be tolerated. He had already been banned from the bar for three weeks and it had apparently done him good because he had won two races. The offender corrected him: three races. The chairman told him the verdict and asked him if he agreed with it, which he did. He was given a stern reminder not to appear drunk again in the club. If he had drunk something on a Sunday he should go straight home and return sober on the next day. That would be best for him (in his own interest). The offender said that he would comply (he was acting very defensively like a school boy) and was dismissed with the words: 'You can go now and order a beer'. The offender left the room and the chairman told the committee that he had caught a drunken member at the door and sent him home. He returned on the next day and everything was all right [Notes 02/08/95].

In this case the offender accepted the lesson taught to him by the chairman and the committee men and the committee was successful in maintaining the moral order. The offender belonged to a generation that still accepted the paternalism of the chairman as a 'natural' expression of his authority. The whole setting and the way in which the chairman conducted the hearing left no doubt who had the power to define what was right and what was wrong. Critical remarks about the conduct of a committee man were seen as an attack on the authority of the committee that could not be tolerated. The chairman's reaction can be interpreted as an expression of masculinity that was in accordance with the educational paradigm of the club. For the chairman disciplinary measures were primarily a way to "teach them what's expected of 'em as members" and a reaffirmation of his claim to authority through a demonstration of his moral superiority. It is not surprising that his style of handling disciplinary cases was extremely similar to that expected of school teachers. As Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (1996:53) argued, teachers "… tended to advocate a

masculine style that revolved around authority, discipline and control. This was a masculinity that appeared to draw on themes of paternalism." They found that in a teaching situation expressions of masculinity had to convey the competence of the teacher at operating some degree of power and authority. Incompetence, on the other hand, was perceived as an unmanly weakness and an expression of femininity. Thus, the authority of the teaching person depended on the fulfilment of the expectation that men were able to control and use discipline (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill 1996:54).

In order to be effective as a means of control disciplinary measures had to be carefully balanced. The committee had the power to make its sanctions count because a ban from the club would deprive a man of the most important stage for the negotiation of his masculine identifications in the community. Expulsion was only the last resort because it implied that the committee men had failed to fulfil their educational mission and that the offender would be beyond the control of the club in the future. As the cases of Dai and Arthur, described earlier, demonstrated, the committee's decisions could also provoke serious opposition from the members if they felt that the sanctions were not within the boundaries set by the 'consensus' — e.g. if the committee condemned what could be defined as legitimate resistance by the discourse of survival. Furthermore, the decisions of the committee were likely to be opposed if the men made no allowance for the otherwise legitimate extreme expressions of masculinity or if the integrity of some of the committee men was put into question as a result of a competition for power between individuals or groups of men. Although committee men were expected to be loyal to the club and bear the interests of the whole club in mind they were also bound by the social relationships with other men in their informal groups. Thus, the power and authority of the committee and the club officers depended on the close observation of the moral prescriptions constituted by the discourses of survival, respectability and masculinity. However, the second disciplinary case shows that a challenge to the power and authority of the committee could be motivated by a different perspective on the 'traditional' order that revealed the contradictory aspects of the local hegemony and could threaten the club's position in the community.

A boy in his early twenties was summoned before the committee because he was accused of having sworn at a cleaner. Huw, the vice-chairman, was told by Barbara, one the of the cleaners, that the young man had entered the club shortly before six o'clock in the afternoon when it was still closed. She was mopping the floor and he went straight over the wet floor instead of going around the area she had just cleaned. She had asked him, 'What do you think you're doing?' and he angrily replied, 'Don't give me anything of that, I've had enough of that from Will [one of the committee men]!'

When the boy appeared before the committee a heated discussion began with the chairman. The boy was very agitated and repeatedly shouted at the chairman. He had been very drunk and couldn't remember swearing at anybody but would apologise if he should have done so. The anger he had displayed earlier at being summoned before the committee later gave way to insecurity. The chairman asked him why he had entered the club drunk before six o'clock when the club was closed. He explained that he had been to the pub down the road and the betting shop afterwards. His explanation made the situation even worse. The fact that he got drunk in the pub and came to the club for a piss did not find the approval of the chairman who asked him why he couldn't use the toilet in the pub. The boy replied that it had been very crowded in the pub. The vice-chairman then told the committee that he had heard him swearing as he left the club and the boy tried to justify his behaviour by telling the committee that some boys who saw him leaving were winding him up. The vice-chairman disagreed, he did not see any boys near

the club at that time but the accused insisted that there was a group winding him up.

During the whole exchange between the vice-chairman and the boy the chairman browsed through the disciplinary records. They told him that he had been a member for only two years and that this was the eighth time that he had to appear in front of the committee, once in the first year, thrice in the second year and four times this year alone. He was asked if he thought that this was an adequate behaviour for a member of the club. The boy was obviously on the defensive now and said in a subdued voice, 'No'. The chairman continued by reminding him that he had got a suspended sentence only six weeks ago so that he could take part in his sister's wedding party. They did it only because they did not intend to spoil the party and cause distress to his mother. He replied that his sister had not married in the end and was harshly told that this was of no concern here.

He was dismissed and the chairman asked the committee men for their opinion. The secretary immediately said, 'Throw him out!' When he could not find a seconder for this drastic measure he proposed a six months suspension. This was seconded by another committee man and finally agreed on by the whole committee.

The offender was brought back in and appeared to be extremely nervous. As soon as the chairman disclosed the verdict he interrupted the chairman and angrily told him that he should tell that to the captain of the pool team. The chairman became extremely annoyed and told him to listen, he would not learn from talking but rather from listening. He was allowed to continue playing pool matches, home and away, but was banned from the bar and had to leave the club immediately after the match. Being told off by the chairman only infuriated the boy more and he obstinately declared: 'I'm out!' The chairman told him that this was his problem and he would have to tell the pool captain himself. As soon as he left the club today he would be banned for six months. The boy left the committee room infuriated and the chairman commented on his behaviour: 'We can't do anything for him, anyway!' and one of the committee men added that he had been banned from the bandits before and told them that he could not stay away from them. He was hanging around the betting shop now, pestering them. [Notes 13/09/95].

Both cases demonstrate that the club was not only an institution that was engaged in the (re-)production of the local hegemony of the mining community but also in the legitimation of the dominant bourgeois discourses in capitalist society. The way in which the disciplinary procedures were performed by the committee and its chairman showed quite clearly that the power differential experienced as intimidating and oppressing in the formal ritual context of a court of law or in the context of school culture was part of the ritual performance by the committee. The position of the club with regard to the maintenance of the moral order closely resembled that of the school described by Willis (1988:65) as "the agency of face to face control *par excellence*". The challenge of the chairman's and the committee men's authority by the young offender in the second case has to be understood in the context of the kind of resistance to institutional authority developed in oppositional working class culture that was conceptualised by Willis (1988) as "counter-school culture". Although men remembered with pride that they had been rebels in their youth — especially in school, as Arthur did — learning to accept the moral norms of the working class counter culture was nevertheless considered to be an important stage in the process of becoming a man.

Apparently, the ruling elite of the club was caught up in a contradiction: on the one hand, they believed in the importance of the subversion of dominant meanings, imposed by bourgeois discourses, for working class male socialisation and the (re-)production of a masculine identity; on the other hand, the practices of domination imposed upon them were taken up and used for the (re-)production of a dominant position within the framework

provided by the antagonistic local hegemonic project. Although the legitimacy of the power of institutions in dominant capitalist society (courts of law, schools, etc.) was disputed or even explicitly negated, the entanglement of the discourses of respectability and masculinity, dominant on the local level, with those dominant on the translocal level led to contradictory emulations of imposed ritual forms and the relationships of power expressed through them. The disciplinary sessions of the club, thus, showed that they were once again unwillingly engaged in legitimising their own subordination; or as Collison and Hearn (1996:69) put it: "… highly male-dominated working-class cultures often symbolically invert the values and meanings of class society, but in ways that often unintentionally reinforce the status quo."

Rituals of discipline in the club drew on sources of power otherwise constructed as antagonistic. A contradictory situation was generated by the committee and particularly by the chairman who symbolically enacted the power and authority embodied by judges and headmasters and transformed it into a source of legitimation for his own claims to power and authority. This process was symbolically expressed in the ritual of discipline. First of all the formal letter summoning the offender to the committee was a clear break with the informality of the usual communicative practices of men. Secondly, the fact that the offender had to sit in the middle of the room with the committee men around him, facing the chairman's desk, had an intimidating effect on him. Finally, the formal way in which the chairman was addressed signified his embodiment of legitimate power and authority. During the committee meetings the chairman, usually called by his Christian name, was addressed by all men present in the room regardless of their own position only in a formal manner as "Mr. Chairman".

The strict adherence to these 'traditional' ritual forms can be seen as an attempt at negating the impact of the changes which have transformed the former mining communities in the valleys. The contradictions produced in this process posed a serious threat to the continuity of the established networks of male power. As long as a man could identify with the discursive practices of the local hegemony which were enacted in the contexts of work and the club, the basis for the power and authority of the local elite was not challenged. However, for the younger generations (under 30 years of age) the club became increasingly meaningless as a focal point for identification. They were no longer socialised into overlapping networks of pit and community. Young men who usually had to face long-term unemployment immediately after leaving school lacked the socialisation through the interaction with older men in the work context. Thus, the local hegemony whose values and norms were inextricably connected with the experience of work, as well as the masculinity and respectability (re-)produced through it, lost its persuasive pull on the young men. The apparent preference of pubs — which provided far less controlled environments — as meeting places for their informal groups can be interpreted as a way of escaping the constraints of respectability represented by the club. For them club culture with its emphasis on order and discipline resembled the school culture they had learned to oppose. With its emphasis on the experience of work as the primary source of masculinity and respectability the club had little to offer them apart from subordinate positions as potential problem cases. The older men realised that the club had failed to attract the younger generations and to "teach them what's expected of 'em" not only as members but as respectable men in general — in the case of the young offender the chairman thought that their attempts had been futile. However,

explanations for the obvious changes are sought in structural transformations imposed by the dominant society — primarily in unemployment — and not in the context of the local hegemony itself. Yet, this is not the only challenge to the male dominated, sedimented local hegemony on the estate.

If you got a ship you got to have one captain

6

Challenging the male hegemony

Gender relations in working class communities in general (cf. Dunk 1994, Skeggs 1997, Wight 1993), and in mining communities in particular, are often regarded by outside observers as classical examples of male domination perpetuating the oppression of women. In a critical appraisal of gender issues in British community studies, Frankenberg (1976:37) opened his discussion of the mining community ethnography "Coal is our life" (Dennis et al. 1956) with an important question: "Coal is whose life?" Dennis et al. (1956) believed that economic practices, privileging men as breadwinners, and domestic practices, confining women to the home, provided the basis for the constitution of the gendered power differential in the mining community of Ashton. "The pure economic fact of man's being the breadwinner for his family is reinforced by the custom of family life, the growth of an institutional life and an ideology which accentuate the confinement of the mother to the home. 'Woman's place is in the home' is a very definite and firm principle of thought and action in Ashton" (Dennis et al. 1956:174). However, Frankenberg (1976:38) argued that Dennis et al. were confined to "their own miners' eye view" perpetuating the male view on women as object and enemy and ignoring the fact that resistance as well as domination were two important aspects of life at home and in the community. He believed that life in a mining community was characterised by a gender struggle rather than a class struggle: "The responsibility of women for housekeeping and childcaring, the solidarity of the male peer group reinforced by shared work hazards, shared pit language, shared clubs and shared interest in Rugby League, led to a situation in which men reacted to exploitation by fighting not as a class against capitalism, but as a gender group against women …" (Frankenberg 1976:40). While Dennis et al. may have represented the male perspective on class conflict with a male bias, Frankenberg's attempt to reduce processes of resistance, domination and exploitation to a struggle primarily driven by gender antagonism did only add one possible perspective to the representation of these communities. It did not, however, really improve the reductionist analysis of the complex and inextricably connected practices of power and resistance in the mining community. As I have argued in chapter 2 the separation of classed and gendered power relationships as well as practices of domination and resistance will only lead to the (re-)production of ideological informed images of working class people and an essentialisation of either gender or class.

However, a number of analyses of gender relations in mining communities, and working class communities in general, also fell prey to a theoretically inspired reductionism — essentialising class and/or gender in the process. In his rather crude functionalist analysis of the background to trade union militancy among miners in Britain, Allen (1981:74-84) described the working class in general, and working class women in particular, as being totally at the mercy of the forces of the capitalist economy. He argued that the primary purpose of the working class family was the reproduction of a labour force geared towards

the needs of capitalism. He believed that "[i]t has been simply a case of basic structural needs of the situation dominating everything else, moulding everything to suit its own peculiar requirements" (Allen 1981:74). Although women were crucial for ensuring the continuity of the supply of labour power their contribution was devalued. In capitalist society power and status could only be derived from the involvement in market-determined production which was an exclusively male domain. The gendered division of labour was extremely effective in legitimising the continuity of the production process and the power differential in gender relations. In spite of the fact that women were disadvantaged by their position in the capitalist economy the dominant discourse was reproduced by them in the routine practices of daily life. The women's preference for men who were consistent, responsible workers and brought home a regular wage, was very much in line with the preferences of the employers. "Miners and womenfolk lived out a condition in the interests of the capitalist exploitation of coal which became discriminatory and oppressive towards women" (Allen 1981:79). Allan's approach reduced men and women in mining communities to mere automatons not just constrained but determined by the powers at work in the capitalist economy. Allan also covered up the male production of relationships of domination and subordination because he interpreted the production of gendered difference only as a function of the capitalist economy.

Another strand of the Marxist analyses of working class communities set out to rectify the male bias. It is informed by feminist debates about the oppression of working class women not only by the capitalist system but also by working class men. One such study was Williams's (1981) research on gender relations in an Australian mining town. She addressed the problem of "the relations of production in the home and community" — that were, according to Frankenberg (1976:37) ignored by "the Left at large". Furthermore her study echoed the domestic and communal aspect of the gender struggle envisaged by Frankenberg. Williams (1981:124-125) analysed gender relations in an Australian mining town with extreme sex segregation as being the result of "proletarian anti-feminism" produced by the men and reinforced by exclusively male organisations like the miners' union. She showed that the miners' union, the government and the mining firm, although they were involved in antagonistic political projects, were nevertheless perpetuating "patriarchal privilege" and the subordination of women by trying to prevent married women from entering paid employment. The discourse on gender relations in marriage and the family in capitalist society was crucial for the maintenance of the subordination of women. She argued that the "companionship ethic in marriage" was part of the capitalist hegemony's attempt to secure the dominant position of men and, at the same time, made the couple easier to exploit because it contributed to their individualisation. "Companionship norms in marriage mislead women into regarding marriage as an egalitarian institution when, in real terms, this is illusory…" (Williams 1981:133). However, women subscribed more fully to the ideal of companionship marriage than their husbands who were still intensively involved in their informal groups of men — Williams (1981:136-139) called them "mateship cliques" — and saw their wives in more 'traditional' terms as caring for husband and family.

Williams interpreted the development of oppositional practices in working class culture as a result of the experience of domination and subordination. Women who were dissatisfied with their husbands and marriage, she argued, developed a "[s]pontaneous feminist aware-

ness" and were engaged in a "dimly-perceived struggle against the patriarchal hierarchy" that was, nevertheless, still constrained by the day-to-day practices of gendered difference (Williams 1981:170). "Just as industrial workers are likely to develop oppositional consciousness through experience with the social relations of production, particularly the relations of authority in industry, so these findings suggest that wives develop politically in a feminist direction through conflict in the social relations of marriage" (Williams 1981:134). She argued that the "male-chauvinism of the working-class community" was, on the one hand, a "vital cultural defence against capitalist exploitation" (Williams 1981:190) but, on the other hand it also facilitated the perpetuation of the capitalist relations of domination. The family structure lay at the heart of the ambiguity of dominance and resistance. It was conducive to the development of oppositional activities at work because married men could not leave easily and were more likely to fight for better working conditions. In addition to this, the wives created a political space for their husbands by restricting themselves to the reproduction of male labour power. Williams came to the conclusion that if patriarchal men were less well cushioned by the gendered practices of everyday life they would find the control and exploitation at work far less tolerable. In order to make sense of the ambiguity inherent in industrial and gender relations she employed a theoretical framework based on her interpretation of Gramsci's concept of hegemony. One of the merit's of Williams's work is that she emphasised the persuasiveness of hegemonic discourses and the naturalisation of domination through ideological closure. "The dominant bourgeois ideology, in this case of class and patriarchal nature, wins acceptance through the agencies of socialisation and through the ways these values are present in all the societal institutions, and therefore are accepted passively as part of a taken-for-granted world view" (Williams 1981:191).

I, nevertheless, disagree with her on the point of the passive acceptance of the taken-for-granted world views. Furthermore, her focus on the determining function of economic and social structures appears to be too simplistic. As I have written earlier (see chapter 2) the lived consensus produced by a successful hegemonic project requires the active articulation of specific discursive practices through persuasion and sometimes coercion. The discourses of respectability and masculinity assume a particular importance in the active — though often unconscious — perpetuation of the "dominant bourgeois ideology". It was the work of the demotic intellectuals — creating, as well as being created, by the male dominated hegemony of the mining community — which made the transformation of everyday experience into the ideologically closed taken-for-granted world views possible. They occupied key positions in the social institutions which affirmed the gendered power differential. While partially alleviating the feeling of powerlessness and consequently empowering working class men the miners' hegemonic project was instrumental in deflecting powerlessness to women — and thereby perpetuating the domination of women. As Dracklé (1991:77) pointed out one of the most important effects of the contradictiveness of ideological discourses is the production of a feeling of powerlessness and helplessness. Resistance against imposed powerlessness implies the need for action, the active creation of something new.

If one part of the population managed to empower itself through a hegemonic political project and the institutions it created, the answer to Frankenberg's question — "Coal is whose life?" — could simply be: 'Coal was men's life!' However, hegemony implies the

cooperation and the belief in the naturalness of the dominant order by those subordinated by it. The women in the mining communities were actively taking part in the maintenance of the male hegemony and, thus, their own subordination. But women were not the only dominated group on the estate. The power differential in the negotiations of male identities between men also produced subordinate masculinities. Thus, 'coal was everybody's life!' The majority of men and women took it for granted that 'coal was their life.' But when the local hegemony was moving more and more towards crisis, and lost its persuasiveness, the powerless inside the community tried to establish new and different meanings. I will show that during the miners' strike some women started to realise that their powerlessness was not natural and tried to undermine the male hegemony by establishing new centres of power. However, not all forms of resistance imply the creation of new networks of power and a fundamental challenge of dominant gendered meanings, as the struggle of women for full membership in the club shows. Finally, I will discuss the attempt to subvert male dominance by powerful forces from outside the community. The political establishment and the welfare state bureaucracy tried to undermine the local working class hegemony, that was challenging their power, in the name of community participation and development. The men resisted the attempt to undermine their power but their resistance was based on the preservation of the established male dominated institutional framework that had already come under attack during the 1984/85 miners' strike.

"We're not used to working with women": subordinate and threatened masculinities

With regard to gender relations in the mining communities the large scale participation of women in political activities during the miners' strike of 1984/85 was presented by many commentators on the events as a turning point for working class women. For them the position of women in the (former) mining communities had changed considerably during and after the miners' strike of 1984/85 (cf. Loach 1985; NUM 1985). Moreover, the strike was idealised as a boost for working class women's liberation (Stead 1987). For Campbell (1986) mining communities represented the last bastions of the "proletarian patriarchy" privileging the men and excluding the women. "A 'normal' miner's wife's life is one of exclusion and isolation surrounded by a culture of solidarity and support which has been immortalised in the labour movement's iconography. But that solidarity rarely extended to the women of the coal communities" (Campbell 1986:253). She idealised the political activities of the women during the strike as "a cultural revolution" and argued that the men in the mining communities were finally forced "to join the twentieth century, and must now deal with the personal and institutional revolution which will finally bury proletarian patriarchy: that domination of the working class by men" (ibid.). Her rhetoric employed metaphors of the bourgeois discourse of masculinity that are all too well known from the stereotypical identifications of working class men as 'primitive villains'. It was not only the assertion of the right to act in public and political space by the women that posed a serious threat to the male dominance of the miners' hegemony. It had already been weakened by the decline of the industry itself.

The eradication of the coal industry from the face of the valleys not only led to a loss of

employment and exposed the people, particularly the men, in the area to the psychological problems of long-term unemployment, it also undermined the foundations of the miners' hegemonic project. The decline of traditional employment opportunities, the changing industrial structure which encouraged female employment, the loss of work as the core space for negotiating male identities, and the emigration of younger people from the valleys were important factors for the crisis of the patriarchal order. The meanings, that were temporarily fixed by discourses of the miners' hegemonic project, started to lose their persuasive qualities. They were no longer taken for granted. Dominant symbols — e.g. the male breadwinner or the caring wife — could be inscribed with new meanings by other political projects which attempted to become hegemonic or, more likely, the still powerful antagonistic bourgeois hegemonic project. The changes caused by the processes of negotiating and inscribing new meanings were far more radical, though slower, than the process of de-industrialisation itself. Gender relations were particularly affected by difficulties of the miners' hegemonic project to maintain the dominance of its symbols of gendered difference — particularly the hard working, respectable man who was in control and who was responsible for the well being of his family as the breadwinner or the caring wife who made a home for her husband and looked after the children. According to Dracklé (1998:115-116) these hegemonic symbols exerted a powerful controlling effect of domination and they increased the pressure to take part in the ritualised everyday practices of gender differentiation and segregation. In spite of the availability of alternative ways of being male or female, the pressure and the desire to conform to the hegemonic ideal proved to be extremely powerful. Dracklé regarded the relationship between the collective pressure to conform to the dominant norms and the subject's own desire to identify him-/herself with them as an effect of power (*eine Machtwirkung*).

In times when core practices of the hegemonic ideal were confronted with experiences of a changing reality it became increasingly difficult to maintain the persuasiveness of the ideologically closed masculine ideal. For men the gap between hegemonic ideal and lived everyday experience became recognisable if a man was no longer able to perform the role of the breadwinner and was unable to live up to the expectations of reciprocity inherent in social drinking because he was unemployed. The fact that his wife sometimes assumed a position of relative economic independence by taking up full-time employment or assumed a public and political position could also undermine the persuasiveness of the hegemonic ideal. Another factor could be the pervasiveness of dominant consumer ideals that could make it necessary for both partners to work. The contradictions which arose in the process made the fragmentation of the self more manifest in everyday negotiations of (masculine) identities. Willot and Griffin (1996:89) argued that "[u]nemployment served to undermine hegemonic masculinities at various 'sites', especially the home and the pub. … Hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to subordinated masculinities (in addition to femininities). Therefore, the contradictions associated with being white and male (and therefore powerful) but also working-class and unemployed are complex and profound." Hegemonic masculinities are constituted in ideological discourses which privilege some men by associating them with power; they "define successful ways of 'being a man': in so doing, they define other masculine styles as inadequate or inferior" (Cornwall & Lindisfarne 1994a:3). The criteria used to identify a man in the hegemonic discourse of masculinity were based on the experience of coal mining, particularly the work underground. Dangerous work

requiring physical strength and the comradeship underground made a man (see chapter 5). As Vale de Almeida (1996:73) pointed out with regard to Portuguese quarrymen, sacrifice and risk are inherent in the notion of work but they are also "ambiguous, since they are not desired, but they reinforce prestige for the man who has undergone tribulation, in a cultural universe in which masculinity invokes physical strength." The social relationships between men formed in the context of underground work, were regarded as unique and men who lacked the experience of an exclusively male work environment requiring physical strength were believed to be lacking an important ingredient of masculinity. Emrys, a miner at Tower Colliery, had worked in a factory before he became a miner, and when the pit was closed he was afraid that he might be forced to return to factory work again.

> One night in the club Emrys told me of the days when the pit closed: "The day they closed Tower I cried. The fucking government put me on the dole and it wasn't right. I've been on the dole for only eight months, until we bought Tower back. We own the pit now, they've done a marvellous job." He would never go back into a factory. He likes the job at the pit, especially the comradeship and the fun he has with the boys underground. I remarked that factory work tended to be monotonous and Arthur stressed that mining was physical despite the fact that they have a lot of machinery underground now. It is still physical but you need more skills now. Emrys said that he never got used to working with women and Arthur added that he would not like to work with women either. Arthur "Factory workers are used to working with women — but we're not male chauvinist pigs, as some might say, we've been brought up this way, we're not used to working with women" [Notes 08/09/95].

The roots of Emrys's anxiety lay in the inextricable connection of an exclusively male work environment with the kind of masculinity that could be generated from it. "Work places seem to be the crucibles out of which male identities are forged or through which they are given shape and meaning" (Morgan 1992:77). This may appear to be a paradox because in a capitalist economy a man is dependent on the sale of his labour and the work place is likely to become the space where he will experience subordination, powerlessness and alienation. However, Back (1994:172) argued that the expression of maleness in these spaces of dependence provided a means to exert power; "power is associated with maleness, its absence with feminization." The work place is the place where power and resistance become entangled with masculinity— and with Foucault (1983:116-117) I believe that resistance is the necessary 'other' of power. However, resistance against the dominant order as the attempt to regain control and to establish one's own masculine power is imbued with ambiguities. Individual forms of resistance — finding an expression in "foot dragging, attitudinal opposition, and petty theft" and causing what Bourgois (1996:155) called the "purposeful disgruntlement" of superiors — as well as collective forms of resistance — overtime bans, strikes, etc. organised by the trade union — may alleviate the feeling of powerlessness and restore a feeling of being in control and possessing power. Nevertheless, individual resistance tends to be limited to the production and maintenance of a positive self-identification — a man's pride and dignity — threatened by denigrating identifications of those dominating the structural and discursive frameworks at work. The relationships of dominance and subordination, created by the power differential inherent in the capitalist relations of production, are not really threatened by individual forms of resistance — nevertheless, those engaged in acts of individual resistance may believe that they are. Thus, the feeling of being in control can only be temporary because it is continuously contested.

Collective resistance, on the other hand, has a potential for threatening the power differential and, thus, is suppressed by forces intent on maintaining their dominance. The threat to the dominant, capitalist forces that arises from industrial stoppage lies in the temporary inversion of the power to control the means of productions. This inversion enhances the persuasiveness of counter-discourses of resistance. Even if the inversion of the power differential remains temporary it will strengthen collective identifications by producing or renewing the promise of a future that will see a permanent negation of the dominant power differential. Acts of collective resistance are rituals that practically and symbolically invert the dominant hierarchy. They establish or confirm the power of the collective and create a space where each of its members can feel empowered. Collective resistance is not limited to politically organised attempts to gain formal control of the labour process, it is also enacted by the informal groups of men. According to Dunk (1994:7), informal groups of men are the basis for the ongoing struggle to gain control of the labour process on the shopfloor because they informally resist the intensity of exploitation. Attempts to gain control of the labour process by formal means, such as strikes, were often initiated by these informal groups. These groups occupy key positions in processes of identification because, as Dunk pointed out, meaning and satisfaction were found in the social aspect of the job rather than the work itself: a "good bunch of guys to work with, that's all that matters" — this "indicates how it is through the cultural practices of the informal group that an alienating situation is invested with meaning" (Dunk 1994:8).

Notwithstanding the unifying effects of collective resistance, the work place continued to be an important site for competitive negotiation of masculine identities. In the ongoing negotiation of relationships of power between the employer and the employees and between the workers themselves, power is inscribed in men known to take a stand — which is an important characteristic of demotic intellectuals. However, the feeling of powerlessness that was produced in the everyday negotiations between the dominant employer and the dependent employees was also deflected to those positioned further down the hierarchy. The production of subordinated masculinities was part of the processes of deflection. Deflection contributed to the gendering not only of exclusively or almost exclusively male spaces but it also shaped the general framework for identifications in terms of gender in all spheres of life. Consequently, not only the fact of being in paid employment, which was a necessary prerequisite for being identifiable/identifying oneself as a 'real' — as well as a respectable — man, but also the kind of work a man did was considered to be an important factor for the kind of masculinity that could be inscribed in a particular man. In the discursive space of the mining community the hard working miner was identified as the ultimate embodiment of masculinity — however, the surface workers in the coal industry, usually called 'sunshine miners', were regarded as less masculine than those miners doing dangerous work underground (see also Morgan 1992).

Working in a less dangerous and physically demanding environment apparently reduced the masculine potential of a job — it was reduced even further by working together with women. The fact that a man was not working in an (almost) exclusively male environment, that he lacked the challenge of hard and dangerous work and the comradeship of an all male group at work were important criteria for the inscription of subordinate masculinities. If a man was not working at all his masculinity could even more easily be challenged and reduced to a subordinate masculinity through the application of stereotypical identifications

of women (e.g. "He's got a brain like a woman": see chapter 5). Especially in the context of the club the hegemonic masculinity of miners proved to be extremely pervasive. The construction of the miner as *the* embodiment of masculinity also showed that the miners themselves were engaged in (re-)producing the myth of the archetypical proletarian.

> Today a drunken man came into the bar and shouted. After a while Mike called to him from behind the bar: "That's the last warning!" (I think he was only joking). The man came to our table and Phil appeared to be happy when his niece came to fetch him. Lewis talked and talked about his life: he was sent to work on a farm when he was 14 to milk the cows and everything. Arthur told me, "He is our glass cutter, he cuts the glass in the whole valley."
> When Mike came back to our table he wasn't pleased — he wore an expression of 'What have I done to deserve that?' — and made a point of winding Lewis up: "Are you going to Blackpool [the annual outing of the club]?" Lewis replied, "No", and Mike said to him, "you have been banned anyway". Arthur disagreed, "he hasn't been banned" but Mike insisted, "he has". Lewis confirmed Mike's version, "I have, I won't go" but Mike told him, "you can go as long as your wife says that you can go. I still have a place left on the bus." And Mike said to Arthur, "he won't go because his wife won't let him. I wouldn't say that if I wasn't sure his wife won't let him." Arthur told Lewis that the first priority of a man is his family. A man has to bring his family up tidy and it's the priority of the woman as well.
> After Lewis had left Arthur told me: "He's one of the pigeon boys." He could understand him perfectly because he treated him like a drunkard which other people couldn't. Arthur gave me his interpretation of Lewis's repeated attempts to get his attention: "Lewis wants my approval because he comes from a mining family, his father was a miner and he's feeling guilty about not being a miner. He wants my approval, because miners are — they are looked up to, they have some respect" [Notes 15/09/95].

That Lewis partially lost control because he had too much to drink provided the men "who are looked up to" with an opportunity for lecturing him about the values and norms prescribed by the dominant local discourse of masculinity and respectability — drinking was considered masculine and respectable as long as one remained in control of oneself: when I talked with the Boys about some men who had lost control in Blackpool, Phil stressed that he did not drink more than he could take because he wanted to "remain respectable" (Notes 13/10/95). Earning the respect of these men who were identified as embodying the most prestigious (hegemonic) masculinity, and being accepted as a temporary and marginal 'member' of their informal groups, could temporarily boost the self-identification of those men whose masculinity was identified as subordinate. However, through the "wind-ups" orchestrated by the dominant men Lewis was made aware that he did not really belong.

In order to be (identifiable as) 'real' men, men have to be in control of their own activities in the private sphere of the home and the public spheres of work and club. Both, the private and the public spheres, were interrelated because the power to control one's own activities — as well as those of others — in the public sphere was to a large extent influenced by the social and material effects of paid employment . That Lewis was mocked by suggesting that his wife was in control also pointed to the situationally dependent identification of him as possessing a subordinate masculinity. This "wind-up" followed the same lines as those negotiations of masculinity in the work place, described by Back (1994:173), where "seniors compel apprentices to inhabit a feminized position" and thereby reinforce their dominant masculine identities. "Those who display a willingness to 'give it

and take it' are accepted into the masculine subculture, while those who 'snap' have failed this particular test of manhood and are likely to be kept at a distance" (Collinson & Hearn 1996:68). In contrast to Lewis, apprentices had the opportunity to transcend the feminised positions and become real men. For those men who were past the stage of work place socialisation it becomes increasingly difficult to be accepted as 'real men'. They were, thus, less likely to be in control of the identifications of them by others and less likely to achieve positions which would enable them to control others. Those men who did not manage to become 'real' men lacked the power to control as well as the positions that would give them control and could imbue them with power. Power and control — which were entangled in a dialectical relationship with each other — were key elements of the masculine ideal (cf. Kaufman 1994:145-146). Back (1994:172) argued that "power is associated with maleness, its absence with feminization." The power to control was imagined to be embodied by the ideal autonomous male individual. But this ideal of autonomy, inherent in the image of the 'real' man (cf. Gilmore 1990:49-50, 199), was a powerful illusion — an illusion that nevertheless profoundly influenced the reality of men's lives. As Dracklé (1998:116) pointed out, the hegemonic ideal of masculinity cannot be fulfilled, it will inevitably remain fragmented.

"She's got one of these bloody problems": Challenging the male hegemony 1

The threat to the male power to control posed by the politically and publicly active women in the support groups was an important source of conflict during the 1984/85 miners' strike. During the strike the women were no longer confined to the domestic space and prevented from active engagement in the public and political life of their communities. By claiming the previously inaccessible public and political space for themselves women opened up a potential source of positive self-identifications (cf. Taylor 1986:80) they had never realised before within the male dominated context of the mining community. Taylor (1986:85) described three generations of women in her family as not having realised their great human potential because "… all have thought that this was inevitable given the importance of ensuring a secure home for their men. All of them have deferred to choices made by their men in decisions about their lives and all have a very low concept of their own importance." Despite the fact that economic restructuring, the decline of the coal industry, and subsequent male unemployment had to some degree transformed the economic position of working class women into a more active one, positive identifications in the context dominated by the discourse of survival remained the exclusive domain of men: e.g. the breadwinner, the politically active trade unionist, and the club committee man. However, the daily practice of women working in factories slowly but steadily undermined the persuasiveness of dominant symbols like the male breadwinner.

Some of the men were well aware that male unemployment and increasing female employment undermined the ideal of the male breadwinner and that gender relations were changing even within the very 'traditional' former mining communities. It was Arthur, with whom I was talking about the problem of unemployment in the period after the strike of 1984/85, who brought up the topic of changing "gender roles".

> *R.:*   I don't think it has stopped. I mean the [economic] situation in the whole valley is

	still getting worse.
Arthur:	Ya.
R.:	Tower is one of the few places where the situation has improved.
Arthur:	That's right. But roles have changed in the valley as well because — in the '60s and '70s and late '70s it was the man that was out to work and some women, you know, some women in factories. But if you look now it's mainly women who go out to work. You see a lot of women if you drive down the area in the morning, you see women on the bus stops everywhere, right. Where before you'd see groups of men, 5.30 to 6.30, waiting for buses to go to work. Groups, big groups of men everywhere. All bits of the va… everybody in the valley. It's groups of women you see now. If you ever, if you take the time to go down that time of the morning, you see groups of women. So, the role is reversed.
R.:	Doesn't that demoralise the men? — because when the men are unemployed and the women go to work — I mean, traditionally the man is supposed to be the breadwinner.
Arthur:	That's right. So, why's he got be the breadwinner?
R.:	I mean, that's the traditional —
Arthur:	That's the traditional
R.:	— the traditional attitude and —
Arthur:	That's right.
R.:	— I think that many men think that way, still think that way.
Arthur:	Oh yeah, you — I was brought up to think that way. I was brought —
R.:	So it must be a big problem for them — seeing their women going to work and bringing the money home.
Arthur:	That's right, yeah.
R.:	And, I think, that will also contribute to demoralisation.
Arthur:	Hm. No, you're right and there's no answer to it. That's all I'm concerned about — if you got wage packets going into the house, right, does it matter what sex is bringin' 'em in? To me it doesn't, anyway. Ah, I mean, I was brought up to be a bloody macho type of man that — as you say, the breadwinner but I feel, looking at it realistically, as long as the money is coming into the household ah, so that ahm — roles change and so it's — I mean, you know [Arthur 04/10/95].

Arthur's view on the changing gender relations reflected the ambiguity felt by many men who were confronted with the reality of what they saw as a 'role reversal' caused by the changes in the economic structure of the former coalfield. Although Arthur questioned the dominant image of the male breadwinner that was part of the "bloody macho type of man" identity he had no answer to the questions posed by the crisis of hegemonic masculinity. His reflection of hegemonic masculinity remained on a rather abstract, rational level. As a socialist he believed in equal rights for all, regardless of sex, but he also felt that the basis of his self-identification as a 'real man' was slowly eroding.

Arthur:	I don't feel though — the Welsh women, that they do it. I agree, women are the same, like generally speaking, all miners are the same. I can — there's is a slight difference in some of the Welsh women. They bel… if you, if I take the hoover, taking the hoover on the floor, I guarantee my wife will come in and joke a bit over me. If you pick pieces of spuds, and I say something about the spuds, you're cooking a meal, she say something about the meal. Because they're threat… they feel threatened that you're taking their domain over. I believe that, I don't know. I might be wrong.
R.:	Did the men also feel threatened — ?

> *Arthur:*   They do, they feel very threat… I feel threatened [Arthur 04/09/95]!

It is evident that both men and women on the estate were engaged in enacting and reproducing hegemonic gender relations. His wife's reaction to his invasion of the female domain of the home followed the same lines as the wind-ups performed by men. By making jokes about men doing housework, the act of taking the hoover 'round was turned into a symbol for subordinate masculinity and, thus, a potential threat to the self-image of the 'real man'. From Arthur's perspective the men initiated the changes which started to dissolve the gendered division of labour in the home. Women were represented as passive, feeling threatened by the activities of men who remained in control. When we talked about the role women had played in the 1984/85 miners' strike Arthur denied that the large-scale mobilisation of women during the strike was a catalyst for the changes in gender relations.

> *R.:*   Do you think that the strike and the women's support groups have changed the relationships between men and women.
> *Arthur:*   [thinking]
> *R.:*   And the strike —
> *Arthur:*   No I don't, I don't think [agitated] they did really all that much because I think, I think men and women were, were ending that, anyway. I think there have been changes since 1984, a lot of changes between the men and women, but I think that was coming anyway. It's started, I think, restarted and ahm — I think, in the home it been goin' on for years. Men beginnin', have begun to do housework of some sort now. Watching the children and cookin'. That's been goin' on for years and it, it, it — as the generations was changed, the generations, it become more and more the men who'd do these type o' things in the house. Ahm — we only had changes — as I can see it, was in the work place. Not, not — I doesn't gather anything has changed — no, I did — before they're making a difference as such. That's what I've seen in the club, as such, such — where the women started coming on a Sunday morning, when they'd never come before, and they started drinkin' all the pints not their half glasses, as I noticed, again. I see little things but I notice them, right [Arthur 04/09/95].

His vehement refusal to acknowledge the effect the activities of the women's support groups had for the re-interpretation of gendered difference showed that the challenge to the male hegemony produced confusion in the men. That women started to visit the club on Sundays and drank pints may have irritated the men but it posed no serious threat to male dominance. However, that women refused to be content with their supporting role and got involved in activities in the public and political sphere was taken much more seriously by the men. "There were arguments about *which* activities the women should be engaged in, and how to deal with their relations with the men. Sometimes, these arguments led to highly problematic strategies, but that was only to be expected, for they were challenging communities that were very traditional in how they saw the role of women" (Seddon 1986:12). Samuel (1986:21) argued that the women's support groups managed to establish "an alternative centre of power in the villages" which caused "considerable friction" between them and the exclusively male union lodge committees.

> *R.:*   But there were only a few people actively supporting the miners [in the next village].

Arthur:	Yeah, that's right. Susan is one and she'd a lot of problems up there, and would create a lot of problems — and because she doesn't understand. I think, the way she'd talk to people, you know —
	[the cassette had to be changed]
R.:	Ahm — which action group? Women against —
Arthur:	Pit Closures.
R.:	— Pit Closures?
Arthur:	Ya, but, it — anyway — I know me and Tyrone go for a couple of meetings up there to try and stop that.
R.:	Yeah.
Arthur:	Silly and bickering things, not, nothing mayor. Silly little bickering things, now.
R.:	Well, you you get that — I mean —
Arthur:	That's right —
R.:	— in many groups. Many groups break up in the end because of some silly misunderstanding, or whatever —
Arthur:	Yeah, that's right. Now, for Penywaun was marvellous, see. It was outstandin' there. We got all these women — We was lucky, in a sense, here. We had the club as base and — we didn't have this women, women whatever. My father [Dai] and Peter, who was chairman of the club —
R.:	The former miners?
Arthur:	That's right. We had them, right. And when you think, we put a gang of women together with no experience at all of running a committee, or an organisation, or whatever, you got problems and fight for something there. The same with a group of men, I shall imagine, right.
R.:	Well, what kind of problems?
Arthur:	I don't know really. I'll be called a male chauvinist pig on a number of occasions, right [laughing] and I am to a certain degree because I was brought up that way, to respect women, all right. And I can't — something like open the doors and whatever — you get up on a bus for a lady to sit down, that type of thing. I mean, I've always done it and —
R.:	That's —
Arthur:	— that's not —
R.:	— that's not what a male chauvinist pig is like.
Arthur:	No, no, no, no.
R.:	That doesn't make him —
Arthur:	That's right. Well he called it a male chauvinist pig — and a woman don't like being told something, it's —
R.:	Yeah?
Arthur:	Now you, you know Susan. Now Susan doesn't like me as such. She's telling she we're, we all remember that, but she doesn't like me because I tell her: "Oye, you can't do that! No, you got no right doing that! That's the property of the NUM, you know, the members of the NUM. You can't do these things. You can't make decisions and them things. But you'll make decisions on what you're doing as group up there that's up to you. You can make — impose them decisions on us 'cause we're an elected body. You're not an elected body. We're an elected body and we got to — we're answerable to our members." And she can never understand that. She wants to drop everything down there and go to that — and you can't, you can't. You got your statutes — that you can't do these things, you know. So o' course we got a few bloody barmies over the year, me and Susan. And — Tyrone hasn't and I haven't got a lot of time. She's a bugger sometime — Basically, I mean, she's all right but I think she's got one of these bloody problems. And she thinks — and she's is a woman socialist pig, now — 'cause she thinks men can't do nothin', you know. And she wants it, both of them — in both worlds, worlds. She

> wants you to open the door for her, you have to ask, "Have a seat", right. She
> wants both worlds. You can't get — you're in one or the other [Arthur 04/09/95].

In the eyes of the men the women created the problems themselves simply because they
were women, and thus lacked the experience and the ability to organise. Women were also
believed to get embroiled in "silly" rows with each other; and even worse they interfered
with the business of men. However, Arthur indirectly admitted that he did not know which
problems were specific to a group organised by a "gang of women". This shows that his
characterisation of women's groups was based on stereotypical identifications produced by
gendered discourses. He was, nevertheless, well aware that women who had become politically
active during the strike were no longer willing to put up with disqualifications in terms of
gender — the gendered category of the 'chauvinist pig' will be discussed later in this
chapter. Conflicts between men and women over the running of support groups and the
political activities of women were less likely to break out on the estate because the local
support group which organised the food centre was set up in the context of the male
dominated space of the club.

R.:	Was there a lot of support from the people in the village —
Dai:	Oh, marvellous, marvellous —
R.:	— during the strike.
Dai:	— marvellous. We had a women's section here then and — Penywaun club. Penywaun club had a women's section there and they used to go round collecting food, stacked in tins. We never missed a parcel all the time. All the time we was out on strike. The women were fantastic, they were. They went really out this world, they were. And at the end of it, at the end of the strike we had a party for them at the club. Oh, they went on strike, they went on marches — they went on picketin'. Oh, they were doing good job, they went fund raising all over the country [Dai 06/07/95].

The "outstanding" success was due to the fact that prominent men of the local elite
(particularly Dai and Peter) ensured the smooth running of the group and the continuity
of male dominance. The women were "marvellous" as long as they remained under control
and fulfilled their supporting role. However, that some of the women all over the coalfield
broke with the 'traditional' practices of gendered power distribution, that they decided to
organise themselves and claim the public and political spaces in the communities as legitimate
spaces for women, was a new and disconcerting experience for the men — especially for
demotic intellectuals who were used to controlling these spaces and believed that it was
natural for them to do so. It is not surprising that these men attempted to re-affirm their
superior position by giving advice to the women on how to organise themselves. However,
they had to discover that these demonstrations of their superiority, clad in the rhetoric of
advice and assistance, were sometimes vehemently rejected by female activists who insisted
on the right to make their own decisions. This radical departure from the practice of
deference inherent in the gendered distribution of power was sometimes perceived as the
total negation of male power and authority — women were accused of thinking that "men
can't do nothing" (Arthur see page 150).

R.:	So, do you think anything has changed for women in these communities because of the strike, because of the support groups?

Susan: Yes, definitely! I would say a on a big, wide scale. You know, a lot of people would come out, you know and come into meetings and — not only to say, oh, we collected this and we collec… there was a lot of groups came in to the valleys, political groups and people became much more aware of things. And I don't think that's gone. It may look as though, well, there's not, people out on the streets shouting. Well, it doesn't happen like that but it made them aware and it had made them aware of how far people were prepared to go. Although there is nothing happenin' at the moment, I think that seed has been sown in these valleys and it has shown that with commitment things can happen. And that — if you realise the number that were involved in it, and if anything did happen in the future those numbers would come again. Yeah, I think, I think it made a big difference to people.

R.:   And has it changed the life of women in general, in the house, in relation to men?

Susan: Yeah, I, well I believe it has! I mean, not in all cases, I mean, never a hundred percent, but yes because a lot of people took decisions — whatever was for the family's best interest they just take it as so. But now they ask questions — I know a lot of people — a lot of women who went on from the miners' strike, a couple of my friends have gone in, they done degrees, they just got involved. A lot of them have got very much involved in politics. In, whereas before they weren't members of parties as such, you know, down here it's the Labour Party. But people actually became members of the Labour Party. Not just voting for the Labour Party and quite a lot of women, I know down over the Merthyr, they've become councillors. I mean, people who — right, there's only one, two, three, four, but these people they wouldn't have done it before you know.

R.:   Hm.

Susan: And they could call in support of people that had been in the group to support them in being — made into, you know, or doing anything. So, yes, I think, I don't think — a lot of women that were involved in the miners' strike have the same outlook on things after the miners' strike. I don't think they believe that they should take things as so — they, that — things could be questions and things can — if you believe in them, at least try to change them. A lot of centres were set up after miners' strike in a lot of places, mind. They were women's centres. In Banwen they started a centre down there for educating women. And all them stem from the miners' strike — I said, not so much in this area. But a lot of areas did do that.

R.:   A colleague of mine from the university of Swansea is doing a study of Banwen at the moment.

Susan: Yeah, but Banwen was to — you know, that area, they went leaps and bounds after the miners' strike. They set this cen… it was such a pity here that nothing did come from it because considering it was such a — it was a mining community that had so many pits at one time. It was surprising — that's why, as I said, when it happened you didn't realise but on reflection you can see how little it was. Because there was lots of areas that really went forward. They set up a lot of things. Well, I'm hopin' to go to Banwen myself in September now to this way forward with Labour thing with Davy because Banwen is the only one that's doing — but, I mean, it just goes to show, I mean, it maybe only one but that came from it. And that got to be good. And over the year — over 11 years a lot of people gone through Banwen who've done different things. Sometimes only a course sometimes even a degree but they've gone through it and that wouldn't have happened without the miners' strike.

R.:   Yeah, I see. But in the Penywaun club they have a heated discussion about whether women should become, should be allowed to become full members of club or not. And a lot of the men are against it. And —

Susan: It doesn't surprise me down there.

R.:	— it's, it seems to me that, that a lot of the men still have very traditional ideas of, about what women are supposed to do. Women should stay in the house and look after the children, etc.
Susan:	Well, talk to Arthur! He's a self-confessed male chauvinist pig!
R.:	[laughing]
Susan:	You know, and Arthur is typical of Penywaun!
R.:	But, I think, to me — Arthur at least, Arthur thinks about it and tries, I think he tries to change it.
Susan:	Hm.
R.:	But that's my impression.
Susan:	Arthur will tell you himself —
R.:	Ya!
Susan:	— he does it to wind people like me up. I don't know. But he does say what he thinks of women. Women are women for the house. I don't if he —
R.:	I don't, I don't —
Susan:	I don't think he really believes in it —
R.:	No!
Susan:	— but he just has you going.
R.:	Yeah, he does, it's a joke.
Susan:	He can wind me up with it, I know that.
R.:	Ya!
Susan:	But what he really thinks I don't know. But no, I would imagine Penywaun is very behind in its way in, in — you know, I would imagine as far as women go.
R.:	Compared to Hirwaun?
Susan:	Oh, I would say Wales is a bit behind to be honest with you. It needs a lot of catchin' up. But again it's been because women have not, have never been forceful around here.
R.:	Hm.
Susan:	You know, they've always fallen into that role. As I said, your not talking of a hundred percent but, you know, majority-wise, yes! You won't see women in all the top jobs in Wales. Very few will have top jobs in Wales. And not only this area, it's not just this area, in the whole of Wales. I was talking to somebody, they done, done a survey on it and in all there is one or two, but it's one or two. Most jobs are held by men — any jobs of, you know, are all held by men. You know it's unusual we've got a woman MP [Susan 02/08/95].

The crisis that resulted from the prolonged strike temporarily suspended the rigid gender divisions constituted by the local miners' hegemony. Susan believed that many women, who were active during the strike, had started to question the taken for granted order of things and subsequently developed new perspectives on their lives. However, few managed to sustain these new perspectives — and tried to develop their qualifications by taking courses in adult education centres — once the crisis was over and life returned to 'normal'. A few women — who, like Susan, were involved in the political activities organised by the Women Against Pit Closures groups during the miners' strike — managed to transcend the position of the miner's wife.

> I belong, as you know, I belong to Women Against Pit Closures, well, which were formed during the miners' strike. Well, when the miners' strike ended the groups still stayed from — they weren't — whereas the foods people, the women that were just, helped out in the food centres, it stopped and that was it. Women Against Pit Closures didn't. Over the years the numbers went down but it's still a strong movement [Susan 20/09/95].

For a minority of women in the coalfields the strike had opened up new possibilities, for other women the impact on gender relations appeared to be negligible. Linda, who was a key figure in the struggle of women to become full members in the club, denied that the strike had a significant effect on gender relations.

R.:	Were you active in the food kitchen and the women's support group during the strike.
Linda:	In the miners' strike, no.
R.:	Yeah, during the strike.
Linda:	No, no, no. I used to do the raffle for them but I never got involved in the distribution of the food and things like that. I used to run the raffle and get a few things running but I never got involved actually with the miner's wives.
R.:	The miner's wives were doing it?
Linda:	Yeah, they were doing it — I mean we had a raffle down in Penywaun. No, they were active in that, in the club at the time but, as I said, I didn't get involved in there. I did my part by selling the raffle tickets, whatever, you know. Collecting money, like.
R.:	Do you think that had some effect on how the role of women was seen by the men. I mean a lot of women were active and I think — liked it.
Linda:	Yeah.
R.:	Ah — has that changed anything?
Linda:	No, I, I don't really think so, no. No! — I mean, what they were really doing is supporting their own husbands — what I think anyway, which is normal anyway. No, I don't, I don't think, really think that changed anything. Everyone stopped, I mean, they stopped then, didn't they, I mean, they were going on Marches and Rallies and things like that, like, with their husbands but — No I don't, I don't think it made any change whatsoever.
R.:	So, the women involved in that, in the food centre didn't want to do more in the club after the strike?
Linda:	No, no, no. I mean they never had, they weren't before and they weren't after, active on the clubs behalf then. They were active in the club but on their own, for the miners, for their husbands — sons, something like that, you know. But no, not active for the club, no [Linda 16/10/95].

Linda's characterisation of what the women were "really doing" during the strike reflected a male definition of the role women were supposed to play: the support of their husbands and family especially in times of crises. Although many men played down the political activities of women's support groups, the 'supporting role' of women was certainly acknowledged by the men. In their accounts of the strike the South Wales miners interviewed by Richards (1996:152-153) confirmed the 'traditional' supporting role ascribed to women. The women had allowed the men to "do what they felt was right at the time", and they had kept the strike going because "they stood behind their husbands during the strike". This is very much in line with the dominant representation of the women in the mining communities as 'miners' wives', which means that women were almost exclusively identified as being part of a family or a relationship defined by marriage. They were rarely identified as individuals (see chapter 2).

    The definition of the women's activities during the strike in terms of a supporting role for their husbands was crucial for the maintenance of the male dominated local hegemony. In the end, the temporary inversion of the norm served to strengthen the encompassing discourse of survival. The emphasis on unity and solidarity prevented the de-legitimation

of male dominance by accommodating the unusual activities of women in the public and political sphere as an effect of crisis. The invasion of the male domain by women was considered to be legitimate as long as the survival of the whole community depended on the mobilisation of all of its members. In her account of women's support groups at Maerdy, in the neighbouring Rhondda Valley, Bloomfield (1986:162) wrote: "It seems from talking to men that most of them draw a sharp line between the strike-based activity of the women, which they think of as good and useful, and other kinds of female militancy which they see as bad and unnatural."

Waddington et al. (1991), who studied mining communities in the north of England after the strike, also remained sceptical about the extent to which the gender relations in the mining communities had really changed. They argued that the distinctive counter-culture had limited the range of legitimate experiences. "The emphasis on masculinity as a way of handling dirty, arduous and dangerous work combined with a lack of female opportunity for employment to produce a rigidly segregated set of gender roles. The extended family rigidified this structure which permeated leisure. Thus class relations were transmuted into a set of cultural imperatives. A way of coping with the exigencies of dependency on the mining industry became a prescription of how life was and should be" (Waddington et al. 1991:175). The mining communities certainly were "very traditional" in the sense that the norms and moral prescriptions of the miners' hegemony still dominated the social life of men and women. The strike had only brought a temporary shift in gendered practices and positions that had allowed women a greater freedom of action and access to the public and political spheres. It "… provided for some a brief glimpse of a set of gender relations very different from those normally prevailing in the mining communities" (ibid.:172). However, "this was often only the kind of flexibility mining communities had exhibited in previous industrial conflicts. Once the strike was over, traditional roles were reasserted and women returned to their peacetime domestic roles" (ibid.:171).

After the strike some women refused to return to their 'traditional' domestic roles and they experienced difficulties in preserving the right to act in the public and political sphere for which they had fought during the strike. Stead (1987:24) believed that those women who had started to question the "political system" would continue to do so and would also start to question "… the way women's lives are predetermined, not only by their sex, but often by men for their own convenience. There are many miners who will accept this questioning and even welcome it. There are many others, however, who are finding it is making their lives more difficult." Conflicts between women and men were inevitable when the men realised that their dominance was challenged. However, to present these conflicts as a matter of potential inconvenience or a slightly more difficult life for the men is a gross simplification. It does not help us understand the complex issues involved in the negotiations of gendered difference in the mining communities.

Although a lot of the men on the estate acknowledged that gender relations were in the process of changing, they were caught up in sedimented practices of (re-)producing a gendered power differential that was crucial to the continuity of their power over others. It was obvious that a more equal distribution of power would have made a re-definition of dominant images of masculinity as well as femininity inevitable. However, masculine self-images had already fallen into disarray after the defeat of the strike. The prospect of long-term unemployment contributed to the feeling of anxiety which took hold of men

who thought that they might no longer be able to live up to the (self-)image of the 'real man'. But even those men who did not experience the disconcerting effects of unemployment and whose masculinity and respectability were not in danger of being questioned by other men, appeared to have ambiguous feelings about giving up their dominant position. One of them was Arthur, who was not only a prominent trade unionist at the local colliery and an influential member of the club; he was a demotic intellectual who played a crucial role in the enactment of everyday practices which sustained the local (male) hegemony. As long as the legitimacy of these practices was taken for granted, and their gendered nature not questioned by women, men were able to derive power from the enactment of their superior gender position. Women were effectively prevented from gaining power through the naturalisation of concepts of gendered difference constituted by the discourse of masculinity. They were excluded from those activities and resources in the community that would have enabled them to take part in the negotiation of power.

During the 1984/85 miners' strike the women created their own networks and by-passed those institutions in their communities that were geared towards the perpetuation of their exclusion. In these contexts they developed forms of resistance against the imposition of male stereotypes upon women. Resistance against stereotypical identifications in terms of gendered difference was expressed by Susan (see p. 153) who continued to be politically active after the strike. In the interview I conducted with her, she symbolically reversed the dominant stereotype of women as backward and lacking intelligence produced by the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. In doing so she did not question the logic of dominance and subordination in gender relations but confirmed the dominant practice of 'othering' on the basis of ascribed gender characteristics. Dracklé (1998:118) argued that the production of images of men as dominant implies an imagined collective of women as the constitutive 'other', whose image is derived from discourses of physical and intellectual dominance, and biological as well as religious/evolutionary concepts. Susan went the same way of naturalising difference by using an 'evolutionary model' rooted in the dominant bourgeois discourse of class. Her representation of male dominated Welsh society as "a bit behind" and needing "a lot of catchin' up" followed the same logic as the bourgeois image of the working class as being "a bit behind" and needing improvement. She was identifying working class men as a collective in the same way the dominant bourgeois discourse of class identified working class people regardless of their sex, by imposing stereotypical categories of backwardness. Arthur was singled out as a symbol of male dominance and gendered oppression: the "male chauvinist pig". Susan's categorisation of Arthur as a "self-confessed" chauvinist reflected not only their difficult personal relationships during the strike, it was also intended to discredit the naturalised expression of male dominance. Although Arthur appeared to be the embodiment of the dominant male, Susan was not entirely sure if he really believed in the naturalness of the subordinate position of women. This was not surprising because Arthur's attitude towards women appeared to be contradictory. On the one hand, he believed in equal rights for women and, on the other hand, he was actively engaged in (re-)producing gendered difference in terms prescribed by hegemonic representations of women. However, his reasoning was slightly more subtle than that produced by more 'traditionally' oriented men. He did not argue that all women lacked the intelligence to be politically aware but he represented them as not interested in serious political matters. He, thus, suggested that the reason for the different attitudes expressed by men and women

was a question of choice rather than a question of power or powerlessness.

The negation of structural constraints (re-)produced and imposed on women by the dominant men became evident in the talks I had with Arthur about male leisure activities outside the club. We often talked about the books we were reading and one night he told me that he believed that women preferred romantic novels because they liked to escape into romantic worlds. In contrast to women, men were more interested in reading books with a political (socialist) message. I disagreed and told him that the women I knew were interested in political literature. He replied that "modern women" were "perhaps" interested in politics (Notes 27/09/95). In order to characterise what he perceived as the rather restricted perspective and disinterest of working class women he coined the term "Coronation Street type" — "Coronation Street" is a well known British soap opera on TV. The "Coronation Street type" was the symbolic condensation of stereotypical images of women: women are emotional, they are interested in direct social relationships, they choose to occupy a subordinate position and choose to have a restricted world-view — all of this, of course, by nature. In contrast to women, men were constructed as the 'rational other'. They were interested in more serious matters and, thus, liked to watch documentary programmes (Notes 01/09/95).

I believe that he was made aware of the contradiction between the practices of male dominance and the socialist ideal of the fundamental equality of all human beings regardless of sex, when women started to resist his attempts to impose his male visions upon them. One night in the club, after an argument with one of the women from the lady's subsection, he told me that the strike did have an effect on gender relations. Nevertheless, the majority of men still believed that they had to go out and work and that women "belonged in the house". His position was marked by ambiguity. He stressed that not all men were "chauvinist pigs" but admitted that some men could be characterised as "chauvinists". However, in contrast to these men, he presented himself as politically aware — he believed that all human beings were equal — and as an exception to the still prevalent norm. On this occasion, and several other occasions, he and the other members of his informal group of men tried to legitimise their stereotypical characterisations of women by explaining that they were brought up that way — "to be a bloody macho type of man" — which, of course, did not mean that they were "male chauvinist pigs" (Notes 28/07/95). The use of the term "male chauvinist pig" caused a lot of "aggro" (aggravation), especially in conflicts with those women who continued to be politically active, like Susan.

> When I told Arthur that Susan had said to me that he was a self-confessed "male chauvinist pig" he became angry, turned around and rested his arm on the back of my chair. He would tell me a story about Susan and accused her of being a staunch feminist — Phil approved energetically. She is the real "chauvinist", a "female chauvinist". She wants to get everything done her way, she is exploiting people and dropping them afterwards. That's what she has done with the people from "Militant" (the newspaper). Arthur said that he was fed up with Susan because she would destroy everything but did not have any ideas how to build up something new. She is like Germaine Greer. Phil argued that they were brought up that way but that they were no chauvinists. But Susan was worse because she wanted to destroy everything. After Arthur had calmed down a bit and I said to him that Susan had meant it as a joke. But Arthur and Phil agreed that she really meant what she said [Notes 07/08/95].

The boys' reaction to their categorisation as "male chauvinist pigs" shows that the attempts

to redefine gender relations were inextricably connected to the struggle over the power to define class identity. Male identity and working class identity were so deeply entangled that questioning male self-images was interpreted as yet another attempt of the bourgeois hegemonic project to eliminate the distinctive counter-culture of the mining community. Subsequently, those women who were accused of being feminists were 'othered' as individuals who had defected to bourgeois feminism — and feminism was perceived as an ideology that challenged the very essence of naturalised male dominance. Thus, for the boys being identified as a "male chauvinist pig" invoked images of bourgeois feminists deconstructing everything they had learned to believe was masculine. It also meant that their masculine self-images were not only attacked from the outside — and they knew from experience how to deal with these threats — but also from within their own communities. In order to preserve internal unity and solidarity the conflict was symbolically transferred to a terrain where it was much easier to handle. 'Othering' was a way to externalise the threat. In the process of 'othering' women the *them/us*-dichotomy (see chapter 4) was applied. The boys accused Susan of exploiting people which was a dominant characteristic of *them* — in contrast to *us*, *they* denied collective responsibility and solidarity and worked only for their own benefit. Comparing Susan with Germaine Greer, who was constructed as a symbol of destructive, militant feminism by the men, was a way of identifying her as one of *them*, a bourgeois enemy — Greer was described by Ardener (1977:44) as a revolutionary women's liberationist who questioned "the most basic assumption about feminine normality". But the connection of women from the support groups to active feminists was not only a symbolic construct of men. During the strike bourgeois left-wing feminists, like many other left-wing groups, joined the ranks of the supporters of the miners. The fact that they linked with the women's support groups in the mining communities during the strike was perceived by the men as yet another attack on the miners' hegemony by the dominant bourgeoisie. The influence of feminist ideas about gender relations and the use of feminist rhetorics by women from the mining communities proved to be disconcerting for the men.

R.:	Do you think it's a good idea to have women as full members of the club?
Dai:	I wouldn't like to comment on it. I mean, I've seen a woman prime minister Margaret Thatcher, you know, what she've done. And look into, how many of the women, I suppose, but you also get some good women. But —
R.:	So — ?
Dai:	Could be a good thing, could be a bad thing [laughing]. I wouldn't like to say myself personally, you know because, I mean, we're lucky, we got a good MP, right. But I, my honest opinion, I think there's too many women in parliament they're gonna ruin parliament. I honestly think, I'm not sayin' it now but I said it donkeys' years ago, there's too many MPs up there. And I think a smaller committee is a better committee than a bigger committee — myself personally [Dai 08/08/95].

That their 'arch enemy', the former prime minister Margaret Thatcher, was to a great extent responsible for the most serious threat to their livelihoods and their distinctive way of life, contributed to the strengthening of their conviction that it would be dangerous to give women too much power. Women just did not know how to deal with it in a responsible way; and this became part of the social memory of the strike that was kept alive. Ten years later the men acknowledged that women had made a vital contribution to the efforts to

sustain the strike for over a year. Nevertheless, a latent feeling of anxiety remained, despite the fact that most women had returned to their domestic existence. Gender relations in the mining communities could never return to their male defined 'normal' state after the experience of the strike. However, the changes were far less dramatic and took longer to 'materialise'.

"They're living in a dark age": Challenging the male hegemony 2

The male dominated local hegemony proved to be quite resistant to change. It took almost ten years until the women seriously attacked the last bastion of male dominance, the club. Although a direct connection between the participation of women in the public and political space during the miners' strike of 1984/85 and the struggle of the women on the estate to gain the right to full membership in the club was denied by male and female actors in the membership dispute, the events of 1984/85 certainly influenced the perspectives from which men and women viewed gender relations in mining communities. The strike represented a state of emergency, a profound crisis, that made the temporary suspension of gender segregation inevitable and tolerable. The establishment of separate centres of power in the communities, that were to some extent outside the control of the men, was grudgingly accepted by the men as long as the crisis lasted because they were convinced that they would cease to exist once the crisis was over. However, the far-reaching and permanent loss of control over *the* institution of male sociability, the club, would be much harder to tolerate. It was perceived as a threat to the very foundations of male dominated mining community culture. Traditionally, working men's clubs were an exclusively male institution — especially the bar was an exclusively male space and in the 1960s many clubs still demonstrated this by putting up "men only" signs on the doors to the bar. In some clubs women were allowed to enter the club for special occasions such as dances and concerts (cf. Dennis et al. 1956:146, Rees 1975:161) but in the 1980s working men's clubs in Maerdy, in the neighbouring Rhondda Valley, still had "men only" rooms (cf. Bloomfield 1986:157).

  Even in the mid-1990s the invasion of male privacy in the club by women was only reluctantly accepted by the men. The club, and particularly the bar, represented the space where men could enjoy the company of other men outside work. Furthermore, going to the club was an attempt to get away from the responsibilities of domestic life, to get away from the home, the world dominated by women. Arthur told me once: "I don't want my Missus here with me, I want to have a talk with the boys" (Notes 15/09/95). Arthur's wife visited the club from time to time but she never sat with her husband and the boys in the bar. She usually played the bandit that stood in the entrance hall just outside the doors to the bar. On rare occasions when women sat at the boys' table the men seemed to feel inhibited by their presence. They did not talk about the usual topics —work, politics, sport — and often excused themselves for using 'bad language'. Phil and Arthur agreed that there was a lot of swearing underground but they stressed that they would never swear in front of women — in fact, they sometimes did swear in the presence of women but felt obliged to excuse their bad language (Notes 28/08/95, 01/09/95). The topics of their conversation and the language they used in the club were part of the symbolic expression of an exclusively male space. "Bars are no longer off limits to women, but they are still

male public spaces, and that space is defended through language" (Dunk 1994:96, reference omitted). The exclusion of women was legitimised by employing the image of women as lacking the knowledge to take part in the conversations of men. A lot of time was spent talking about work related matters — "It is said that more coal is 'filled off' in the clubs than is ever filled off down below and that the men come back exhausted from a hard shift at the club" (Dennis et al. 1956:144).

The gendered segregation of leisure activities was also legitimised by emphasising the responsibility of men towards women — women needed to be protected from the rough world of men. This concept of male responsibility was a way of inscribing relations of dominance and subordination. Male dominance was clad in the rhetoric of "respecting" women. Opening doors or offering your seat on the bus to a woman (see Arthur p. 150) were interpreted by the men as showing respect to women. The gendered meanings of respect differed considerably. In a male context respect was something you had to earn, a man was respected because he had achieved something or had fulfilled the moral obligations prescribed by hegemonic masculinity — "You can buy friends but you can't buy respect, you worked bloody hard for that" (Peter 02/08/95). Women were respected by men because they performed the caring role in domestic space — and sometimes even in public space. Moreover, this kind of male respect for women included a protective aspect. They were respected because they were thought to be weak and lacking the abilities to gain respect the male way. Thus, women were defined as embodying an inherent lack which limited the experiences they could make and in turn legitimised their subordinate position. In showing some consideration for the weak (women), men were able to symbolically re-affirm their dominant position vis-a-vis women as well as their self-identification as morally superior. According to the logic of male dominance women were not excluded, they were protected for their own good.

R.:	And, and the women usually didn't go into the bar?
Dai:	No, no. This is —
R.:	I mean, there're very few women there now.
Dai:	Now — well, women are not members of the club. They are associated members of the club. I don't know why but the majority of men always said, well, you know, when you go into a bar — it's a man's bar then. I mean you take [the club], the language over there is terrible some afternoons. It's not very nice for women to be there, that's right —
R.:	And the men didn't want the women in the bar?
Dai:	No, they didn't want the women in the bar, like. I mean, now it's all changed, now like. I mean, the women are, these women have done a good job there, I think myself. See, what you would find is that you had a committee, you'd have one or two committee men would do all the things then and the others would sit back. You could spend hours on the door or sellin' bingo tickets — and other people wouldn't do it. Well, why put your name forward, if you're not gonna do it. And the women have showed the men how to do these things [Dai 08/08/95].

Few women entered the male space of the bar regularly. However, three times a week, on bingo nights, the bar and the hall were packed with women and men. Bingo was a major source of income for the club and one of the few leisure activities shared by men and women. Bingo sessions were organised by the club and all functions — e.g. calling the

numbers, selling and checking bingo tickets — were performed by men. However, during the 1980s the men seemed to have lost interest in the club (see chapter 5). When some of the committee men started to lose interest in doing their duties for the club and proved to be unreliable a solution to the bingo problem had to be found. In contrast to the men, a group of women was interested in taking on some responsibilities in the club and volunteered to take over the running of the bingo sessions — bingo was probably the most important leisure activity the club was offering women. Nevertheless, the decision whether the women could take over the bingo rested with the men — as the only full members. According to Arthur, he had brought up the issue of full membership for women in the first place.

R.:	So, what about the issue of women becoming full members of the club?
Arthur:	Here?
R.:	How did that start?
Arthur:	I started it!
R.:	You started it?!
Arthur:	I started it back three years ago. I was on the committee of the club and — I believe in women have as much rights as I got. That's — I brought it up in a committee meetin'. I couldn't get a seconder for it, right. There was a nasty row, a nasty row goin' on there — I was on my own. So, I started — go ask some of the women. But you get through the women, say look, do you want to be full members — all I say, you got to face it. Perhaps there's — they won't give it to us. So, we had a General Meeting back two years ago where I stood on the floor and said why don't we let the women sell the house [bingo] tickets, go on the door of the club, as a woman's section. Oh, that's a good idea. And they fell through the fucking trap, didn't they. The vice [chairman] said at the end of my speech, right. I said, then after about a year, I said, he was looking at me, becoming full members. I'd never, I dropped my voice slightly.
R.:	[laughing] Yes.
Arthur:	And will be settled in. And it's down in the minutes. It's down [he knocked on the table] in the minutes of the AGM [Annual General Meeting]. So, this AGM, this year now, we've got to look into it 'cause we had another small AGM, General Meeting, when I brought it up full force. And I said, it's down, it's been passed, you can't change it now. It's changed, and I said, you got to now, between now and next for cert… to look into it. What are the implications of it, it's something between men, and will you be allowed to become full members, if you want to. So that, so hopefully, are our readings of the next year now. It's a long process, but there're so many people against women becoming members. And you ask their reason why and they can agree with all of them — but women will try and take over the club. And they will! I know that, right. Especially Susan and them lot —
R.:	Why do think women will try — ?
Arthur:	They believe in their ways, that only they can run things [Arthur 04/09/95].

Arthur believed in equal rights for women but he also wanted to remain in control of the process of change that was going on in the club. Furthermore, his position as a demotic intellectual depended on his abilities to retain the power to define. By making the issue of full membership for women his own, he made a crucial step towards remaining in control. He developed the strategy of slowly undermining male resistance by persuading the men to let the women take up more and more responsibilities, so that they could one day become full members. Despite the fact that he saw himself as initiating change he was also afraid that things would get out of hand. Once again the ambiguity of his attitude towards

women showed through. On the one hand he believed in equal rights for women, on the other hand he felt threatened by women he could not control because they insisted on their own points of view.

Nevertheless, by laying the organisation of the bingo nights into the hands of a group of women, a process was set in motion that would inevitably change the sedimented gendered distribution of power in the club. Although women could never become full members of the club they had, outside the formal structures, always worked for the club — e.g. they performed the role of the caring wives by catering for the men. Starting an official "ladies' subsection" was a formal recognition of the contribution the women had made to the club. But women remained associate members without the right to make decision on behalf of the club, to vote or stand for office. In spite of the fact that the Working Men's Clubs and Institutes Union (CIU), to which the club was affiliated, had an equal membership policy (Working Men's Clubs and Institutes Union 1995:15-16) the full members — that is, the men — refused to grant the women the right to full membership.

> Yeah, yeah — you had a women's section there — you had a football section, their wives would go and make sandwiches and if you had a visitin' team, they would put a cup of tea on and sandwiches for the visitin' team. Ah, they'd come in bus loads, right — after they'd stop for a show that night, play football in the afternoon and then they would stop over night. Well, then their wives would do it. And that is what we used to call the women's section, you know [Dai 08/08/95].

Apparently, women's activities in the club were constructed as an extension of their domestic role — 'naturally', they did not get paid. But the active women were no longer willing to accept that some of the men only did their duties if they got something out of it.

Linda:	It's like Boxing, ah not Boxing Night, Firework Night now. Who's the one that's gonna be making the hot dogs? Me! Who is the one — I done it when this international, rugby internationals I go there in the afternoon I do the hot dogs. I do get nothing for it, mind, nothing! And it was — and the other ladies' section, they don't get paid for anything we do through the year and I don't get paid nothing. Mind, we're saving the club about 20,000 pound a year on cheques alone. What the committee, when they were doing duties — they were having cheques for every duty they done. If it is calling bingo, they had two cheques. If they were checking the tickets they'd had a cheque. If they were on the door, they got five cheques. Well we stopped all that and we don't get nothing.
R.:	Well, I think Will doesn't get anything.
Linda:	No, he doesn't get nothing. For I never — we stopped it — 'cause the sole reason was, the men that was on the committee, they were only on there to get their cheque. They wouldn't do anything at all unless they got paid by cheques. Right and you said … tell, tell them that, I said, we would form a ladies' subsection and we don't want nothing for it. But Peter said, oh you should have a cheque, no, I said, we're willing to do it for nothing. Which is saving the club 20,000 pound a year.
R.:	So, the committee had to —
Linda:	Well, they didn't like it then, i'n' it, know, the ones that was there. Like Will was on it, and his buttie was all right and they didn't want no cheques anyway. But the others that was there John, Lee they were just on there — Billy — just to grab all the cheques that's going and of course when, when we went on they didn't have no duties to do, well, they didn't last long. They got a bit of a — a month after,

	they finished.
R.:	[laughing]
Linda:	We finished them, you know, we stopped their beer money, like. 'cause what they were doing then, if they wanted to go out in the night and they didn't have the money, they'd go over there do a duty and they'd have cheques and they'd have beer now, wouldn't they.
Both:	[laughing]
R.:	Yeah, that's how it works.
Linda:	You know, we stopped it like. So we weren't very popular the summer round. I mean, you've got some members have come round and appreciate that we were doing a good job. It's one ex-committee man, he'd always say to me, Linda, I gotta be honest, you do a marvellous job here — you know. And they do appreciate what we do but in the beginning they didn't like it at all. They didn't ask and they just went off, i'n' it. So — [Linda 16/10/95].

The rhetorics of challenge, employed by Linda in the conflict between women and men in the club, represented the women as the altruistic, true guardians of the club's spirit — comradeship, solidarity, and respectability — while some committee men were said to be lacking these moral qualities. These men were portrayed as hedonistic, motivated only by the opportunity to get a couple of free pints. In fact, even the established male elite identified some of their fellow committee men as hedonists. Particularly one committee man had lost all respect. The chairman accused him of abusing the power of a committee man and he threatened to hold a ballot in order to remove him from the committee (Notes 28/07/95). Most of the men believed the lack of interest in the club had made it possible for morally suspect, less respectable men to gain a seat on the committee. These men were accused of disregarding the moral obligations of collective responsibility and threatening the unity and solidarity of the club and the community. The hegemonic meanings constituted by the discourses of respectability and survival were undermined by the men themselves. This gave women the opportunity to subvert their meanings by exposing male practices as contradictory. From the perspective of the women who were active in the club, the men only seemed to be interested in having a place where they could socialise with other men and have a drink: "As long as there's beer coming out of the pump, see, he don't care a shit" (Linda 16/10/95). Thus, the women were able to construct themselves as morally superior; they adhered to the values and norms constituted by the discourses of respectability and survival, which were, nevertheless, still defined by men. The men, on the other hand, appeared to be threatening not only the survival of the club but also the maintenance of the miners' hegemonic project as a whole. Apparently, the men themselves provided the women with the means to legitimise their claims to full membership. Furthermore, for the women the struggle for full membership in the club assumed a special importance because it was a way to claim the public space for themselves and a way to articulate a positive identity.

At a first glance, male and female perspectives on the question of full membership may appear to be radically different. However, in contrast to the female activists in the miners' support groups, the women in the club expressed their resistance in terms defined by the local hegemony. Both the male and female strategies of constructing gendered difference were enacted within a male dominated discursive space. In the process of negotiating the gendered distribution of power, the men used the negative image of women — they were

incapable of getting themselves organised because they were women — to defend their dominant position. The women, on the other hand, used the example of men who were lacking these supposedly 'essentially masculine' qualities to expose the fragility of the ideology of male superiority. In the conflict over full membership for women the same strategies of constructing gendered difference were employed. The stereotypical identifications of women were symbolically reversed by them. However, this inversion of the norm did not represent a radical opposition to the values and norms constituted by the discourse of masculinity. On the contrary, Linda used an essential ingredient of masculine respectability — hard work — to legitimise her claim to full membership for women. She stressed that she, as a woman, had "worked hard" for the club even before the ladies' subsection was formed, thus, making it clear that she was as good as any man, and perhaps even better than some. But she also turned the 'caring' paradigm — usually used to confine women to the private sphere of the home — against the men by accusing the men of not taking their responsibility for the club seriously. She created a picture showing that the women cared for the well-being of the collective (the club) while the men were increasingly individualised, following their hedonistic desires at the expense of the collective. This kind of critique was certainly not welcomed by the men.

> Arthur argued that women should have become full members two years ago, but they haven't because they didn't listen to him. They organised the bingo sessions but made too much of it. He advised them to keep a low profile but they wanted to do it their way. He believed that the women were offending the men with their talk, and he stressed that "they have alienated the men", especially the committee men. The men were coming to the club to get away from their women. Therefore, the women should have kept quiet until they had become full members because nobody could throw them out then. In contrast to the chairman, who tried to prevent women from becoming full members, he claimed that he was doing something for them, despite the fact that they don't want his help. They should work behind the scenes and they could profit from his experience; and he could be a "devious bastard" if he wanted to achieve something. When Arthur said to Linda that they would have become full members if they had listened to his advice, she angrily replied, 'If I had a stick like you, I'd kill myself' [Notes 28/07/95]!

In order to achieve full membership for women the women were dependent on the good will of the full members. However, the majority of the men resisted any attempt to grant women equal rights in the club. An important reason for their resistance was not just the belief in the 'natural superiority' of men but, according to Arthur, the fact that the women had "alienated the men". But how did the women manage to 'alienate' the men? The men were annoyed with the women for a number of reasons depending on their position within the local networks of power and the degree of involvement in the conflict.

Firstly, Arthur was certainly disappointed that the women did not listen to his advice. As I have pointed out earlier (see p. 151; see also the concept of teaching young people in chapter 5), the giving of advice is not a neutral act. In interactions between men and women it is also a way of (re-)producing relationships of power. In the act of giving advice, those persons who gave it — usually men — established dominance. Those persons perceived to be lacking knowledge, and thus being in need of advice — usually women — were defined as occupying a subordinate position. The refusal to listen to men who 'offered' their advice was interpreted as a refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of the sedimented

relationships of dominance and subordination. Hegemonic masculinity seemed to have lost its persuasiveness. This was not only disconcerting for the men, it also threatened the pervasiveness of the hegemonic discourse of gender.

Secondly, the men were irritated because the performances of some women in the public sphere resembled those expected of men. Women, like Linda and Susan, were forceful in asserting their right to be active in the public sphere and confronted the men with their own ideas. Furthermore, they did not conform to the male ideal of the deferential woman and played the 'rough' role that was reserved for men. They used "bad language" in their arguments with men — a 'language' the men believed women should not hear, let alone use. In these interactions they also used sexual metaphors. The frequent use of these metaphors was not unusual in contexts dominated by men. It was part and parcel of negotiations of masculinity. For men boasting of one's sexual prowess confirmed one's status as a 'real man'. Just like the construction worker who, on a Sunday afternoon in the bar, boasted of his sexual adventures while he was working abroad (Notes 24/09/95). It was considered natural for men to give accounts of their sexual activities, to comment on the physical attributes of women who happened to enter the bar, and be engaged in sexual banter with other men. Women who swore and frequently used sexual metaphors in interactions with men, however, were always in danger of being categorised as not respectable — as the stereotypical "wild women" (see chapter 2). The positions of these women were in a state of flux which made them particularly dangerous to the men. They could no longer be defined as feminine because they violated the moral prescriptions of femininity as defined by the male dominated discourse of gender. However, in order to achieve their aims in the context of the local hegemony, women had to resort to masculine ways of claiming power. As Bourgois (1996:214) pointed out, the processes whereby women claim the public space for themselves often produce contradictory outcomes, largely because "the fundamental status quos that enforce male domination have not been altered". Furthermore, the struggles and achievements of women were often caught up in "patriarchal models of 'empowerment' " (ibid.). In contrast to the women in the support groups during the strike, the women in the club did not create an alternative centre of power. They had to compete for power with the men in ways defined by the male dominated local hegemony.

Thirdly, the men were confronted with the ambiguity of those elements of working class masculinity that they had believed to be beyond questioning. The crisis of the patriarchal order that was an effect of long-term unemployment (see p. 143) was further intensified by the women's inversion of the norm because it made them appear less masculine than they had believed to be.

The threat to persuasiveness of gendered difference resulting from the crisis of the patriarchal order, the invasion of male public space and the inversion of the norm by the women strengthened the resistance of those men who continued to regard the gendered power differential as natural.

"It's just gonna be hell there": Defending the male hegemony

Many men continued to be sceptical about women organising the bingo and handling a large proportion of the club's money and tried to prevent them from becoming full members. Linda, however, was optimistic because she believed that the women had managed to

convince a fair number of men of their abilities.

>   *Linda:* It's surprising how our, how many men we have swayed up there now because they can
>   see we are far more organised then what the men were. We have introduced more in…
>   than what the men did — or would have, anyway. And they have been swayed over to
>   our side then see, you know. And, you know, I mean, hopefully next year we will be full
>   members, we will be full members next year. And that'll be very interesting to see then
>   — when we get up the stairs and what will happen. And because that will be the proof
>   of the puddin' because —
>   *R.:*   Yeah, that's right.
>   *Linda:* — when we're full members, have become then, they want committee people upstairs
>   and they put a notice on the board — well, I would put my name down, obviously. And
>   so would some of the other women. It'll be very interesting, that will be the proof of
>   the puddin' then, how the men feel about it anyway. If we're voted on or whether
>   we're not [Linda 16/10/95].

When I returned to the estate in 1996, the situation had not changed. The women had not been allowed to become full members and the opposition of men against their membership was undiminished. The discussion about full membership for women in 1995 revealed the conflicts between different groups of men in the club. Even the local elite was split on the issue. Firstly, there was the group around Arthur and his friends who tried to persuade the other members of the necessity to grant women full membership. Except on the point of women as full members they were more or less loyal to the chairman and some of them had served with him on the committee. I will call this group the 'moderately progressive group'. On the one hand they realised that changes in gender relations were inevitable, on the other hand they were still caught up in the (re-)production of the local hegemony and seemed to believe that it was better to control a process which could not be stopped.

The 'moderately progressive group' was opposed by the those men who agreed with the chairman's position. These men believed in the persuasiveness of the 'traditional', hegemonic model of gender relations. They represented the 'conservative group' and were afraid that they would lose their power to control the club if women were given the right to participate in decision making processes. Members of the local elite, like Arthur and the chairman of the club, tended to belong to either one of these groups.

The third faction can be described as the 'macho man group'. This group was made up of men who held extremely 'traditional' views on gender relations. Some of them had been committee men in the past and lost that power to the 'conservative group', and some of them still served on the committee — they seemed to belong to, what the 'moderately progressive' and the 'conservative group' regarded as, the less respectable element. The masculinity of some of these men was already questioned by other men. Thus, the prospect of competing with women, and perhaps losing positions of power to them, was deeply disconcerting. It would be yet another blow to their already fragile masculinity. These men mobilised every possible defence and over-emphasised their own masculinity. They even accused men belonging to the 'conservative group' of giving in to women. Tom, for example, used the issue of female membership to question the masculinity of those men who had challenged his masculinity (see chapter 5). The question of full membership for women not only produced a conflict between women and men, it became the arena for the contestation of certain masculinities. The situation was highly charged with affect because

the self-images of many men seemed to be at stake. Thus, both the 'conservative' and the 'macho man' group expressed their resistance to women's rights in the club by imposing negative images upon women. Even the 'moderately progressive group' invoked images of chaos to legitimate the supervision of women's activities.

One of the most prominent opponents of full membership for women, and a leading member of the 'conservative group', was the chairman, Peter, himself. A couple of days before I interviewed him, I had a chat with him in the club. He told me that the women were very active during the strike and that some of them discovered that they wanted to play a role in the club. Although some attempts had been made to make women full members, he stressed that, personally, he was against it. He appreciated the work that the women were doing for the club by organising the bingo nights but also complained about the lack of discipline during the bingo sessions. The reason he gave for this was that women did not command the respect that men did. The people would be more disciplined if he — a respect(able/ed) man — was responsible for the bingo (Notes 28/07/95). In the interview, a few days later, he was much more careful in voicing his opposition. The fact that the interview was recorded, and that it was recorded in the upstairs' office where he was sitting behind his desk and felt that he had to represent the club properly, was certainly a reason for the vagueness of some of his answers.

R.:	Women are only associate members?
Peter:	Women are associate members, they've —
R.:	Was there a time when women were not allowed in the club?
Peter:	In the early days. They've always allowed women in club early but they wouldn't allow 'em, like they do now, they weren't allowed to come in on a Sunday morning.
R.:	Right.
Peter:	As it is, that was, and now they play bingo now on a Sunday don't they. That's only been allowed, I would say, over the past ten maybe twelve years. They're associate members now but it is in the process — it has, there was a resolution passed in the last General Meeting to seek ahm — ah — the legalities and ah — the possibility of making women full members. And obviously the right to stand for the committee or any office in club and so forth.
R.:	But there're many men who are opposed to that.
Peter:	Oh I've spoken to a few that's opposed to it but I think, anyway we live in 1995 — the Con[servative] Club in Hirwaun over there now, they were last — women, the last club in the Cynon Valley, wouldn't allow women in there. But we have a sub-section of women here and they're bloody worth their weight in gold they are, you know. They run the bingo. But I would emphasise the fact that to run the bingo sessions — is a vast difference — in running the club itself.
R.:	Hm.
Peter:	But, as I said, you know, you're talking about a quarter of a million pound turnover. I'm not saying they're not capable of doing it but it's like in a house, and this is like a big house — we can't spend more than we got. We have, if we — if our expenditure exceeds our income we gonna be in trouble. And it's — well, I s'ppose it's like a house, really, like a large house, you know. If you don't pay — if I don't pay my electric bill at home they'd cut my light off and the same applied over here. I you don't pay the electric bill they the cut the light off. You know, but — I'm not a chauvinist pig, or anything like that. I believe, you know, I honestly believe that — Want one of these? [he offered me a cigarette] —
R.:	Ah, no thanks. Last week you told me that you, that you personally were against women becoming full members.

Peter: Well, I think it — that women are doing a vital important job here, what they're doing at the present time now, vital important.

R.:   Right.

Peter: And what I was, I'm concerned about was that — the dedication you got for this, for the function which they're doing now, is next to none. They are, they're good, I won't say they're good, they're bloody marvellous. Now because when it went down in the club, it's going deeper and deeper and deeper and as I explained to you earlier on, you know, you can't expect a woman with a couple of kids to come, run up here, to drop everything and come up here. Now, if I have a phone-call at home and them want you over here then — I come over here — or if I need committee men and I pick the phone up and phone them and they're here. Now, if I got one or two kids — you can't bring the children up here with you, obviously. You know, so there are disadvantages in that respect, like. As it is now, they run their own organisation within the club, the sub-section in the club, and of course they do — those with children — they do, plan their week ahead, you know. If they're on rota coming Tuesday they arrange for something, say watch the kiddies Tuesday or Thursday or whenever. You can't expect them to drop everything and run up — you know, — attending meetings —

[switched the tape off because Mike came in with some club business]

Peter: — they got a role to play in all aspects of life — they proved that in the miners' strike, how effective and bloody hard-working they was. [...]

Peter: They worked bloody hard, they put their heart and soul into everything.

R.:   So, why do you think, ahm, many men don't want women to become full members?

Peter: I, I — I think myself that there's a lot of the women wouldn't want to become full members — themselves.

R.:   But there are women who want to become full members.

Peter: Yeah, but see you can't have half a captain for a ship — if you got a ship you got to have one captain. But it's pointless, say for ten, you imagine the chaos that would be on a ship who had ten captains. This is what we — now if we got say — 150 women against being full members and you got 100 women, ah 50 women want to be members. Now, that doesn't rest with them, the decision doesn't rest with them. It's resting, especially — they call — extraordinary general meeting of the members. Now, it's the members who vote. It's the same thing as I said with the men, if the members vote 150 against not for it and 50 voted for it then that resolution is carried not to have them as full members, you know. Democracy has got to prevail whether you like it or you don't! But it's, it won't be the women that'll decide if they become members. That will be the full members now on a special meeting that can say that.

R.:   And do you think this is the result of what the women did during the miners' strike?

Peter: No, I wouldn't say that because —

R.:   Or the change which —

Peter: Not necessarily, I wouldn't put it down necessarily to the miners' strike. Obviously some of the active women, some women who were active here now was active during the strike. There's a lot of them active here now who had nothing to do with the miners' strike, you know. As I said, a lot of them had no relation in, working in the collieries. But — I don't know, you know, like I say, sort of, they've all, years ago the woman's place was in the house, themdays are gone. You know, we all accept that. And I think — right — here they are, serving a rightful purpose here now. There's no question of that either. But as I said — if anything, I could make a phone-call and they come — perhaps they have a bit of a disagreement with their wives but they'd probably come. But a woman couldn't just leave the children and go up here and do things like that. A woman couldn't turn around and say, well, all right, we got a meeting every fortnight — when I become

involved with this, the first year we had 54 meetings in the first year. So, I can say, some weeks it was holding two meetings — in the year. And it's time, and we're talking about two, three hours a time, you know. But, like I said, I thought hard about it but it's not really my decision anyway. All I'm doing is chair the meeting. If I'm asked my opinion I will give my opinion, obviously. But I will not force my opinion on anyone, you know. If they ask for it then I will give it to 'em.

R.:   Right. So what are the women doing, I mean, the women's section in the club?

Peter: They run the bingo. They runs all the bingo, the tote and, indeed, any shows that they have, they do that.

R.:   Yeah, they organise them and — ?

Peter: It's very important, they got a very important function within the club [Peter 02/08/95].

Peter employed two important metaphors to convey his opposition to women as full members: the house and the ship. First of all, he compared the club to a large household. At first glance his implicit suggestion that women were not able to handle financial matters of a household, in a way that prevented the accumulation of debts seems to be contradictory. Handling the household finances was an integral part of the 'traditional' gendered division of labour. On a Friday, a miner used to put his wage packet on the table and it was his wife's responsibility to redistribute the money and organise domestic life (see chapter 4). Furthermore, it was the responsibility of a respectable woman to make sure that the money lasted until the next pay day. However, in the eyes of the chairman, and of many other men, women were too inexperienced to organise an institution that was bigger than their own household — what he did not mention in this context was, that a group of men had run the club into considerable debt which had threatened the survival of the club in 1978 (see chapter 5). But it was not only the assumed lack of experience that was used against the women. The chairman also believed that women lacked the dedication necessary to do the job of a club officer. He, nevertheless, portrayed those women who were active in the food centre during the miners' strike as totally committed — with their "heart and soul" — to the cause. However, these women were acting under the control of men (himself and Dai), under special circumstances which required unusual measures.

   The women who were trying to become full members were neither under the control of men nor fighting for a cause most men could identify with. Thus, they needed to be defined as lacking, what the men considered to be, essential qualities. Peter's assumption about the lack of dedication is an expression of the naturalised male definition of the domestic division of labour. He defined women, who were looking after their children, as not flexible enough to do the job of a committee (wo)man — a man, after having provided the financial resources for the family, had no such obligations. It is evident that the men used the 'caring paradigm' to legitimate the confinement of women to the home and to prevent their participation in the public space. But the women were also engaged in the process of confining themselves to the home through the process of naturalising their subordinate position. Their belief in the naturalised gendered divisions of space on the estate was essential for the maintenance of (male) hegemony — or, as Mitchell (1998:75) wrote, without women "the performance of masculinity is incomplete".

   However, the development of feminist thought and political activities in bourgeois contexts had filtered down into the working class communities, particularly through the media. Furthermore, the increasing economic and political (e.g. during the 1984/85 miners' strike)

involvement of women as well as the growing number of single mothers who assumed the role of the breadwinner made it increasingly difficult to maintain the naturalness of hegemonic ideals of femininity as well as masculinity. Many men — especially of the local elite — still believed in the persuasiveness of discursive practices which constituted hegemonic images of men and women in the mining community. Although, the persuasiveness of hegemonic images was threatened, the normative power of images of gendered difference in the community was to a large extent still taken for granted. Peter's assumption that a lot of women did not want to become full members themselves was a confirmation of the persistence of these images. It also reflected the reality of female participation in processes which (re-)produced their own subordination. Consequently, any attempt to question the naturalness of the patriarchal (hegemonic) order invoked visions of chaos — the dissolution of the 'natural' order which ensured the survival of the community and provided internal coherence. Women were "worth their bloody weight in gold" but only if the men could prevent them from causing chaos. The ship was a condensation symbol, representing a well ordered male dominated world in itself with the captain as the embodiment of unquestioned patriarchal power and authority — an image the chairman could identify with. It echoes an image of the 'traditional' gendered division of labour in the valleys in the first two decades of the twentieth century produced by Gwyn A. Williams (1991:224) in his history of Wales: "This was the world of a majority of Welsh people, a world carried, supported, fed, washed, coddled by its hard-working and resilient women, taken for granted as First Mate in the House by the Captain of the Ship at work." Furthermore, the ship also symbolised the struggle against potentially dangerous and chaotic forces of 'nature' that could only be mastered by 'real' men — the embodiment of rationality and 'culture' (see also p. 157). The club and the community were imagined as a ship tossed about in the hostile waters of capitalist society. It was always in danger of being sunk by the power of unleashed antagonistic forces if the men, who believed that they knew how to hold a steady course, did not remain in control of it.

In order to ensure security, coherence and order, the course had to be determined by an exclusively male membership and a committee led by a strong chairman. Furthermore, male dominance and the exclusion of women from the decision making process was also legitimised with reference to democracy — as the chairman pointed out, the men who made decisions in the club were elected to do so. As we have seen in Arthur's account of the conflicts between the women's support groups and the union lodge during the strike (see p. 150), the exclusive control of social and political institutions by men was often legitimised with reference to the concept of democracy. The views expressed by these democratically elected (male) leaders reflected a gendered definition of democracy. In the context of the male dominated local hegemony democracy is a prerequisite of men and a means to ensure their dominance.

Thus, the vision of a club dominated by women was a means to mobilise male resistance. For many men the club represented a place where they could still be men, a 'safe haven' in a world constructed as threatened by women who claimed their right to equal participation. It had to be protected from 'feminists' who would bring chaos to a place of order and threaten democracy. However, some of the men — belonging to the 'macho man group' — who were opposed to the idea of women as full members, also took the opportunity to accuse the local elite of being responsible for the loss of male power.

Tom:	… Peter has been a good chairman but what I can gather and I'm spo… and talking from, from Arthur's family — Arthur's brother Bill — I give Bill a lift home a couple of weeks ago, it was, on a, I'm not sure on what night it was, anyway, Richard, and he spent many a years with me on the committee — and with Peter and — and he, Bill, he's a hard working boy, and he said he would never, he never ever thought that he would see Peter giving in to this ladies' section and certain members as he is, you know. Because we wouldn't have thought that, I mean, you know, there's, there's a lot of bad feeling there, you know, with this ladies' section and, you know, it's upsetting a lot of members over there.
R.:	Why is that?
Tom:	I don't know!
R.:	I mean, what's happening?
Tom:	I don't know! And, as I say, I don't go, I don't go there in week nights, you know, or the weekend. I go there on a Monday after I lock up from the old age, from here [the community centre], Wednesday and Friday. I don't go there on bingo nights and what have you. But I reckon there's certain people of the ladies' section are tryin' to rule the roost, you know, just do what they like, you know.
R.:	I mean, there is a discussion going on — whether women should be able to become full members of the club —
Tom:	Yeah, yeah, I personally think myself now, I maybe biased or what have you, but I think that would be the ruination of the club.
R.:	Why?
Tom:	I don't think Peter will have any objection to it, right. Whether, given Peter asked the same question 10 years ago, Peter would have turned on and told to them, no bloody chance! Or any of the members sitting on the committee, no chance! But they all started, mellowed a little bit and things are happenin' that shouldn't be.
R.:	I think Peter is still against women as full members. That's my impression.
Tom:	Yeah, I haven't got a, to be honest with you, because, you know, there're cer… unfortunately, Richard, I've been involved for a long time and the amount of ladies' section that I've seen — this lady's section is kept under control a little bit now by the, you know, by the management committee, to a certain extent. I've never ever seen a ladies' section work in that club — never ever! And ask Peter or Arthur, you know, he will tell you know, even Arthur's mother, she's an old age pensioner now, she must have, she's gone 70 — even when she was on the ladies' section years ago, would never ever work but always arguing and fighting amongst themselves — you know.
R.:	Hm. — So, do you think that women should become full member of the club?
Tom:	I don't think so! I think, you know, it'll be the ruination of the club. You know, that's my own personal —
R.:	Do you think that they will take over the club or — ?
Tom:	No —
R.:	— how could they ruin it if they don't take over the committee?
Tom:	There would be — well, yeah, it — you know, see we got, once they're made full members, all right, therefore they'll be eligible to be voted — but ahm — and I got a funny feeling there's certain people are gonna get in and trying to rule the roost and, you know, and it's just gonna be hell there, you know.
R.:	Hm.
Tom:	You know, as I said, you know, the subsection have never ever worked in the club, the ladies' subsection. And the lady's subsection had more freedom than what, you know, these have had. But these are bloody cheeky! — you know.
R.:	Do you think that the whole discussion came up because of the — what the women did during the strike?

Tom: Hm.
R.:   That the women were more active and wanted to get —
Tom: No!
R.:   — involved?
Tom: How this came about, about the, you know, the women with the club — is, what I call, is over the, this, you know, this effort with the — Peter and they couldn't get a committee — that's how all this come about, you know, and they've, you know, that's how they started asking the women to help out. And they started to, you know, form a little group. Of course and then they started bickering and, you know, and one thing and another. I think as the miners' strike — no — because I don't know of any of the ladies' section that are on the club now were in, you know, were involved with the miners. I don't know of any — and I was with them right through [Tom 18/09/95].

It is interesting to note that Tom accused one of the 'real' men who questioned his masculinity to have "mellowed a bit". He regarded them as less masculine than they had been and should be. He, nevertheless, tried to use their authority to strengthen his position when he claimed that they would support his views on women. Apparently, he was anxious to legitimate his negative definitions of women and his critique of the local elite by emphasising the respectability of the male opposition — he stressed that Bill was a real man, "a hard working boy". Like the 'conservative group', the 'macho man group' invoked images of order and chaos to reject the women's claims. In contrast to the 'conservatives', who acknowledged the contribution of those women they could control, the 'macho men' totally negated the contribution of women. It was, thus, not surprising that they became the prime target for the women.

> Bill used to be on the committee of the club, vice-chairman, and he was a proper male chauvinist pig. If you — enter into the committee room then say something and I, he go, I'm a member of this club and you are not, and all this bloody caper, you know. Shut up you bloody whimp, i'n' it. Even now as I go up the office and he's there — so, what're you doing in the office, you're not a committee man, woman. I have more right in this office than you have and I'm a member, you're not and he left as hard, and I really loved it. There come a day I get my — pull up and tell him the truth [laughing] [Linda 16/10/95].

The struggle for women's rights in the male dominated club was of particular symbolic significance because the profound socioeconomic changes in the coalfield had already led to a crisis of working class male identity. It became increasingly difficult to maintain gendered relations of domination and subordination that were naturalised through the hegemonic concept of mining community culture. In this context, the club, as one of the few remaining places where 'traditional' masculinity could be enacted and celebrated, assumed an even greater importance as a symbol for the continuing salience of a hegemonic project that constituted and legitimised male dominance. But not only the decline of the coal industry, the assertiveness of women during the strike and in the working men's club, as well as the disidentifications of the younger generations, posed a problem for the maintenance of the miners' hegemonic project. Another factor, directly threatening the local hegemony, was state intervention on the local level.

"You can start living your own life and becoming your own person": undermining the male hegemony?

In the 1980s and 1990s local authorities increasingly felt the need to counter the effects of economic restructuring in the old industrial heartland of South Wales. But it soon became obvious that the attempts to create new employment opportunities had not succeeded in providing employment for the growing number of industrial workers no longer needed in coal mining and other heavy industries. Long-term unemployment had become a permanent reality for a large number of people in the South Wales valleys — young adults and men over 40 years of age were particularly affected. In order to make the problem of long-term unemployment more manageable state-sponsored community initiatives were introduced. However, as Crow and Allen (1994:161) pointed out these "top-down policies", which advocated some kind of community participation, were based on "a conservative concern for consolidating social order".

Especially the members of the local male elite, who considered themselves to be the guardians of the social order, as constituted by the local hegemony, were concerned about the impact of state intervention on the community. On the council estate state intervention materialised in the form of a Community Development Worker who was installed after the murder of an old lady by two young girls. The murder was regarded as a serious disruption of the social order by both, the inhabitants and the local authorities. From the beginning, the position of the Community Development Worker on the estate was an ambiguous one. For the men, at least, an important reason for their critical stance towards Margaret, the Community Development Worker, was the feeling that she had been imposed upon them by "the powers above" who had done nothing for them in the past.

> … the only reason Margaret is here, 'cause the old lady got murdered here by two young girls, were they 16 and 17, two or three years ago, whatever it was, they murdered a lady — the powers above — oh, something down there — chuck something there, somebody in there, right. Nobody had it. The people in Penywaun have got no money. They've employed people form outside to come in to solve the problems around here [Arthur 11/07/95].

Although, some of the men felt that they were implicitly accused of not being able to control their own community, the established male elite acknowledged that the Community Development Worker was "a hard working girl", "dedicated' to the job, who "earned the respect" of the community (Peter 02/08/95). They, nevertheless, remained very critical of the impact her work could have on what they considered to be *their* community. Apart from being an 'outsider' imposed upon them, the fact that the Community Development Worker was a woman who occupied a position of power and intended to 'develop' their community was difficult to accept for the men. Her work with children — e.g. the summer holiday play scheme — and with young unemployed — e.g. skills training — could be accommodated by the dominant caring paradigm of the local discourse of gendered difference. The support given to the women on the Tenants' and Residents' Association (TRA), however, was quite another matter because it was regarded as a direct threat to the dominant

position of men and their control of the public and political arena.

The TRA was part of the local authority's attempt to initiate the so-called "regeneration" of the former mining communities as well as an exercise in the "empowerment" of the "marginalised". Empowerment, as defined by the 'social engineers' of the welfare state bureaucracy, had clear political connotations. First of all, it was based on the projection of a "stereotype of uniform commonality" — as Baumann (1996:15) defined it in his analysis of the discursive constitution of ethnic minority groups in Britain by the dominant political discourse — representing the whole estate as a 'community'. Moreover, it was a 'community' that resembled a kind of reservation for the marginalised and powerless. Secondly, since marginalisation and powerlessness were assumed to generate apathy and depression, the 'community' was expected to have lost the power to safeguard the smooth working of *the* dominant social order. This image provided the legitimation for a 're-construction' of the 'community' along the lines prescribed by the dominant discourse. In order to "re-engage" the members of this 'community' in the dominant bourgeois society — which implied a re-creation of them as thrifty and responsible individuals — they had to be empowered.

Empowerment descended upon the community in different guises. One of them was the Community Development Worker who was the key agent of empowerment. Another one was the Tenants' and Residents' Association (TRA) established as an instrument of empowerment through community participation. It was actively supported by the Community Development Worker. Furthermore, the Community Development Worker, the chairwoman of the TRA and the Borough Council's Special Projects Officer were setting up a so-called Enterprise Partnership in order to establish a training scheme for young unemployed in a disused chapel on the estate. In contrast to the club and the women's support groups during the strike, these new social institutions were established as the result of local authority initiatives.

Anne:	Well, they came round, would you be interested in things that happening on our estate. And it was the Cynon Valley asking, they put leaflets around the door, we had a meeting — and that's how it began.
R.:	So it was the council who started it?
Anne:	The council, yeah — fetching it out into the communities [Anne 04/07/95].

The aim of the TRA was to get the tenants and residents involved in the "development" of the estate. It also represented the inhabitants of three estates in their dealings with the local authorities. The council estate — including the small neighbouring estate of Trenant (132 houses) — was divided into seven zones. Each zone was represented by one or two inhabitants. At the time of my fieldwork the TRA had eleven members (six women and five men). Of the eleven members seven came from Penywaun and four from the other two estates. Although almost half of the members were men, the TRA was dominated by women — except for one unemployed man almost none of the other male members showed up at TRA meetings during my fieldwork. In contrast to the club and the community centre the association was chaired by a woman — Anne, a single mother who lived on one of the smaller estates. She worked quite closely together with the female Community Development Worker who believed that "… she's become a very, very positive person. She's become very assertive and that, and I think that's perhaps a little bit of me rubbing

off on her" (Margaret 04/10/95). This short quote from an the Community Development Worker shows quite clearly who was regarded as requiring controlled empowerment channelled through new social institutions. Women had to be empowered because they undoubtedly were the most marginalised and powerless people on the estate. They were not only subsumed under the "uniform commonality" of the scrounging poor imposed by the dominant political discourse, they also occupied a subordinate position in the local 'community' that was dominated by men. Margaret was aware of the fairly 'traditional' character of gender relations on the estate and she intended to help women start their "own life". She attempted to undermine, what she believed to be, the prevalent practices of male dominance on the local level. However, her notion of empowerment reflected the dominant bourgeois ideology of individual responsibility and achievement.

Margaret:	They're very much, they still think of women as the housewife and the childbearer and the cook, and the bottle washer and — but it's totally against everything I believe in — everything I believe in, it's totally against but then, but then, I mean, I'm working here so you just have to —
R.:	You have to accept it —
Margaret:	— to accept it.
R.:	— up to a certain point.
Margaret:	But what you have to do is educate the women, see. You educate the women to think. That's why all the women don't have qualifications or don't go into education and anything like that because they feel that they're still in the traditional role. And what we're doing is, we sort of, try to say them, we do a lot of work with just women and what we're trying to do is say to them, you know, you can go on, you can start doing things for yourself. Children can go into — you can put them into creches, later school, or whatever. And you can start living your own life and becoming your own person. But it's quite hard for them. They, it's not som'ing they pick up instantly. They find it quite difficult to — it's different for the single mothers because single mothers have got friends for themselves — [Margaret 26/07/95].

The strategy of 'empowerment' through community development work turned out to be a practice undermining the local working class articulations of gendered difference; and the TRA became part of this strategy. It provided an opportunity for women to get involved in decision making processes in the public and political arena from which they had been barred by male local elite as well as the male dominated political establishment. However, the men did not simply leave this field to the women. Considering the potential political power this new institution represented, it was not surprising that the local male elite initially attempted to control it. The chairman of the club also took up the position of the chairman of the TRA.

Peter:	I was the chairman of the Tenants and Residents.
R.:	Chairman, yeah. But that was the one before this one or?
Peter:	No, that — there've been three, there was one was going a couple of years ago — then they come over and asked if I go, if would be prepared to make a contribution over there — which I did, I said I would. But obviously my time is limited, you know. Because you can't be master to two, you know. You can give your time but I found out that it was taking too much of my time. And if it meant, which it did seem to, I was neglecting, I was getting out of touch here a little bit like. And I

thought about it, you know, stop. You know, you got to decide, you either come here or go over there. And I have been in this business now for, say 17 years and I stick with that. I'm available to them any time, you know, as a matter of fact, I know you've seen children in the hall over there. They phoned me ten days ago, they didn't have a place for the kids, I think it's 50 children at the time we're taking over the next four weeks. So we got a use for the hall in there, like. And the field out there is the council's property anyway. That was ours but we handed it over to local authority 'cause of the maintenance costs.

R.:   All right, yeah.

Peter: But they enjoyed it — but I found that it's very difficult to chair a meeting with — when you got a majority of women, you know.

R.:   Why?

Peter: Because they always seem to talk at the same time, you know. They won't leave one finish — and let someone answer. They all — I don't know what it is but they just seem to want to talk all — everybody talks at the same time like [Peter 02/08/95].

At times when the influence of the NUM and of the club was declining, the TRA had the potential to become an alternative centre of power in the community which had to be controlled by the local male elite. The fact that the TRA — in contrast to the club — was recognised by the local authorities as representing the inhabitants of the two estates contributed to its attractiveness for the local elite. Becoming chairman of the TRA was a way to enhance one's prestige and power in relation to the functionaries of the local authorities. In this sense, the chairman felt empowered.

> The pleasure I had from it is being able to walk into that office [the Housing Department's office on the estate] as the chairman of the Tenants and — Association. Having to speak to the manager — but obviously, without that position which I was holding, I wouldn't have been able to see the manager, anyway. They'd probably pram me off with somebody else [Peter 02/08/95].

But the feeling of being empowered did not last and the attempt of the dominant male elite to control this new institution failed. The members of the local elite on the committee, Dai and Peter, were disappointed with the TRA for a number of reasons relating to their positions as respectable men of power in the community.

Dai: I mean, I served on the two Tenants' Associations out there, months. And you can ask Liz [the Borough Council's Special Projects Officer], right — how do we get the money — who puts the money — this is for the Cana Chapel, what-'s-name, myself and Peter We were the first ones to bloody put it. Not that I want anything out of it, or what's it, but who's the man who's had the implication of it, Tony! Tony never even come to a cowin' meeting!

His wife: Watch your language!

Dai: No, I won't! That's what you will find and that is why a lot of people, myself and Peter, we packed it in. You'd go in there, and you're going through the same thing, same thing every bloody week and nothing being done. It's so slow, it's so slow in comin' and doin' these things —

R.:   But they've bought Cana Chapel now. [...]

Dai: Well, that Cana Chapel should be half way through by now. If they wanted to do something for the youngsters of the community live here — why don't they build, they got the ground there now, build a cafe there. You know, the youngsters hangin' about the street — let them do it in a cafe, put a juke-box in there and just

have one fella, no one woman, I don't care if it's a man or — one man or one woman get pokin' their noses in just to see there's no drugs or anything done. Let the youngsters run it theirselves on a non-profit basis.

R.:   Ah, the —

Dai: We were on about that for years.

R.:   Now, they're trying to buy some railway coaches for — to put them up down there — for the youngsters.

Dai: Ah but tell me, why buy railway — when they build one. When they, when they build one?

R.:   I don't know.

Dai: I mean, you take it, if the council wanted, go have a look at the council chambers how they've done all that out. Have a look at the council offices, it would have been an ideal place down here. And the woman over there, her cousin, she's 73 years, her chimney now, she reported this in January — they have been up here twice and still nothing done about it. There's no Tenants' and Residents' Association — See, they only, what I found out of the Tenants' and Residents' Association is that certain people will go there and — for what they want out of it. I mean, there's one fellow [the only male member who regularly attended the meetings] in Lawrence Avenue who's a, right, he's come from somewhere, and he moved up here. He wanted to get rid of the kids from the bloody street. Well, the kids got every right to go on the bloody street. To me, they have just as much right in Penywaun as, well, more rights than he have because he's not from here!

R.:   Yeah, but if more people from Penywaun would get involved in that Association and —

Dai: But they wouldn't, they wouldn't because there's a certain clique, there's a clique, see. You will find out that it's a cliquey situation [Dai 06/07/95].

For both, Dai and Peter, their work on the TRA was partly a fulfilment of their obligations towards the community, and partly a re-affirmation of their (self-)identities as respectable men. In a sense, they tried to use the TRA to maintain the persuasiveness of the discursive practices of the local hegemony. However, this attempt was challenged by other groups represented on the TRA who saw it as an opportunity to undermine the local hegemony. The dominant practices enacted by the male elite were challenged by those excluded from the networks of informal groups of men that dominated *the* community. One of them was Tony, the local councillor, who was accused of having disregarded "the consensus" prescribed by the discourse of survival (see chapter 4). He tried to use the TRA as a vehicle for the improvement of his political image and was criticised for doing so not only by the men but by all factions on the TRA. But he was not the only one who was categorised as an 'outsider' because he resisted "the consensus" as defined by the dominant elite. The "fellow from Lawrence Avenue" — who was a regarded as a 'newcomer' — was perceived as yet another threat to *the* community because he symbolised the decreasing persuasiveness and pervasiveness of the local hegemony. As Cole and Furbey (1994:155) suggested, the "… early relative homogeneity of population in public housing schemes in the post-war years has given way to growing variation within neighbourhoods." The increasing fragmentation of the council estate was an effect of the growing occupational diversity, the rise of long-term unemployment, the out-migration of the children of the 'old' respectable families, the disidentification of the younger generations with the 'mining community' and the allocation practices of the Housing Department. The social institutions which were part and parcel of the miners' hegemonic project became less attractive to the growing number

of men without a mining background and less able — or willing — to integrate 'newcomers' into the social networks of men.

However, probably the most important factor in the power struggle which developed in the context of the TRA were the women on the committee and the influence of the Community Development Worker. While the male elite did not take the women seriously and accused them of lacking discipline — "they always seem to talk at the same time" (Peter) — the Community Development Worker actively supported the women on the TRA. Thus, Dai realised that the TRA was dominated by people who were trying to establish an alternative network of power on the estate that was not controlled by the 'traditional' male elite. The attempt of the male elite to maintain local hegemonic practices was resisted. Especially the women and the Community Development Worker seemed to regard the men as fossils, clinging to a glorious past and unable to adapt to the 'modern' world — it was not surprising that men, like Dai, felt excluded by what they perceived as a "a clique". Finally, after one year on the committee the men abandoned their attempt to control the TRA and a new committee was elected. For the first time a woman, Anne, became chairwoman of the TRA.

Margaret:	[Peter] was the chair of the committee. And Peter is very — I mean, he is a really nice bloke, I mean, I don't have any problems with him at all. His heart's in the right place and everything. It's just that he's the old, what I call the old school, he still lives in the time of the unions and the club membership and standing orders in committee meetings and things like that. And the new way of doing things, and tenants associations don't run like that. They — you've gotta deal with what's on the agenda and deal with it. If it takes you three hours, then that's the way it goes. But he used to have standing orders and he was very, very definite about how he did things and Lin didn't, couldn't see that. And she just, it was just a personality — and things weren't happening fast enough for her either. I mean, there were other people on the committee as well, it wasn't just Peter, who were with us —
R.:	That was the one before this —
Margaret:	Before with Anne, yeah.
R.:	Yeah.
Margaret:	But what happened is, when — in December they have their AGM and they voted Anne in as chair. Now, Anne is slightly different because Anne's been working quite closely with me. And she's getting to know development work and the community development side of things. And she's used the computer and she does all her own agendas and minutes and everything like that. And I think as a chair she does a very good job, as a chair for the tenants association. She's very committed, very strong, very committed. And she wants to do things and because of that it makes a difference to the committee. Now the committee has changed. Their attitudes towards things have changed and because of that Lin has come back on then. Which, I think , is a really good move. It's a nice, she's got a quite strong voice and strong ideas about what should be done. And a voice, for certain, for the [bottom end] area. So, it's quite good. I mean, I'm really pleased that she's come back on. And I'm pleased she's done it because she wants to do it. Not because anybody has forced her, really, which makes a difference [Margaret 26/07/95].

Apparently, the local authorities had managed to establish a new centre of power under the guise of 'community participation' that changed the distribution of power on the estate at the expense of the 'traditional' male elite of the former mining community. The process of

'developing' the former mining communities was expressed in terms of a struggle of 'modernity' against 'tradition'. The discourse of community development created miners and former miners, once again, in the image of the archetypical proletarian. It was an image that resembled Lockwood's "proletarian traditionalist" who was "encapsulated" in an extremely limited social system (see chapter 2). In this context the club became a symbol for the limiting effects of "encapsulation" — it was represented as the last bastion of the 'old-fashioned' patriarchs. Thus, resistance against the 'development' of the community was no longer an act of defence of a distinctive local culture but rather a selfish attempt of a group of die-hards who stood in the way of progress — parallels with New Labour's 'intellectual cleansing' of the Labour Party are by no means accidental. The recently constructed negative image of the club was quite openly propagated by the Community Development Worker who also inverted gendered differences as expressed in metaphors of order versus chaos — the "bickering" women were transformed into the "petty" men.

R.:	What role does the club play in Penywaun?
Margaret:	I don't know, really.
R.:	You don't know, really?
Margaret:	No [laughing] it provides a social and leisure outlet, I think, to the residents. That's my interpretation of the club. I've worked with them, I mean, well, no I've tried to work with them and not trying, sometimes they're very, very difficult people to work with.
R.:	Why?
Margaret:	That's because it's the old, old way of — the old, sort of club thing where it's a male dominated place and the men like to have a role and — the control of it. I just find it very — they have old ways of thinking and they can be very, very, sort of, like, difficult. If they want to be. But they have been very helpful as well. So, you get two sides of them. But it has to fit in with what , it has to fit in with their way. If it fits in, you're OK, if it doesn't, then they're not very happy about that. If it disturbs any — which is the way they've always done it or the tradition — then it, it doesn't, they're not very acceptable of you. But, I mean, in all fairness to them, they have been OK with other things, you know. I mean, Peter, he is quite supportive of things on the estate and what we do but he can also put a spanner in the works for you as well, if he doesn't agree with things. So —
R.:	He can.
Margaret:	He's a nice enough bloke
R.:	He has some influence.
Margaret:	He has a lot of influence. We, I don't know whether he's got so much now but he must've — I'm sure he did in the past and it still carries a little bit but —
R.:	I don't think he has as much as in the past.
Margaret:	Not as he used to be but that's change, isn't it, for you? And people starting at — I mean, they used to have a very strong thing in that club where women weren't allowed in the bar at one time. And, I think, there weren't enough — put their foot down and said, well, no, you know. […] I mean, they were quite brilliant in the summer because they let us run the play schemes there. And they didn't charge the borough for that, you know. And I said to Peter, you know, you can make a charge for it, for the use of the building. And he said, no, no. And he said if we can put some'ing back into the community. And that's the nice part, I mean, that's the really nice side to it, that sort of, is very positive. And then you get some'ing really, sort of, like, stupid negative things and just think God they're so petty, they're not, they're just silly things, petty things and it can really, sort of, like — [Margaret 04/10/95].

The alternative networks of power established with the help of the local authorities were slowly but steadily undermining the already crumbling foundations of the male dominated hegemony. It was a process that was still at a very early stage in its development at the time of my fieldwork in 1995. In other parts of the former coalfield these changes were initiated over twenty years ago. In 1973 a number of local activists from different valleys of the coalfield met at a conference in Aberfan to discuss the 'regeneration' of their communities. At this conference they challenged the powerful hold the 'traditional' institutions had over the people in the valleys and called for a radical restructuring of the social fabric of the 'traditional' mining communities as the appropriate answer to radical economic and social change.

> We have recognised that every community by today consists of a wide variety of loyalty and interest groups, and it is these, insofar as their interest extends beyond themselves to the community as a whole, they will group together under one umbrella! The churches and miners' and welfare institutions are part of this variety, and they can now make their contribution to the life of the community alongside others, as equals. To them it needs to be said: You no longer have the unchallenged place at the centre of things. Settle for your new status as part of the social build-up, and cooperate with others in fashioning the new community (Ballard & Jones 1975:127).

However, the case of community development practice on the estate shows quite clearly that an equal place for the 'old' institutions of the mining communities was an illusion. Demotic intellectuals, like Arthur tried to stabilise the position of the 'old' social institutions by trying to control the processes of change from within the community — e.g. granting women full membership in the club. But for many men the traditional networks of power were so bound up with the constituting processes of male identity that they could hardly give up their dominant positions without putting their identities at risk. State intervention through community development was highlighting the dilemma. The successful "empower-ment", controlled by outside agencies, of particular groups — e.g. women — among the marginalised implied the deprivation of power and marginalisation of others — particularly the 'traditional' male elites. The men were confronted with the problem of either giving up part of their power, re-defining gendered difference and accepting a transformation of the distinctive mining community culture or slowly but steadily losing control to new social institutions that were much more in line with the dominant capitalist society. Very little remained of the miners' hegemonic project — in a sense, the defeat of the 1984/85 strike had been the final death knell of an already weakened political project — and the local hegemony was losing more and more of its persuasiveness and pervasiveness with each successful attempt to undermine it.

Empowering the marginalised?

Power(lessness) and hegemonic masculinity

7

To the outside observer the former coalfield in the South Wales valleys may appear to be an area stuck in between an industrial museum and an industrial desert. Large empty tracts of land or newly erected business parks — the sites of the former collieries — and waste tips disguised as green hills can be found in almost every valley. They are symbols of the profound changes transforming these valleys. But not only the landscape is changing. The people living in the former mining communities and on the council estates are deeply affected by these changes and were, to some extent, engaged in producing them themselves. Processes of change are particularly visible in practices of gendering difference and the attempt of men to control these practices.

Although gender relations in mining communities have, at least since Dennis et al.'s (1956) ethnography of Ashton, often been discussed as part of the analysis of working class culture, male dominance has most of the time been taken for granted and the complexity and contradictiveness of masculinities remained invisible. Waddington et al. (1991) and Warwick & Littlejohn (1993), for example, concentrated only on the changing role of women in their analyses of gender aspects in the mining communities. As Cornwall & Lindisfarne (1994b:19) pointed out, "the context and criteria in terms of which men are differentiated from each other is an area which has [also] been neglected in anthropology." In this book I have looked at the production of gendered difference from the perspective of the dominant men — hegemonic males — linking the production of hegemonic masculinity to discursive practices of gender and class in the context of competing hegemonic projects.

One of the reasons for the lack of detailed analyses of men and masculinity in the mining communities was the 1984/85 miners' strike. For the first time the women in the mining communities became politically active and the hitherto neglected position of women in mining communities suddenly became the focus of social research. In spite of the shift towards the study of gender relations in mining communities, most publications that appeared after the miners' strike did not reflect on the implicit naturalisation of male dominance. Male dominance was taken for granted and some feminist activists saw mining communities simply as the last bastions of "proletarian patriarchy" (Campbell 1986). Furthermore, the crisis for male identity, triggered by the prolonged liminal phase of unemployment, was described as entrapment "in the 'macho' ethos of yesteryear" and the failure of the men "to adjust to their changed circumstances" (Morgan & Price 1992:32). However, I agree with Vale de Almeida (1996:167) that hegemonic masculinity is not static, "it is not reproduced *ad aeternum.* There are conjunctures of contestation and negotiation, either on the part of men whose lives, thoughts and actions stray away from the central model, or on the part of women."

Furthermore, this study clearly demonstrates that "[i]dealized masculinity is not necessarily just about men; it is not necessarily just about relations between sexes either" (Strathern 1990:65). The hegemonic ideal of masculinity is a discursive practice constituting difference.

It is entangled in the constitution of similarity and difference in the discursive space of competing political projects in capitalist society. Thus, hegemonic masculinity speaks of class, of *them* and *us*, of relations between power and powerlessness, dominance and resistance. It is not just about men, it is about working class people and the effects of power on their perception/construction of reality. I have, therefore, contextualised the processes of change as they were experienced on the local level in the South Wales valleys in a wider political framework of competing hegemonic projects.

I have argued (in chapter 2) that the work of hegemonic agents — particularly the demotic intellectuals — is crucial for the (re-)production of any hegemonic project. These demotic intellectuals are engaged in production of persuasiveness through the transformation of personally and situationally specific experiences. This process of creating a shared experience as a focus for individual identifications contributes to the coherence of the collective. It is a process that leads to a naturalisation of categories of collective identifications, and the exclusion of the, nevertheless constitutive, 'other'. Demotic intellectuals are central to the production of ideological discourses: discourses that privilege some men by associating them with power and constitute hegemonic masculinities (cf. Cornwall & Lindisfarne 1994a:3). Although the ideal of hegemonic masculinity corresponds to only a small number of men it is, nevertheless, persuasive enough to ensure the complicity of those identified as subordinate because it produces a desire to identify with the ideal. Demotic intellectuals become powerful because they act convincingly — they produce the persuasiveness of hegemony — and control the desire to identify. I have described them as demotic because in order to act convincingly they need intimate knowledge of the experiences and self-images of the people they are trying to convince. They have to be connected in order to make connections that are compelling and they have to be identifiable as the embodiment of dominant ideals — such as the ideal of hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, demotic intellectuals are masters of performing emotional discourses — that can be defined as "a form of action that affects the social world" (Vale de Almeida 1996:120). Emotions are particularly important for the (re-)production of collective identifications through institutions because they play a key role in the constitution of the self that is engaged in processes of identification with a collective. "Emotions are about the ways in which the social world is one in which we are involved." (Rosaldo 1984:143) Furthermore, because emotions are expressions of the way we are involved, the way we are connected, they necessarily are expressions of power. Power, dominance, consent and resistance are mediated through emotional discourses (cf. Abu-Lughod & Lutz 1990:14, Dracklé 1996b:112-113).

Negotiations of masculinity are highly charged with affect, especially when self-images of maleness are threatened or delegitimised. The emotionality of processes of identification becomes clearly visible in crises, such as those caused by unemployment or the attempt of women to gain power in the community. The conflict of men with women — and with other men — over full membership for women in the club shows how much was at stake, in terms of identity, for all parties to the conflict. The passionate reaction of the men I have described as the 'macho man group' in the club (see chapter 6), whose views on women as full members can hardly be distinguished from those held by the 'conservative group', shows quite clearly that power, or the lack of it, produces highly emotional effects. The club is, as the chairman put it, "the heart and soul" of the village which implies an ideal of total commitment and identification. The biological and religious metaphors suggest

that the club keeps the community alive — it is its heart — and that it is the embodiment of the community's spirit, its collective identity — the soul. However, it is a life and a collective identity kept alive and dominated by particular groups of men.

In the local hegemony power is inextricably connected to the (self-)identification of men as 'real' men. However, the dominant men, who regard themselves as conforming to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity, identify the men of the 'macho man group' as possessing subordinate masculinities. This process of deligitimising their claims to conformity with the hegemonic ideal produced feelings of anxiety and anger in the subordinate group. One of the few ways left to them to assert a position of power and restore their self-esteem was claiming superiority over women. Another way to do this was the deflection of this stigmatising identification to people who were already excluded from the 'core' community — I have argued that the process of deflection is an important, often neglected, element of the resistance to dominant stereotypes produced by a powerful 'other' through symbolic reversal.

The construction of a 'core' community is an excluding practice that is part and parcel of the mutually reinforcing relationship between masculinity and practices of wage-labour imposed by the capitalist economy. For men the production of classed difference is most directly experienced at work because "work is an overwhelming aspect of the context within which working class individuals live" (Dunk 1994:153). The exercise of power experienced as control and exploitation in the workplace is crucial for the (self-)identification of workers as classed subjects.

However, for unemployed men, and women exclusively engaged in domestic work, the production of classed difference was most directly experienced in their communities and in their encounters with the welfare state bureaucracy. In the Thatcher-era in British politics the stereotypical identifications in terms of class, community and (working class) culture, imposed by powerful institutions outside the community, led to a transformation of the image of the 'archetypical proletarian' into the image of the 'archetypical scrounger'. Subsuming the inhabitants of council estates under the category of the scrounger is part of the politically motivated articulation of social order, or the presumed absence of it, with 'community'. This articulation confronts us with the problem of the discursive constitution of divergent and contradictory meanings of 'community'.

In dominant political discourse in Britain 'community' was articulated with 'culture', 'ethnicity' and 'class' in an ideological closure. In his work on ethnic minority groups in Southall (London), Baumann (1996) pointed out that the concept 'community' was part and parcel of the reification of minority 'culture' in the dominant discourse as well as the counter-discourses generated from within these minority groups. But not only ethnic groups are affected by the projection of a "stereotype of uniform commonality" (Baumann 1996:15) upon them on the sole basis of an ascribed ethnic identity — an image that "reeks of disrespect, ignorance and even prejudice" (ibid.). With regard to council estates policy makers and local authorities, (re-)producing the dominant political discourse, tended to project a "stereotype of uniform commonality", represented as 'community', upon the inhabitants mainly on the basis of an ascribed class identity.

On the local level these identifications were not only resisted but also deflected which indicates the pervasiveness of the dominant images. On the estate different 'communities' coexisted. Each of them provided the constitutive 'other' for the construction of symbolic boundaries between them. The dominant group on the estate defined 'community' along

the lines of the hegemonic ideals of survival, respectability and gender. This group which regarded itself as *the* (core) community was composed of miners, former miners and their families who were the first tenants of the council houses in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It also included those people — mostly children of miners who grew up on the estate — who had never worked in the coal industry but had either been among the first tenants or subscribed to the values and norms of 'the mining community' (see chapter 5). The men belonging to this group established and maintained local networks of power. They controlled the definition of the community's symbolic boundaries. For other inhabitants of the estate 'community' was more loosely defined as the neighbourhood or street they were living in. Many young people, however, identified to a considerably lesser degree with these 'communities'. The disidentification of young people posed a serious threat because "[m]ore than the strike or feminism, it was the arrival of youth culture which was beginning to divide the social life of these communities. Unlike changes in the family, youth culture could not be contained within the confines and networks of traditional adult culture" (Waddington et al 1991:106) — my data on the younger generations on the estate are not sufficient to allow a detailed discussion of this problem but the comments of adults and my observations of young people on the estate suggest that a similar development can be expected on the estate.

Externally imposed negative stereotypes suggesting "uniform commonality" were deflected to those inhabitants of the estate identified as not belonging to the 'core community'. The inhabitants categorised as not belonging to *the* community were mainly people — e.g. so-called 'problem families' and single parents with no kinship links on the estate — who had been allocated houses or flats by the council's housing department in recent years. The deflection of imposed stigmatic identifications to those people and families identified as 'problem cases' was also observed by Given (1998) on a council estate in Newcastle. There was a broad consensus about what was wrong. The 'problem families' were identified as the root of the problem — however, most of the tenants were excluding themselves from the 'problem' category. Given found that alliances were established by telling "horror stories" about other tenants and he argued that "[t]he exchange and elaboration of these narratives was a primary means of day-to-day sociability on the estate" (Given 1998:172). Although "horror stories" about the so-called problem families were sometimes told in Penywaun, they were not "a primary means of day-to-day sociability". However, the process of deflection practised in working class culture shows that those people who set out to undermine the dominant power relations are, in fact, unwillingly engaged in reproducing them and, thereby, their own subordination.

Nevertheless, the political discourse on council estates tended to marginalise the inhabitants as a whole regardless of their individual and collective self-identifications. It suggested a uniform collective and glossed over apparent internal differentiation. In contrast to the discourse of community dominant on the estate, the discourse (re-)produced by the dominant political establishment (on the local, regional and national level) employed an image of 'community' that had lost its positive connotations. In the context of the so-called community development the positive image of 'community' was replaced by an equally stereotypical "… model of paradise lost, of 'broken' families, of parents no longer exerting discipline over children, of community disintegration and social disorder." (Crow & Allen 1994:157) The rather optimistic ideas about the development of 'community' on a council estate

dominant in the 1950s and 1960s (see chapter 5) gave way to an ideology of crisis proclaiming the decline of 'community' in the 1970s (cf. Ballard & Jones 1975:115-132). A report on the estate written by the Borough Council's Special Projects Officer for the Housing Services Committee shows quite clearly that the "model of paradise lost" served to legitimise state intervention and the imposition of dominant practices upon the supposedly "frustrated" inhabitants who could be regarded as a potential threat to the dominant social order.

> Many estate residents are almost completely unable to exercise any form of choice in the way they live. They experience a complete lack of either spatial or social mobility. Within such an environment they feel more frustrated than ever - a sense of powerlessness which means they do not perceive ways of participating in society and affecting changes in it. … [Furthermore, the so-called regeneration of the 'community' could only be initiated if] … we have faced up to the extraordinary decline in hope, aspiration and self-esteem, and until we have found ways to rekindle people's imagination, ways to re-engage them in society. The marginalised must be empowered so that there is a desire to participate in the process of regeneration of their communities (Cynon Valley Borough Council 1994).

But who were the marginalised, who was in need of 'empowerment' and what did 'empowerment' mean? The feeling of powerlessness affected most of the inhabitants but in a number of different ways. On a council estate most people have to cope with unemployment, poverty and the usually denigrating experience of dealing with the welfare state bureaucracy (see Howe 1990 for a detailed account of Social Security office culture). Dependence on benefits — either temporary or long-term — is a persistent reality shared by most people on the estate, and it produces a feeling of powerlessness. Nevertheless, the feeling of powerlessness, as an effect of the exercise of power, is highly dependent on context and can be inverted or deflected. For the political establishment on the local and regional level 'empowerment' appeared to be the solution to the social crisis of the mining communities.

However, the 'empowerment' envisioned by the local authorities is not an attempt to "rekindle people's imagination". It is an attempt to guide their imagination and to ensure compliance with the dominant discourse. The imagination of the unemployed had to be restrained because some of them were already extremely imaginative in finding ways to ensure their survival and resisting the dominant moral norms. Hobbling (illegal work in the black market economy) played an important role for economic survival of those people who could not live a decent life on meagre benefit payments. Some individuals and families developed skills that helped them to survive. They seemed to be very inventive in 'working the system' — 'the system' is a metaphor which points to the alienating effects the welfare state bureaucracy produced in people who were dependent on it. In a sense, the ability to 'work the system' enabled them, to some extent, to develop a feeling of being in control and helped them to cope with the negative identifications constantly thrown at them. However, 'working the system' is not legitimised as an act of resistance or survival by the miners' hegemony. It is interpreted as a fundamental threat to the hegemonic ideals of masculinity and respectability — constituting a moral order that emphasised honesty, the desire to work and the independence of men — because dependence is associated with feminisation while power is associated with maleness. Thus, for many long-term unemployed men a decent job and a decent wage appear to be the only way to empowerment.

But not only people who are 'working the system' experience powerlessness. The male

members of the long-established 'core community' also experience moments of powerlessness in their interactions with the dominant political and economic system of bourgeois capitalism. The people belonging to this group believed that prolonged unemployment, and the inevitable interaction with the welfare state bureaucracy, had produced a feeling of power-lessness and apathy in many inhabitants of the estate, including men belonging to *their* community. However, they also believed that solidarity, loyalty, neighbourliness, the feeling of belonging to the 'core' community and their political convictions provided a sound basis for self-esteem and the hope for a better future — demotic intellectuals, like Arthur, who still believed in the viability of the socialist ideal of a just society, provided and nourished the basis for these beliefs. Thus, the miners' local hegemony was not simply an "imprisonment in a particular phase of our story" (Ballard & Jones 1975:117). For some it represented a tangible hope for escaping the imprisonment in a subordinate position imposed by capitalist society. The miners' hegemonic project derived some of its strength and persuasiveness from fostering the people's imagination of a better future that contested the dominant vision of individualised responsibility, social mobility and flexibility imposed by the hegem-onic project of Thatcherism.

This imagination of a better future is, however, controlled by men. And what does this future hold in store for women? Although a number of men believe in gender equality as prescribed by socialist ideology, it is rarely emphasised and not very popular with the majority of men. The local hegemony reinforced individual and collective identifications of men as 'real men'. The 'real' — hard working, streetwise, loyal and respectable — man was constituted as the embodiment of power. Thus, women are the most disempowered people on the estate but they had already taken steps towards self-empowerment during the 1984/85 miners' strike. However, male identity was so deeply entangled in the concept of the class struggle that the attempts of women to assert their right to equal participation were fended off as an attempt of bourgeois feminism to undermine the counter-culture of the mining communities. The political activities of women in the women's support groups during the strike changed the outlook of a number of women. The strike opened up new perspectives for them, but a fundamental change in the practices of gendered difference was not set in motion.

Could the empowerment envisioned by the local authorities really change the subordinate position of women? Apparently, the Tenants' and Residents' Association provided the most marginalised women on the estate, single mothers and women from the 'bottom end', with opportunities for political activities on the estate and created a new network of power authorised by the local authorities. However, 'empowerment', as practised by the welfare state bureaucracy, was designed to restore the social order. It ensured the compliance of the powerless women and young unemployed with the dominant discourse, by subverting the local hegemony. Furthermore, it was aimed at disempowering those working class people who contested the meanings imposed by the capitalist hegemony. Empowerment did not mean that working class women, who were active in the new institutions, were empowered with regard to their subordinate position in capitalist society. It meant, however, that the power of the miners' local hegemony was drained. Empowerment and disempow-erment were, thus, part of a discursive power strategy leading to the affirmation of domination. The attempt of community development to create 'a sense of community' on the estate inevitably led to further fragmentation because it created new networks of power at the

expense of already existing ones — the existing 'sense of community' was largely ignored or categorised as out-dated. The working mens' club as the key social institution of the community was written off as a relic of the past — which contributes to the alienation from it. The majority of the male elite on the estate, on the other hand, was not able to tolerate changes in practices of gendered difference. Full membership for women in the club could have been a step towards empowerment of women that was not imposed by outside forces. It could have been a way to maintain the distinctiveness of the former mining community and slow down the decline of the social institutions of the miners' hegemony.

> In now derelict Working Mens' Clubs, the last remnants of a by-gone era sit with their pints at formica tables marking their bingo cards or playing dominoes.
>   On street corners gangs gather under the orange street lamps, hands sunk deep in their pockets, their faces blank or fiercely insolent. These are the children of MTV culture, the new unemployed, the new leisure class — they stay up all night watching videos, and stay in bed all day as their lives are gradually narrowed down to nothing (Evans 1994:18).

"It's simple, really!" Arthur had said to me (see chapter 2). Evans's representation of club and youth culture in the valleys is a good example of the kind of strategy — namely, the production of ideological closure through the negation of complexity — that was advocated by Arthur. However, diversity and change in the South Wales valleys are complex processes which are not as simple as Evans wants us to believe. A simple dichotomy of a by-gone working class as opposed to a new leisure class does not help us understand why the local male elite on the estate vehemently resists change and why young people in the valleys disidentify with the miners' hegemony and develop ways to undermine it.

"We have moved forward!" Postscript, May 2000

In May 2000 I met Arthur and Phil again in the local working mens' club. Back in 1995 I had promised to send them the manuscript and I was curious to hear what they thought about the book I had written about their community.

The first reaction of Arthur and Phil was: "I was laughing my head off". They made comments on the interviews and quotes from my notes but rarely mentioned the more analytical parts. Furthermore, Arthur thought they had been naive five years ago because, although I had told them exactly what I was doing, it was different to see it print. However, both Arthur and Phil agreed that the book should be published in its present form because "it's the cowin' truth" (Phil). Arthur was worried about the political implications the book might have and said that he and a few other people wanted to have their names changed. Phil, on the other hand, was not concerned about being identifiable but argued that Arthur, Will and Mike had to be more careful because they held public offices. Consequently, all the names that appear in this book, except those of prominent politicians and historical characters, were changed.

Arthur also seemed to be worried about the representation of the estate in the book. He thought that some of his remarks conveyed a negative image of the estate because he had been angry about a lot of things back in 1995. He stressed that they had moved forward since my last visit in 1996 and invited me to a walk around the estate so that I could

witness the changes. The next day we met at the rebuilt Chapel opposite his house in the centre of the old village. We went down to the bottom end first and I was surprised to see the front gardens enclosed by fences or walls. Most of the front gardens were well kept and many metal fences were painted. The obvious success of the front garden enclosures project shows once again that Tony's resistance to the project (see "It's like a slum and he don't do his garden", chapter 4) was based on a stereotypical representation of this part of the estate — Tony had left the estate after he had lost his seat on the new local authority to a Plaid Cymru candidate. Arthur stressed that the reputation of the bottom end had improved and that more and more people were interested in moving down there. We then turned into Erw Las and Arthur remarked that this street was still regarded as the "rough area" of the estate. The reason he gave for this was that the council had put the "rough people" from all over the valley down here: "they've created a slum but we've stopped that now!" He and other members of the local elite had threatened the council with action if it should continue its practice of allocating houses in this area to "problem families" and had reached an agreement with the council. Furthermore, Arthur told me that as a result of community action the crime rate was reduced considerably. Known drug dealers were reported to the police and money lenders were attacked by setting up a collective savings scheme of which Arthur was particularly proud because "it was using capitalism to make money for the working class".

We left the area and walked towards the so-called shopping centre. As we passed one of the bus shelters I mentioned that it had been Margaret's (the community development worker) idea to have them painted by the kids. Arthur told me that she had left the estate and that the problem with her was that she wanted to do everything her way and was ordering people about. When I said that some of the women had actually liked her, Arthur replied that may people believed that she was lesbian and wanted to "bring women into the fold". I expressed my doubts about this allegation saying that she was married but Arthur did not believe me. He declared "there's nothing wrong with being lesbian" — however, I could clearly discern the implicit "but!" in his statement. As I have pointed out in chapter 6 Margaret's assertive way of communicating and her attempt to by-pass the dominant male elite was perceived as a threat to the dominant discourse of gendered difference. Accusing her of being a lesbian not only categorises her as being "misguided" in terms of the dominant heteronormative moral order but also questions the motivation of those women who have worked with her as well. It is a strategy of reaffirming the ideology of normality in the discourse of gendered difference.

Now that the men had taken over leading positions in "community development" there is "hope" although the "people haven't fully climbed out of the trenches yet" (Arthur). The new hope is not only manifest in the activities — such as adult education classes, a children's day club, etc. — of the Enterprise Partnership in the rebuilt old chapel below the club. In Arthur's narrative there was a new strain of optimism and on our walk through the community Arthur often stopped to tell of projects they wanted to bring under way — e.g. building a covered all-year running track next to the football pitch or converting the old farmhouse by the river into a children's farm.

In spite of all these visible and envisioned changes the institutional structure of the estate had changed only slightly. Arthur who had been extremely sceptical of the Enterprise Partnership project was now involved in it in a leading position. The Enterprise Partnership,

the community centre and the club were now linked through a network of personal relationships of their chairpersons. Will had become chairman of the local working mens' club. Tom had left the community centre — there were rumours that he took money before he left which nobody could prove — and Linda had taken over as chairwoman.

Apparently, the established elite had managed to re-gain control of the key social institutions of the community. The men still believed that the club still had a role to play. They no longer ignored the institutions that were set up by outside forces, such as the local authorities, but had adopted a strategy of taking control of them. Now that the men were fully back in control, Arthur was very keen on showing off his achievements for the community and was anxious that the community should be represented as having a future. Men, like Arthur, used a rather pragmatic approach to ensure the well-being of their community. Although he still believed that capitalism was unjust and "would lose in the end" he had no problem in using the capitalist market economy, the state and the European Union for the advancement of "his people". His approach to local politics appears to be quite successful on two counts. Firstly, it secures the power of the established elite by taking over the leading positions in community development projects that were initially imposed from outside. Secondly it was also quite successful in improving the quality of life on the estate. However, the new strategy of the local elite also ensures the dominance of men and the perpetuation of gendered difference. Women remain to a large extent excluded from the local networks of power. As far as the club and the question of full membership for women was concerned not much had changed. In the last AGM of the club they had a vote on full membership for women which was lost by a narrow margin of three votes — the issue was brought forward by Arthur, Will, the new chairman, and to my surprise the former chairman, Peter. Obviously, some people "haven't fully climbed out of the trenches yet".

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