CRITICAL SOCIAL RESEARCH
by **LEE HARVEY**

© Lee Harvey 1990
Citation reference: Harvey, L., 1990, *Critical Social Research*, London, Unwin Hyman, all rights revert to author.
(A modified version, 2011, is available at http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/csr, updated 9 May, 2011.)

2 CLASS

2.1 Introduction

In this part of the book a number of critical research studies that address the nature and functioning of class are examined in detail. The focus is on the methodology employed in these critical studies which address class in one way or another as an oppressive system.

The first volume of *Capital* is explored below as an example of Marx's critical social research. Marx, of course, had a prodigious output over his lifetime. There is no attempt to assess his entire work here. The intention is to show how he developed a critical methodology. This involves drawing out his epistemological concerns as well as his dialectical methodology. Marx set himself an enormous task by focusing attention on the working of capitalism as a whole. Broadly, his approach was both structural and historical. He used a wide range of empirical material through which to deconstruct and reveal the workings of the late 19th century capitalist system.

In *The Power Elite*, C. Wright Mills (1956) analyses the power structure of mid-twentieth century America. He also adopts an historical and structural analysis and draws on a large array of empirical sources. [1] Mills work is an exemplar in a substantial tradition of American social criticism.

Goldthorpe and Lockwood in their study of *The* 1*Affluent Worker* (Goldthorpe *et al*., 1969) address the nature and role of the working class in advanced industrial society through an empirical critical case study of the embourgeoisement thesis. They adapt standard scheduled interviewing data collection techniques to the investigation of the relationship between working class affluence, industrial relations and working-class culture. Their negation of the embourgeoisement thesis has broader theoretical and praxiological implications.

Contemporary analyses that deal with problems of labour and of social order have made use of ethnographic techniques as a means of generating material. Paul Willis's (1977) study of the schooling of working class kids and Roger Grimshaw and Tony Jefferson's (1987) equally painstaking examination of policing both make use of critical ethnographic techniques in order to engage the structural elements that underlie observed social phenomena. They do not adopt identical methods, Willis tends towards participant observation while Grimshaw & Jefferson prefer a non-participant theoretical case study. Both make use of in-depth interviews and group discussions and documentary analysis, to augment their observations. Both develop a fundamentally critical ethnographic research process. Willis' is an analysis guided by an overt concern with working-class culture. Race and gender are factors which are considered in relation to class culture. Grimshaw & Jefferson, while rejecting crude 'class functionalism', develop a structuralist

informed critical analysis which sees policing as an ongoing practice determined by the interrelationship between the three structures of law, work and democracy. As such they provide a good counterpoint to the more overt class cultural approach of Willis.2

Media and cultural studies are other areas in which class-based critical social research approaches have been widely adopted. Many of these have been informed by structuralism and semiology as can be seen in Judith Williamson's (1978) study of advertising and Will Wright's (1977) analysis of Westerns as the contemporary American equivalent of the 'tribal' myth.

Each, in their own way, provide concrete examples of critical social research based on some notion of economic hierarchy. Class, in the sense of the position of social groups in terms of their relationship to the process of production, is addressed directly by some of the studies, as in Marx's own analysis of capitalism and Williamson's critique of advertising. Other studies concentrate on power based hierarchies, for example Mill's analysis of powerful elites in the United States. Nonetheless, the focus is on economic hierarchies of one sort or another rather than on hierarchies informed by gender or ethnic differences. Subsequent parts of the book deal with these alternative structuring factors. All the studies reviewed in the book are thus approached as methodological examples.

2.2 Class, production and culture

Class, in one form or another, has, until recently been the key analytic concept in sociology. Marxism has, of course, consistently critiqued the oppressive nature of class under capitalist forms of production and has a commitment to overthrowing capitalism.[2]2 Any student of sociology will be aware that Marx offered what is taken to be the first thoroughgoing critical analysis of the class oppression endemic in the capitalist mode of production. Marx's work was more than a critical study of capitalist production, through his engagement with epistemology he pioneered critical methodology. In many respects Marx's lifetime work established a basis for class-oriented critical social research. Most, if not all, subsequent work in this area has been a development of, or at least referred to, the work Marx undertook. Furthermore, a considerable amount of work on both gender and race oppression have also drawn heavily on Marx.

Marxist class analysis is not so much concerned to show that class is an oppressive mechanism than it is to show how such a mechanism works and how class conflict leads to a set of productive relations and consequent superstructure. The oppressive nature of class is, in the main, taken for granted by Marxists, even if capitalism has worked systematically towards concealing class differences and proclaiming the end of ideology (Bell 1962; Dittberner, 1979; Abercrombie, 1980). Marxism is not monolithic and is characterised by ongoing debate and reconstruction. Debates that divide Marxists revolve around the analysis of capitalist production and the role of classes; the nature of socialist economy; the tactics for revolutionary activity; the potential for gradual non-revolutionary transformation to socialism; and so on.

Marx (1845) developed a materialist conception of history and argued for the historical primacy of the economic basis over the ideological superstructure. Drawing on contemporary analyses of the emerging landless proletariat, Marx developed a theory of the evolution of the working class as integral to his analysis of capitalism. In essence, the inevitable crises of capitalism will only be transformed into a post-capitalist order through the agency of the active proletariat. Such praxis is at the core of historical

materialism. Working class action will overcome the alienated condition of labour. The working class, Marx argued, must dismantle the State, not just take it over. Marx's 'scientific' socialism is thus not based on utopian ideals but linked to the agency of the working class.

Marxism, since Marx, has, however, addressed the accuracy of Marx's own analysis of capital and applicability to changed circumstances. Four lines of development have occurred. The first is based on the view that Marx's fundamental critique of capitalism and the role of the working class in revolutionary overthrow is essentially correct (Luxemburg, 1900, 1906; Lenin, 1902, 1905; Stalin, 1924; Varga (undated)). The second is that Marx's analysis was correct but that changed social and economic circumstances require its revision (Lenin, 1916; Bukharin, 1924; Habermas, 1970) The third is that Marx's original analysis was flawed and has to be radically rethought especially in view of changing circumstances (Althusser, 1969; Gramsci, 1971). The fourth is one that concentrates on methodology and argues that Marx's historical materialism and its intrinsic dialectical analysis constitutes a basis for social analysis which continues to be salient irrespective of his particular analyses (Sayer, 1980; Zeleny, 1980; Schmidt, 1981; Wolff, 1985; Resnick and Wolff, 1982; Delphy, 1977, 1980, 1985).

The criticisms of Marx's analysis of capitalism and the role of the working class take four forms. First, that Marx overstated the political mission of the working class. Marx was mistaken in expecting capitalism to continue the polarisation of classes with capitalism forcing wage earners into ever-greater poverty. Through the creation of wealth the working class are neutralised as a revolutionary force. Extending parliamentary democracy thus becomes the way forward (Engels, 1895; Bernstein, 1899, Kautsky, 1918). Second, that Marx saw the state as a coercive instrument of the bourgeoisie and ignored the role of the state in capitalist societies. Political power is not invariably subordinate to economic relations. The state has played an important and relatively independent role (Althusser, 1971, Gramsci, 1971;). Third, that Marx exaggerated the importance of property ownership as a source of social cleavage and conflict and gave insufficient consideration to ideological and superstructural aspects such as occupation, education and culture (Thompson, 1963; Anderson & Blackburn, 1965; Williams, 1965; Petrovic, 1967; Gramsci, 1971; Lukacs, 1971; Berger, 1972; Lefebvre, 1984). Fourth, a specific development of the superstructural view found in humanist Marxism is the argument that Marx underplayed the role of the human agent especially in his later work (Marcuse, 1964; Gortz, 1982).[3]

Since the 1960s the potentially revolutionary subject, for many Marxists, has been displaced from working-class organisation to protest movements of blacks, women, and middle-class students. These movements had a number of successes but their basically existential critiques lacked an economic base and the movements failed both to present an alternative organisational infrastructure and to produce any broad and pervasive political change. This failure became the challenge for the theorists of the 1970s. The New Left challenged the ability of orthodox versions of Marxism to give adequate accounts of racism and imperialism on either side of the Iron Curtain. The recent success of grass roots activities encapsulated in mass 'feed the world' charity events and organisations have, however, re-awakened interest in the protest movements of the 1960s and there is now a (re-)developing view that Marxism should develop along decentralised, self critical and pluralist lines. This view was further supported by developments in the Soviet bloc

and China during the late 1980s. Furthermore, Marxism, especially in Western Europe, has been effected by post-modernist, post-structuralist, feminist and radical black critiques of power as hierarchical structures of difference (racism, sexism, colonialism) which are not reducible to the model of class exploitation.

All this has lead to a continued questioning of the emancipatory process: the role of the working class; the functions of intellectuals; the determining nature of the mode of production; and the place of the state apparatus. Marxism is no longer (if it ever was) a theory in isolation from other intellectual and political positions nor apart from the wider exigencies of history. Marxism is a dynamic, evolving, critical analytic framework. By refusing to take its own categories for granted, contemporary Marxism has re-appropriated the critical power of Marx's interpretive practice. The first part of this book addresses how Marxist analysts have undertaken critiques of capitalism. The subsequent parts show how Marxism has been selectively appropriated in addressing issues of race and gender.

Marx has had an enormous effect on critical social research, but there have also been other strands of development, particularly in the United States where Marxism has often been ignored. One such important strand in the development of critical social research is what has become known as social criticism. This was informed more by pragmatism than Marxism, although in its apogee in the work of C. Wright Mills in the 1950s, a number of traditions coalesce. However, as we shall see, Mills perspective was neither directly informed by Marx nor was it entirely congruent with a Marxian approach. While Marx saw class oppression as underpinned by economic processes (although by no means the economic reductionist he is sometimes portrayed) Mills focused on the issue of institutionally located power in the hands of an elite. Nonetheless, Mills' social criticism represented an alternative strand to critical social research, and the style is explored in the analysis of *The Power Elite* below.

In many senses Mills can be regarded as the last of the 'founders' of critical social research. His call for critical imaginative work forcibly reaffirmed a need for a critical approach to American social science and as such he voiced the concerns that had been rumbling in various guises in American sociological circles for many years. Mills restates many of the ideas that Robert Lynd (1939) drew attention to in *Knowledge For What?* Lynd argued that social science was adopting inappropriate methods, was too fragmented into autonomous disciplines and therefore asking insubstantial questions which failed to match the tenor of the cataclysmic times. He argued that social science was characterised by technicians on the one hand and scholars on the other. They both failed to address contemporary issues, the former because of an over-concern with developing method, the latter because of an esoteric detachment of theory from practice.

The funding of social scientific research was, Lynd argued, contingent upon political factors which prescribed the nature of the enquiry; social science was expected to provide radical solutions but not to be subversive. Social science adopted an atomistic approach, the parts were not related to wholes. It is quite inadequate, Lynd argued, to address, for example, economics in isolation from the social and the political. What is needed, Lynd argued, is to restate old questions in a wider context. A fundamental shift in the concerns of social science to match contemporary issues will come about only by relating specifics to the totality. For Lynd, the totality is not the Marxian concept but one that emerges from the work of the culturologists (Ogburn, White and Dorothy Thomas). Lynd (1939,

p.51) argues that one has to ground analysis in culture, that there is a 'continuous reciprocal interaction of culture with individual personalities'. Analysis of the relationship between the personal and the cultural serves to ground the dualism in material practices.

Lynd saw a mediation of Marxism and Freudianism as central to the development of the social sciences. He argued for the assessment of the extent to which 'economic pressures analysed by Marx are controlling, and where and to what extent the individual motivations studied by Freud operate' (Lynd, 1939, p. 41). A key concern, reflecting the culturologists, is the idea of a cultural gap—the disjunction created by attitudes and opinions being out of synchronisation with changing social practices that manifest themselves in rapidly changing modern society. Lynd talks of 'assumptions' and 'contradictions' by which to address this cultural gap. Assumptions are prevailing norms, and closely resemble dominant ideology although Lynd does not ground them in material practices in the same way that Marx does. Similarly, Lynd's contradictions are the contradictory values that individuals find hard to resolve, rather than the structurally embedded contradictions of Marxist analysis.

For Lynd, social science must address the issue of power and the related divisions in society, including age and gender divisions. Social science should address cross-disciplinary problems which relate to cultural wholes and which are located in their specific historical milieu. History, rather than an autonomous discipline should become a method of the social sciences. In the end, social science must face its responsibilities and not avoid major questions by hiding behind value neutrality. Social science must shoulder its responsibilities and ask substantial and radical (although not revolutionary) questions that address prevailing values and have political implications.

In his seminal book *The Sociological Imagination*, C. Wright Mills (1959) felt obliged to restate the existence of, the need for, and the principles behind, critical social research. Working at Columbia gave him a clear insight into how sociology in the late 1950s had polarised into two tendencies which he labelled 'grand theory' and 'abstracted empiricism'.

Mills couched his reassertion of critical social research in terms of the 'intellectual craftsmanship' embedded in the classic sociological tradition of Weber, Durkheim, Veblen, Marx and Mannheim. For Mills, this intellectual craft had been all but suffocated by Liberalistic scientism since the 1930s. Sociology had become abstruse abstract theorising on the one hand and microscopic method driven empirical study on the other. Substantive issues of consequence were no longer the focus of social scientific enquiry, phenomena were extracted from their dynamic history, dissected and never discussed in macroscopic terms.

Mills maintained that the growing concern with making sociology scientific, expressive of 'truths' rather than meanings, and independent of value judgements, meant that the classical method, with its 'exaggerated historicism' had become a less acceptable approach to sociology in America. The Second World War and the McCarthyism of the 1950s effectively diluted most radical thinking in the social sciences and there were no well-known 'schools' of critical social research. Critical social research was manifested, for Mills, in 'intellectual craftsmanship', directed towards macroscopic historically situated concerns.

Mills acted as a focal point for a brief revival of critical social research in the United States (Stein and Vidich, 1963) which became known (ironically) as 'The New Sociology' following the publication of a book of that title (Horowitz, 1964) in honour of C. Wright Mills. His approach further became codified, for a while, in the early 1970s as 'social criticism' and various attempts were made to construct a broader notion of social criticism incorporating a wide spectrum of pragmatic radical social theorists (Fletcher, 1974; Stone *et al*., 1974; Brown, 1977).

2.3 Karl Marx *Capital*

2.3.1 Introduction

There are a number of contrasting analyses of Marx's philosophy, social analysis, ontological and epistemological position and methodology. However, most commentators agree that Marx developed a materialist approach to social, political and economic analysis out of his philosophical opposition to Hegel's objective idealism. Marx adopted a totalistic approach, that is, he argued that society could not be understood in terms of its parts in isolation but that the parts had to be seen as interrelated into a coherent structure and that they only had meaning in terms of the structure. His analysis thus focussed on the interrelation of the components and the total structure and he reconceptualised the Hegelian dialectic.

Social critique underpins his whole work and in *Capital* Marx sets out to undertake a thorough analysis and critique of capitalism to present the inner organisation of the capitalist mode of production, 'in its ideal average' in order to 'lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society' (Marx, 1887, p. xix). He concentrates on the structural relations of the economic system but locates it in a wider social context and analyses it as a specific historical form. Marx's approach involves a critique of positivism. For him, science is not simply the process of explaining the surface nature of the physical and social world. If one needed only to explain surface appearances there would be no need of science. For Marx, the scientific process differed from the positivist view of science in that he saw science as transcending the world of appearances.

2.3.2 Commodification, surplus value and capital accumulation

Marx begins *Capital* with an analysis of commodities.[4] He does so because he wants to investigate the taken for granted starting point of bourgeois economics, viz. money. For Marx, capitalism is a particular form of social production. Marx argues that money is not in itself the root of capitalist productive relations. Rather, commodity exchange is fundamental to bourgeois relations of production. Commodities are the embodiment of labour time and they have an intrinsic use value and an extrinsic labour value. (Labour value is the amount of labour required to produce a commodity). Marx, thus, transforms the analysis of capitalism from the economists' concern with money, which is merely the surface appearance of capitalist relations, to a more fundamental analysis of capitalism embodied in the commodity form. Commodification is the concept that guides his further analysis.

The creation of profit or surplus value occurs through exchange. In the process of ordinary commodity exchange, equal values of commodities (as measured by labour value) are exchanged. Consumers of commodities gain use-value from the value created by the producers in the exercise of their labour power, for whom the use-value is in

excess of their needs. While any one exchange may lead to someone being cheated, this is an aberration and does not effect the total *social* value of the commodities exchanged. The social value of commodities depends upon the labour value (as measured by labour time) that goes into them. Exchanging commodities cannot lead to an overall increase in use value.

Profit, under capitalism, arises because labour power itself becomes a commodity. The exchange value of labour (i.e. what the labourers receive for their own use in exchange for their labour power) is less than the use value of the commodities they create. The difference, or surplus value, is appropriated by the capitalist. So instead of money being a lubricant in the exchange of commodities which are ultimately consumed (and made use of), a commodity, labour power, becomes the medium through which money is exchanged. The capitalist, through the exploitation of labour, appropriates surplus value. In the process the commodities become alienated labour. Commodities come to exist objectively apart from their producer when valued in terms of exchange value rather than their intrinsic use value. Commodities become fetishised and relations between people become relations between commodities. Human relations, literally, become objectified.

From this fundamental reappraisal of the basis of capitalism Marx elaborates the nature of capital accumulation. His approach is both in terms of general abstract propositions and also in terms of an assessment of practices in the advanced industrial nations. It is abstract in the sense that he sees it as a mere phase in the actual process of production and thus, for simplicity, treats the capitalist as the representative of all those who share surplus value. As Marx bluntly puts it, in order to see what is going on 'we should, for a time, disregard all phenomena that hide the play of its [capital accumulation's] inner mechanism'. (Marx, 1887, p. 530).

However, this elaboration of the abstracted nature of capitalist production goes on throughout *Capital* side by side with historical and contemporary case studies, which lead Marx to an examination of contemporary economic debates. For example, he examines the nature and debates about the 'working day' in England and its bearing on other countries. Here he draws on contemporary and historical data. His primary concern, however, is not a simple account of capitalist practices but an illustration of the nature of capitalist exploitative thinking, its 'reification' in bourgeois economics and an illustration of how such economic theorists (be they academics or industrialists) fail to understand the nature of capitalist exploitation. Similarly, in his discussions of the division of labour, of machinery and modern industry and of wages, Marx outlines the basic principles of capitalist production in respect of these elements within the structure, examines them historically, provides case material and engages political economic theory.

2.3.3 Empirical sources

Marx used a wide variety of empirical sources in *Capital*. Apart from his own 'excellent' observations (Korac, 1962) he made extensive use of secondary sources, which he approached critically and 'with responsibility' adopting an 'historical comparative method'. Research, for Marx, required approaching the subject matter in detail, analysing its different forms of development and finding its internal connections. Only then can the 'real' state of affairs be revealed.

The various parliamentary and official reports used by Marx are listed at the end of each volume of *Capital*. In the first volume he cites thirty reports of H.M. Inspectors of Factories made between 1841 and 1867; five reports of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council on public health (between 1860 and 1865); reports of select committees, Royal Commissions, and others on the adulteration of food, on the baking trade, mines, railways, agricultural labourers, the employment of children in factories, the Banking Acts and the Corn Laws; the report of the Commissioners on Transportation and Penal Servitude (1863); Inland Revenue Reports for 1860 and 1866; the report of the Social Science Congress in Edinburgh (1863); the *Report of the Committee of the Master Spinner's and Manufacturers Defence Fund* (1854); and the report of the Registrar General on births, deaths and marriages in England (October, 1861). Finally he cites *Correspondence with Her Majesty's Missions Abroad regarding Industrial Questions and Trades Unions* (1867) and Hansard.

These reports were extensive, were the result of questionnaire research, observation and medical practice. They usually included statistical material as well as vivid descriptions of social conditions. In addition Marx used the 1861 Census for England and Wales; statistical abstracts (1861 and 1866); various agricultural statistics for Ireland (1860 and 1867); official 'Miscellaneous Statistics'; and Parliamentary Returns (1839, 1850, 1856, 1862).

He makes use of statistical sources to point out changes and relationships. When he does not have adequate statistics he says so. For example, he lacks suitable statistics to illustrate the concentration of agricultural holdings in England, and therefore he restricts his empirical analysis to ten countries for which such information is available between 1851 and 1861. Marx regarded statistical data as important and drew up a draft proposal to the First International urging the world-wide collection of statistics by workers covering sex, age and occupation, the length of the working day, shifts, breaks, wages, health, physical and moral conditions (Bogdanovich, 1986, p. 108).

Marx also referred to various acts and statutes especially the Factory Regulation Acts, 1833, 1859, 1867 and 1878, which were, for Marx an important source of the evolving relations between labour and capital. Besides these official sources Marx lists thirty-three[5]8different British and overseas newspapers and periodicals as sources; these include *The Times*. *Morning Star*, *Economist*, *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, *New York Daily Tribune* and *Sankt-Peterburgskie Viedomosti*. He also collected data and opinions from friends abroad in order to effect comparative analyses between Britain and other parts of the world. Finally, he drew on the writings of over 250 different authors, involving in excess of 300 publications as well as another 48 anonymous essays, pamphlets and open letters.

Marx used one source to complement another and rarely, if ever, relied on a single source. He made considerable use of comparative study, for example, comparing the length of working week and the exhaustion of workers in England, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria and Russia. The comparison is founded on an analysis of factory legislation, and various Parliamentary reports, as well as medical reports. In widening his comparisons from Western Europe to America and Russia, Marx undertook detailed examinations of the economic history of each country, as their development was the consequence of essentially different historical conditions to those of Western Europe.

Marx, however, was critical of his source material, in particular he criticised the inadequacies in the collection of statistics. For example, the 'surprising' fall in the

number of children under thirteen years of age employed, which was a result of surgeons increasing the ages of children 'to suit the greed of capitalists'. Marx also criticised the inconsistencies and inadequacies in the conceptualisation of statistical measures, and the misleading application of statistics. An example of the latter is the use of absolute wage levels to show how the workers are better off, whereas Marx argues that the cost of living (which, for example, had increased by 20 per cent between 1860 and 1862) has far exceeded wage rises and thus workers were worse off.

His approach to the reports is typified by his view of the reports of the Factory Inspectors which he saw as providing 'regular and official statistics of the capitalist greed for surplus-labour' (Marx, [1887] 1977, p. 230). This is not a casting of doubt on their accuracy. Indeed, in the Preface to the first (German) edition of9*Capital* (25th July 1867) Marx indicated in broad terms his faith in the impartiality of much of the collection of these empirical sources.

> The social statistics of Germany and the rest of Continental Western Europe are, in comparison with those of England, wretchedly compiled. But they raise the veil just enough to let us catch a glimpse of the Medusa head behind it. We should be appalled at the state of things at home, if, as in England, our governments and parliaments appointed periodically commissions of enquiry into economic conditions; if these commissions were armed with the same plenary powers to get at the truth; if it was possible to find for this purpose men as competent, as free from partisanship and respect of persons as are the English factory-inspectors, her medical reporters on public health, her commissioners of inquiry into the exploitation of women and children, into housing and food. (Marx, [1887] 1977, p. 20)

What Marx's comment on the documentation of capitalist greed in the Factory Inspector's reports reflects is the way Marx fundamentally reconstituted the empirical data as a result of the dialectical process of analysis.

For example, as part of his analysis of the working day Marx compares the surplus-labour manufacturer in England and the Danubian boyard (in what is now Romania). Marx points out that, for example, if the English 12 hour working day consists of 6 hours of necessary labour, and 6 hours of surplus-labour. Then it is the same as if the labourer 'worked 3 days in the week for himself, and 3 days in the week gratis for the capitalist.' However, 'this is not evident on the surface. Surplus-labour and necessary labour glide one into the other.' (Marx, [1887] 1977, p. 227). In the case of the Danubian peasant prior to the Crimean War, the demarcation of labour was clear. The labour that the peasant does for his/her own maintenance is distinctly marked off from the surplus labour on behalf of the boyard on the seignorial estate. Both parts of the labour time exist independently side by side. [6] The required labour of the corvée is codified in the 'Règlement organique'.[7]

The situation for the labourer is the same yet capitalism attempts to conceal this surplus labour. Unlike the positive expression of greed for surplus labour in the Règlement, the English Factory Acts are a negative expression. They conceal the greed by acting to curb the actions of capital. They forcibly limit the working-day by state regulations, 'made by a state that is ruled by capitalist and landlord'. The limitation is not out of any concern with the well-being of the worker but a pragmatic response to the exhaustion of the exploited class and its growing threats. The Reports of Factory

inspectors are published half yearly by order of Parliament. Marx uses these documents to list details of the fraudulent activities of capitalists who, in their avarice for surplus labour, start the working day a few minutes early, reduce breakfast and lunch breaks, etc. and thereby pilfer labour time.

This example, then, shows how Marx locates practices historically. He draws on a number of sources to make explicit the nature of social practices including official reports, legal codes, and published histories. His approach is comparative, complementary and critical. He shows how empirical material corroborates his exposition, but only after it has been radically transformed by deconstructing its theoretical basis. Central to this is the process of abstraction.

2.3.4 Abstraction, essence and totality

In developing his critique of capitalism Marx engages the whole positivist[8] notion of abstraction. He does not start with factual observations and abstract from them. Rather, he operates the other way round. Marx argues that beginning with the 'real and the concrete' is a superficial exercise as objects of observation are only apparently concrete but in actuality are abstractions. The correct procedure, he argues, is to move from the abstraction to the concrete. Abstractions are not irrelevant because beginning with categories facilitates the analysis of the 'inner structures' of objects. But these abstractions must be made concrete. For example, Marx argues, the positivists' generalised and undifferentiated concept of population is a reified abstraction which hides the complexity of social relations that make up a class differentiated population. For Marx, population is a correct starting point for analysis, but it is a mistake to construe it as a concrete fact, as opposed to an abstract whole emptied of empirical content.

Marx's analysis in *Capital* attempts to get to the meaning behind the categories used by the political economists of the time. He wanted more than the organisation of 'facts', he wanted to reveal the essential nature of the social world which lay beneath the world of appearances.

Marx's process of abstraction in *Capital*10involves a rejection of the taken-for-granted starting point of bourgeois economics. Marx wants to examine the essential nature of capitalist relations so he does not start with money values as is conventional, but examines the basis of production and exchange to see what lies behind the obfuscation of money values. The commodity, as we have seen, is the essence he reveals.

Marx's conception of essence and phenomenal form are qualitatively different from the notions of 'fixed essences' and 'natural forms' employed by the classical political economists. It is also different from phenomenological reduction to essences. While Marx is concerned to get beneath the surface of phenomenal appearances his aim is not a mere reduction to essences. Rather the aim is to utilise the examination of the essential nature of phenomenal appearances as a base for a fundamental critique of the social process (system). For Marx, essences are dynamic and historical. The task of science is to critically analyse abstract categories, penetrate empirical observations, grasp them in concepts, and reproduce them in concrete thought.

For example, as we have seen, in *Capital* Marx argued that surplus value resulted from the commodification of labour power. Marx's selection of commodity as the essence or fundamental element of capitalist relations was not arbitrary. Marx derived his starting point dialectically. Only as his analysis and critique shuttled back and forth

between the elements of capitalism and its phenomenal form manifested as a structural totality did he begin to approach the idea of the commodity as fundamental. Its core role emerged only as Marx analysed the nature of commodities to reveal the objectivation of relationships which they conceal (i.e. the fetishism of commodities). Concentrating on commodity form did not prejudge the outcome of Marx's analysis rather it was a pivotal device for elaborating the structural and historically specific nature of capitalism. The use of the commodity as pivot was the result of a dialectical analysis, not a phenomenological reduction. Marx showed that the concept of commodity involves something other than the object in itself, it embodied relationships between people.

So the discrepancy between the basic condition of social exchange of equivalents and the observable phenomena of capitalism, (the generation of profit), is thus explained through an examination which addresses the essence of capitalist relations, that is, the commodity form.

However, underlying the first problem is a second, which Marx again proceeds to resolve through analysis designed to penetrate phenomenal form. He asks under what conditions can the commodification of labour power take place? This requires a totalistic perspective. In answering this question it becomes clear that capitalism, whose phenomenal form appears as a mode of production characterised by commodity exchange, is itself presupposed by a class relation between labour and capital, without which capitalism cannot exist.

This cannot be understood simply through the phenomenal forms such as 'profit' and 'commodity'. These concepts indicate how surplus value appropriation takes place but not how the structure which depends on it is developed and sustained. For Marx, the categories 'profit' and 'commodity' only make sense in relation to the wider social totality.

For Marx, then, science as the basis for the understanding of the social world was not the construction of causal laws, but of a deeper understanding, arrived at through a process of deconstruction and reconstruction, in which the part is dialectically related to the whole. Marx attempts to grasp the essential nature of capitalist relations, not as phenomenal form in themselves but as a basis for the deconstruction and reconstruction, dialectically, of the productive process. This dialectical process involves relating parts to whole, through the analysis of concrete historical practices.

2.3.5 History and structure

In *Capital*, Marx (and Engels) treated history logically rather than as narrative (Schmidt, 1981). Marx denied the positivist historist view of a self-evident unproblematic history. The past cannot be reclaimed, merely reconstituted, and such reconstitution is ideologically imbued. Similarly Marx denied the utopian view of the linear progress of history.

For Marx, history could only be appropriately understood if one had a 'correct grasp of the present'. This required that the primary pivot of attention in the construction of history be the logically generated critical theoretical perspective. Thus the process of reconstructing history starts out from an analysis of structures. Rather than begin with dogmas or arbitrary premisses, he analysed the prevailing structure, deconstructed it, raised questions about its ideological underpinnings, and then 'logically' constructed the history.

In the analysis of capitalism, Marx first grasps the essence of capital theoretically and then adhered to the logic of that analysis in constructing the history. He focused on immanent developments and shelved particular details which may have served to clutter the analysis. Empirical history then appears to be processed to remove vicissitudinous instances. This is the sense in which Marx argued, that the present be grasped and the past interpreted in terms of it.[9]

So, Marx starts out from the existing social relations rather than beginning with an analysis of the origin of bourgeois social relations. The theoretical development in *Capital* is interwoven with historical detail. Theory and history dialectically inform each other. Historical 'fact' is reviewed in terms of the critical theoretical analysis of present social relations. But, the theoretical analysis, although primary, is also mediated by an analysis of past events. This dialectical process involves two essential elements; the grounding of a generalised theory in material history and the exposure of the essential nature of structural relations which manifest themselves historically. Thus, in order to comprehend the nature of capitalist relations of production it was necessary for Marx to get at the essential nature of capital, that is, the commodity form, rather than simply reconstruct the historical origin of capitalism. The commodity form of capitalism was then located within a specific historical context thus clearly revealing the actual (rather then theoretically generalised) structural processes of capitalist production.

In this way the shift from abstract theoretical analysis to material historical analysis was effected. For although Marx conceived of bourgeois society, irrespective of its origins, as a closed system explicable in terms of itself he saw nothing inevitable or natural in bourgeois relations of production. Essentially they are arbitrary, historically specific, relations, that can be transcended by human praxis.

2.3.6 Ideology and praxis

Marx saw social structures as oppressive. In *Capital* he was concerned with class oppression and economic exploitation. Oppressive structures, while maintained by oppressive mechanisms embodied in the state and judiciary, are also legitimated by ideology. For Marx, ideology was a transparent and intrinsic element of social structures. Prevailing ideology, as the ideology of the dominant class, was constantly represented through institutions such as the church, the school, the courts and the family. This dominant view legitimated, as natural, the existing social, political and economic structure. Ideology thus served not only to reify social relations but also to conceal their real nature; in the case of capitalist economy, their exploitative element. In order to understand the nature of the social relations it was necessary to engage ideology. However, as ideology is grounded in material relations, it is not just a matter of transcending ideology in thought (however useful that might be as an initial step in revealing the underlying nature of social relations) but of changing material relations through practical reflective activity (praxis). There is a dialectical relationship between ideology and material forms. Changes in material relations impact upon ideology which in turn informs praxis and further effects the nature of material relations.12

Marx's dialectical analysis, in engaging taken-for-granted abstractions and the pre-givens of bourgeois economics, exposed the transparent nature of prevailing ideology. His deconstruction of the capitalist mode of production and the reconstruction of the exploitative relations engaged the prevailing ideological forms. But he was also aware

that to effect changes required praxis. The dominant ideological legitimation could not be thought away and changes be effected on the basis of a new consciousness. Changes in the material base must also be effected in order to sustain, or even initiate, a comprehensive ideological critique.

Ideology, like material relations, is not a timeless abstraction, but is a historically specific construct. Fundamental transformation, however, requires that people act to effect changes. The social world does not just change, it changes as the result of praxis. So in pointing to exploitative processes, Marx was not simply undertaking an economic analysis he was engaging the bourgeois ideology that reified exploitative practices and was providing an examination that could be linked with revolutionary praxis.

2.3.7 Conclusion

Marx was opposed to the analytic approach of the classical economists because it accepted surface appearances at face value and made no attempt to penetrate bourgeois ideological forms. Marx was concerned to lay bear the essential relationships manifested in capitalism. His aim was to analyse the structure of bourgeois economy dialectically. This involved, initially, taking the social structure of an historically specific moment as pre-given, and by concentrating on the fundamental unit of capital relations (commodities) to decompose the nature of commodities and thereby reconstitute the relations of production thus revealing the essential structure. History would then be logically reconstructed using this revealed structure as guiding principle. Thus Marx uses structure to guide history, but this theoretical orientation is not a timeless abstraction, it is historically specific, and its illustration is grounded in material history. Essentially, the process incorporates history in the grasping of the essential nature of the totality. Thereby the nature of the processes of capitalist economy are revealed providing a basis for revolutionary action.

2.4 C. Wright Mills–*The Power Elite*

2.4.1 Introduction: social criticism

C. Wright Mills was a professor of sociology at Columbia University until his death in 1962. Educated at the University of Texas he gained his doctorate at Wisconsin before his first teaching appointment at the University of Maryland in 1941. He moved to Columbia shortly afterwards, and for three years, was director there of the Labour Research Division of the Bureau of Applied Social Research. He was a provocative and controversial social critic who did not flinch from addressing contemporary issues. He was disenchanted with American society and politics and berated his sociological colleagues for failing to undertake substantive research. He was the victim of extensive criticism from leading members of the academic establishment for his radical views, was vilified by political opponents, and was turned down by all but one granting organisation after the publication of the *Power Elite*.

Mills grounded his notion of a critical social science in the re-establishment of the sociological imagination. He argued that the sociological project should be the analysis of biography and history and the interaction of the two (Mills, 1973, p. 12). Sociological imagination, for Mills, meant an empirical historical analysis of the relationship between the ‘personal troubles of milieux’ and the public issues of social structure. To do this

involves asking a myriad of interrelated questions, such as: What is the structure of the society as a whole? What is the interrelationship of its essential components? What are the mechanics by which it is changing? What varieties of people prevail in the society? How are the non-prevailing men and women repressed? How is any particular feature of the society affected by its historical period? What is its place in the wider context of the whole world?

Thus, for Mills, the 'classical' method requires the researcher to be a social scientist, not just a sociologist. Social criticism involves reflection, so the researcher should be both theorist and methodologist not just methodical technicians with an inadequate sociological appreciation

2.4.2 Verification and validity

A key concern for Mills was the nature of evidence. He was writing at a time when validation techniques were of a high order of priority among social scientists in the United States, especially amongst those engaged in microscopic quantitative research, the prevalent style of the time. Thus he explicitly addressed the issue.

> How to verify statements, propositions, putative facts does not seem to the classic practitioner as difficult as it is often made out by microscopic workers. The classic practitioner verifies a statement by detailed exposition of whatever empirical materials are relevant (sometimes using the precision of statistical enquiry). For other problems and conceptions, our verification will be like that of the historian; it is the problem of evidence. (Mills, [1959] 1973, p. 140)

For Mills, classic sociology is about attempting to 'improve the chances that our guesses about important matters might be right.' The problem of evidence to some extent resolved itself for the social critic who has a sense of real problems as they arise out of history. In confronting important issues the social critic works carefully and as exactly as possible towards elaborating hypotheses which are documented at key points by more detailed information. This is not rigid, it requires intellectual craft. Social scientists should be social critics rather than tied up with questions of validation. After all, the prevailing concern with verification procedures was simply a pragmatic interpretation of but one epistemological view of science. If such a view were to prevail absolutely then imaginative thinking would be impeded by a concern with 'proof'.

The social critic should analyse substantive issues, and no matter how intense the search for detail, the study should always be related critically to the social structure as a whole. For Mills this is achieved not through a single grand design for one large empirical study but through a 'continual shuttle between macroscopic conceptions and detailed expositions'. The procedure involves designing a series of smaller scale empirical studies, each of which seems to be pivotal to some part or another of the solution that is being elaborated. That solution is confirmed, modified, or refuted according to the results of these empirical studies.

Mills, then, was less concerned with the details of empirical than with historical holistic analyses of substantive issues. However, he was rather more concerned with addressing problems in terms of pragmatic manifestations than in analysing abstract concepts and this reflects a major epistemological difference from Marx's approach to critical social research.

Mills's intellectual development was rooted in pragmatism (he came across Marx much later in life Horowitz, 1966, p. 13) and he was less overtly concerned with the problem of the structural mediation of observation. Marx saw the concrete as theory laden and abstractions as reifications emptied of content which needed to be dialectically deconstructed. Such deconstruction would facilitate the revealing of ideological manifestations thus assisting the process of digging beneath the surface of appearances. Mills' focus on revealing the bare wires of the system was much more pragmatic in that it directed attention to questions of who does what and in whose interest, rather than attempting to analyse generalised structural issues. Mills was concerned with historical processes from a social perspective rather than structural issues as historically specific manifestations. This approach is evident in his analysis of power. He sees power as the crucial concern of social research, yet is not concerned to analyse it as an abstract concept but to investigate its manifestations. Ideology becomes the manipulative process, implemented through the mass media, which ensures voluntary obedience to the powerful.

2.4.3 The question of power

In *The Power Elite*, Mills (1956) brings together his earlier researches into the nature of power in the United States (Mills, 1948, 1951, 1953) and it serves as a useful classic example of the social critical approach. Mills was not happy with the trend in American sociology that manifested itself in theories which effectively sublimated the problem of power as of little consequence within 'Liberal Democracy'. In *Character and Social Structure* (Gerth & Mills, 1953) Mills had considered the implications of immense power concentrated in the hands of the few. He showed how people are socialised into a political society where important decisions are remote but tacitly accepted as inevitably remote. From his studies of the American Trade Union movement and white collar groups, Mills was convinced of the political impotence of both type of collective organisation. He thus looked amongst the upper reaches of American society and from this analysis, and in conjunction with his earlier studies, he produced *The Power Elite* (1956).

Like Marx, Mills style of exposition differs from his style of research. In *The Power Elite* Mills tends to assert his main points and then illustrate them with general, sometimes anecdotal, examples framed as though the content were self-evident. He follows this up with more detailed data. What he claims he is doing in working up the text is deliberating upon three kinds of 'conversations'. These were, first, with himself and imaginary persons. Such reflection is underpinned by a second conversation between influential thinkers whose ideas have filtered the mind of the author and of the readers. Third is the conversation readers have with themselves in which they relate what they read to their own experiences. The incorporation of the latter two conversations involves reasoning along with the reader and this involves more than merely setting forth views but also clarifying them.

Mills argues, from the outset, that in America in the mid 20th century important decisions of national importance are made by powerful people whom he calls the elite. This does not necessarily mean that the powerful are united, that they 'fully know what they do, or that they are consciously joined in conspiracy' (Mills, 1956, p. 18). Picking up

the tentative ideas in *Character and Social Structure* Mills provides the following working definition of 'important and continuous' power.

> By the powerful we mean, of course, those who are able to realize their will, even if others resist it. No one, accordingly, can be truly powerful unless he[10] has access to the command of major institutions, for it is over these institutional means of power that the powerful are, in the first instance, powerful. Higher politicians and key officials of government command such institutional power; so do admirals and generals, and so do the major owners and executives of the larger corporations. (Mills, 1956, p. 9)

These three areas of power he calls the 'big three' and refers to those at the top of these hierarchies as 'the elite of the command posts'. The aim of his enquiry is to find out who this elite are, how they operate, whether they derive from a clear and distinct social class, and whether they are self-consciously members of an upper class, status group or elite.

Emphasising his pragmatic approach, Mills (1956, p. 9) notes of his subject group that all biographies and memoirs of the wealthy, powerful and eminent agree that those operating in 'higher circles' do so within 'overlapping crowds' and 'intricately connected cliques'. Thus, to examine the elite as a social class, Mills (1956, p. 15) argues it is necessary to examine a whole series of 'smaller face-to-face milieux', the most obvious of which, historically, has been the upper-class family, but the most important of which today are the 'proper secondary school and the metropolitan club'.

2.4.4 Holistic approach: biography and history

Mills' holistic approach is reflected in his view of the interrelationship of biography and history. In *The Power Elite* he argues that while the personal awareness of the powerful is useful material for understanding the 'higher circles' it is not satisfactory on its own. Nor is it satisfactory simply to consider historical events. Linking the two are the institutions of modern society, the state, economic corporations and the military which constitute the means to power.

Mills then takes as generic the idea that the elite is defined in terms of institutional position. This seems to Mills to have the practical advantage of being the most concrete way into the whole problem, not least because a good deal of information is available for sociological reflection about such circles and institutions. More importantly, the institutional or structural definition does not prejudge what is to be investigated. Further, the structural approach underpins the other elements. The institutional positions determine people's chances to get and to hold selected values, which in large part determines the kinds of psychological beings they become. All of this tends to influence the extent to which they see themselves as part of select social class. Prestige, status, wealth and power are interrelated and dependent upon access to major institutions independently of individual personality.

Within this holistic perspective he designs a series of related studies. He looks first at the elements that 'people know best: the new and the old upper classes of local society and the metropolitan 400' (Mills, 1956, p. 27). Then examines the nature of 'celebrity' and the 'national' system of prestige. Then the 'very rich' are examined in relation to corporate wealth. An historical analysis of the 'American statesman' is

followed by an assessment of the 'invisible government' that operates at a higher level than visible democratic manoeuvring. The historical ascendency of the military is scrutinised and the powerful positions assumed by admirals and generals revealed. Coincident interests with the corporate rich and political directorate are pointed out.

> In each case he attempts to identify the actors, examine their institutional affiliations, discover what they have, what they belong to, and what sort of personality types they appear to be. He uses empirical data to help in this endeavour but notes that We neither take the world for granted nor believe it to be a simple fact. Our business is with facts only in so far as we need them to upset or clinch our ideas. Facts and figures are only the beginning of the proper study. Our main interest is in making sense of the facts we know or can readily find out. We do not want merely to take an inventory, we want to discover meanings, for most of our important questions are questions of meaning (Mills, 1956, p. 364).

2.4.5 The empirical data

The empirical data Mills makes use of in the study derives from a multitude of sources. Prominent are his own researches, some of which had been previously published. He made considerable use throughout of newspaper and magazine articles in helping him identify powerful Americans and in assessing trends in the shift of power. Extensive literary reviews of scholarly work were undertaken, and official data was also consulted. Mills obtained a considerable insight and first hand empirical data from 'several individuals who know at first hand the Federal government, the military, or large corporations' (Mills, 1956, p. 364) who at their own request Mills was unable to acknowledge.

In analysing local society, for example, Mills draws mainly from his own observation and interviews in 'some dozen middle-sized cities' in the Northeast, the Midwest and the South. Some results of this work had already been published (Mills & Ulmer 1946; Mills 1946, 1951). Field notes made in 1945 during 'the course of an intensive study of a city of 60,000 in Illinois' were also used. In addition he used a memorandum (prepared by J. W. Harless) based on a literature search of sixteen local community studies (published between 1929 and 1950). The whole is augmented by literary works on local communities which, Mills claims, reached similar conclusions to sociological analyses. The problem, for him, in both is that there is a tendency to be concerned with status rather than power.

Material on metropolitan 'high society' came from a number of published sources, the primary one being The *Social Register* which since the 1890s had been published listing the top families (with considerable detail of education, etc.) in New York, Boston and Philadelphia and this was expanded to include nine other cities by 1910, with each supporting a regular annual volume from 1928. Similarly, the 'celebrated', epitomised by 'cafe society' Mills determined again through literature search, principally, listings in *Fortune* nd by reference to, and further investigation upon, Igor Cassini's 'The New 400' in *Esquire*, June 1953.

The investigation of the rich, Mills acknowledges, is tricky because little by way of precise figures on great fortunes is available. On the nineteenth century he used a few relatively recently published works plus the methodical listings of Moses Yale Beach of the Sun Office in the 1840s and 1850s. Reviewing the dozen or so histories of great

fortunes and the biographies of the wealthy, making careful use of data published in newspapers in 1924 and 1925 when a temporary law allowed the reporting of income tax payments, and using share ownership published in the Temporary National Economic Committee's (TNEC) monograph, No. 29, Mills devised a list of all those born since 1800 identified as having $30 million or more.[11] The research was as systematic as the scattered evidence would allow and it was checked as far as possible in the case of those now deceased by reference to probate of will. While the list may not be exhaustive, without doubt, Mills reckons that all 302 on it are among America's richest people. In the same way he assembled empirical evidence on the corporate rich and military personnel.[12]

2.4.6 Interpretation: public and mass

Mills then had to make sense of all this material. He could not have coped with all his data inductively. This, however, had never been his intention. His historical approach was guided by an holistic view which, as we have seen, generated a series of interrelated questions. The studies provided some evidence germane to these questions. At one level he was able to trace the institutional affiliations and cross linkages of the wealthy, the corporate executives, the military and the political leaders and thus indicate that power was rooted in corporate, military, and political hierarchies and no longer in local society, family, education or the church. Having provided evidence on these aspects, Mills returns to the 'master problem of the power elite' and its complement, mass society. The real substantive issue was whether these powerful people operated as an elite. Do the corporate chief executives, the members of the political directorate and the soldier-statesmen clustered around the Joint Chiefs of Staff come together to form the power elite of America?

While he shows that the unification of the elite can be seen in terms of their coincident institutional affiliations, common schooling, socialising, intermarriage, and even similar personalities, he argues that there is a more explicit co-ordination. This is not to say that the power elite has emerged as a realization of a plan.

> But it is to say that as the institutional mechanics of our time have opened up avenues to men pursuing their several interests, many of them have come to see that these several interests could be realized more easily if they worked together, in informal as well as more formal ways, and accordingly they have done so. (Mills, 1956, pp. 19–20)

This more explicit co-ordination can be seen superficially when it occurs rather openly at times of national crisis. However, there is a more subtle coincidence of interests which can only be seen to make sense when seen in relation to the notion of mass society.

Thus while the coincident data are promising, their meaning really only derives from an holistic perspective which sees the power elite in relation to mass society. If the elite is truly responsible to a community of publics it carries a very different meaning than if such a public is being transformed into a society of masses.

Mills undertakes an historical analysis, at a structural level, of the transformation of American society from something close to 'public' to something close to 'mass'. He uses four pragmatic criteria to distinguish public from mass. A *public* is characterised by numbers of opinion givers equalling receivers; communications allow effective and

immediate feedback; direct and effective action based on opinion is possible; and authoritative institutions do not penetrate the public. The *mass* is the converse of this with authoritative institutions controlling opinion, communications and channels of action.

Mass democracy is organised in terms of the struggle of large-scale interest groups located between the individual and the powerful decision making elite. This gap, Mills shows, is getting wider and is epitomised in the steady growth of metropolitan society which segregates people into specialisms and destroys any sense of being an integral public. In this situation mass media manipulation is sovereign. Mills thus proposes a 'manipulative model' of advanced societies.

Mills analysis is historically specific and he is not intending a general theory of history, viz. that all historical events are shaped by an omnipotent elite. Nor is his investigation directed at the process of decision making as such but is an attempt to delimit the social areas within which that process, whatever its character, goes on.

2.4.7 Conclusion

Mills is overtly critical of the American social system in his *Power Elite* but also raises epistemological questions which he elaborates in his subsequent critique of the sociological enterprise in *Sociological Imagination*. In *The Power Elite* Mills dug beneath the surface of apparent democracy to expose the real nature of power relations in America. His concern is not specifically with class relations[13] and how they relate to a materially grounded structure of power, but with the nature of power itself and how it is exercised in the interests of the powerful. Mills takes the abstract concept of power and defines it in terms of the exercise of the will of one person or group of persons over another or others. The exercise of power is essentially located within an institutional structure. His analysis thus moves from the abstract concept to historically specific concrete structural manifestations.

His deconstructive analysis is enabled by the holistic interaction of history and biography. Mills is circumspect in following through the political implications of his analysis and tends only to point to the anti-democratic nature of the exercise of power in the United States of America. There is no overt critique of ideology but an implied censure of the democratic sham. This is clearly evident in his analysis of public and mass which hinges on the fundamental disjunction between the power elite and those in the middle layer of power. The latter are elected by the powerless and fragmented mass of the population and are tenuously accountable to them. However, this middle layer are powerless in the last resort and real power lies with the elite who has no public to whom they are accountable, only a mass whom it manipulates.

Mills' approach, guided by pragmatism, involves a less rigorous approach to critical deconstruction than Marx. It is an approach guided by holistic concerns but one in which elements of critical analysis (abstraction, essence, ideology and praxis) are held together in a loose confederation within an historical and structural critique rather than as a tightly interlocked analytic framework.

2.5 J.H. Goldthorpe, D. Lockwood *et al.*—The Affluent Worker

2.5.1 Introduction

The *Affluent Worker in the Class Structure* (Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer, and Platt, 1969) provides an example of an embryonic critical social research project that used and adapted standard quantitative research methods. Goldthorpe and Lockwood, the principal researchers, initiated a research project into the sociology of the affluent worker in 1962 (Goldthorpe *et al*., 1969). Fieldwork started later the same year. Financial support came from the Department of Applied Economics of the University of Cambridge and later the Human Sciences Committee of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (a precursor of SSRC now ESRC). Bechhofer and Platt were members of the research staff of the department throughout the fieldwork and analysis stage.

A number of reports of the study of the affluent worker were published in journals (Goldthorpe and Lockwood, 1962, 1963; Lockwood, 1966; Goldthorpe, 1966) as well as two longer reports *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour* (Goldthorpe et al 1968a) and *The Affluent Worker: Political Attitudes and Behaviour* (Goldthorpe *et al*., 1968b). *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure* was the final and central book-length report and effectively marked the conclusion of the research.

Goldthorpe and Lockwood saw the *Affluent Worker* study as a contribution to the century-long debate about the working class within Western industrial society. They review the debate in order to provide a 'wider perspective' within which to locate their study. They are 'well aware that the conclusions from any single study, restricted in time and space, are likely to be of only limited application' and in no way suppose their work to resolve the problems they address. Their aim 'might more accurately be defined as that of providing controversy with more and better material on which to feed' (Goldthorpe and Lockwood, 1969, p. 1)

2.5.2 Embourgeoisement

Capitalism, since 1945 had been marked by the growth of 'affluence' and consumerism; the replacement of intolerable factories; the increasing concern by management with 'human relations'; the general increase in automation with its changing work conditions; and the development of suburbanism. The middle-income group had swollen as a result of significant standard-of-living advances gleaned by large numbers of manual workers particularly in advanced technological plants.

In such circumstances, the working class was seen by liberals as in the process of decline and decomposition; as an anachronism belonging to the infancy of capitalism. This view was not new and repeated the long-running concern about the revolutionary potential of the working class.

Goldthorpe and Lockwood (1969) examined the various Marxist and non-Marxist contributions to the idea of the changing nature of the working class. They critically examined the widely taken-for-granted *embourgeoisement* thesis and revealed a number of different dimensions to the proposition which covered the work situation, social lives and cultural values, and aspirations. Briefly, the embourgeoisement argument was that the working class was no longer economically inferior, mass deprivation (Bernard, 1956) and alienated labour (Blauner, 1964; Woodward, 1958, 1964, 1965) no longer characterised capitalism. The traditional distinction between manual and non-manual labour and antagonistic worker-management relations were disappearing.

Homogenisation of living standards had also meant the more affluent working class adopting bourgeois norms, value and attitudes in respect of a wide variety of cultural activities from fashion and eating to entertainment and parenting. Migration and the development of new housing estates further undermined traditional working-class communities and workers became more exposed to mass media and the values of other social strata. In short, the embourgeoisement thesis argued that status distinctions based on consumer power had replaced class distinctions based on productive role. Thus the Marxist notion of embourgeoisement reappeared not as temporary irregularity, as Engels (1895) suggested, but as an integral part of the evolution of capitalism. Instead of salaried workers joining the proletariat, production workers were believed to be joining the middle class.

There is a persuasiveness to the embourgeoisement thesis which gained considerable popularity after Labour's third successive electoral defeat in 1959. The thesis was accepted in Conservative circles as largely accounting for the party's unprecedented run of electoral success. Indeed the two-party system was thought to be in doubt. Labour supporters also accepted the thesis and it led to a radical reshaping of Labour policies and of the party's 'cloth cap' image.[14].

2.5.3 The approach—a critical case study

Goldthorpe and Lockwood reviewed the contributions to the debate in detail in order to clarify what exactly was being claimed about the nature of the embourgeoised worker in respect of these different dimensions. They then designed a study to test these different elements.[15]

Given limited resources and the requirement of an in-depth analysis, Goldthorpe and Lockwood decided to adopt a critical case study approach. They determined criteria, based on the characteristics of an affluent working class community that they derived from the proponents of an embourgeoisement thesis, of a case study that would be *as favourable as possible* for the confirmation of the thesis. They argued that, if in this case the thesis was confirmed then they would have detailed material on workers who were in the process of changing their class situation. If the thesis were not confirmed in these favourable circumstances then they argued that they would be in a position to 'claim that *a fortiori* it was unlikely to be occurring to any significant extent within British society at large' (Goldthorpe *et al*., 1969, p. 32).

The criteria for the critical case study were that the population of workers should be physically mobile, affluent, economically secure, and consumption conscious. They should be in an industrial setting with 'progressive' employment policies, advanced technology and harmonious industrial relations. The community within which this population lived should be socially heterogeneous, economically expanding and open, new, and lacking tightly-knit kinship networks. While this ideal-type was not entirely attainable they showed that in Luton, workers at Vauxhall Motors Ltd., Skefko Ball Bearing Co. Ltd., and Laporte Chemicals Ltd., matched the criteria as nearly as possible. As a bonus, Luton had been identified as the prototype of the 'new middle-class' Britain, and, although they had not chosen Luton for that reason, it was fortunate that they were able 'to meet supporters of the *embourgeoisement* thesis on their own ground'. Thus they 'cannot be accused of seeking for workers turning middle-class where no-one had ever

claimed or supposed that such a pattern of change was likely' (Goldthorpe *et al*., 1969, p. 47).

Testing the thesis required that the elements that constituted the various dimensions of embourgeoisement thesis be operationalised so that they could be checked against the descriptions of actual work practices, social activities, aspirations, and so on. For example, within the world of work, the newly embourgeoised worker was, according to the thesis, supposed to relate positively to the work situation reflecting white-collar careerism; teamwork; commitment to the job; derivation of a certain intrinsic satisfaction from the work; relative autonomy of action; a degree of social spin-off; and so on.

A substantial sample of workers were then analysed to see if their lives both at work and outside the work situation, and their attitudes and opinions reflected embourgeoisement. A small 'control' sample of white-collar workers, backed up by available empirical evidence from other studies, was used for comparative purposes. The population of workers was drawn up so that, at each of the three plants, workers who were central to the main production system were sampled. The population was limited to male workers between 21 and 46, married and living with their wives and regularly earning at least £17 per week gross (October 1962) and resident in Luton or the immediately adjacent housing areas. The sample was not a simple random sample of the population but, for practical reasons, one that was drawn from the major departments in the plants. This does raise questions about representativeness especially among the assemblers; however, Goldthorpe and Lockwood checked the sample in detail and claimed that 'no grounds could be found for supposing that those men in our population in the excluded departments differed in their basic social characteristics from those in the departments studied (Goldthorpe *et al*., 1969, p. 48, footnote 2).

In all they had an initial sample of 326 which yielded a final sample of 229 (a 70% response rate) made up of 86 assemblers at Vauxhall; 41 machinists, 23 setters and 45 craftsmen at Skefko; and 23 process workers and 11 craftsmen at Laporte.

The comparative sample of white-collar workers in the same age-range was drawn from general clerks and commercial assistants at Laporte and cost, correspondence and general clerks at Skefko. The initial sample of 75 men ended as a final sample of 54, a response rate of 72%. Material from this 'restricted' sample is only used for comparisons where it is supported by data from more 'extensive studies of members of white-collar strata'.

The main research instrument for obtaining material on social attitudes, behaviour and relationships was the scheduled interview. Respondents were interviewed first at work for about an hour and then again at home with their wives for about three hours (sometimes split into two sessions). The firm compensated for 'lost time' in the first interview and the project team paid £1 to the couples for the second (although some couples refused the payment). The interviews of the comparison sample of white collar workers also took in respondent's wives and were based on a schedule 'consisting of parts of both the "home" and the "work" schedules used with our manual respondents. Thus, over quite a wide range of items directly matching data for the two samples were obtained' (Goldthorpe *et al*., 1969, p. 52–53).

Interviewing was supplemented by observational studies of the respondent's working lives, but no such observation of 'out-plant' life was possible as the respondents led very private lives. There was no local community of a 'public kind' which was

accessible to the researcher as a fieldwork location. All information relating to aspects other than work were based on the respondent's own account rather than 'direct study'. This raised the possibility of bias and distortion as respondents may present themselves in a particular way. Clearly, Goldthorpe and Lockwood noted, 'as the social anthropologists have traditionally insisted, it is wise to distinguish between what people say they do and what they do in fact'. However, this is not, an intractable problem and they found that their interviewees were both disinclined to attempt a 'front' and prepared to present themselves in what, for them, was often an unfavourable light. Where cross-checking of responses was possible 'no serious degree of inconsistency was found in the answers individuals gave'.

2.5.4 testing the thesis

Goldthorpe and Lockwood maintained that there research design provided the basis for a descriptive account of the social lives of the affluent workers and thus the basis for an 'appropriate and cogent test' of the embourgeoisement thesis. The primary data that described those aspects of workers' lives relevant to the operationalisation of the embourgeoisement thesis were compared to expectations. This was cross-checked by using comparative material of white-collar workers.

For example, they used the reason why their respondents remained in their jobs as one indicator of the kind of satisfaction they derived from the work.[16]

> The reason that our respondents by far most frequently gave for remaining in their present jobs—and most appeared to be quite firmly attached to them—was in fact the high level of pay they could earn.... This reason was given by half the process workers, by two-thirds of the more skilled men and by three-quarters of the assemblers and machinists; and with 1 in 4 of the latter, this was the *only* consideration mentioned. The reason next most frequently advanced was security of employment (referred to by 38% of our respondents overall) and taking all economic factors together—level of pay, security, extent of social welfare and other fringe benefits—one or more of these was referred to by 87% of the craftsmen and setters in the sample and by 82% of the semi-skilled men. In contrast, in no occupational group did as many as a third of our affluent workers make any mention of staying in their jobs because they liked the work they did; and among the assemblers and machinists the proportion was as low as 1 in 8. (Goldthorpe *et al*., 1969, p. 56)

A table of results is supplied for greater detail. The analysis is further developed by way of a comparison with white-collar workers. This showed that among the blue collar workers 'affluence has been achieved only at a price: that of accepting work which affords little in the way of intrinsic rewards and which is likely to be experienced essentially as *labour*'. This is in contrast to white-collar work where a 'clear majority (70%) did *not* refer to pay as a factor attaching them to their present employment'. The comparison was further developed by assessing the reasons why the skilled workers showed dissatisfaction with their work. In became clear that, for them, affluence was bought at the price of less freedom in their work environment.

While it was evident that work experience was dissatisfying, it also became clear that non-economic, social, satisfactions did not compensate for inherently unsatisfying

work by, for example, building up rewarding relationships with workmates, superiors or other work associates. Their observational studies indicated that 'tightly knit work groups were something of a rarity in the shops and departments in which we were concerned'. This conclusion was reinforced by 'the finding from our interviews that 76% of the more skilled men in our sample and 66% of the semi-skilled felt that they would be 'not much bothered' or 'not bothered at all' if moved to another job away from the men they presently worked with (Goldthorpe *et al*., 1969, p. 65).

Goldthorpe and Lockwood argued that among workers in their sample, 'affluence had been gained by these men sacrificing, directly or indirectly, the possibility of a higher level of intrinsic job satisfaction'. This sacrifice involved greater stress and deprivation in the work situation, overtime and shiftwork. The work experience was a fundamentally dissatisfying one for the workers.

In this way, each aspect of the embourgeoisement thesis was addressed and primary data used to test the expected attitudes and life experiences of the supposedly embourgeoised workers. The test is thus dependent upon an operationalised concept of embourgeoisement against which the actual lives and attitudes of workers can be compared. The operationalisation process reflects the standard quantitative social research process of identifying various dimensions of the concept, based on a literature review, and the determination of indicators of the various dimensions. The three dimensions identified were work, sociality, and social aspirations and imagery. The key difference from a standard quantitative approach was rather than construct 'neutral' operationalisations to be used to measure a random or otherwise 'representative' sample, the empirical context was selected to favour the thesis and the measures designed to address supposed material manifestations of the thesis.

The design of the research was thus directed to materially grounding an abstract theoretical debate. It was not a study of the *process* of embourgeoisement as it basically provides a static picture. It, thus, does not permit analysis of the mobility of the workers in the study. But this is not the aim. What the study does permit is an assessment of whether, amongst affluent workers, middle-class values, and so on, have already been adopted. Thus, given their critical case, if the embourgeoisement thesis is a sound one, there should be a sizeable proportion of the sample who are indistinguishable from, at least, 'lower middle-class non-manual workers'.

Similarly, the research study, unlike most standard quantitative social research, does not attempt any causal or pseudo-causal explanations, or broad generalisations. It does not look for the factors that might account for an observed phenomenon. The principle aim of the primary data analysis is to critically examine, through a case study most likely to confirm the embourgeoisement thesis, the adequacy of this widely taken-for-granted view.[17]

Goldthorpe and Lockwood conclude, by way of 'generalising from their findings', that in respect of the world of work the class situation of the affluent worker has not changed and the thesis is inadequate as it breaks down 'fairly decisively at any one of several points'. Workers lives and attitudes do not indicate a shift to middle-class values, attitudes and activities. Although changes may have occurred in consumption, within the sphere of production there is still 'a fairly distinctive working class' (Goldthorpe *et al.*, 1969, p. 83) even in progressive, modern industrial establishments. If anything, changes in white-collar work are tending to bring some non-manual workers closer to manual

workers rather than the other way round.[18] In contrast to the version of the embourgeoisement thesis that asserts affluent workers have a dual social identity (working class at work, middle class out of work), there is a tendency for workers to dissent from middle class conceptions of the status hierarchy. The aspirations of the affluent workers seemed to reflect neither working-class consciousness nor middle-class status consciousness. Differences in prestige and power were less significant for respondents than differences in income and standards of consumption.

2.5.5 Implications: the working class and party politics

The primary intention of the empirical analysis, the examination and testing of the thesis, has thus been completed. The authors do not finish here, however, but relocate their work in its wider framework. They argue that their resounding rejection of the thesis rebounds on the whole evolutionary theorising about the nature of class in advanced capitalist society. Clearly, their analysis shows that although economic development has had a considerable impact on working class lives, class and status relationships are relatively autonomous of changes in the economic, technological and ecological infrastructure.

Rather than an embourgeoisement thesis the authors point to a 'normative convergence' between certain manual and non-manual groups amongst their respondents which blurs the distinction between middle and working class. In the case of white-collar workers there is a shift away from traditional individualism and towards collective, if instrumental, means of pursuing economic objectives. Manual workers are shifting from community oriented social life to a recognition of the centrality of the conjugal family.

What then are the implications of their research for the debate on the working class as an historic agent of radical social change? Two alternative arguments can be constructed from the apparent decline of workplace and communal solidarity of workers who see labour as a means of sustaining a mode of social life dominated by home and family. The first, the 'liberal view', suggests that workers are becoming more individualistic, with a consequent decline in support for unionism and the Labour Party, and, as such, their potential as a radical force has declined. The second, the 'neo-Marxist view', takes up the alienation of the worker. Commodity consciousness, the lack of intrinsic satisfaction in work, and so on, are indicative of the denial of the real needs of the affluent worker and thus such a worker is fundamentally in opposition to the system. The empirical material, when analysed in detail, leads Goldthorpe and Lockwood to reject both views.

Essentially, both approaches rely on an evolutionist position which takes basic premises for granted: on the one hand that 'middle class incomes' lead to a decline in support for labour politics: on the other that consumerism is alienating. On the contrary, affluent workers continue to adhere to traditional forms of working-class collectivism, although this tends to be instrumental and irrespective of any sense of participation in a class movement seeking structural changes in society, and are characterised by a growing 'commodity consciousness'

Goldthorpe and Lockwood offer an alternative scenario which they link firmly to Labour Party policy. Seeing a general disaffection with the anti-working class economic policies of the second Wilson administration and the particular drift of the new affluent worker away from Labour policies they predict that Labour would loose the next election (which, of course, they did a year later in 1970) and that a long period of Conservative

government is likely to follow. This defeat will be because Labour have adopted a centrist position, not because they have ignored the new affluence. It is precisely the apparent abandoning of the working person in attempting to play the Conservative game of 'managing the economy' that Labour will lose support.

They conclude their praxiological analysis of what the Labour Party might do in the face of the growing affluence of the workers in order to sustain a class based political movement as follows:

> if the working class does in the long term become no more than one stratum within a system of 'classless inegalitarianism', offering no basis for or response to radical initiatives, then this situation will not be adequately explained either as an inevitable outcome of the evolution of industrialism or as reflecting the ability of neo-capitalism to contain the consequences of its changing infrastructure by means of mass social-psychological manipulation. It will to some degree be also attributable to the fact that the political leaders of the working class *chose* this future for it. (Goldthorpe *et al*., 1969, p. 195)

Thus, Goldthorpe and Lockwood do not just draw on an existing wider theory, use it to inform their concept construction, undertake a study and suggest implications for a particular theory, as in the standard quantitative approach. Instead, they relate their analysis back to a much larger realm of debate and praxis. It is the framework in which it is situated and the nature of the enquiry into structural taken-for-granteds that gives Goldthorpe and Lockwood's study its critical edge.

2.6 Paul Willis—Learning to Labour

2.6.1 Introduction—schooling for working-class jobs

In *Learning to Labour,* a study of how working class kids get working class jobs, Willis (1977) grounds his critical analysis in ethnographic evidence analysed from a Marxist cultural perspective. He attempts to dig beneath the surface of what was seen at the time as a developing crisis in education evident in pupil misbehaviour in schools. Willis was not so much concerned with the 'misbehaviour' as such but rather set out to look at the transition from school to work of non-academic working class boys. The primary aim of his research was to cast light upon the 'surprising' process whereby, in a liberal democratic society, where there is no obvious physical coercion, some people are self-directed towards socially undesirable, poorly rewarded, intrinsically meaningless, manual work.

As such Willis' critical analysis is structural rather than historical in the first instance. He sets out not by asking what occurs in the classroom, but by asking what happens at school that leads some boys into low status manual jobs? His ethnographic work reveals that there is a counter culture among some working class 'lads' which denies the expectations, values and social control incipient in the 'educational paradigm'. The lads are suspicious and distrustful of schooling; see it as failing their own aspirations; as irrelevant; and actively ridicule the schooling process.

2.6.2 The participant study

An ethnographic approach was chosen as its 'sensitivity to meanings and values' and its 'ability to represent and interpret symbolic articulations, practices and forms of cultural production' provided a way for Willis to access the collective praxis which he saw as constituting culture. Willis' ethnographic work is organised around a main case-study group and a number of comparative groups. The latter suggest that the characteristics of the main group of 'lads' are by no means unique, and that they, as a type, can be distinguished from more academically oriented working- and middle-class groups who hold different cultural values.

The main case-study was of twelve non-academic, white, working-class males, in their penultimate year of schooling, aged around 15 (at the start of the study) from an industrial town in the Midlands ('Hammertown'). The subjects formed a friendship network, and were in the same year at a single-sex, working-class, secondary modern school in the heart of a working class estate in Hammertown. Willis saw them as all members of some kind of oppositional culture. They were intensively studied during their last two years of schooling, via participant and non-participant observation in classrooms; around other parts of the school; and in leisure activities. Willis attended, as a class member not teacher, some of all the different classes that the group went to, including careers classes. This direct observation was supported by 'regular recorded group discussion; informal interviews and diaries'. (Willis, 1977, p. 5). In addition Willis taped long conversations with all parents and teachers of the main group, as well as all other senior teachers and careers officers. After they left school, Willis undertook short periods of participant observation of each of the twelve in their workplace by actually working alongside them. This was augmented by taped interviews with the individuals and with selected foremen, managers and shop stewards

The main study was supported by less intensive studies of five comparison groups of working class lads in the same school year. These were of two 'conformist' groups taken from the same year of Hammertown Boys and from a nearby Hammertown mixed secondary modern and three 'non-conformist' groups from a single sex Hammertown grammar school; from a mixed comprehensive in the centre of the nearby larger conurbation; and from a high-status grammar school in the 'exclusive residential area of the larger nearby conurbation'. These comparison groups were all friendship groups who intended to leave school at 16. Three subjects from these comparison groups were selected for participant observation at work, the same approach being used as for the main study group.

The research is reported in two parts. The first part presents the empirical data and main findings of the research. It is basically an ethnography of the school, focusing on the 'oppositional working class cultural forms within it'. Large numbers of excerpts from the ethnographic material are quoted verbatim as Willis outlines the elements of the oppositional culture. On the basis of interviews with parents and the research in the factories, this elaborated oppositional culture is then contextualised, as part of a more general working-class culture, and specifically shown to have profound similarities with shop-floor culture. This is further developed in terms of local institutional manifestations of working-class culture. Finally, Willis examines the way the culture subjectively prepares labour power. He illustrates how manual work is seen in oppositional culture as a sociable practice which substantiates a view of life which, in an elusive way, generates

self-esteem while demeaning others. It is the sense of their own labour power, learnt within the counter-school culture, which sustains the positive image.

The second part is more theoretical and it is this analytic framework which develops the study from an ethnographic account into a piece of critical social research. His avowed aim is to 'plunge beneath the surface of ethnography' in what he calls 'a more interpretative mode'. (This should not be confused with an interpretive or Verstehen approach, however). Willis offers an analysis of the inner meaning, rationality and dynamic of the cultural process revealed in the ethnographic study and considers how these processes contribute both to working-class culture in general and to the maintenance and reproduction of social order. The ethnographic study cannot reproduce the 'logic of living', which must be traced back to the 'heart of its conceptual relationship' if the creative aspect of the culture is to be understood.

Willis thus adopts a 'critical ethnographic' approach. His material is based on extensive ethnographic enquiry, but rather than simply report his observations in terms of the sets of meanings that operate within the group, he is concerned only with the ethnographic detail in as much as it provides indicators at the local level of the more general structural questions which frame his enquiry. Willis retains, throughout, the question, framed at the holistic level, of why working-class kids get working-class jobs? In order to link the particular to the general he asks a number of intermediary questions which provide a framework for shuttling between the wider social-cultural and the specific manifestations. These questions provide the basis for the interrogation of his ethnographic material in order to discover how the structural features relate to the particular: what unspoken assumptions lie behind and make the cultural attitude sensible. The intermediate questions he asks are: Why do some working class lads differentiate themselves from the institution? What is the basis of the conviction with which the 'lads' hold their views, insights and feelings? How does one explain the 'lads' reversal of the conventional occupational hierarchy? How, in the end, are the 'lads' entrapped rather than liberated by their work situation? What, at root, determines the cultural forms?

2.6.3 Penetration and limitation

To go beyond the ethnographic study, which he sees as describing 'the field of play', and thus answer some of these structurally oriented questions, Willis suggests two key organising concepts which interact to provide a basis for understanding how the 'self-damnation' to manual work is seen so positively. These concepts are *penetration* and *limitation*.

Willis' analysis is widely regarded as somewhat dense at this stage and this is reflected in his definition of these core concepts.

> Penetration' is meant to designate impulses within a cultural form towards the penetration of the conditions of existence of its members and their position within the social whole but in a way which is not centred, essentialist or individualist. 'Limitation' is meant to designate those blocks, diversions and ideological effects which confuse and impede the full development and expression of these impulses. (Willis, 1977, p. 119)

In terms of the counter-school culture, this means that it is able to cut through the (middle-class or dominant) ideological notions embodied in schooling and reveal them

for what they are. Essentially, the educational paradigm espouses individualism (the free action and self-interest of individuals) and the counter-school culture voices its opposition to individualism, although, of course, not in such abstract terms. The illusory promise of qualifications, the irrelevance of the curriculum, the meritocratic values, are all seen, by the counter culture, as at variance with immediate gratification, group solidarity and the primacy of labour power. This is rooted in a clear conception of the working class as at the bottom of the status hierarchy, irrespective of any movement by individuals.

> The wisdom of movement up the gradient as an individual is replaced by the stupidity of movement as a member of a class. By penetrating the contradiction at the heart of the working class school the counter-school culture helps to liberate its members from the burden of conformism and conventional achievement. (Willis, 1977, pp. 129–130)

However, the counter-culture is only partial in its penetrations, and faces limitations which are generated within the working-class culture upon which it draws.

The idea of labour power is central. Willis suggests that the positive affirmation of labour power might have precipitated a radical, alternative, liberating culture. However, it is blocked out by distorted impulses and ends up simply inserted into an exploitative and oppressive class structure. He thus addresses the impulses towards penetration in the oppositional culture and then considers the internal and external limitations which prevent and distort their impacting on the cultural form.

Willis' analysis of labour power is a direct re-presentation of Marx's surplus value analysis (see section 2.3). Labour power is a unique commodity upon which profit is based as the result of the appropriation of surplus labour by the accumulating capitalist. An infinite *capacity* has been purchased for a finite sum and this is socially legitimated through the apparent equivalence of wages and human power which permits the continuation of this purchase and use of labour power.

Capitalist ideology hides this exploitative relationship, yet, argues Willis, the counter-school culture reacts to it 'as if by instinct' and limits labour power. At the immediate level, in the school, this limitation is in order to devote more energies to the activities of the counter-school culture. The ethnographic material indicated that the 'lads' saw their own labour power as 'a barrier against unreasonable demands from the world of work'. This feeds directly into shopfloor culture 'whose object is at least in part to limit production' and as such is a 'creative response to the world of capitalism', although one devoid of a clear analytic appreciation of the special nature of labour power as a commodity.

Capitalism is concerned with the profit derived from labour power rather than the use to which it is put. Labour power is seen in the abstract and is measured not in terms of its use value but in units of time (which is its exchange value). This is reflected in the indifference expressed by the 'lads' in their choice of manual labour. The counter-school culture 'recognises' the principle of abstract labour and the commodity form of labour power. The reaction to abstract labour by the counter-school culture digs away at the core of the capitalist reproductive process. However, it operates not to expose exploitation but to *enable* it by creating a subjective acceptance of the abstractive labour process and by

promoting the celebration, by the 'lads', of their labour power which can be applied to their own ends and purposes.

However deeply critical of the educational paradigm and the capitalist mode of production this is, Willis notes that it does not lead to a fundamental (working class) critique of the capitalist mode of production. He asks, why is the potential for a total social transformation not fulfilled?

2.6.4 Contradictory divisions: labour sexism and racism

The counter-school culture (reflecting the wider working class culture) has internal divisions, these are based on a division on the lines of mental and manual labour, of gender, and of race. These divisions serve to override any potential analytic recognition of the uniqueness of labour power as a capitalist commodity.

The first division, Willis argues, arises as a result of a partial penetration of individualism. The school represents individualistic values and the group solidarity of the 'lads' is opposed to this. However, this opposition is inextricably linked to an expressed opposition to all that the school embodies by way of practice, namely mental work with the associated qualifications whose promise is illusory. Thus within the working class a mental–manual division is rehearsed at school (the lads versus the 'ear-'oles') which produces division.

Capitalism benefits from this mental-manual division, indeed, this positive affirmation of manual labour is essential for the stability of capitalism as without this inversion of the ideological order there would be a constant clamouring away from the giving of labour power which could only be opposed by coercion. But just because capitalism needs the shift does not explain why that need is satisfied. Why do the 'lads' not aspire to the rewards and satisfactions of mental labour? The ethnographic data indicated that the lads preferred manual labour and affirmed themselves through it? However, capitalism does not directly generate this inversion, it is actually generated from within patriarchal working-class culture.

Thus, the second division is gender based with the male counter-school culture promoting and celebrating its own sexism. This is manifested by the lads in terms of exploitative and hypocritical expectations of, attitudes towards, and treatment of young females. Once again the sexual division is emphasised at the point at which individualism is penetrated. The sexism of the wider working class culture, evident in the division of labour at work and home and its associated power relations, provides the model for the counter-school culture. It is this, Willis argues, rather than the institutionalised sexism of the schools which is the dominant force in the reproduction of sexism. [19]

It is the gender superiority enshrined in working-class culture which enables the 'lads' to accept their disadvantage as manual rather than mental labourers. The ethnographic material makes it clear that the two divisions do not operate separately but are conflated in lived experience. Patriarchy buttresses the (mental/manual) division of labour but in doing so reproduces gender oppression. It operates in the counter-school culture through the lads regard of mental work as effeminate 'pen pushing' and not as 'real' work. Mental work lacks 'robust masculinity', a conception grounded in the restricted role of women. Manual labour takes on a grandeur from this macho perspective which works both to generate a self-esteem among the 'lads' and to entrap them into the giving of their labour power.

Thus patriarchy is a pivot of the complex process of capitalism in its preparation of labour power and reproduction of social order. The counter-school culture raises consciousness about the 'commonality of the giving of labour' only to undermine this awareness by concentrating only on manual labour and sliding into a distorted affirmation of it by disengaging it from its role in capitalism and using it to establish the nature of self. As the affirmation of manual labour provides a sense of self so the acceptance of unfavourable status reflects patriarchal dominance. The unfavourable status the lads have at school simply reflects the unfavourable status they are aware of for women in working-class culture in general.

The third division is racial division. Willis does not develop this aspect and tacks it on rather than integrates it with his earlier labour type/gender analysis. Racial division serves to further divide the working class both materially and ideologically. It provides a heavily exploited underclass which is itself partially or indirectly exploited by the working class and which provides a basis for simplistic assertions about the superiority of self among the white working class.

Willis argues that racism enables the 'lads' to develop a 'more carefully judged' cultural categorisation of masculinity. Rather than link masculinity directly to tough labour, the unwillingness to concede ground to black labour (who at the time tended to take the harder and rougher jobs) resulted in a specification of some forms of labour as 'dirty' and therefore unacceptable. Such work fell off 'the cultural scale of masculinity'. The reaction to the 'upward mobility' of some ethnic minority groups, particularly those perceived as 'Asian shopkeepers' reflected the 'lads' feeling that such groups should be doing 'dirty work', although at the same time they could be despised as 'pen pushers'.

2.6.5 Culture, ideology and collusion

Willis suggests that the idea of academic achievement being reflected in job opportunities is an inadequate middle-class notions of success and failure. Working-class culture has a radically different perception which is grounded in lived experience. This culture delimits and structures the sets of choices and decisions that its members can make. Thus, Willis argues, it is their own culture which most effectively prepares some working-class lads for manual labour. Paradoxically, the culture projects itself, and is articulated, as 'true learning', affirmation, appropriation and resistance. However, this cultural articulation is distorted and turned back on itself. Complex ideological processes meshed with the actions of the guidance agencies and the school, in addition to the influence of patriarchal, sexist, male domination of working class culture, are all involved in the self-damning impact of school counter culture.

Working class culture with its resultant self-induction into the labour process is related in complex ways to regulative state institutions which have an important function in the reproduction of the social totality. Culture and ideology are dialectically related. Dominant ideology is not simply imposed from above but may (and does) emerge from within a potentially antithetical (working class) culture. It may be, Willis suggests, that elements useful to the state such as racism and sexism are passed up from the working-class culture and are grasped opportunistically. Thus, Willis argues that dominant ideology is that which is ostentatiously handed down through the media and the education system. This dominant ideology appears 'natural' and the result is that the giving and exploitation of labour power also emerges as a natural outcome, as the

ethnographic material reveals. There is a contradiction between the penetration of counter-school culture and the tendency to 'conventional morality'. The partiality of the oppositional cultural processes are overpowered by dominant ideology. The dominant ideological conceptualisations (control, order, private ownership, etc.) remain reference points of the last resort for those involved in the counter-school culture

Culture is, thus, praxiological. It is not just socialisation nor is it the determination resulting from the action of dominant culture. Working class culture is the result of collective consciousness derived from the active struggle of each new generation. However, working class counter culture operates within a determinate social structure and, in ways Willis has revealed through his critical analysis of ethnographic material, serves to reproduce the dominant culture through its opposition. It is important, however, to avoid a reductionist view of culture. Industry's labour requirements do not simply determine the formation of working class culture. Schools alone do not produce candidates for manual labour, working-class culture in general and the counter-school culture in particular act to affirm the labouring ethos. In short, cultural reproduction contributes towards social reproduction in general

> In contradictory and unintended ways the counter-school culture actually achieves for education one of its main, though misrecognised objectives—the direction of a proportion of working class kids 'voluntarily' to skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual work. Indeed far from helping to cause the present 'crisis' in education, the counter-school culture and the processes it sponsors has helped to prevent a real crisis. (Willis, 1977, p. 178)

Willis's detailed first-hand analysis of the counter-school culture is related to a broader analysis of working class culture with its intrinsic racism and sexism and its celebration of manual labour. This is seen in the context of the wider dominant culture and the need of capital to ensure the reproduction of labour power. In his ethnographic analysis Willis used the concepts of penetration and limitation to unlock the interrelationship between counter-school culture and working-class culture and it is this which makes *Learning To Labour* is a paradigm case of critical ethnographic work.

2.7 Grimshaw and Jefferson—*Interpreting Policework*

2.7.1 Introduction: a structural perspective

In *Interpreting Policework*, Roger Grimshaw and Tony Jefferson (1987) undertake ethnographic and document analysis of policework and policing policy. Their analysis is concerned with the interrelationship between law, work and democracy which they see as the three core structures within which policing as an ongoing activity is located. They are concerned with the 'normal' activities of beat work, looking separately at unit beat policing, with its emphasis on fast response, and at resident beat policing, with its emphasis on community intervention.

They examine a number of existing perspectives on the police and are critical of the empiricism and idealism of 'sociological liberalism' (of which they identify three varieties: the 'machine model', subcultural studies, and environmental studies) and of the economism and voluntarism of crude Marxist class reductionism.[20] This is not only a dissatisfaction with the epistemological presuppositions but with the failure of the

approaches to provide an adequate framework for understanding organised policework in practice. Empiricist approaches tend to be partial; idealist ones assertive; and reductionist ones trivialise the actual content of police work.

Grimshaw and Jefferson draw on a broad structuralist tradition in developing a framework for analysing the structural relations within which the police operate.[21] They identified seven aspects of this synthesised view of structuralism. Individual activity becomes social through interactive discourse constituted by signs. Group communication is possible as the elements of discourse are objective. Language is a signifying system that involves different levels of signification. Signifying elements are arbitrary (not intrinsically meaningful) and signification is the result of the relational nature of signs. Applying simple generative rules allows the production of complex expressions and, vice versa, simple key terms can be used to explain elaborate discursive expressions. Significations are not fixed because elements can be re-grouped to create further significations. History is subordinate to structural transformations in structuralist analysis

In terms of their analysis of the police this synthetic view suggested that law is a signifying discourse. Such discourses sustaining police activity are objectively intelligible. Policing events have a number of discursive implications. Law can be seen as a systematic structure despite discrepancies within and between its domains as there are socially constructed categories of legal infringements (such as 'theft'). Policework can be understood through an analysis of the three key structures of law, work and democracy. However, these should not be seen as fixed. The politics of police accountability may be the basis for a structural transformation.

2.7.2 Abstraction—law, work and democracy

Grimshaw and Jefferson undertake a detailed analysis of the three key concepts, law, work and democracy, that derive from their critique of prevailing theories, mediated by their fieldwork experience. Rather than take these for granted they deconstruct the broad abstractions and develop them in terms of concrete practice. Thus for example, law, as it relates to political activity, is seen, by various commentators, as tripartite, comprising the legal system, procedural law, and types of substantive law.[22] Grimshaw and Jefferson argue that to assess the role of the law as a structural determinant of police behaviour, it formal structure must be investigated, rather than assumed, in order to identify the legal constraints operating in particular situations. This meant acquiring detailed knowledge of the legal structure including the powers and duties of constables and Chief Constables; the relevant Police Acts; common law; statutes and their interpretation in the courts; and the legal powers of citizens and legal authorities and the use made of them (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 18). This led them to analyse procedural law, substantive law and the legal system as concrete entities. For example, in confronting the abstract notion of procedural law, they ask questions like, what are the legal powers of constables and Chief Constables? What discretion do they have in practice in different situations? In this way the idealistic abstract notion of procedural law is replaced by a materially grounded concrete concept.

In the same kind of way they analyse the notions of work and democracy/community[23] as they effect policework. What is important for an analytic framework, they argue, is the interrelationship between law, work and democracy. Such a framework should allow the empirical testing of the proposed interrelationships without

foreclosing on the variety of empirical possibilities. They therefore distinguish between dominant and determinant structure (Althusser & Balibar, 1970) and suggest, for a host of reasons, that law, rather than work or community, is the determinant structure of police activity, in that it determines which of the three is empirically dominant at any moment. The research is thus organised around the exploration of aspects of this thesis.

2.7.3 Procedure—integrated theoretical case-study

Grimshaw and Jefferson, (1987, p. 27) undertook an integrated case-study approach because, they argued, it is the 'approach, *par excellence*, which enables the adequate tracing of differences and connections' and they needed a method which was capable of 'illuminating in one movement the form of the structures *and their interrelationship*.' The task they intended to undertake was 'equally empirical and analytic' and involved 'making distinctions, marking limits, setting out conditions and reducing processes to their elements'.

Despite their assertion about the suitability of a case-study analysis, their concern was not with case-study as method but case-study as a vehicle for analysing the interconnections between structures. The analytic framework organises the methodic enquiry. This differs from the more conventional approach that is characteristic of subcultural, interactionist, ethnographic case study which, as was noted in Section 1.4, exhaustively experiences a situation in order to inductively generate the implicit meanings of actions. Conventional approaches to ethnographic case-study work (especially those used by subcultural theorists) prioritise structures of *meanings* and thereby inhibit the making of structural connections.

The usual notion of case-study had to be developed and they proposed a *theoretical case-study*[24] which is characterised by 'a sufficient range of empirical differences and interconnections to constitute a starting-point for the task of elucidating theoretical concepts generated through a critique of existing theory'. Further, such a case-study is not confined to comprehending subjective meanings of participants but concerned with the 'systematic articulation or connection of social structures' (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 32).

In practice this meant investigating a large metropolitan county force with a range of specialist departments and a large centralised command structure, located in an area of 'ethnic settlement and incipient economic decline'. In addition theoretical case-study required

> detailed observational work at strategic sites within the organization designed to elucidate the full range of practices: from policy consideration through operational command and supervision, to operational duties of various kinds. It meant detailed attention to the written statements relating to working practices: standing orders, policy files and operational orders…. Finally, it meant special attention to police-public contacts of all kinds: to contacts with complainants, victims, arrestees, letter writers, petitioners and organizational agents, since these provided one important empirical indicator of the presence of the working of democratic elements. (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 33)

The field research included direct observation of police personnel at work on 57 different occasions. One of the researchers accompanied a police officer throughout all

(or most) of a working shift. The selection of shifts was such as to cover different days of the week, all three shifts (early, late and night), and a variety of officers. They were present on 28 shifts of unit officers and on 29 shifts of resident beat officers. Details of seven of the former and eight of the latter are included in the book by way of representative ethnographic material.

2.7.4 Structural analysis: a brief example

As an example, the following is a résumé of Grimshaw and Jefferson's (1987, pp. 61–65) reporting of the night shift (10 p.m. to 6 a.m.) of a 'first-response car' duty. In this example, the officer being shadowed is DL, the driver of the first-response car. This is the vehicle kept in reserve and sent first to more 'serious' situations

DL and his partner (JR) accompanied by the researcher went to a house, at 10.15 p.m., in response to a complaint from a woman that her neighbour's children had broken her windows. The PCs visited the neighbours who in turn complained about the original complainant, referring to her as a prostitute. The car was then called to a fire arriving at 10.35. The fire may have been started deliberately as part of a domestic dispute or by accident by the drunken husband. They left the house around 11.00 and DL followed a car containing young black people, and asked for a registration plate number check which proved negative. A man, who was waiting for a late bus, was 'called over for a word'. At midnight, after dealing with a drunk driver, they responded to a general alert that intruders had been reported at the local football ground. A young man outside the ground was detained, he was clearly drunk. DL eventually intended to arrest him for being drunk and incapable, but after the drunk complained that he would have been home by now if he had not been detained, and that he also had an ulcer, DL took his name and address and let him go. In the interim there had been two arrests in the ground and a third person was being sought. Back at the station DL learned that one of the men arrested had the same surname as the drunk he had let go.

> As he rushes from the station, the station sergeant says, 'As long as you're *sure*'
> DL drives to the address the man gave him. The door is opened by the man we know. 'Can we come in?' asks DL. The man is silent, and DL quickly walks through the gap in the doorway. As I follow, the man recognizes me and protests. DL tells him the reason for our visit. The man protests loudly again, but DL grabs him by the hair and tells him to be quiet. It is about 12.40 a.m. He is taken to the car, and DL drives to the station. There is no caution.
> DL says to the man, 'You hopped over the wall. I saw you come over the wall.'
> 'I didn't,' says the man.
> You did', said DL; 'you've taught me a lesson.'

The man was put in custody at the station, around 1.00 a.m., and a discussion ensued as to a suitable charge, given the peculiar, roofless, nature of the premises in which those arrested were found. The Vagrancy Act of 1824 was favoured by the officers in the station as it allows a charge of 'being found on enclosed premises' and this was confirmed by a telephone conversation with the senior officer on duty. On more than one occasion both JR and DL said that they saw the man arrested by DL come over the wall of the stadium. 'When they are asked about this point by the sergeant, there is laughter'. The men arrested finally admit to the offence. The sergeant talked about the Judges Rules

to the researcher while all this was going on. No other significant events took place and the officers spent the rest of the shift involved in paper work.

This, and the other, extensively reported field observation are critically analysed in order to develop an introductory sketch of the main structural features. Having collected the data the researcher's analytic strategy consisted of

> perusing the data relevant to particular practices, proposing a concrete idea structured around the question of the relationship of the original theoretical concepts, then 'testing' the idea by searching for aberrant cases, reformulating the notion, if necessary, until a thesis about the relationship between the determinants of a particular practice had been achieved. (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 33)[25]

Grimshaw and Jefferson initially address the formal elements of the structure of police work. They note the rhythm of activity during the shifts, the diversity and fragmentary nature of the beat police officer's work and bouts of desultoriness and triviality. In the example quoted, the activity takes place at the beginning of the night shift; there are a number of different activities, and some are fragmentary (the number plate check, the man at the bus stop, etc.). Grimshaw and Jefferson (1987, p. 71) argue, for example, that the need to be ready for a call is greatly responsible for the fragmentary, diverse, and desultory aspects of the job as the 'call system takes command over the individual's dispositions and instantly imposes its own priorities'. Performing trivial tasks (noted when shadowing other officers) far from being an evasion of responsibility is a response 'to the functioning and requirements of the call system'.

There is a continuity, however, in some aspects of the work which have more legal substance, as, for example, in the seeking of intruders, subsequent arrests, interrogation and paperwork. Such work is concerned with interpreting and applying definitions of law. In the case of the arrest made by DL, for example, the minor routine contacts were suspended and a concerted set of actions from arrest to interrogation was undertaken with a view to explicitly catching a 'criminal'. Legal relevance, which characterises elements of continuity, is the common feature that 'unifies the otherwise disparate subjects to which significant police attention is given; unit work becomes more clearly visible as the ongoing practice of distributing and rationing scarce legal resources in response to prima-facie demands' (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 74).

Public contact is similarly fragmentary, but falls into two broad camps, elective and non-elective. The woman visited by DL following a phone call is an example of the former, while the man at the bus stop, and the one outside the stadium are examples of the latter. Although the public may initiate encounters, they do not organize or direct them. The police, guided by organisational and legal structures, follow up those contacts that are or appear to be legally relevant.

In this way (although in far more detail than represented in this summary) Grimshaw and Jefferson move from the initial 'impressions and suggestions' to the identification of significant structural features of police work. This they elaborate with the aid of additional depth interviews with personnel of different ranks (in the case of the unit policing with four supervisors and seven PCs).

They conclude that in assessing the relationships between various determinants of unit work, the organisational features lead towards legally oriented work in which both

public and management play only a relatively minor role in routine activity. The call system with its inherent frustrations is designed to deal expeditiously with public interventions. However, the critical function of the public in call initiation, is mediated by the organisational deployment of resources which prioritises legal process work. Leadership and supervision are thus influential if they conform to legally oriented competence in practical application rather than in terms of abstract rational–technical norms.

The authors undertake a similar analysis of the residential beat system. Overall, they conclude the analysis of practical policework by suggesting that the structure of law manifests itself indirectly in beat-work as, on the one hand, 'a reflex in the unit' and, on the other 'as a resource in resident beat-work measured against the search for consent'. They follow up the structural analysis of their observational material with a further analysis of policing policy.

2.7.5 Policy

In the analysis of beat work, Grimshaw and Jefferson proceeded from a critique of prevailing theories to an empirical examination guided by a structuralist view which posited the interrelationship between three structures, law, work and democracy (or community). One of their major critiques of other perspectives was a lack of concern with policing policy and thus consequent lack of attempts to relate activity to policy. Rather than assume the nature of the relationship between policy and action Grimshaw and Jefferson again developed an empirically grounded materialist analysis. This involved an initial definition of policy as 'an authoritative statement signifying a settled practice on any matter relevant to the duties of the Chief Constable'. The authoritative source of policy is highlighted in this definition as is the distinction between a descriptive statement of policy and practice. An example of such a policy would be a statement made by the Chief Constable or one of his senior officers that

> 'Resident beat officers will not be taken off their beats except in exceptional circumstances.' This 'authoritative statement' clearly 'signifies a settled practice' since it has direct implications for the deployment practices of the Superintendents (that they must not use RBOs as reserve manpower), implications which are intended to be more than temporary. (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 204)

They developed their analysis empirically by attending 23 policy meetings at Force, Division and Subdivisional level ranging from The Chief Constables' Management Team, through the Joint Advisory Committee, to the Subdivisional Superintendent's Senior Officers' Meeting; and through an analysis of policy files, which contained records of correspondence and meetings. Faced with around seven hundred such files to analyse they indicated a list of 342 files of interest based on titles of which 62 were identified as those they preferred to analyse. In the event they were given access to 28 (45%) of their preferred list plus another 34 files mostly drawn from their initial list of 342. The analysis of the files took three to four months.[26]

Space preclude a detailed review of their analysis of policy, however, two issues dealt with in some depth by the authors are illustrative. The two issues, unit car speeds and racial attacks, both demonstrated the centrality of the legal structure in determining

the relationship between law democracy and work. The actual influence of the various structures is illustrated by two operational issues, analysed in depth: unit car speeds and racial attacks. Both demonstrate the centrality of the legal structure in determining the relationship between the law democracy and work. The organisational and occupational concerns of efficiency and welfare are overridden by the legal structure in the case of a policy on car speeds. Similarly, the democratic structure with a clear and pressing public concern was overridden by the legal structure in the case of a policy on racial attacks.

2.7.6 Structure, history and praxis—the 'police debate'

The study does not come to an end following the outline of the interrelationship between the key structures. Grimshaw and Jefferson go on to relate structure to history in order to provide a context for examining the debate about forms of policing. Grimshaw and Jefferson argue that modern society, rather than being directly repressive, relies on consent (Gramsci, 1971) and normalises power through the more localised imposition of discipline outside, or supplementary to, the formal juridical apparatus (Foucault, 1979). Unit beat policing reflects the view of the police as representative of the law while resident beat policing appears 'less as a representative of the law than a guardian of the norm, as a community worker rather than a gendarme' (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 277).

Although unit policing and residential 'community' policing co-exist, the emergence of the latter from a situation dominated by the rationalist unit policing system can be understood by focusing on the 'structural combinations of elements that constitutes policework and notice the way in which elements of the 'old' system are re-grouped in the 'new''. The unit system based on the organizational concerns with responsiveness, speed and mobility, failed to establish consent because, it simultaneously increased police-public contact whilst reducing the intensity of such contacts. This led to contradictions in the 'message' transmitted to the public. This led to pressure for more intensive public contact to produce a 'new and more consistent message'. As a result the 'democratic structure is highlighted while the work structure and the legal structure are selectively reshaped for the task of 'normalization'—an occupational reflection of the democratic structure. (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 281)

In this way Grimshaw and Jefferson show how policework selectively calls upon different structures at particular historical conjunctures. As such, a historical understanding of conjunctures in policework complements the structural analysis and informs the praxiological concern with the political debate on policing.

Although the field research took place in 1978–80, prior to the 'convulsions' of 1981, they 'could not overlook' the issues that came to prominence in the following years during which the book was written. However, the book focuses on the 'normal' activities of uniformed police beat work rather than the 'explosive' events, and thus provides an 'essential background' for understanding the setting within which such events were located

None the less, Grimshaw and Jefferson have a clear praxiological concern with the politics of policing. They argue that previous contributions to the 'police debate'[27] failed to appreciate that the demographic or legal structure cannot be changed in isolation. Grimshaw and Jefferson offer alternative proposals based on an appreciation of this structural interrelationship, and the determining role of law. The fundamental general

feature of the office of constable is the idea of independence in judging infringements of law. This independence makes effective operational policy redundant and in operational matters other instruments of managerial control come into effect: deployment, supervision, training and so on.

What is needed, they argue, is a reformed legal structure, with democratic control of police policy making, is necessary for the establishment of agreed principles of public justice. Only from this base can effective operational policies be formulated. From the point of view of such a reformed legal structure the work and democratic structures can be reformed[28]

> In the mid-1980s, in the wake of Brixton, Handsworth and Broadwater Farm, some changes are sorely needed, in order to address issues of public justice in law enforcement, and to open up these questions to democratic debate and direction. In the hope of providing useful background material for that important debate, we end this book. (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 296)

2.8 Judith Williamson—Decoding Advertisements

2.8.1 Introduction

Judith Williamson (1978) regards advertisements as one of the most important cultural factors moulding and reflecting our everyday life. Advertisements are pervasive and immensely influential and have an 'apparently autonomous existence'. In *Decoding Advertisements*, Williamson is not concerned with assessing the influence of advertisements but investigates the way that advertisements work.

In selling things, advertisements address both the qualities of the product and the ways in which they can be made to mean something to the reader.[29] Advertisements translate use-value into symbolic exchange-value. A '50 miles per gallon car' is translated into a 'careful, thrifty driver'. Advertising thus sets up a relationship between a type of consumer and a type of product. In this sense, advertisements sell by making objects meaningful. However, the meaning they create is contrived, both at a consumer and a social level. Williamson provides a methodology for decoding advertisements.

Decoding Advertisements was originally submitted as a project for a course in popular culture at the University of California, Berkeley. In its transformation to a published text, Williamson made explicit the basis of a theory for the analysis of advertisements. However, Williamson is not just interested in developing a methodology for looking at advertisements in the abstract. She also wants to provide a basis for a critique of advertisements in the context of consumerist society. Although her book has emerged as a 'theoretical analysis' she is 'impatient with any theory of ideology which is not tied to anything practical, to the material factors which influence our feelings, our lives, our images of ourselves' (Williamson, 1978, p. 10). Her analysis thus draws on a vast amount of empirical material, more than one hundred advertisements, in developing a theory of the decoding of advertisements.

Williamson argues that the real distinction between people in Western society is based on their relation to the process of production. Advertising re-presents that as a distinction in terms of the products of work. The real structure of society is obscured by a distinction based on consumption of particular goods. Consumerism identifies people in terms of what they consume and not what they produce. Fundamental class differences

are recreated in terms of manufactured goods. Meaning becomes ideological. An analysis of advertising has also to be an analysis of the ideological distortion of the relations of production.

2.8.2 Signifier, signified, sign

Williamson sees advertisements as sign systems operating on a denotative and connotative level (Barthes, 1967, 1974, 1977). Signs, according to Barthes, consisted of signifiers (sounds, pictures, words) and signifieds (the concept meant by the signifier). Her basic premiss is that an advertisement is not simply a transparent vehicle for its message. On the contrary, signifiers are not passive carriers of the overt meaning of the advertisement. Signifiers in advertisements do not just lead to the ideas contained in the signifieds but also have a role in producing an alternative 'less obvious' meaning. Advertisements, in Barthes's terms, denote one thing while connoting something else. This connotation or latent meaning requires work on the part of the reader of advertisements. Unlike the overt meaning of the advertisement the latent meaning is not completed. The latent meaning involves the correlation of two elements in the advertisement, the product and a referent. This is effected through the formal composition. This connection has to be made by the reader. The reader has to have a prior set of meanings that can be brought to bear in ensuring the transference of meaning.

For example, a magazine advertisement[30] for Belair cigarettes has the simple message 'Fresher tasting'. A packet of Belair cigarettes is pictured in front of a bowl of fresh fruit and salad vegetables. All the items in the bowl are crisp (apple, cress, lettuce) and sprinkled with droplets of water. Right in the front of the bowl is a section of cucumber. The formal composition links the cigarette packet with the bowl of fresh produce. The reader knows the foods are 'fresh tasting'. This information is transferred to the cigarettes, 'the other oral pleasure'. We might wonder how a cigarette can be 'fresh', yet 'it seems to be because of the dewy drops on the cucumber'. The unstated message is the 'coolness' of the cigarettes, and the known correlative of 'cucumbers for coolness' is invoked to sell us 'an unknown and unproved correlative'. The reader has 'to make a leap of credibility' via the known correlative object. The words in the Belair advertisement make no claim. It is there positioning close to two things which suggests the transfer of meaning from the fresh tasting produce to the cigarettes (Williamson, 1978, p. 33).

An advertisement, then, makes a connection which evokes meaning for the reader between the object being sold and some referent. This is done through juxtaposition and other formal elements in the advertisement. The link between the product and the referent can be made by colour; by formal arrangement; by linguistic connection, such as a pun, or replacing one for the other in a narrative.

However, the formal arrangement only works if it taps our pre-knowledge. Advertisements appropriate the formal relations of pre-existing systems of differences that exist in social mythologies. For example, Chanel used the face of Catherine Deneuve in their advertisements for Chanel No.5. [31] In so doing, it used an existing mythological system: Catherine Deneuve as signifier for the signified, 'classic French glamour and beauty'. If we are unaware of this signification, or cannot deduce it from our store of knowledge on confronting it, then the advertisement has not worked.

Advertisements, then, equate commodities with meanings and transfer the meaning of the referent to the commodity. [32] Meaning then flows from one to the other in

an apparently autonomous fashion. But while advertisements transfer meanings by juxtaposing two objects simultaneously given the same value (or 'currency'), they do not do so entirely in terms of the formal processes within the closed world of the advertisement. The advertisers sign have meanings only in relation to a wider set of meanings. It is through this wider set of meanings that we as consumers have that products are turned from signifieds into signifiers. As receivers of advertisements we create the meaning but only because we have been called upon to do so (Williamson, 1978, p. 41).

Advertisements work by simultaneously creating meaning and drawing on the reader's already existing meanings. There is a transfer from a set of referents to the product. For the purposes of analysis, Williamson breaks down the simultaneous dialectical process of meaning construction in advertisements into four linear stages. These are, first, the way we create the meaning of an advertised product; second, how we take meaning from the product; third, how we are created by the advertisement; fourth, how we create ourselves in the advertisement. The semiological system that operates in the first two stages is inextricably linked with a psychological one that operates in the last two stages. What connects the two parts of the process is ideology. It does not do it overtly but 'provides the invisible cloak' through which their 'intermeshing is rendered transparent'. The transparency is, ironically achieved through our own agency. We do not simply receive advertising messages but are active in the process of constantly recreating them. So the process 'works *through* us, not at us'. As readers we are not being deceived by false ideas that someone is 'putting over' on us. Ideology works in a far more subtle way: it 'is based on false *assumptions*' (Williamson, 1978, p. 41).

Ideology operates by making assumptions about the world that we do not question because they are seen as already true. Advertisements create an 'alreadyness' of 'facts' about ourselves. Advertisements assume that we are consumers who will freely buy things, that this freedom is encapsulated in our freedom to choose what we will buy, and that this choice is determined by certain values.

2.8.3 Exchange and creation

Taking the first part of this deconstructed process, Williamson examines the way the reader creates the meaning of an advertised product. The exchange of value that takes place in an advertisement only works if the reader is somebody for whom the currency has value in the first place. We give Deneuve's face its meaning for use in the advertisement for Chanel No. 5. But the advertisement did not create that meaning, it appropriated an already created meaning. But we did not (necessarily) know that we already knew the value of Deneuve's face until it was used in the advertisement. The point is that it is in their use that ideas have currency, not in their abstract existence. 'Values exist not *in* things but in their transference' (Williamson, 1978, p. 43).

For Williamson, any system of values constitutes an ideology. As values exist in their transference, then ideology exists only in as much as the component values are regenerated through transference. The constant decoding of signs, as embodiments of values, reproduces ideology. The advertisement transfers an empty relationship, it is filled by what we already know. The referent system (the world of glamour) is inextricably linked to the product system (the world of perfumes) through the form of advertisement (e.g. juxtaposition of images and colours). The ideology of the referent

system is constantly being regenerated as the reader engages the advertisement. The reader is thus active in reproducing ideology. The advertisement takes this anterior knowledge for granted (Deneuve means glamour), refers to it, and the reader does the work of transference in understanding the advertisement. The active subject has thus been created by assumption. The 'space' between the bottle of perfume and the face of Deneuve (which are only linked by their formal juxtaposition, not by any explicit claims) is bridged by the reader. The reader is the space; the subject is signified through the transaction in the advertisement. Advertisements thus *work* by a process in which they invite us 'freely' to create ourselves 'in accordance with the way in which they have already created us' (Williamson, 1978, p. 42).

Having gained meaning through the transference in the advertisement the product gives meaning back to us. This is the second stage of meaning construction in advertisements. The meaning applied to Chanel No. 5 in the Deneuve advertisement is used to differentiate the user from the user of other perfumes. The advertisement thus serves to create a new system of groups. So, at one level advertisements enable the product to appropriate a desirable state (glamour, happiness, etc.). At a second, more subtle level the advertisement draws on the 'alreadyness' of the reader. The reader does not buy the product to become part of the group it represents, but must already feel a natural belonging to the group; therefore the product will be purchased.

Advertisements do not operate by conjuring up an image hoping that the reader will retain it until such time as they become purchaser. The advertisement is not about influencing the reader's choice in the shop. It attempts to create the reader's self-image so that the reader has already chosen when confronted by an array of perfume, margarine, soap powders and so on. Advertisements thus appeal to the 'freedom' of the unique subject to choose, but constitutes the subject as part of a 'totemic' group existing around a product. The advertisement is a contradiction appealing to the reader's difference from other people but also their similarity to (a sub-group of) other people. Social class is subverted to consumerist groupings on the one hand and individuality on the other.

The third stage in the meaning construction of advertisements is the process by which the reader is created by the advertisement. Advertisements address the reader as an individual even if they are part of a group. The Player's No. 6 advertisement which carried the message 'People like you are changing to No. 6' indicates, through the associated picture, that 'ordinary people' are moving to smoking No. 6. It also makes it clear that they are not just any ordinary people but ones like you, the reader of the advertisement. Advertisements project an imaginary reader in terms of the relationship between the elements with the advertisement. The imaginary subject does not exist but in being appealed to, by stepping into the totemic space created by the advertisement, the reader becomes part of the totemic group centred on the product. The reader is trapped by his/her 'alreadyness'. The current experience of the reader in front of the advertisement is displaced by the advertisement into an already constituted past. The reader already is the type of person who smokes No.6, or uses Chanel perfume.

The final stage is the way the reader creates her/his self in the advertisement. Advertisements appeal to the reader and ensnare the subject through the exchange of signs. This is effective only if the referent coincides with the subject's desires. Advertisement work to ensure this coincidence. Williamson sees Lacan's notion of the mirror-phase [33] as essentially the process operating in advertising in the way

advertisements present an image we aspire to but cannot achieve. Advertisements constitute 'us as one of the objects in an exchange that we must ourselves make'. They are alienating as they appropriate an image from us which gives us back our own value. In the No.6 advertisement '*you* give the product its image/value (because it's people like *you* who smoke it) and then in buying the product you receive this image back. So this *alienation takes place via the product*' (Williamson, 1978, p. 64). But there is more to it than that. The people in the No.6 picture are also giving the product its value. The reader is in the same relation to the product as those depicted. The advertisement projects the product as the mirror through which the people depicted are reflections of the reader.

What advertisements dangle before us is that which we desire. In the advertisement, the sign is never the referent. The picture is not what it represents. Desire does not acknowledge this. The advertisement creates an imbalance between one sign and another (Deneuve's face and the bottle of Chanel No. 5) which the subject fills through the mirror axis of the product (Chanel perfume) reflecting the desired signified (glamour) onto the self. We want to traverse the space in the advertisement. We desire to make up the lack. We want to merge with, to be part of, something that signifies us only through its separation from us. Desire must always make a leap, across that gap between self and other, in its attempt to unite them (Metz, 1975).

Advertisements claim parts of the subject as separate objects which must be reclaimed (purchased) in order to recreate the self. 'We are both product and consumer'. We create our own lives through buying those products which combine to form the 'identikit' of various fragmentary images of ourselves.

Thus Williamson has shown how advertising, as an ideological system has appropriated systems of signification and psychic processes (hence the role of semiology and psychology in decoding advertisements). The formal structure of advertisements functions ideologically in signifying the reader. However, the subject should appear to be 'free' and in control of the system rather than part of it. Advertisements constitute the subject as the decipherer of signs. They conceal the fact that the reader is already signified.

2.8.4 Analysis—an illustrative example

Having established the principles of decoding, Williamson shows how advertisers adopt different formal structures to enable meaning transference.[34] The major referent systems adopted by advertisers include history, science and nature. These referent systems are 'cooked' so that they become idealised and devoid of material content, and are simply evocative, reusable empty referent systems. Mushrooms are shown as made of, and as meaning, cans of soup; Stonehenge is propped up by a cigarette packet; and so on.

Williamson develops her analysis through many different types of advertisement but the basic principles are summed up in one of her concluding examples which shows clearly how advertisements appropriate and empty out 'real' systems. The advertisement is for Holsten lager. The advertisement has a large picture bottom left taking up half the area of the advertisement. The picture shows the portion of a droplet-speckled bottle on which the brand label is stuck. This is bordered on two sides by a light coloured area with text and a small inset picture of an old monochrome etching of a brewery. The text banner reads

In 1188 Duke Adolph III granted the city of Hamburg its own brewing rights.43

The rest is history

The text is an 'explanation' of the banner message, which wraps round the picture of the label. The foot of the column has, in heavy type, 44

Holsten.

The historic beer of Germany.

Williamson decodes the advertisement in the following way. The historical figure of the Black Knight that symbolises Holsten is insubstantial. The advertisement even tell us this —'*Nobody knows for certain who he is*'—despite the fact that it is his substantial 'historicity' which is meant to transfer this quality to the beer. So history becomes identified with a total mystification but is somehow suggested as being both unknowable and yet 'obvious'. '*The rest is history'* implies that it need not be told, it stands so objectively and solidly on its own. So a completely hollow symbol is used to signify both history and the beer: and in connecting the two the beer becomes the '*historic beer*' Clearly the material substance which has been knocked out of history has been transferred to the beer: the referent system may be empty, but the beer has a '*full* distinctive taste'. What history has lost, the taste of the beer has gained.

This shows precisely that the loss to the referent system is always replenished by the product: history may have been relegated to the level of 'tradition' ('*tradition* says the Black Knight is Duke Adolph III and it's a happy explanation'), that is, not 'true' necessarily, but 'happy' (since it coincides with the mythical origins of the product) To sustain this the 'wood-engraving-style' picture of beer being made has the caption '*History* in the making' and thus history and beer have become totally confused because they are both subject to the same mythological structuring.

Once a reality like history has been made into a 'symbol' about which 'nobody knows for certain' and a 'tradition' which may offer at the most a 'happy explanation' (in other words, a myth), its elements have become, not significant of *themselves*, but signs. The 'historical' bit of the ad here tells us absolutely nothing about Duke Adolph or Germany but nevertheless implies that there is a whole body of knowledge (but *unknown* knowledge) which suggests a 'body' to the beer, (Williamson, 1978, p. 172–3).

2.8.5 Conclusion: engagement

When people are asked about advertising they nearly always say that advertisements are misleading, dishonest, and that they are not influenced by them. This would seem to raise doubts about the point of advertising. Williamson argues that advertising is not ideological brainwashing forced on us, on the contrary they work, as has been illustrated, because we collude in their working. Advertisements work because they empty out content. It is not the overt message in an advertisement that is important. The reader may not believe that X washes whiter than Y, and so on. It is the exchange, the referent system that replaces the overt message that is insidious. It is the images of the referent system that remain, not the claims for the product. Williamson argues that this is why advertising is so uncontrollable.

This is where Williamson's overt political concern is voiced. She argues that while advertisements can be attacked on the grounds that their messages are capitalist or sexist, and so on, critique must go further and engage ideology. Advertisements work

through ideology, not the overt message. Exchange systems cannot be controlled by law, only overt claims.

Williamson warns against complacency in critiquing advertisements. Having revealed some of the formal strategies is only the first stage of an ongoing struggle with advertising. A struggle which it is hard to keep abreast of.[35] Advertising has been quick and adept at incorporating critical material in increasingly subtle ways. Advertising is highly adaptable and tenacious because it lacks real content: 'a framework can be filled with anything, and structures of social myths are re-used and re-used'. Ideology cannot be entirely overturned only engaged. This engagement makes use of structural analytic tools. However, Williamson warns against allowing analysis 'to become a *value in itself*—in some way making perception more important than *what* is perceived'. One must not loose sight of the context and settle for an introverted structural critique. 'Ultimately it is *not* this knowledge in itself that is valuable, but its potential to change the system which is its object' (Williamson, 1978, p. 178). Advertisements must be criticised and their values fought.

Williamson's analysis of advertisements is clearly critical in its deconstruction of the advertising process. She reveals what is going on beneath the surface by abstracting out the formal process by which advertisements operate to project a latent meaning behind an overt message. She analyses this process in terms of the re-production of ideology, linking the advertisement to wider social structures through the analysis of referent systems. She views advertisements as a total system in which meaning does not arise in advertisements in themselves but only in relation to other elements in a totalising structure. Advertisements are addressed as socio-historically specific despite their attempt to usurp and subvert history and create themselves as timeless, in the manner of all ideology. Finally, she has a clear praxiological intent to engage and oppose the insidious values of advertising. The aim is the continued critique of the way advertisements appropriate referent systems in order to sustain a critique of the shifting ideology of consumerism. The very process of decoding and thus revealing the way an advertisement works provides the reader with a basis for reconstructing the meaning in a way that enables a distanciation from the product. The 'alreadyness' of the advertisement is fractured through the decoding. The decoder of advertisements is no longer a passive reader colluding, but a critical reader revealing and effectively denying the efficacy of the process of meaning transference.

2.9 Will Wright—Six Guns and Society

2.9.1 Introduction

In *Six Guns and Society*, Will Wright (1975) sets out to explain the popularity of the Western. The popularity might be attributed to interest in a 'unique and colourful' era of American history. However, the period of history in which Westerns are located only lasted from 1860 to 1890, which was much shorter than the settling of the Eastern seaboard which lasted 130 years.[36] For Wright, the key for understanding the popularity of the Western and for interpreting Westerns is to see it as a contemporary myth.[37] The appeal of the Western is that it encompasses a variety of ways of life with clear-cut conflicts of interest and values that are available as a vehicle for myth.

Most anthropologists and most literary critics draw a distinction between the 'synthetic' myths of 'primitive society' and the 'analytic' literature and history of 'modern societies'. They argue that modern societies do not have myths in the sense of popular stories that serve to locate and interpret social experience. Modern societies may have folktales, fairytales and legends but they do not need myths for it is history and science that explains origins and nature and literature that 'expresses the archetypes of the collective unconscious' (Wright, 1975, p. 185). But, Wright suggests, that while history can explain the present in terms of the past, it cannot provide an indication of how to act in the present based on the past since, by definition, the past is categorically different from the present.

In 'modern societies' myths are not history but present a model of social action based upon a mythical interpretation of the past. Modern America, he suggests, has myths which function in similar ways to myths in 'primitive' societies. These myths take the form of popular stories and the Western is one such form. The Western contains a conceptual analysis of society that provides a model of social action. *Six Guns and Society* is devoted to demonstrating not only that the Western is a myth but how it operates.

Wright's study concentrates only on Western films, not novels, as the former reach a much larger audience. The detailed analysis is only of successful Westerns, because Wright (1975, p. 13) assumes that they 'correspond most exactly to the expectations of the audience'. As such data of the study is available to all the readers, unlike most works of social science research.

The few attempts to analyse Westerns up to the mid-1970s were of rather rudimentary type. Sociological studies assume that the Westerns resolve a cultural conflict (Warshow, 1964; Kitses, 1969; Bazin, 1971; Cawelti, 1971) while psychological approaches attribute the popularity of the Western to universal and unconscious needs (Munden, 1958; Emery, 1959). Wright argues instead that the Western as myth is essentially about communication.

2.9.2 Analysis of myth

Wright's analysis of myth is directed to an examination of the assertion that: 'the social concepts and attitudes determined by the history and institutions of a society are communicated to its members through its myths' (Wright, 1975, p. 16).

He argues that within each period the structure of the myth corresponds to the 'conceptual needs of social and self understanding required by the dominant social institutions of that period' (Wright, 1975, p. 14). The structure of myth therefore changes over time in accordance with the changes in the structure of those dominant institutions. The popularity of myth thus depends on its ability 'to tell viewers about themselves and their society' (Wright, 1975, p. 2). To analyse myth it is therefore necessary to discover the meaning of myth and how a myth communicates its meaning.

Wright argues that myth consists of an abstract structure and a symbolic content. The structure of myth is assumed to be universal while the symbolic content is socially specific. If myth provides models of social action then it is necessary to analyse the structure, the symbolism and the narrative contained within myths. Wright proposes a four-part process for doing this based on Levi-Strauss's (1963, 1967, 1970) theory of the structure of myth, which he substantially transforms by drawing on Danto (1968), Propp

(1968) and Burke (1969). The deconstruction then has to be located within a wider context. This results in five tasks. First, identify the binary oppositions operating in a myth. Second, provide a symbolic coding for the characters. Third, identify the functions of the plot. Fourth, determine narrative sequences. Fifth, locate the myth in the socioeconomic context.

Below, the rationale for each stage and what is involved is outlined in principle and illustrated by a case study.

Like Lévi-Strauss, Wright adopts Jakobson's (1962) view that the structure of language is inherently dichotomous and symbolic meaning is determined only by differences: similarities are irrelevant. Wright argues that myths reflect this binary structure because it provides for ease of comprehension and does away with the fine distinctions necessary in interpreting stories in which three or more images/characters are structurally opposed. While literary works need more complexity and subtlety, myth depends on simple and recognisable meanings which reinforce (rather than challenge) social understanding. Of course, more than two characters appear in myths and in Westerns, but when they do they are contrasting pairs rather than complex triads, and so on.

The first task is thus to determine the characters (or groups of characters) that are structurally opposed (e.g. cowboys and Indians, gunslinger and sheriff, farmers and drovers).

Within the binary structure myth uses sensible, or secondary, qualities to develop conceptual differences. An image of something (a human) is structurally opposed in a myth to an image of something else (an animal). The sensible differences (like human/unlike human) become symbols of conceptual differences (culture/nature). Thus the image of a character (human) in a myth does not come to represent a concept (culture) because of any inherent properties of the image but because of *differences* between it and the image of the character (animal) it is opposed to. Each society has a system of such oppositions and it is through them that myths are (unconsciously) understood by members.

The second task is to provide a symbolic coding for the characters (e.g. civilization/wilderness, good/bad, stable/transitory).

Structural anthropologists, such as Lévi-Strauss, tend to stop here because they are primarily concerned with the social symbolism in myth.[38] However, Wright sees myth as a guide to social action and argue that differences between *this* being and *that* being are differences between *this kind of* being and *that kind of* being (Burke, 1969). Thus the characters of a narrative represent social types acting out a drama of social order. Thus interaction between characters represents the social principles that the characters represent. To understand what the characters mean, and thus how myth presents a model of appropriate social action, it is necessary to analyse the *narrative* because it is in what they do that the characters' meaning becomes clear.

Analysing narrative structure involves problems of 'temporal order, cause and effect, and explanation'. Wright deals with this, in analysing Westerns, by reducing the narrative to a single list of shared functions (Popp, 1968). A function is a one sentence statement that describes a single attribute or action of a character (e.g. 'the hero fights the villains).[39] Thus, the third task is to break the narrative down into a set of functions.

Wright argues that the narrative changes in accordance with the changing social actions and institutions, while the binary oppositions are fundamental to the consciousness of the society and any fundamental change in them would essentially mean a change in society and thus the need for a new myth. In terms of his study of the Western myth, he would expect the basic opposition to remain the same but the interaction between the symbolic characters to vary as American social institutions change.

Analysis of narrative structure needs to be descriptive and explanatory, that is, to *explain* how individuals in a society interpret the narrative actions in their myths. The narrative structure of a myth or story consists of one or more narrative sequences (Danto, 1968). A narrative *sequence* is an internally ordered sequence of narrative functions that is typically smaller than the entire list of functions but whose order is unchanged. Narrative sequences explain a change and thus provide an analytic connection between the functions (as a description of a myth) and the narrative structure (as a model and communication of social action). Most narratives are too complex for a single sequence, so narratives are composed of a number of sequences which may follow one after the other but are more likely to be embedded (nested) or overlap.

The fourth task is thus to determine the narrative sequences (e.g. the hero fights the villains; the hero has exceptional ability; the hero defeats the villains.)

The sequence ensures that the narrative 'makes sense', that is, tells a story rather than giving a listing of events. More specifically, the sequence provides rules by which characters are created and conflicts resolved. The receivers of the myth 'learn how to act by recognizing their own situation in it and observing how it is resolved. (Wright, 1975, p. 186). If the recipients are to recognise their own situation then narrative structures most reflect the social relations 'necessitated by the basic social institutions within which they live'. Changes in these institutions brought about by technology, conflict, economic or social factors must be reflected in the narrative structure of myth. However, social types symbolized by the oppositional structure will generally remain the same, since they are fundamental to society's understanding of itself. None the less, as the institutions change, the conceptual relationships between those types will change.

Identifying the narrative sequences leads on to the final stage of analysis. The location of myth in the socioeconomic context. Wright argues that the interaction of individuals is structured more or less directly by the major institutions of society. To relate the Western plot to social context requires an independent analysis of social institutions of America (Wright uses Polanyi, 1965; Galbraith, 1968; Habermas, 1970) and the demonstration of the correlation between the structure of the Western and the structure of these institutions. Furthermore, it is necessary to show that structure of institutions changes in accordance with, but slightly prior to, changes in the structure of the Western. The intention is not to show how myths create institutions or vice versa but that the structure of myth symbolically reflects the structure of social actions 'as those actions are patterned and constrained by the central institutions of society' (Wright, 1975, p. 131).

The final task, then, is that of myth-reader (Barthes, 1957). It involves showing how the meaning of the narrative structure represents dominant ideological forms grounded in existing social structures.

2.9.3 The classical Western

Wright undertook an empirical analysis of the Western myth by examining 54 of the 63 'top grossing' films.[40]

Wright's analysis of the narrative structure o the Western leads him to propose a basic myth and three variants. The basic myth is embodied in the 'classical' Western in which a hero saves 'society' from oppressive villains. The three variants Wright identifies are the 'professional', the 'vengeance' and the 'transitional' Western. Of the 54 films, 24 are classical, 17 are professional, 9 are vengeance and 3 are transitional. Wright's approach is illustrated by focusing on his analysis of the classical Western. Wright has developed and tested his structural analysis by applying it to actual movies, as he shows in the book.[41] The approach he adopts in reporting his research to avoid undue repetition is to select five classic Westerns and analyse them in detail, referring to the other nineteen in passing. The selection is based on 'distribution over the period of time involved, differences in plot, and popularity' with the aim of providing a representative cross section (Wright, 1975, p. 33).[42] Wright provides an outline of the plot and then shows how the functions and oppositions are manifested.

In the classical Western there are three characters, the hero, the villains, and the society. Although, the villains and the society are made up of a number of people they are composites with no basic internal conflicts and are treated as a single unit.

Wright identifies sixteen functions of the classic plot (and these are illustrated using his example of the classical Western *Shane*).

1. The hero enters a social group. Shane rides into the valley and meets the farmer, specifically, Joe and Marion Starret[43] and their son Joey.
2. The hero is unknown to the society. Shane has no past and no last name.
3. The hero is revealed to have an exceptional ability. Shane is a gunfighter and demonstrates his skill.
4. The society recognises a difference between themselves and the hero; the hero is given a special status. The farmers are unsure of Shane because, although a gunfighter, he refuses an offer of more money from the villain Riker.
5. The society dopes not completely accept the hero. Shane is initially distrusted following his refusal to get involved in a fight with one of Riker's men.
6. There is a conflict of interest between the villains and the society. Riker wants the land for cattle and the farmers want it for farms.
7. The villains are stronger than the society; the society is weak. Riker is an old Indian-fighter, supported by Wilson is a professional killer. The farmers are mainly middle-aged and afraid of violence.
8. There is a strong friendship or respect between the hero and a villain. This function does not apply to *Shane*.
9. The villains threaten the society. Riker kills one farmer and almost succeeds in driving all of them out of the valley.
10. The hero avoids involvement in the conflict. Shane does not initially interfere in Starret's plan to go and see Riker.
11. The villains endanger a friend of the hero. Shane only fights after he is told of the impending trap set for Starret.
12. The hero fights the villains. Shane goes to town alone to fight.
13. The hero defeats the villain. Shane kills the villains in gunfights.

14. The society is safe. Shane wins the valley for the farmers.
15. The society accepts the hero. Shane leaves the valley to avoid the gratitude and acceptance of the farmers.
16. The hero loses or gives up his special status. Shane thus forfeits his special status as the deadliest man in the valley, instead prefers the dark night and the cold mountains.

The majority of these functions are present in all classical Westerns, although functions, 2, 8, 10 and 11 are optional. The functions do not have to appear in the exact order above in the classical plot, although the general pattern is maintained and the narrative sequences are consistent. The classical Western operates through an oppositional structure which is clearly identified in the codes that distinguish villains from society and hero. There are 'three basic oppositions, each differentiating between at least two of the characters, plus a fourth opposition which is less important structurally'.

The first opposition is inside/outside. The hero is contrasted with society and is clearly outside society. The villains may be inside or outside. (In *Shane* this is coded by the contrast between Shanes's wandering unsettled life and the settled life of the farmers and the villains who are ranchers.)

The second opposition is good/bad. The hero and the society are good and contrasted with the villains who are bad. (Two codings are used for this opposition in *Shane*. The first is the opposition of social against selfish values, with the farmers wanting community progress while the Rikers want individual exploitation of the land. The second coding differentiates those who are kind and pleasant (Shane and the farmers) from thjose who are not (the Rikers) This permits the hero, who has no particular interest in settlement, churches, and so on to be classified as good.)

The third major opposition is strong/weak with the hero and the villains being strong and contrasted with the weak society. (Shane and the Rikers while the farmers who are virtually helpless in the face of violence. They constantly complain that the only law is three days ride away.

The fourth much less important opposition is wilderness/ civilization. The hero is associated with the wilderness and contrasted with both society and the villains. (This operates in *Shane* in an entirely visual way. The film opens with Shane riding down from the mountains and he leaves the valley at the end by riding into the mountains. Shane is the only character filmed alone against the spectacular Teton Mountains, just as he is the only one to wear buckskins. The mountains are used in *Shane* to reinforce an association of the wilderness with strength and goodness, and they are never shown at the same time as the villains.)

Thus the classical coding is:

society	*hero*	*villain*
inside good weak	outside good strong	(inside) bad strong
civilisation	wilderness	civilisation

society *hero* *villain*

inside	outside	(inside)
good	good	bad
weak	strong	strong
civilisation	wilderness	civilisation

Wright identifies the following narrative sequences of the classical Western. The *status* sequence (functions 2, 3, 4) which begins with the hero being unknown, revealing an exceptional ability and ends by being accorded a special status. This sequence itself is the middle sequence of the *outside* sequence (functions 1, 5 and *status* sequence) which begins with the hero entering the group and end with not being completely accepted as a result of the *status* sequence which projects the hero as different. And so on, through the *weakness* sequence (functions 6, 7, 9); the optional *friendship* sequence (functions 2, some combination of 3 and 7, 8); *commitment* sequence (functions 10, 11, 12) again optional but prevalent; the crucial *fight* sequence (functions 12, 3, 13); the *safe* sequence (function 9, the *fight* sequence, function 14); the *acceptance* sequence (function 5, the *safe* sequence, function 15); and finally the *equality* sequence (function 4, the *acceptance* sequence, function 16).

2.9.4 Oppositions, narrative and socioeconomic context

To complete the analysis of the classic Western it is necessary to locate the oppositions and narrative structure within the socioeconomic context. The theoretical problem of individual and society becomes a practical problem in the myth. The inside/outside opposition reflects the distinction evident in American society of the individual striving to be autonomous in the market but wanting to belong to a social group.

The hero is separated by society by the strong/weak opposition. Independence derives from the hero's strength while weakness makes the society dependent on each other and the hero. This notion of strength (or independence) reflects the attributes of the possessive individualist and becomes shorthand for 'those who can look after themselves'.

The good/bad opposition in the classical plot is almost always coded in economic terms between those whose motivations in making money are good against those whose motivations are bad. The villains represent possessive individualism, are exploitative and selfish. The society represents social values, a concern with others and (some) communal objectives such as establishing the infrastructure of a community. The individual–social distinction is necessary for a market economy. In short, the oppositions in the classical Western reflect differences between individual and society in a market economy.

Wright then addresses the way in which the narrative of the classical Western structures the interaction between the different kinds of people defined by these oppositions. The meaning of the narrative is not contained in the list of sixteen functions but in the structure of the functions, that is, in the narrative sequences. the structure of the classical Western reflects the conflict between institutional constraints and the cultural values of a market economy. For example, the following paraphrase shows how the *fight* sequence is instrumental in saving society.

The strong hero acts alone to save society from the villains. This demonstrates the critical importance of the individual to society. Society produces individuals but that they are selfish villains against whom society is powerless. Society needs the help of an

independent strong outsider. Yet it cannot produce such an individual for his or her strength comes from relying only on him/herself, not on others or social institutions. The existence of society and the happiness of the individual depend upon a negotiation between the two positions or sets of values: independence and self-reliance against love, law, friendship and family. This negotiation centres on the threat of the villains, for it is this threat that disturbs the separation and makes the interaction both possible and necessary.

In this way Wright addresses the various sequences and shows that the values and goals of the bourgeois society reflect the market principle of 'just exchange' but are also grounded in the idea of the 'good life', the 'achievement of equality, work, community and mutual respect'. The market values possessive individualism (MacPherson, 1962) as the mans by which individuals increase wealth and thereby their their control over their own labour.[44] This is in conflict with the moral order based on social interaction.

As a myth, the classical Western addresses this conflict and provides a resolution. The myth asks 'how do we, as autonomous, self-reliant individuals, relate to the society of others, a society of morality and love?' The myth thus asks how the dilemma of independence from, but integration into, the society can be achieved. The analysis of the Western 'should tell us how it establishes the context of this problem—what are the components of a society in which this problem is both significant and capable of solution?—and, of course, what is the solution' (Wright, 1975, pp. 137–138).52

Wright argues that in this way a 'structural grid' in which the actions and relations of the characters are given 'conceptual meaning' can be compiled for each of the narrative structures of the Western myth. These narrative structures change with time, creating new ideas of society and of the individual's relation to it. Thus right, for example, analyses the 'professional' plot which he argues reflects the more recent development of corporate economy. The ideas in the myth reveal to the members of society what their society is like and how they as individuals should act in it.

2.9.5 The Western as a meaningful experience

Wright argues that seeing a Western is a *meaningful* experience. Empirical claims can be made, and rested, about the experience. It is possible for observers to agree on the story, dialogue, length and components of the imagery. A framework of analysis can be tested empirically. None of this, however, provides any understanding of how the Western is experienced as meaningful. The problem for Wright is to determine which of these aspects makes it meaningful.

> Meaning is not something that can be pointed to or hit with a hammer; it must be communicated—that is, meaning does not exist in the world; it exists in relationships between things in the world and a person or group of people. Meaning cannot be observed; it can only be interpreted. (Wright, 1975, p. 196)

Locating meaning is not an empirical problem. Empirical elements can be identified but cannot be used to arbitrate meaning. 'Facts' cannot 'prove' the correctness of an interpretation. This means that there is no empirical grounds for asserting whether it is the structure of the Western or some other aspect—such as the ever present (threat of) violence—which gives it social meaning. However, a lack of 'empirical proof' does not

disable the analysis. The meaning is located socially, the same empirical information can be interpreted in different ways. New interpretations are not the result of additional evidence but of new ways of seeing—a 'Gestalt switch' (Wright, 1975, p. 197).

> I was quite conscious as I did the study that I was selecting some aspects of each film and ignoring others, But this selection has enabled me to reinterpret the Western myth. Instead of a series of films that repeats 'near-juvenile formulas' (Smith), 'a serious orientation to the problem of violence' (Warshow), or 'the contrasting images of garden and desert' (Kitses), I have suggested that the Westerns, as I see it, represent a conceptual model for social action. To support this suggestion, I have in effect *reconstituted the Western myth, taking it apart and putting it back together again* in a special way. (Wright, 1975, p. 198 (emphasis added)).

Wright argues that in this sense he has recreated the Western and altered its meaning because people who read his book will see Westerns in a new way. Until now, no one has argued systematically that the Western represents forms of action and understanding that are inherent in the changing economic institutions of America. He argues that he must, therefore, make explicit and justify the effects of his work. He maintains that it is not sufficient to suppose that a scientific work is its own justification, that somehow knowledge exists for its own sake. His position is that to increase the possibility of a meaningful life people need to understand the empirical conditions of their lives. The only just and liveable society is one in which, through science and social myths, people are aware of the real conditions that structure their life. Science can only be justified if it contributes to a better world, that is, increases the 'understanding and control people have over their own lives'. The basis of the claim of validity of his study, then, is not empirical but political. The research, in recreating the Western, is itself political, as interpretations of the meaning of the empirical world are the basis for social and political action.

Wright argues that his analysis of the Western, although incomplete, is far better than any previous ones because it locates it firmly in its economic and social setting, addresses the ideology in the myth and its relation to objective social conditions. In so doing it does not simply provide an understanding of part of society (the Western film) but makes the whole of society more understandable.

2.10 Conclusion

A wide variety of methods have been used in these studies. Marx and Mills primarily used secondary sources ranging from newspapers through books and articles to enacted legislation. Mills additionally made use of key informants and they both augmented their library and archive research with direct observation. Goldthorpe and Lockwood focused their research, specifying a restricted sample, and used of a schedule of directed questions backed up by library research and direct observation. In as far as it was possible, Willis was a participant observer of the small sample of school leavers in his study. Grimshaw & Jefferson undertook detailed non-participant observation, augmenting their research with document analysis in order to uncover policing policy. In her study of advertising, Williamson adopted a semiotic approach that involved close scrutiny and analysis of a

large number of magazine advertisements, a hundred of which were used in her presentation. Wright's analysis of the Western involved him in analysing character types, plot and narrative of over fifty popular Western films.

This diversity of method is characteristic of critical social research. It is not the data collection techniques but the way the data are utilised to answer substantive questions about the nature of oppressive social structures that characterises these studies as critical. Grimshaw and Jefferson, for example, did not just undertake an observation study of police activity but assessed how the conflicting demands of work, legal and democratic structures were resolved in practice. Willis was not just interested in the disruptive strategies adopted by the 'lads' for their own sake but looked at them in the light of the partial penetration of working-class culture. Mills was not interested in just naming the power elite but in analysing the extent to which the possibility of an 'invisible' power bloc was related to the evolution of mass society. Williamson was not interested in a content analysis of the innumerable magazine advertisements she looked at but was concerned to reveal the various ways in which advertisers tramsmitted their connoted messages.

In each of these studies the authors have attempted to get beneath the surface of appearances to show how class oppression operates and is legitimated. A substantial question is raised and then examined in terms of its taken-for-granteds. Mills, for example, does this by asking a series of questions that try to unravel not only who has the power in America but how they are able to wield it. Marx asks what it the exploitative process that underlies capital accumulation. Willis wants to know how working-class culture, although critical of bourgeois individualism, ends up colluding in the oppression of the working class. Wright asks what is the essential nature of the Western myth, its underlying structure and its relation to social practices.

What is characteristic of all these studies is that, in one way or another, they dissect taken-for-granted concepts and reconstruct them as concrete entities. In so doing they lay bear the essential concepts of the research and use these as a basis for revealing what is really going on. Abstraction, essence, totality, ideology, history, structure and praxis are key elements of critical social research. The studies have been analysed in terms of the way they deconstruct taken-for-granted abstractions, determine core concepts, relate particular practices to historically specific structural wholes, analyse the mediating role of ideology, and address praxiological issues. What the examination has shown is the interrelatedness of these elements. Willis's notions of penetration and limitation make sense only if the activities of the lads are seen in the light of the relationship between working-class culture and hegemonic ideology. Capital accumulation, for Marx, is only possible if labour power is commodified, which itself can only occur in a class-based society legitimated by bourgeois ideology; and so on.

So critical social research is not methodic, but it is clearly dialectical. The dialectical process cannot be summed up in a procedural recipe, it is an imaginative and creative process that involves the interrelationship of the seven elements in order to provide the basis for an insight into a substantive question. We have seen some examples of how this is done in relation to class; and the next part looks at how gender oppression has been engaged by critical researchers.

NOTES

[1] He is, of course, criticised by some Marxists for replacing a class-based analysis of society by a sort of elite conspiracy theory (Swingewood, 1975).1

[2] To attempt to provide a schematic account of different critical perspectives on class is to court disaster. No classificatory scheme is likely to please everyone, not least because key terms in such a schema are far from unproblematic. Three concerns are of particular interest to the following analysis of critical research methodology and these will be briefly commented on. First, the broad notion of class, whether class is perceived in terms of relations to means of production or not. Second, the way in which ideology is approached. Third, the extent to which history or structure inform the perspective.

[3] Of course there have been innumerable discussions about the extent to which Marx addressed the role of the working class, the state, and superstructural aspects. Considerations of space precludes the analysis of these in detail here.

[4] He doesn't just stumble on this starting point, it is the result of much theoretical analysis over much of his intellectual lifetime and had been prominent in the *Grundrisse.*

[5] Bogdanovich (1986) says there are (36 not 33) to go along with the 50 Parliamentary Reports and other official publications. Further, she logs 4 of each type of source in the second volume of capital. The third, she notes, has 13 reports and 19 newspapers and periodicals.8

[6] Marx addresses the question of how the situation in Romania came about. The original mode of production was based on community with part of the land cultivated as freehold and part cultivated communally, the latter as a reserve fund against poor harvests, or to pay for war, religion, and so on.

> In course of time, military and clerical dignitaries usurped, along with the common land, the labour spent upon it. The labour of the free peasants on their common land was transformed into corvée for the thieves of the common land. This corvée soon developed into a servile relationship existing in point of fact, not in point of law, until Russia, the liberator of the world, made it legal under pretence of abolishing serfdom. The code of the corvee, which the Russian General Kisseleff proclaimed in 1831, was of course, dictated by the Boyards themselves. Thus Russia conquered with one blow the magnates of the Danubian provinces and the applause of liberal cretins throughout Europe. (Marx, [1887] 1977, p. 228)9

This passage also reveals Marx's use of irony, acerbic wit, relentless attack, and humour. Marx argued that the model of exposition is different from the method of research. Marx footnotes a comparable situation in Germany by way of further evidence.9

[7] On the face of it, each peasant owes fourteen working days to the landlord of which 12 are general labour. Not, perhaps excessive and far less a proportion of necessary labour than the British wage-earner provides to the capitalist. But this is an illusion for the Règlement goes on to point out that a working day is in effect the equivalent of three days' labour. To this must be added 'jobagie' owed by the community which effectively adds another 14 days per peasant. This total of 56 days is a large proportion of the working year, which, because of the seasonal climate, random bad weather, and religious days, amounts to just 140 working days. Even this large proportion gets larger. In Moldavia conditions are still harder. "The 12 corvée days of the 'Règlement organique' cried a Boyard drunk with victory, amount to 365 days in the year." (Marx, [1887] 1977, p. 229)

[8] There are many notions of positivism, but all seem to include the following. First, the world can only be apprehended directly via the senses. Second, the procedures of natural

science are applicable to the social world, i.e. the social world can be construed in terms of social laws. Third, social science should be value free.10

[9] Marx was clearly not interested in historicalist mediation. Similarly, he dissociates himself from any notion of an ultimate goal of history. Marx was able to do this because he denied a pre-formed 'world view'. An analysis of the historically specific structure informs the historical analysis.12

[10] Mills' references to social researchers and to members of the power elite in America are almost always to men. When directly quoting Mills, his own words are used without amendment despite their sexist implications.16

[11] The cut-off figure was guided by pragmatic concerns about available resources, it produced a list of 371 names. No biographical details could be found on 69 who were excluded. Mills reckons that these were transitory fortunes, mainly accumulated in the speculative 1920s.

[12] Mills' analysis of the chief executives and interconnected directorates was based on his own research, some of it previously published (Mills, 1945, 1948, 1951), supported by other published material including TNEC monographs, Taussig & Joslyn (1932) and Keller's (1954) analysis of Miller (1952). Similarly, information on the corporate rich came from official data from the Bureau of the Census and the Treasury Department along with Kuznes & Jenk's (1953) analysis of tax data, various newspaper articles, and TNEC monographs. The generals and admirals selected for detailed study in his analysis of the warlords were taken from official army, airforce and navy registers, augmented by Barbera's dissertation (1954), for wjich he provides no full reference, simply noting that he he 'wishes to thank Henry Barbera for use of material from his M.A. thesis at Columbia University, 1954' (Mills, 1956, p. 392, footnote 6).18

[13] This has resulted in a number of critiques from Marxists (e.g. Swingewood, 1975) who argue that Mills develops something close to a conspiracy theory of power and fails to engage in an adequate dialectical analysis.

[14] However, there were, however, voices sceptical of the embourgeoisement thesis (Lockwood, 1960; Miller & Reissman, 1961; Goldthorpe and Lockwood, 1962, 1963; Willmott, 1963; Runciman; 1964; Shostak & Gomberg, 1964; Westergaard, 1965).

[15] Goldthorpe and Lockwood countered the embourgeoisement thesis on five grounds. Changes in the existing pattern of social stratification that have supposedly occurred are imprecisely specified. The lack of class distinction as consumers blurs distinctions as producers. Assumptions have been made about the adoption of middle-class values rather than adaptation of traditional working-class patterns of culture. There is no evidence of changes in relationships between individuals and groups. Similarly, there is no evidence that manual workers actually aspire to middle-class social acceptance.

[16] This was a prosperous pre-Thatcherite era, a time of high and secure employment and numerous job opportunities.

[17] Thus, although appearing to adopt falsificationist principles, the critical case study is not concerned with cause and effect nor does it remain within the parameters of the 'experimental situation'. On the contrary the research is about a broader issue, the debate surrounding the role of the working class, and it is an attempt to fundamentally question the myth of embourgeoisement from a structural perspective.

[18] Although they are as critical of any thesis suggesting the proletarianisation of the middle class as they are of the embourgeoisement thesis.
[19] He suggests that although the school plays a vital and systematic role in the reproduction of class society, it is 'no product of the school's manifest intentions that sexism and profoundly naturalised divisions arise in more virulent forms at the moment when its own authority is broken' (Willis, 1977, p. 147). For the working class, 'female domestic work is simply subsumed under *being* 'mum' or 'housewife'. 'Mum' will always do it, and should always be expected to do it. It is part of the definition of what she *is* as the wage packet and the productive world of work is of what 'dad' is (Willis, 1977, p. 151).
[20] The machine model of the organisation sees actors as executing directives of superiors, thus a knowledge of the formal organisation and structure, its rules, policies and procedures is assumed to be sufficient to understand the 'normal' functioning. Such an approach is 'clearly idealistic in its failure to examine concretely the relation between individual behaviour and organizational dictates' (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 7). In short, it fails to contextualise the machine or examine its workings.

The subcultural model is, in effect, the opposite liberal interpretation, which presumes the actual practices in the organisation do not reflect its formal organisation. The concern is to define and explain the occupational subculture of a particular occupational group. Interactionist and ethnomethodological studies of this type place considerable emphasis on ethnography as the means to reveal meanings and dynamics of situational encounters. This approach, however, tends to ignore the law, the formal organisation, the policies and the spheres of higher authority. The relationship between the subcultural group and these other elements are taken-for-granted rather than examined

The environmental model sees the behaviour of the organisation (its structure, policies and working practices) as the product of a series of negotiations with its 'environing system' (Reiss & Bordua, 1967, p. 25). This approach, particularly in the work of Wilson (1968), attempts to 'link police behaviour to organisational and legal constraints, and to the composition of the community and its prevailing style of political administration' (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 10). Unfortunately, in practice, it provides neither the ethnographic detail of practices of agents nor the organisational analysis that the subcultural and machine model approaches do. All three liberal approaches define the police in a partial empiricist or pragmatic way and links them to the law only through idealistic normative assumptions.

In crude 'class functionalist' theories (sometimes referred to as 'conflict theories' in the United States) the analysis of historical and material determinations becomes a prescription that the police act in the interests of the ruling class. The result is a 'reductionist functionalism', a sort of 'mechanical materialism' which reduces the structured reality of empirical reality to the simple 'underlying economic class determinations'. The police is seen as part of the state and as such must therefore act as a mechanism to reproduce economic class domination and consequent exploitation. Where there is an acknowledgement that not all laws reflect the economic advantage of the bourgeoisie, the approach reverts to voluntarism to indicate that the police choose to selectively enforce laws in accord with class domination. Grimshaw and Jefferson have

no time for such class reductionist approaches which ignore the complexity of the empirical evidence.

[21] Including Levi-Strauss (1963, 1970), Leach (1967), Althusser and Balibar (1970), Barthes (1974), Jameson (1974), Coward & Ellis (1977).

[22] Procedural law represents the constraints on police activity; substantive law is that which deals with criminal activity, maintenance of order etc.; the legal system refers to the courts, the prosecutor and the political organisation of the criminal justice system.

[23] They tend to use the terms democracy and community interchangeably. They are concerned with the way the 'public' effects policework. In a democratic system, the public are formally supreme. Without analysing the nature of British 'democracy' they suggest that policework practices are effected by a democratic as well as work and legal structure.

[24] This theoretical case-study is similar to Goldthorpe and Lockwood's (1969) critical case-study (Section 2.5)

[25] This appears, superficially, to reflect the kind of model building advocated by interactionists such as Becker (1958) and Geer (1964). While Becker's and Geer's approach is to build up an understanding of the structure of meanings through modifications to working hypotheses following the discovery of negative cases; they are not concerned with the structural interconnectedness, and thus the totalistic perspective that fundamentally informs the work of Grimshaw and Jefferson.

[26] They divided them into three categories, 'operational, 'non-operational' and 'mixed'. An example of the first is a file entitled 'Race and Community Relations—Incidents Arising From Racism' which contained summaries of the procedural activities of the police in responding to four incidents brought to their attention by the public in the late 1970s. An example of the second is a file entitled 'Orders—Policy on Police Divisional Orders' which contained material solely on the administrative system of communication and control. An example of the mixed file category was one on 'Arrests—Stop and Search'. This file contained Home Office requests in response to Parliamentary Questions for statistics, and so on, plus circulars about desirable procedures. The file dealt with adequacy of procedures as well as operational matters. On this classificatory basis, the sample consisted of 13 operational, 20 non-operational and 29 mixed files. There is a paucity of operational files despite a selection procedure that was biased towards them and this reflects the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the meetings.

[27] They distinguish three positions in the debate: the political right embodied in sections of the Police Act (1984); the classic liberal position exemplified by the Scarman Report (Scarman, 1982); and that of the left, exemplified in Jack Straw M.P.'s private members bills (November 1979 and March 1980), the Greater London Council (1983) initiative and the Labour Party (1983) proposals. The Police Act fails to balance increased police powers with new controls, as the liberal Scarman Report had argued for. The Straw Bills aimed for increase democratic control without altering constabulary accountability to law.

[28] Given that the political climate is not conducive to such changes, Grimshaw and Jefferson undertake to offer 'open-minded police chiefs' a pragmatic route to change which could be developed through their managerial instruments. The changes relate to law, work and democracy. For example, using public complaint as the selection criteria

for ‘absolute offences’; adopting non-partial approaches to public complaints; avoiding over- or under-attention to particular sections of community; develop conceptions of rational effectiveness in operational areas and monitor them; aiming to increase public acceptability; and so on. All this tends to point towards a shift from the organisational imperatives of immediate reactive response, epitomised by unit beat policing, towards the more flexible approach of residential beat policing.

[29] The subject to whom the advertisement is addressed will be referred to as the reader. This is not meant to imply that only advertisements in texts, etc. can be analysed in this way. The ‘reader’ may be a ‘viewer’. Williamson uses reader, viewer, subject, and ‘you’ as terms to refer to the person to whom the advertisement is addressed

[30] Williamson’s substantive analyses are all in terms of magazine advertisements, for logistic reasons.

[31] The magazine advertisement has a full-page close-up of Deneuve’s face. Next to her face, and overlaid in front of her neck and left shoulder is a bottle of Chanel No. 5. In very small print across her right shoulder is the caption ‘Catherine Deneuve for Chanel’. Across the bottom of the advertisement in large letters is the name of the product ‘Chanel No. 5’.

[32] Once the link has been made the commodity and the meaning of the commodity, the symbols of exchange that are generated become taken-for-granted by the consumer. For example, in advertising jingles such as ‘Beanz Meanz Heinz’, no longer is Heinz signified as being beans, rather beans are completely enclosed by the signifier Heinz.

[33] Lacan in his reworking of Freudian psychoanalysis sees consciousness as created not inherent. A major element of Lacanian theory adopted and adapted by Williamson is the theory of the mirror-phase. Lacan developed this by observing children in front of mirrors. Crucial to this is the distinction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic which comes about, Lacan (1951) argues, when the child is aware of the nature of its reflection in a mirror. On the level of the Imaginary the child is aware of the identity of the image and the self. But at the moment of such an awareness the imaginary unity (Ideal-Ego) is destroyed by the coincidental awareness that the reflection is a sign which signifies something. The sign (the reflection) *means* the child but cannot also *be* the child. The awareness of difference provides access to the level of the Symbolic. The access to the *Symbolic* creates the ‘social-I’. It is then impossible to return to the old, unified, ‘Ideal-Ego’, because the mirror image now reflects the Social-I which is itself a symbolic representation and with which the child can no longer merge.

[34] While interesting, space limitations prohibit detailed exploration of these.

[35] For example, the way that Holsten have amended their use of the Black Knight symbol in their advertising campaign. It is now clearly identified as the symbol of Duke Adolph III.

[36] The Indian wars with the Cheyenne began in 1861 and the Homestead Act was passed in 1862. By 1890 the American Indian had been exterminated or placed on reservations and the last ‘unoccupied’ territory, Oaklahoma, had been settled. The rise and fall of cattle empires took place between these dates and the great cattle drives lasted only from 1866 to 1885. If Western settlement is extended to include the ‘California gold rush and the first wagon trains to Oregon’, the entire period of Western settlement lasted less than fifty years.

[37] Wright side-steps the possibility that American tastes are moulded by the media, including Westerns rather than reflect them. The Western myth, he claims, remains independent of stars, publicity, and so on. 'A clear pattern of change and development in the structure of the Western is apparent in a list of successful films of the last forty years'. This suggests that within a given period, films with only a specific structure were popular, irrespective of stars or publicity.

[38] Lévi-Strauss was principally to show how myth reveals a universal autonomous mental structure rather than any particular concern with analysing the meaning of myths. He asserts that the mind is structured in terms of such oppositions. Levi-Strauss claims that if myth exhibits the same binary structure as phonetics, this structure must be derived from the human mind. In *Mythologiques* he demonstrates the existence of binary oppositions in tribal myths from which he imputes that the conceptual meaning of tribal myths is expressed through this binary structure. For Lévi-Strauss, this implies that myths signify the mind that evolves them. Wright argues that even though Levi-Strauss argues meticulously that the myths of totemistic societies serve to resolve conceptual contradictions inherent in those societies his concentration on the conceptual dimension of myths is at the expense of their function as a model of social action.

[39] Propp (1968) analysed Russian folk tales and showed that the actions (functions) characterising a set of stories occur in a rigid unchangeable order. In each tale, every function appears in exactly the same order. Wright, unlike Propp, includes attributes as well as actions in his functions and is also less concerned about the rigidity of ordering, arguing that in the more complex Western film similar stories have slightly different ordering of events.

[40] Top grossing films are those which the *Motion Picture Herald* identifies as having rental receipts in the United States and Canada in excess of four million dollars. Wright identified 63 Westerns that fell into this category between 1930 and 1971. Nine were excluded from Wright's analysis because he was unable to see four of them recently (*Colt 45* (1950); *Hondo* (1954) *Gunfight at the OK Corral* (1957) *Cheyenne Autumn* (1965)), four others were hybrids (*Fort Apache* (1948); *She Wore A Yellow Ribbon* (1950); *Chisum* (1970) and *Little Big Man* (1971)) and '*The Charge at Feather River* is an awful Western, which I refuse to consider since its commercial success was solely due to its big release as a three-dimensional film at a time when this gimmick was new and exciting' (Wright, 1975, p. 30). Wright actually discusses sixty-four films as he includes *The Cowboys* (1972) which he expects to be a top grossing picture but which has not appeared as such in his source journal. It has been excluded from this review.

The films are as follows. Classical Plot: *Cimarron* (1931); *The Plainsmen* (1937); *Wells Fargo* (1938); *Union Pacific* (1939); *Dodge City* (1939); *Destry Rides Again* (1940); *Northwest Mounted Police* (1941); *Along Came Jones* (1945)*; *Canyon Passage* (1946); *San Antonio* (1946); *Duel in the Sun* (1947); *California* (1947); *Whispering Smith* (1949); *Yellow Sky* (1949); *Bend of the River* (1952); *Shane* (1953); *Saskatchewan* (1954); *The Far Country* (1955) *Vera Cruz* (1955); *How the West Was Won* (1964); *Cat Ballou* (1965)*; *Texas Across the River* (1967)*; *Hombre* (1967); *Support Your Local Sherriff* (1969)*

Vengeance Variation: *Stagecoach* (1939); *Red River* (1949); *Winchester '73* (1950); *The Naked Spur* (1953); *Apache* (1954); *The Man From Laramie* (1955); *The Searchers* (1956); *One-Eyed Jacks* (1961); *Nevada Smith* (1966); *Hang 'Em High* (1968)
Transition Theme: *Broken Arrow* (1950); *High Noon* (1952); *Johnny Guitar* (1954)
Professional Plot: *Rio Bravo* (1959); *The Alamo* (1961); *North to Alaska* (1961); The *Commancheros* (1962); *Four for Texas* (1964); *Sons of Katie Elder* (1965); *The Professionals* (1966); *The War Wagon* (1967); *El Dorado* (1967); *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1968); *The Wild Bunch* (1969); *True Grit* (1969); *Two Mules for Sister Sara* (1970); *Cheyenne Social Club* (1970)*; *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1970); *Big Jake* (1971); *Rio Lobo* (1971).
*These were self-conscious parodies of their respective plots.

[41] 'I found that, in the forty-year period from 1930 to 1970, there were four significantly different forms of the relationship, which seemed to change with time, particularly after the war. Concentrating on this relationship, it was not difficult to discover that each of the four forms appeared in a series of films that—for all their differences in content—had essentially the same plot structure. Furthermore, I found that the characterization of the heroes, society, and villains was essentially the same within any one plot structure, but was often quite different across the structures. After this, all that remained was to reveal, through investigation, the details of each plot structure and the conceptual meaning of the characterization within each.' (Wright, 1975, p. 33)

[42] The five he selects are *Dodge City* (1939), *Canyon Passage* (1946), *Duel in the Sun* (1947) *Shane* 1953), and *The Far Country* (1954).

[43] Wright spells the farmer's name Starret on page 34 when first mentioned, and Starrett later in the book.

[44] MacPherson (1962) lists the attributes of the possessive individualist as freedom from dependence on the wills of other, freedom from any relations with others except those entered into voluntarily, and self-proprietorship which owes nothing to society.