

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

**Class and Identity Processes: Restructuring in the (Former)
Coalmining Communities of the South Wales Valleys**

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ABSTRACT

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CLASS AND IDENTITY PROCESSES: RESTRUCTURING IN THE (FORMER)
COALMINING COMMUNITIES OF THE SOUTH WALES VALLEYS

by Jane Margaret Parry

This thesis investigates how the social organisation of the populations of the South Wales Valleys has been transformed by restructuring processes at the end of the twentieth century. In doing so it engages with issues which have long concerned sociologists, examining the complex relationship between structure, culture and agency. In particular it looks at how group loyalties have been disrupted by the demise of coalmining and the heterogenisation of the Valleys' labour markets, how spatial attachments have been affected by a growing awareness of a broader range of spaces affect life experiences, and how under broader transformations, self-understandings have become more complex. This is investigated through fieldwork conducted in three distinct 'waves' in the western anthracite district of the South Wales Valleys and consisting of fifty semi-structured interviews and a focus group with seventy individuals, distinguished by their possessing a former or current coalmining household identity. The project draws upon a theoretical framework which reconfigures class processes in order to understand how individuals' responses to restructuring are related to their positioning in relation to a series of unequally distributed 'resources'.

The work of Bourdieu is employed to develop an analytical scheme which recognises that resources are interdependent, cumulative and dynamic, and derivative of a broader range of sources than the labour market. In order to understand how individuals' structural positioning enables them to effect greater or lesser degrees of agentic behaviour, their behaviour is analysed in terms of 'strategic' and 'survivalist' behaviour, respectively consisting of long- and short-term planning. Through a holistic examination of individuals' life experiences, this categorisation enables a complex understanding of the significance of class processes in determining mobility and lifestyle, to be developed, illustrated in the form of a model. It is argued that a series of unequally distributed and inter-related resources fundamentally determine individual behaviour, but these are mediated through a multi-dimensional and dynamic class culture which is specific to individuals' environment. This imbues meaning on their circumstances and facilitates the inherent tensions in their complex attachments to become reconciled and comfortably inhabited.

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Abbreviations

AMS	Additional Member System
DOVE	Dulais Opportunity for Voluntary Enterprise
Fed	South Wales Miners' Federation
NCB	National Coal Board
NCLC	National Central Labour College
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
PC	Plaid Cymru
PR	proportional representation
SNP	Scottist Nationalist Party
SWMF	South Wales' Miners' Federation
TEBO	Tower Employees' Buy-Out (Team)
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
WSG	Women's Support Groups

Black coal, **black** dust
Black lungs, **black** death
We quenched our thirst with beer
And sang alive for love

Our souls were **white**
Washed clean by sorrowing
For the spilt blood
Of our comrades crushed

Now we are abandoned
Beneath a **grey** sky
We powered an empire
By our dark craft

But we are annulled
By the new god
Of the market force
A jealous god

Who intends to kill
The dragon sleeping
In the cave

By Ros Moule

Chapter One : The Research Context

1.1.Prologue

I felt a man in real truth, to be coming up among that crowd of men, sharing their tiredness, blacked by the same dust, knowing the sounds and the sights of the colliery as they did, thinking with the same mind, of them, with them, a part of them.

(Llewellyn, 1939: 339)

So were Huw Morgan's reflections, the narrator of *How Green Was My Valley*, after his first day working down a mine. Llewellyn's book charts Huw's transition to manhood in a close-knit Welsh coalmining community, a journey marked by various joys and disappointments. The novel has had an enduring influence on the way in which sociologists have come to depict coalmining communities as the vanguard of the working-class. Coal was indeed a great leveller, and the organisation of the industry was fundamental in inscribing particular gendered identities upon men and women. However, given his efforts to provide an honest portrayal of the environment inhabited by his actors, Llewellyn would likely be shocked at the romantic character which history has attributed to the life of the miner. The latter has failed to recognise the endless differentiation which co-existed with the commonalities shared by coalmining communities.

I re-read *How Green Was My Valley* having written the first draft of this thesis, a project which set out to examine the extent to which coalmining communities have been fractured in the period following 1984/5 Miners' Strike. I was struck, first and foremost, by its temporal resonance, in that its enduring theme of loss is still relevant today, with the demolition of the last truly great trade union, and former coalmining communities being forced to draw upon their inner reserves in order to forge a meaningful existence in the world. Now as then, survival has been effected to a large extent through the mobilisation of a wealth of collective resources, some considerable distance removed from a prototype of homogenised class action, but nonetheless grounded in commonalities established through structural location. Recognising the diversity of experiences amongst my informants, this thesis sets out to challenge traditional representations of working-class community. This is pursued through

focusing on the recent transitory experiences of the former coalmining communities of the western anthracite district of the South Wales Valleys, in doing so developing a more complex account of collectivity which is appropriate to the modern environment. By unpicking the homogeneous assumptions which have been used to describe social organisation, and providing a more refined and responsive account of relationships, it demonstrates the central explanatory power of a re-worked class analysis for understanding the experiences of a population whose labour market positioning has become increasingly diverse, but which remains in an important sense 'a community'.

1.2 Social transformation and industrial restructuring

The industrial transformations of the past three decades have triggered a deluge of sociological debate regarding whether these represent a permanent shift away from the period broadly termed 'modernity'. There has been wide differentiation in the terms of reference and explanations employed to describe these transformations, including 'post-industrialism' (Bell 1973; Esping-Andersen 1993), 'disorganised capitalism' (Lash and Urry 1987), 'high modernity' (Giddens 1991), 'post-modernity' (Lyotard 1984), and 'risk society' (Beck 1992). Nonetheless, a broad consensus has been reached in observing that the wide-ranging and systematic changes experienced by Western labour markets since the 1970s have dramatically affected their constituent social organisation. This has occurred in a number of ways, affecting people's sense of location in the world, their experiences of work, and the political and personalised explanations which they invoke to make sense of transformed circumstances.

In general terms the restructuring of the late twentieth century has encompassed a redistribution of capitalist investment from manufacturing into the service sector. This shift has been accompanied by the promotion of a 'flexible' workforce integrated into automated and computerised methods of production, whose behaviour is governed by trans-national market forces. With the rapid proliferation of new technologies, shift in economic priorities, and transformations in organisational practices, the power of Britain's formerly dominant 'heavy' industries such as coal and steel has been substantially and dramatically diminished (table 1.1). The effect of these labour market transformations is highlighted by Casey

(1995), who has described the contemporary experience of work as ‘post-occupational’. By this she meant that transformations in the industrial infrastructure have challenged individuals’ expectations of work, affecting both the social solidarities associated with the traditional workplace and the actual practices incumbent in workplace performance. This transformation can be expected to have dramatically affected how individuals negotiate personal and collective belonging.

Table 1.1: Average number of employees in British coal industry 1954-1991

Thousands

1954	1963	1972	1975	1979	1983	1985	1988	1991
832	648	362	345	342	241	176	112	74

Source: Ransome 1995: 102

The effects of the restructuring of capital within Britain have been uneven, leading to social polarisation and the development of deprived regions with high levels of unemployment. This has tended to occur in areas more traditionally associated with heavy manufacturing industry and dominated by working-class communities, who during the twentieth century, have been largely represented by the Labour Party within the wider context of a labour movement affiliation. Bagguley *et al.* (1990) have termed the distinctively spatial nature of political difference associated with these regions, a ‘territorial politics’, an observation which highlights the dangers of attempting to derive general conclusions from national electoral statistics. The failure of the Labour Party in the period 1979-1997 to form a government, led some commentators to suggest that a fundamental transformation had occurred in the established patterns of party political class alignment, possibly in terms of a move toward ‘consensus politics’ (Kavangh 1997). However, the evidence of detailed survey analysis has concluded that party support continues broadly to mirror class differences, and that the ‘old’ Labour Party’s electoral weakness reflects the steady decline in the numerical force of its traditional constituency, the blue-collar working-class (Heath *et al.* 1985; Westergaard 1996), a phenomenon which has resulted from industrial restructuring. The Labour Party’s

reassessment of its priorities in terms of electoral appeal can be interpreted in the light of such explanations, and the 'rebranding' of the Labour Party under Blair's leadership in the mid 1990s, regarded as an attempt to extend the Party's appeal beyond its traditional constituency into 'new' sections of the working-class, but also into 'middle-England' (compared by Thomas (1998) to the Stalinist re-writing of Russian history). Its landslide general election victory of May 1997 might imply that, in the short-term at least, 'New Labour' has successfully achieved this mission.

The constriction and fragmentation of labour market experience within deprived regions under industrial restructuring, however, threatens to disrupt the traditional cleavage of class with occupation, working experiences having become more dispersed and less easily consolidated or mobilised. This has presented problems for theorists employing traditional understandings of class, who have considered structural positioning in terms of occupational hierarchy. In examining how the populations living in these regions might be undergoing a process of re-considering their pre-existing social and personal identities, one response has been that new or alternative alignments, perhaps based upon consumerist or identity-politics interest groups, are challenging class-based interests as a mobilisation axis. However, recent intensifications in the economic, social and psychological gaps between rich and poor at regional, national and global levels suggest that transformations in social organisation continue to reflect existing socio-structural inequalities. Class analysis therefore continues to provide a central mechanism in describing social relationships. However, given the disruption of class relationships in recent years in line with broader restructuring processes, class understandings must be re-examined if they are to continue to provide a basis for the interpretation of complex patterns of social transition. A more fruitful line of enquiry, pursued in this thesis, is whether individuals experiencing the upheavals of economic restructuring wish to and are able to formulate alternative alignments based upon their structural location, which do not necessarily involve production (and by implication, occupation) in a world where increasingly large sectors of society are excluded from participating in this sphere, or are participating in quite different ways from in the past. And beyond that, what are the organising or unifying principles around which alternative cleavages develop?

This project examines the transitory experiences of a particular industrial population in South Wales which has been acutely affected by restructuring, and it thus contributes to broader theoretical debates currently attempting to develop a sociological analysis capable of describing and interpreting a transformed social environment. In developing an understanding of how sustained socio-economic upheaval has impacted upon people's lives, and in particular the extent to which it has effected a break from 'traditional' social arrangements, various theories of social change have been posited, including those of globalisation, detraditionalisation, and individualisation. This thesis, through studying the recent experiences of the populations of the South Wales coalfield, is centrally concerned with questions of social transformation. Its approach, however, is distinctive, in that it reconceptualises social-stratification processes to develop an understanding, sensitive to the complexities of contemporary circumstances and responsive to current sociological debate, of how individuals are held together and driven apart within a restructured environment.

This investigation of social transformation is pursued through an examination of the processes through which identity becomes formulated and articulated, which are discussed in the broader context of a class analysis. This approach facilitates the development of an understanding of the relationship between structural and subjective experiential factors in informing individual life trajectories and becoming translated into self-conscious identifications, facilitative of particular kinds of behaviour. By taking a processual approach to identity, outlined below, the co-present difference and similarity existent within a population are highlighted and the tensions between them explored. In examining the relationships between structure, experience and action, the project provides an applied investigation and a theoretical response to the structure-agency debate underpinning sociological concerns. Savage (1995) has stressed that this interface should be the subject of renewed empirical study as sociologists engage in developing a conceptual framework capable of accounting for the formation and negotiation of social relationships. This broader project is pursued through a consideration of identity processes in terms of a bridge between structural circumstances and particular types of behaviour, with regard to three sub-component problematics, whose conceptual distinction has been driven by the fieldwork findings, and which provide the basis for the organisation of the empirical chapters. However, the sub-division of the empirical material also reflects key debates in social theory, a consideration of which facilitates a comprehensive examination of identity formation.

Furthermore, the interconnections between these three chapters consolidate the thesis's theoretical position, that identity processes are inter-dependent and dynamic. By examining these issues separately and ultimately consolidating findings in the concluding chapter to generate theory, the thesis illustrates how experiences of belongingness operate on a plurality of interconnected and disparate levels in reflecting individuals' circumstances and facilitating their negotiation of the social world.

Three sub-questions are considered in terms of spatial, collective and personal identity processes, respectively providing critiques of globalisation, detraditionalisation and individualisation theories. The first of these, considered in chapter three, entails an examination of how people's attachment to space is affected by their increased awareness of how a wider range of spaces, extending beyond the immediate environs, impact upon their lives. The second, corresponding with chapter four, looks at how group loyalties have been transformed by the restructuring of the labour market and by the plurality of groups and institutions to which access and belonging is negotiated. The final part of this exploration, pursued in chapter five, comprises an examination of how under wider transformations, individuals' sense of self is becoming a more complex phenomenon. While these questions are distinguished for the purpose of theoretical clarity, they should be regarded as interdependent, having significant implications for one another. Overlaid across these discussions are the re-iterative themes of class, gender and community, whose integrated theoretical significance to the project is discussed below. In chapter six, the interrelationships between these identity processes are considered in greater detail, and are utilised to develop a theoretical framework capable of interpreting transitory social relationships.

Identity can be considered as having three broad important dimensions: spatially-defined, group-based and individually-perceived. The South Wales Valleys is a particularly interesting context in which to consider these issues for three main reasons. First, in the context of its mandate for a Welsh Assembly, nationalism or spatial awareness has become increasingly visible and warrants more detailed examination. These transformations are examined in the context of the particular relationship which existed between space and identity in South Wales under the coalmining industry, which was distinctive from other coalmining populations - self-contained villages having been built up around the pit-head

structure and located in geographically-isolated valleys. Secondly, the de-industrialism surrounding the dismantling of the coal industry, the major employer in the region for the past century, the move towards light manufacturing industry, the emergence of alternative forms of employment, such as the Tower Colliery initiative, and women's increased entry into the labour market make the South Wales Valleys an important location within which to consider the persistence or transformation of group loyalties. And finally in the late 1990s, the legacy and longer-term impact of the 1984/85 Miners' Strike, considered in the context of broader industrial and political restructuring, require reflection in terms of a broader sociological consideration of how they have affected identity formation. However, before moving on to examining the specific relevance of the Welsh Valleys in considering issues of social transformation, it is necessary to engage with contemporary representations of identity and class, to examine why they provide the most suitable vehicles for addressing these issues.

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives

1.31 A Processual Approach to Identity

Mercer (1990: 43) has suggested that identity politics becomes an issue only when in crisis, and hence it is relevant to and a useful conceptual tool in considering the recent experiences of the populations of the Welsh Valleys, where the old certainties of work and identity have been challenged by socio-economic change, and where common reference points have become more dispersed. While a 'coalmining community' identity was previously considered by theorists to consist of a relatively unproblematic, coherent and complementary set of interweaving identities, and whether or not individual experiences corresponded with this perceived uniformity, the transformative potential of industrial restructuring necessitates a re-examination of social organisation in the region. This requires an engagement with the possibility of fragmenting identities in the search for an explanatory theory embracing transformative potentials, but it is also necessary to attach significance to the persistence of embedded commonalities, and to examine how co-existence difference and similarity entail a complex range of tensions as they become negotiated and assimilated into individuals' social attachments.

Sociological theory can be considered in terms of two broad perspectives which have been used to describe identity formation. In a simplified distinction, the first considers identity as a holistic phenomenon, in which the individual ultimately possesses one 'true self', which may however be hidden among a range of 'artificial selves', mobilised according to circumstances experienced by the individual. Collective values are thus regarded as being developed in parallel with a shared history. Until quite recently, this approach formed the dominant view of cultural identity and enabled its advocates to theorise identity in terms of an 'imaginary coherence' (Hall 1990) amid an increasingly disjointed lived experience, although they have disagreed on the explanatory principles as to how this was achieved. Marxists, for example, proposed that class provides the central factor in determining the formation of a particular set of relatively coherent and consistent social identities. Thus it was theorised for Welsh coalminers, that a set of collective identities were constructed around their shared class positioning, based upon values of community, trade-unionism, socialism, non-conformity, self-education and distinctive gendered responsibilities. For the purposes of this project, when examining this holistic concept of identity in relation to the populations of the South Wales Valleys, the short-hand of a 'coalmining community' is employed, indicative of the descriptive elements associated with this perspective.

The second view of identity, initially associated with the development of postmodernist theory, but recently incorporated into the work of a wider range of theorists, emphasises the multiplicity of differences existing *between* individuals, in addition to the mass of apparent contradictions inherent *within* individuals. This problematises any attempt to essentialise a coherent 'true' identity (Sarup 1996). This position, at its most extreme, considers identity as free-floating and detached from the bases of deterministic social structures. Identity is thus regarded as processual rather than static, drawing upon various temporal points: the future and the present, in addition to the past. The process of identity construction is never completed but continues to unfold, constantly undergoing processes of transformation and discovery.

There are elements in both of these perspectives which are useful for the development of an understanding of how the populations of the South Wales Valleys have formulated identities during a period of transition. While the former approach is valuable in highlighting the role

played by structural location in determining the range of possibilities open to individuals, and in emphasising the significance of commonalities in identity formation, it is less revealing of how difference co-exists with similarity, and is not well placed to interpret how socio-economic transformation disrupts established identifications. Conversely, the second approach is recommended by its processual analysis which takes into account the dynamic potential of identity, and its recognition of the interconnections between constituent parts of identity. However, postmodernists in particular have been guilty of utilising this approach to mask the extent to which identity formations are also embedded, and provide coherence and stability in individuals' interpretations of their changing circumstances. This thesis then, in analysing identity in transition, takes an approach which draws upon both of these perspectives to provide a more integrated and refined account of social formations. Thus it recognises that identity is processual and dynamic, but also draws attention to the continued significance of structure in facilitating the establishment of commonalities which are utilised by individuals as a template in negotiating the vagaries of their unique circumstances.

One theorist who has made inroads into reconciling the tensions between these theories has been Harriet Bradley (1996). While she regards the latter approach as valuable for its emphasis upon the importance of choice in identity formation, and in its appreciation of the inevitably fractured and contradictory nature of identity, she also provides a critique of postmodernist theory. For example, Bradley contends that individual choice is actually severely limited by structural and social conditions, and that identity construction is to a large extent, a political process. She concludes (1996: 214) that a 're-worked' modernist theory has a central relevance in understanding identity formation, and specifies the importance of recognising the persistence of social hierarchies and of considering them within a wider ideological framework.

However, Bourdieu's work (1984) provides perhaps the most valuable and sophisticated insight into how individuals negotiate co-existent difference and similarity in processes of identity formation. Central to *Distinction*, his empirically-based examination of the genesis of social relationships, is the concept of 'habitus', which he previously defined as, 'a system of durable, transposable dispositions which functions as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices' (1979: vii). Habitus, which can be compared to Eder's (1993) 'cultural texture', or Raymond Williams's (1961) 'structure of feeling', provides an interface

of constantly-evolving and culturally-validated 'rules', through which personal experience is mediated (rather than determined). It serves to imbue broader meanings upon individuals' experiences, thus playing an important role in the social identifications subsequently adopted and in the actions pursued. This process is both conscious and subconscious, and is central to understanding how individuals' lifestyle 'choices' are informed not only by economic constraints, but also by cultural environment, in that where habitus dispositions are unproblematically assimilated, certain types of behaviour are more comfortably adopted by actors than others. Eder describes this as 'the cultural logic of action spaces' (1993: 10). One of the strengths of Bourdieu's habitus for understanding identity formation, is his recognition that it reflects both back from and onto individuals: individuals' understandings of the world contribute to the broader conceptualisation of habitus, but these are also partly the result of their reflexive interpretation of habitus. As Calhoun has observed (1991: 52), 'identity is not altogether internal to an individual, but is part of a social process.' This reciprocity explains how identity processes embodying both difference and similarity can be assimilated by particular social groupings.

The South Wales Valleys provide a particularly relevant context in which to address these theoretical issues, because the distinctive social identity described by traditional theorists and associated with a 'common experience' has been fundamentally contested by the diversification of socio-economic circumstances accompanying industrial restructuring. Welsh coalmining communities were, until fairly recently, unusual in that they displayed a relatively coherent set of identities associated with a gendered commonality in work, place, leisure, family and political ideology, in which occupational identity appeared to be the 'master' (Ebaugh 1988) or defining identity. Employing Bourdieu's terminology, the unique set of cultural dispositions attached to these commonalities, can be regarded as their 'habitus'. While this social similarity also masked individual difference, the massive changes which occurred in the Welsh Valleys largely as a result of economic restructuring, render the continued mobilisation of holistic conceptualisations of identity problematic, as people's lives have diversified in the search for employment outside the traditional coalmining industry. A theoretical perspective employing 'habitus', however, is able to address the implications of increased heterogeneity, since it provides a reflexively employed lens highlighting commonality, but is also processual, and evolves to continue to provide a template of broad representation amid differentiation.

This project seeks to recognise and demonstrate how identity processes metamorphose and fluctuate over time, affected by various external and internal factors and events. Certain elements of identity may be more fixed than others. There might even be some sort of an identifiable hierarchy existent within personal perceptions of identity. It examines why certain elements of an individual's identity are more important to them than others, how this changes across time, and considers how individuals actively participate in constructing their own identities, but also have certain identities imposed upon them by external forces. Processes of identity negotiation and recognition are also examined: whether identity is open in that all individuals are free to consider themselves part of various groups, or whether membership of identity groupings is constructed within certain boundaries, and if so, how these boundaries are constructed and maintained. Finally, the examination provides an analysis of whether the massive socio-economic transformation experienced by Britain in recent years, specifically by the people of the South Wales Valleys, has entailed the development of new and alternative types of identifications, and this being the case, considers how such alignments are constructed. It provides an understanding then, of how the 'habitus' of the populations of the South Wales coalfield processually evolves, and variously mediates individuals' experiences in the process of identity formation as they are distinguished by their structural location in relation to this environment.

The most obvious way in which industrial restructuring has affected identity formation in the South Wales Valley is that people's working identities are likely to have undergone a simultaneous quantitative and qualitative transformation, as both the types of work in which they are engaged and the practices associated with this employment have been affected by shifts in industrial and organisational priorities. These transformations are likely to have a significant impact upon gendered identities, with the recent 'feminisation' of the region's labour market providing a challenge to the gendered organisation of labour, which had in turn provided the basis for broader interpretations of masculinity and femininity (section 1.44). As working experiences become more diverse and fragmentary, the distribution of structural inequalities is less easily explained in terms of linear hierarchy. It is thus necessary to explore how traditional class understandings can be reconceptualised, in order to counter their masculinised bias which fails adequately to represent a plurality of labour market experiences, to reveal the complex interconnections between axes of class and

gender, and to provide explanatory theory capable of accounting for the diversification of collectivised experiences. Within 'traditional' regions, occupation has been regarded as the basis for collective or class-based organisation. An examination of contemporary class analysis will demonstrate how alternative alignments might also be constructively employed to develop a more representative and dynamic structural account of social transition.

1.32 A Processual Approach to Class

The postmodernist perspective which considers identity as free-floating is little able to account for persistent similarities among social formations, and is therefore rejected by this thesis which instead seeks to describe the relationship between structural inequalities and identity formation. This link has traditionally been theorised relatively unproblematically, coalmining communities being understood in terms of a class analysis which unproblematically linked coalminers' workplace solidarities with their broader leisure, family and political commonalities. However, the institutional framework which promoted the development of 'a' class consciousness within these populations has been significantly, perhaps irreparably, damaged by industrial restructuring. Therefore, in seeking to understand where class now sits in relation to the structure-culture-agency equation, and what it offers for social analysis, it is proposed that a processual approach be extended to class, making it more able to provide a responsive analysis of a transformed socio-economic environment. Thus, as identity is conceptualised as multi-dimensional and dynamic, so too linear models are rejected in studying structural inequalities, and class structures are recognised as heterogeneous, evolving and interactive.

Before moving on to consider the contribution of recent theory to the reconceptualisation of class, it is necessary to establish how 'class' is used in this thesis, and to examine what a class analysis offers to the project of studying social relationships in transition. The position taken in this thesis is that class embodies the structural determination of life-chances, and Bourdieu's (1984) work is employed in recognising that structural inequalities derive not just from occupational positioning, but are also found in the interaction of economic, cultural, social and symbolic forms of 'capital'. These forms of capital are regarded as dynamic and therefore potentially convertible, but also as reproduced; understanding structural

inequalities in these terms facilitates an understanding of change and continuity in class relationships. Class embodies considerable explanatory power for understanding processes of identity formation, since individuals' negotiation of their social environment and the recognitions which they attach to their circumstances, are constrained and enabled by their positioning in relation to various types of capital. By employing class objectively to understand how the interdependencies between unequally distributed forms of capital translate into probabilistic outcomes for individuals variously positioned in relation to these capitals, a social analysis is developed which ascribes meaning to dynamic social relationships, and furthers an understanding of the relationship between structure and agency.

The link between structural inequalities and objective class, is defined thus by Bourdieu: 'Classes (are) sets of agents who occupy similar positions and who, being placed in similar conditions and subjected to similar conditionings, have every likelihood of having similar dispositions and interests and therefore of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances' (1985: 198). His work on the formulation of movements in capital is central to developing an integrated understanding of class as processual, in stressing that individuals' class experiences should be simultaneously considered in terms of their possession of an overall volume of capital, its specific composition, and its changing distribution over time in line with individual trajectories. Furthermore, as Skeggs has elaborated, 'Each kind of capital can only exist in the interrelationships of social positions; they bring with them access to or limitation on which capitals are available to certain positions. They become classed, raced, sexed and gendered through being lived: they are simultaneously processed' (1997: 127). Class is thus conceptualised as dynamic and relational, and as interconnected with other social axes, such as that of gender. The value attributed to capital is unique to the habitus operating in a particular environment, and interaction with habitus provides a mechanism through which individuals' embodied manifestations of their structural location are negotiated in developing social identity. Bourdieu thus constitutes social class as a *social practice*, 'an activity in which categorisation, structures, dispositions and social choice combine' (Wilkes 1990: 125).

This approach is distinct from traditional Marxist, Weberian and functionalist approaches to class, which consider structural inequalities as primarily embedded in the labour market, and distributed across relatively linear hierarchies. These perspectives are rejected for three main

reasons. Firstly, they are unduly restrictive in analysing transitory social experiences, reflecting only static positions and unable to account for class fluidity across time. Secondly, they tend to privilege a particular masculinised occupational experience which fails to address the social experiences attached to a more heterogeneous and temporally dynamic labour market in which the centrality of the male breadwinner model to social organisation has been challenged. And thirdly, in prioritising structural inequalities associated with the labour market, they are unable to interpret the interactive significance of a range of inequalities, extending beyond the economic into social, symbolic and cultural fields. A 'traditional' view of class has over-simplified the mechanisms fostering collective experiences and is unable adequately to represent transitory social relationships. The broader project of this thesis then, is to re-examine class theory in order to develop a responsive model of structured relationships capable of interpreting a diverse and unstable range of social experiences.

Substantial problems face those classifying socio-economic change and considering its impact on class cleavages in that, within an ever-evolving global economy, industrialism may still be relevant. Additionally, there is an apparent difficulty in applying general theory amid geographical socio-economic diversity. Britain for example, is widely considered to possess a unique industrial history, displaying a distinctive form of industrial capitalism and stark class differentials. Hence postmodernist theorists concerned with class have criticised the explanatory power of 'grand narratives' (Lyotard 1984) in describing change and diversity, and have called for an understanding of the multiple sources of oppression and conflict in contemporary societies. However, this has been countered by Harvey (1989) and Jameson (1991) who acknowledge local variation, but emphasise that this should be considered within a wider framework of the globalising influence of capital. Maynard (1994) also argues for the need to develop generalising principles within a framework which recognises the increasingly fragmented nature of societies. This concern is shared by Giddens (1991) who stresses unifying features within a fragmenting modernity. So to move away from 'grand narratives' is not necessarily to dismiss the place of wider explanatory principles, rather to appreciate their internal variability.

Gibson-Graham's (1996) work is particularly relevant in re-examining class, and in developing theory responsive to social transformation. Their recent work conceptualised

class in terms of a social process (associated with surplus labour) rather than a static structural entity, an approach which complements the temporal component of this project. They also emphasised the multiple and diverse forms taken by class in a particular society (1996: 58), thus challenging the rather unitary conceptualisations of class which have tended to dominate the modernist project, and extending the range of its analytic scope into arenas such as the household, within which they consider women to have traditionally occupied a 'feudal' class positioning. An important component of their work is their recognition that individuals can simultaneously and temporally occupy a variety of diverse class positions, the class processes in which they are involved being mediated by characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, occupational sector and political affiliation. Similarly, Bradley (1996) has emphasised the importance of extending class analysis beyond simple occupational criteria, to look for example at class divisions within families and communities, in order to facilitate a more flexible approach which considers broader aspects of inequality such as gender, ethnicity and age.

The processual and relational approach to class analysis taken in this thesis is aimed not at demonstrating the subjective power of class, but rather at employing class objectively to inject meaning into the co-existent difference and similarity characterising social relationships. A class analysis is employed in conjunction with a similarly processual approach to identity, to uncover the complex relationships between structural inequalities, cultural context and social action, a project which as a result of social transformation, can no longer be contained in simplistic hierarchical explanations. Thus it moves beyond a purely empirical description of social organisation, and attaches meaning to the interdependencies constituting social relationships. In this way, a class analysis facilitates the development of a theoretical perspective which is responsive to innovations in social theory, but which is also validated by the empirical evidence of fieldwork.

Industrial restructuring is likely to have had considerable and variable effects upon the ways in which people experience and make sense of their lives. The range of identities open to individuals has been most obviously diversified by the fragmentation of the labour market, but is simultaneously disrupted by the transformation of spatial boundaries associated with political and economic developments, and by recent challenges to the gendering of public and private experiences. Thus the homogeneity associated with established

conceptualisations of identity and class have been challenged and require a renewed analysis if they are still to be utilised in understanding social relationships. It is suggested here that a processual and relational approach to class and identity is facilitative of this project. The former and current coalmining communities of the South Wales Valleys, being a population who until recently displayed an unusual degree of social similarity, and who have thus experienced the fragmentary impact of industrial restructuring particularly acutely, provide a fascinating empirical context in which to investigate these theoretical questions. The following section provides an account their industrial and social history, and of recent experiences of industrial restructuring in the region, thus providing a backdrop to the broader theoretical project.

1.4 The South Wales coal-mining Communities

1.41 Restructuring in the South Wales Valleys

For much of the past century the South Wales Valleys' labour markets were dominated by a monolithic employer: the coal barons of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and later the nationalised coal industry. Over the past thirty years, however, Britain's traditional coalmining regions found themselves the victim of a turnabout in national energy policy, the political motivations for which remain contentious. This became most apparent to coalmining communities during the 1984/85 Miners' Strike, the defeat of the miners providing the Conservative Government with the impetus to consolidate its programme of pit closures and implement their longer-term anti-trade unionist strategy. Following their humiliating defeat by the miners in the 1970s, the Conservative Party came to regard strong unionisation as politically problematic, and their return to government in 1979 was quickly followed by the implementation of policy which served to dismantle the industry (Waddington and Parry 1995). Termed 'rationalisation', it patently had little to do with financial accountability, economically viable pits being pronounced 'unprofitable' and placed on a closure list. During the months preceding the 1984/5 Strike, the NCB invested huge sums of money in refurbishing pits in an attempt to make them appear unprofitable in

annual cost-accounting procedures.¹ The systematic dismantling of British coalmining was facilitated by the industry's inability to compete on the international market with heavily-subsidised coal (particularly from Germany²), its weakened position in terms of trade-unionist mobilisation following legislation and distortions within the wholesale electricity market (which are artificially rigged against coal). As a consequence of industrial restructuring a vacuum has developed in localities such as the South Wales Valleys in terms of alternative sources of secure and skilled employment.

With the decline of heavy industry, the South Wales Valleys saw a shift in production towards light manufacturing, rather than the service sector employment which has been more typical of 'post-industrial' regions (Esping-Andersen 1993). Indeed, the latter has been of greater significance in the Southern coastal strip of Wales broadly correspondent with the M4 motorway, and by the late 1980s the employment market in south-west Wales comprised two-thirds service sector and less than a quarter manufacturing employment (Department of Employment 1989). The Welsh Valleys are therefore problematic in terms of a 'post-industrial' classification scheme, but this is unsurprising given the tendency of capital to affect regions unevenly. The few factories established within the Valleys in recent years have tended to provide un-unionised, low-paid and frequently part-time work.³ Because of differential occupational expectations, women have been more willing to engage in this sort of labour. Thus restructuring has entailed fairly dramatic changes in gendered employment patterns, with women's position within the household strategy moving from the position of secondary wage-earner or domestic servitude, frequently into the position of sole or joint-breadwinner. Patterns of domestic labour, however, have been little affected by changes in household members' relationship to the labour market: women continue to assume the bulk of the domestic burden (Morris 1985), constituting an intensified or dual load of labour.

¹ Ironically, this policy ultimately assisted the buy-out prospects of the Tower Colliery miners in 1994/5, since little money subsequently had to be borrowed for investment in the mine's infrastructure.

² Perhaps bafflingly, German coal is twice as expensive to produce as British coal (McAvan 1993). However it has been prioritised by Germany under new European Commission rules, which permit members to support only one power-generating industry, and has thus been heavily subsidised (Waddington & Parry 1995).

³ The insecurity of such employment is illustrated by the closure of the Lucas factory in Ystradgynlais during the course of the study. Affectionately known as 'Tic-Tock' by its employees, this was the main source of local employment for many of my informants and its closure is likely to have a significant impact upon their occupational expectations.

The labour market loss incurred by pit closures has not been matched by the establishment of alternative or 'new' employment in the region. 'Careers' and jobs-for-life are all but non-existent *within* the Valleys, although organisations such as the Dulais Opportunity for Voluntary Enterprise (DOVE) in Duffryn Cellwen are having considerable success in encouraging the pursuit of academic and technical qualifications (particularly amongst women), suggesting that a transformation in personal career strategies may be under way. However the main source of labour market opportunity is now to be found outside of the Valleys, on scattered industrial estates and along the southern coastal strip, requiring the financial and social disruptions which accompany commuting, factors which will have a significant impact upon the social organisation of those who continue to live in the Valleys.

1.42 Coalmining in the South Wales Valleys

The people of the South Wales Valleys, and in particular the western region (the focus of this thesis), constitute an extremely interesting population in terms of the restructuring of the coal-mining industry, and also in regard to the transformation of Britain's 'traditional' industries and the impact which this has had upon working-class communities more generally. Not only has this traditionally been a region of solid unionisation and radical politics (Cooke 1985), but it is also an area where, despite the virtual decimation of the industry in the late 1980s and early 1990s, coal-mining has forged various routes of recovery, some of which have been particularly innovative. British coal-mining today operates largely in the form of open-casting⁴, but also through a series of small privately-owned and largely primitive pits, the primary exception being the worker-owned and run Tower Colliery near Hirwaun, a village in the upper Cynon Valley.

The communal working environment of coal-mining has been substantially weakened in the South Wales Valleys by the privatisation of the industry, replaced by altogether more individualistic and alienating employment alternatives (section 4.2.2.2.1), dominated by RJB Mining. However, countering this trend, Waddington et al. (1998) have compared the success of the worker-owned and run Tower Colliery with the relative failure of a Scottish workers' take-over endeavour, identifying the carefully cultivated political, economic,

technological and organisational factors, which were crucial to the realisation of Tower's aspirations. The continued significance of Welsh coal-mining is reflected in the (relatively) high NUM membership figures for the South Wales region of the national coalfield, which boasts six hundred working members⁵. Since the Neath Valley also possesses the greatest concentration of small private mines in the UK, it can be seen that coal-mining remains a significant, albeit vastly diminished, source of male employment in the South Wales Valleys.

Coalmining was established in South Wales during the nineteenth century and has been personified through its frequently Communist-led union, the South Wales Miners' Federation. This was affectionately known to its members as 'the Fed', even after it was officially renamed the South Wales Area of the National Union of Mineworkers following nationalisation in 1947. South Wales miners have a history of solid unionisation, made possible through the relatively strong bargaining position afforded them by the international competitiveness of anthracite coal. They have thus been able to receive a fairly militant political education within the union, a process which was frequently complemented by National Central Labour College classes, and reflected in the political profiles of former alumni, such as Nye Bevan, D.J. Williams and Dai Francis. The Fed was perhaps unusual among trade unions in that it provided its members with a social framework for organisation through local Miners' Welfare Institutes, in addition to the more common economic and political alignments⁶ associated with trade union membership.

The prosperity of the coalmining industry in the earlier part of the twentieth century encouraged substantial immigration into South Wales, which resulted in the population of the region comprising a relatively heterogeneous grouping. Those attracted by the security of coal-mining arrived from rural Wales, the Forest of Dean and Devon, and beyond that from Europe, for example from Italy (Hughes 1991) and Spain⁷. Thus the Valleys' population has historically demonstrated a low degree of ethnic homogeneity, their diverse biographies perhaps going some way towards explaining their commitment to establishing international

⁴ Open-cast miners being nicknamed 'sunshine miners'.

⁵ These are concentrated mainly at Tower Colliery, and to a lesser extent at the management-owned Betws Colliery near Ammanford.

⁶ The Miners' Federation of Great Britain affiliated to the Labour Party in 1908, although this by no means proved deterministic of policy direction.

⁷ Spain is historically linked to the Welsh miners through the latter's active and substantial support for the Republic during the Spanish Civil War (Francis and Smith 1980).

political affiliations (Cope et al. 1996; Parry 1996), and providing an example of the difference amid similarity which has been an overlooked feature of their demographic constitution.

With the Labour Government's nationalisation of the coal industry in 1947, the South Wales miners became incorporated into the Nation Union of Mineworkers. Nationalisation was greeted optimistically by Welsh miners, who associated it with the establishment of socialism, but they were soon disappointed when they discovered that the hands of the NUM's National Executive were tied by its permanent right-wing majority, a frustration which Dennis *et al.* (1956) also documented among the Yorkshire miners. Dai Francis, the first chairman of the Welsh Trades Union Congress and a local hero in the Valleys, commented that, "There was no difference between the old ... coalowners and the National Coal Board. They were turning it into State Capitalism." (interview transcript: 1976: 26, South Wales Miners' Library).

Today only 12,000 miners remain in Britain's 23 deep mines, compared with 257,000 miners in South Wales alone at the height of the industry's prosperity in 1919. However, following the Miners' Strike, by 1986 this figure had plummeted to 10,200 miners working in just 14 South Wales pits (NCB figures). Industrial restructuring has affected a huge proportion of economically active men in the South Wales Valleys, and has failed to generate the degree of alternative employment which would counteract the impact of pit closures. The level of unemployment experienced as a result of the decline in coalmining has been particularly severe, since the industry was virtually the sole employer in many of the South Wales Valleys, and its contraction has had an accumulator effect on local employment, for example in terms of local shopping facilities. Economic inactivity, formerly limited to women, is increasingly affecting men, and Wales now has the highest rate of economic inactivity in Britain (Blewitt 1998). Unemployment figures tend to mask the actual rates of joblessness in South Wales, a high proportion of which are attributed to long-term sickness and disability.

The generations of men who regarded coalmining as a job and a skill for life, for themselves and their progeny, have recently had to reassess their occupational attachments, as the industry which formed the basis of their communities has all but disappeared. For the minority who remain in coalmining, its forms are considerably changed and variable, such

that the occupation is barely comparable to its precursor under the NCB. The alternative to this work, however, is migration, unemployment or, for the lucky few, insecure and low-paid factory work.

1.43 Community and the South Wales coalmining valleys

The culture and development of coalmining communities in Britain have been well-documented (Bulmer 1975; Dennis *et al.* 1956; Gilbert 1992; Williamson 1982) but are also frequently romanticised, to the extent that they are now held up as *the* prototype working-class community (Orwell 1937; Lash and Urry 1987; Lockwood 1975), representing the embodiment of collective, communitarian socialist values. Yet Bulmer's (1975) description of 'ideal' coalmining community types makes them *untypical* of other social groups. Collective imaginings of coalmining communities have tended to depict a culture dominated by the cult of masculinity, empowered by solidarity and collective action, enabled by a common experience of harsh working conditions. This romantic mythology of coalmining has been nurtured both internally by the communities themselves in order to establish the reassurance of tradition, and externally by a wider society which looks fondly upon its 'noble savages'. However, the unquestioning assumption of these generalisations in studying coalmining communities obscures their unique experiences and values, and masks the differences which result from their distinctive geographic, temporal, economic, industrial and political locations (Crow 1993). The South Wales miners, for example, have been among the most politically radical of Britain's coalmining communities (Parry 1996). Pahl and Wallace (1988) highlight the dangers of employing the mythologies associated with traditional working-class communities, which constitute them as unproblematically solidaristic and community-minded, to contrast with present circumstances, arguing that these images are overly generalistic and conceal internal tensions.

Sullivan (1990) considers that within South Wales, 'community' has an extremely strong resonance and a dual meaning, entailing the sharing of both geographical space and common property, the latter of which has developed in the context of a communal history of industrial struggle, which has in turn led to the fostering of a common identity. This implies a parallelism or submerging of communal with class interests as they have traditionally been

considered. Indeed, within the South Wales Valleys, the same institutions have made claims of representation regarding both community and class interests. The local miners' lodge is one such example, and the activities of the 1984/5 Miners' Strike can be taken as evidence of an explicit and political link being forged between community and class interests. However, assigning meaning to 'community' is more problematic, in that it has tended to be invoked with reference to the past and as emotively romantic, and for these reasons is largely employed in positive contexts.

The social philosophy of collective community in South Wales has been compared by Sullivan (1990) to that of Labourism in that, 'its meaning encompasses actions which at one and the same time protects the community as a collective and also allows for the promotion of individual escape from the limiting geographical and material experience of the community' (1990: 77). He considers this conviction to be embedded within the rhetoric of Kinnock while party leader, himself the progeny of a Welsh coalmining community, and also identified it as embodied in the localist welfare institutions cultivated by coalmining communities, such as the NCLC classes.

Thus community is not a static entity, but a multi-dimensional, shifting experiential (both subjective and objective) and dynamic phenomenon, capable of integrating and reflexively employing communal with political, spatial, occupational and familial interests. Thus Crow and Allan have promoted a consideration of 'community time' (1995), whereby community is examined in terms of places, social structures and meanings, but simultaneously through a 'fourth dimension' of 'community time', the application of which facilitates a more sophisticated understanding of how community is interconnected to and catalysed by various temporal events, the 1984/5 Miners' Strike being one of the rather more dramatic examples.

Communities are also, of course, to a large extent 'imagined' (Anderson 1983), in that one may never meet all the fellow members of one's community, which is not to deny the subjective reality they have in the lives of their constituents. Young (1990) has argued that communities are constructed *across* time and space, and that a less 'oppressive' conceptualisation of community is therefore required, which she models upon the anonymous city in which the emphasis is upon acceptance rather than the construction of boundaries. These types of interpretations are increasingly relevant to the former coalmining

communities of South Wales as commuting to work becomes increasingly prevalent, encouraging membership of a range of new occupational communities and weakening the traditional overlap between geographical community, leisure and working experiences.

1.44 The gendered organisation of coalmining

The organisation of coalmining throughout the twentieth century has entailed an extremely marked gendered division of labour, with women's domestic routines directly mirroring men's work in the pits (Williamson 1982). Women's heavy burden of domestic labour was to some extent lessened by the introduction of pit head baths⁸, but gendered distinctions within coal-mining communities continued to be more clearly defined than in much of Britain. The gendered division of labour has been central to how broader identity processes have been ascribed gendered characteristics, occupational and gendered identities being jointly-constituted (see Massey 1995). However, mining was not always organised along such rigidly gendered lines; John (1980) documents the experiences of the pit brow 'lasses' during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and indeed it was not until 1972 that the last of the female surface workers were finally made redundant (Leonard 1991: 130).

Within the modern formulation of coalmining, there has been considerable implicit emphasis upon women's (invisible) place within the domestic sphere (Wight 1993; Williamson 1982; Dennis et al 1956) based upon the sexual division of labour. This has served the capitalist class through providing paid workers with unpaid services, otherwise obtained privately and expensively. This phenomenon has been facilitated by the lack of an infrastructure in South Wales until quite recently, which provided women with the option of industrial employment, as for example, existed with the Lancashire cotton industry. The few women who found work in the pit canteens faced huge wage differentials which reflected the patriarchal culture of mining communities: the highest paid female workers earned less than the lowest paid male worker (Campbell 1984). Where women were able to engage in paid labour, it tended to be part-time, facilitating their continued responsibility for the majority of the domestic workload.

⁸ Which was authorised in 1911, but not generally introduced until after nationalisation, despite lobbying from the Women's Labour League.

The normalisation of a male breadwinner model was reinforced through an ideology prioritising the 'family wage', and a patriarchal culture which encouraged role segregation through emphasising of the importance of women's maintenance of kinship ties and an ethos of male homosociability established through shared work and leisure experiences. These values were promoted through a dominant discourse which upheld the desirability of marriage and close familial relations, by allying them with 'respectable' connotations. Skeggs (1997a) has suggested that since working-class women have traditionally been able to mobilise scant resources in comparison to men, their adherence to culturally-validated forms of behaviour should be interpreted in terms of the cultural and symbolic capital which is acquired through exhibiting a particular type of 'femininity'. Gendered behaviour in this light, can be interpreted as representing a manifest embodiment of class interests. This has led to a situation, however, where while men's experiences might coincide with conventional assumptions about masculinity, it has been less easy to reconcile the rather unglamorous lives of women in coalmining communities with suppositions about 'femininity' positioned at the opposite end of that spectrum.

The gendered organisation of the social structures associated with coalmining and men's implied domination of the public sphere, systematically excluded women both from the labour market, and from knowledge of, or participation in, the political forum, as Campbell has documented: 'mining communities demonstrate the effects of patriarchal dominance in the trade union movement. For the labour movement has been used by and for men to the total exclusion of women's interests: it is a movement effectively hijacked by the men's movement.' 1986: 251). This has meant that in areas traditionally dominated by heavy industry, the processes by which men and women developed a sense of class consciousness have been substantively different. However, traditional class analyses have presented an explanation of how class formation is experienced only for men, a deficiency which is now being addressed (Hunt 1980; Skeggs 1997a).

While men's collective consciousness in coalmining communities was fostered institutionally through workplace trade union organisation, the NCLC, educational opportunities, and their greater access to and familiarity with the structures of the local labour movement, women's awareness of their class positioning was experienced less

formally, encountered largely in terms of the exploitation which they perceived their menfolk to experience at the hands of the capitalist infrastructure, and via their restriction, along with female relatives and friends, to the private sphere. It is therefore imperative, not least in a context where economic restructuring is bringing more and more women into the labour market, that an investigation into structured processes of identification should recognise the gender differential in the approaches which have been adopted as a result of women's lack of formal workplace organisation in such regions. The distinctive organisation of women's lives in traditional working-class communities has been such that they have approached class in a non-solidaristically organised fashion, although this is not to say that they have been unaware of its existence and consequences (Gibson-Graham 1996), as the evidence of this thesis will demonstrate. However, this has proved problematic for traditional class theorists who have subsequently overlooked their class experiences, and women's class positioning has long posed a dilemma for polls such as the General Household Survey, which have tended to classify them according to the men 'heading' their household.

Women's confinement to the private sphere, has of course, made it inherently difficult for historians to develop an accurate account of their experiences (Francis 1980), both because of the difficulties of collecting oral history evidence from an 'invisible' population, but also because the private sphere has failed to raise the degree of academic interest generated by more formalised activities. Thus women's experiences in these regions have remained under-documented. Women living in coalmining communities have tended to be solely responsible for domestic labour, and for the budgeting of household resources, which has put them under considerable pressure amid mass redundancies and the restriction of assets. Separate spheres also extended beyond activities associated with work, reflected for example, in leisure behaviour, women tending to adopt home-based pursuits associated with the family and the crafts, that is, ventures which *contributed* something to the home, while men have tended to socialise in the public sphere (Wight 1993; Waddington et al 1991) usually in the form of clubs and sport, although there has been more convergence in these activities since the 1984/5 Strike (Measham and Allen 1994).

Family structure itself has tended to be fairly conservative, emphasising the importance of wider kinship ties, the maintenance of which is assumed to be women's responsibility (as in Rosser and Harris' (1983) Swansea study, conducted during the 1960s). This was reinforced

by the geographically contained character of coalmining communities, served by an underdeveloped transport infrastructure; several generations tended to live in close proximity. Illegitimacy and cohabitation are still fairly unusual (Betts 1994) among Valleys' 'insiders', and are somewhat frowned upon, although they have increasingly become an option for younger women deprived of economic status (individually or through their potential partners), but desiring the transition into the adult world which motherhood provides. This conservatism in the private realm might initially appear to be in contradiction with the region's public sector history of radical labour politics during the twentieth century. The empirical chapters examine whether these distinctively gendered identities have been transformed with the decline of coalmining, and the opening up of labour markets to women's employment.

Dicks *et al.* (1998) recently studied coalmining communities facing up to the effects of industrial restructuring, and observed that health-care providers displayed an implicit endorsement of women's traditional roles, in particular regarding their caring networks as the glue which held the communities together. This finding illustrates how internal and external actors interact to uphold traditional gendered identities. In continuing to position women as primary carers, these providers effectively endorse a monolithic conceptualisation of masculinity, apprehending men as redundant *workers* rather than as potential carers. However, women's continued responsibilities as carers, taken in combination with recent expectations placed upon them to engage in labour market activity, has resulted in their shouldering a 'dual responsibility', as men's diminished relationship with the labour market has not translated into an increased interaction in the domestic sphere (Charles 1990a; Morris 1985).

Men's dominance of the public sector and women's dependence and relative isolation within the home, however, was challenged by the experiences of the 1984/5 Miners' Strike which, together with industrial restructuring, called into question the continued expediency and justification for such arrangements. The thesis examines whether these patterns have been challenged or have reverted in the aftermath of the Strike's cataclysmic impact, thus feeding into broader theoretical debates about how industrial restructuring affects social organisation, particularly in terms of occupational and gendered identities. First however, in order to

understand the context of social transformation, it is necessary to engage in a brief analysis of the experiences and shorter-term implications of the 1984/5 Strike.

1.45 The 1984/5 Miners' Strike

The 1984/5 Miners' Strike began as a response to the Conservative Government's policy of closing 'uneconomic' pits. Coal-mining communities correctly interpreted this as a prelude to a wider programme of scaling down the industry in favour of a handful of 'super-pits'⁹, in the transition to a reliance upon gas and nuclear power. This posed a direct threat to the occupational expectations and social organisation of whole villages, since the coal-mining industry has tended to be geographically isolated from alternative forms of production. The 1984/5 Strike then, was a political strike in that it sought not wage increases or improved conditions, but was called in defence of 'a way of life': the continued existence of communities and the provision of skilled employment for current and future generations of men. Mick McGahey, the Communist Vice President of the NUM surmised the basic tenet of the Strike as being, 'We will not be constitutionalised out of existence' (Samuel 1986: xii). Support was particularly strong in the South Wales Valleys, involving around half a million people, and one of the lowest return-to-work rates in the country (Francis and Rees 1989). With the sequestration of NUM funds in August 1985, the support of the communities became increasingly central to the durability of the strike effort.

The 1984/5 Strike is of particular significance in developing an understanding of social organisation and transformation in coalmining communities for three main reasons. First, the running-down of the coal industry to which the Strike was a response, represented an attack upon a 'way of life' and henceforth met with a widespread community-based resistance. The psychological impact upon coalminers of their transformation in the post-war years from one of the most politicised and industrially developed occupational groups in Britain, into a series of powerless 'imagined communities', should not be under-estimated. The miners recognised the *fait accompli* embodied in the pit closure programme long before the rest of Britain and sought to defend their way of life against what, in retrospect, may have been insurmountable odds. This was to be their last chance, since communities

organised around the social institution of the Miners' Welfare appeared to have a limited future in their existent form in the absence of the structure provided by the coalmining industry. Indeed, the continued coherence of communities was tested to the limit, and endurance of the Strike's hardships was only possible through a sharing of communal resources, and the manifestation of what Samuel (1986) has tagged a 'wartime spirit'. Community resources hitherto fading or taken for granted were drawn upon; latent symbolic capital was transformed into manifest assets.

Secondly the Strike was remarkable for the active role which women played in its orchestration and the for politicising effect it had upon them (Seddon 1996; Measham & Allen 1994; Leonard 1991; Swansea Women's History Group 1985). Women's initial involvement in the strike effort in terms of fund-raising, organisation, public-speaking and picketing was qualitatively different from their involvement in previous strikes, and is best explained by their understanding that this strike threatened their long-term future as evidenced in campaigning slogans such as 'Close a Pit, Kill a Community'¹⁰. Women's diverse experiences during the Strike had the effect of politicising them in various ways and increasing their self-confidence. For many, it was the first time that they had access to the formal political world, and the impact of pit closures in their immediate world allowed them to personalise politics. Leonard (1991) has suggested that the Strike was a crucial point from which women began to re-evaluate their traditional positioning within their families and communities, and work towards negotiating more equitable personal relationships. Although this may have been the case, particularly among women playing an active role in the Women's Support Groups, it was also to an extent countered by the re-assertion of traditional values in the period immediately after the Strike (Charles 1990a). With the crisis concluded, it was difficult to maintain the Strike's momentum. However, the significance of women's involvement in the 1984/5 Strike should not be underestimated, representing as it does one of the most important events in the history of working-class feminism. The longer-term politicising impact of the Strike upon women living within coalmining communities, and its various implications, requires a more detailed examination.

⁹ Such as the oft-mentioned 'sweetener' of the proposed site at Margam.

¹⁰ 'Cau Pwll, Lladd Cymuned'.

Finally the Strike represented a key historical moment when the values and ideals of the labour movement were regenerated, and alliances of solidarity forged with outside interest groups who had also suffered under the excesses of Thatcherism. These included gay and lesbian groups, black welfare groups, and the Greenham Common women. Women were particularly crucial in developing these alliances, perhaps because their inexperience of the Political field was such that their prejudices about appropriate forms of political organisation were less rigid. Hence they were able to develop a broader interpretation of politics than simply that affecting their own communities. In particular their striking experiences better positioned them to interpret the Conservative Government's treatment of minority groups within a context of a long-term free market inspired economic strategy. Women's experience was thus in many ways educational, and it has been fundamental in the formation of a new political agenda for coalmining communities, the values of which have led directly to the foundation of community regeneration and self-help schemes such as the DOVE workshop, credit unions and Amman Valley Enterprise (see Cope *et. al* 1996 for a full account of these and other responses). Their concerns swelled from the localist to the national and the international, for example, in campaigning for the application of sanctions against the apartheid system of South Africa during the late 1980s. This was mirrored in organisational forms employed on a sliding geographical scale, matching men's political organisation: local lodges and women's support groups; the South Wales section of the NUM and Welsh Women Against Pit Closures; the NUM and Women Against Pit Closures; and Links, an organisation established by a group of miners' wives in 1986 to communicate their campaigns to other interested parties.

Several studies (Waddington *et al.* 1991; Warwick and Littlejohn 1992) have examined the period of the Miners' Strike as a manifestation of a unique political energy, and have made projections as to the longer-term significance of these experiences. Waddington *et al.* (1991) suggested that feminist predictions regarding role reversal have been somewhat hasty, and reported some evidence of men's greater participation in domestic tasks, but regarded this involvement as at best supplementary, and not constituting a significant transformation to gendered roles. They suggested that the changes which had occurred were by no means universal and should be regarded in the context of wider social change: 'what has been happening to mining communities can be seen as a microcosm of fundamental shifts in the economic, political and cultural life of the nation' (1991: 179). Warwick and Littlejohn's

research (1992) carried out during 1986 and 1987 came to similar conclusions, revealing that while women's Strike experiences had fuelled their desire for greater autonomy, a highly gendered division of labour continued to prevail within coalmining communities, men providing at best only piecemeal assistance within the domestic sphere. However, both of these studies were conducted relatively recently after the Strike. More than a decade on, and in the context of a more obviously long-term restructuring of local labour markets, this project is well placed to investigate how traditional coal-mining identities have been transformed. In particular it examines how women have interacted with a whole range of political and feminist identities which became available to them amid transformed circumstances, existing both within and outside of the traditional confines of the Labour Party.

This latter point is relevant because women living in coalmining communities have traditionally sought to make sense of their lives not through their exploitation by men, but via capitalist exploitation, and have been influenced in this process by the experiences and political guidance of their menfolk. They have thus received relatively little exposure to explicitly feminist explanations. They have accepted their domesticity because they have understood it to be the only way in which their families could survive, and they have recognised the brutal conditions and exploitation to which their husbands were subject in the public sphere, and have not coveted such a role for themselves. In fact, their main objection to feminism as a distinctive ideology has been the antagonism which they have perceived it bearing towards men, with whom they have been united within a familial solidarity. Indeed, Campbell argued that women's active involvement in the Strike was only vindicated because, 'it was the acceptable face of women's liberation ... it was about *men*, not *women*: it was ostensibly about men's right to work ... Those socialists bewitched, bothered or bewildered by feminism could sleep soundly in their beds in the belief that in the coalfields, at least, the struggle had been heterosexualised.' (1986: 252). But Loach is optimistic about the effect of the Strike in terms of a feminist consciousness: 'If the argument against feminism is that class oppression is paramount, what better challenge could there be but from working class women who not only identified with the needs and requirements of their class and community, but who through personal struggle had glimpsed some of the oppression they feel in relation to men.' (1985: 170). A contemporary examination of identity provides

insight into the relevance of these early assessments of the 1984/85 Miners' Strike as acting catalytically upon women's understandings of feminist and/or class consciousness.

The programme of pit closures which followed the 1984/5 Strike, and the accompanying shift in national energy priorities towards gas and nuclear power have dramatically diminished the economic power of the coalmining industry. While a limited market remains, and has been utilised by Tower Colliery, for high-quality coal, it seems unlikely that demand will again match that experienced during the early twentieth century, or that international environmental-pollutant regulations would permit this to occur. Therefore the various socio-economic transformations experienced in the South Wales Valleys, and examined in this thesis, can be regarded as long-term phenomena, a return to pre-Strike social arrangements being unlikely. As individuals reconcile themselves to the loss of traditional certainties and search for alternative and new forms of employment, which are negotiated in terms of their broader social identifications, this process is likely to continue and have a significant impact upon established patterns of stratification. This thesis has adopted a processual approach to identity and class which draws attention to networks of relationships evolving over time, but which also highlights the interaction of structural forces in enabling and restraining particular types of behaviour. This approach is more suited to representing the co-presence of diversity and similarity within social organisation than both traditional modernist and postmodernist perspectives, and thus provides a productive contribution broader structure-agency debate.

1.5 The Organisation of the Thesis

The project of understanding social relationships in transition in the South Wales Valleys is brought together in a theoretical model, outlined here, but explored in greater depth in the conclusion, which consolidates the processual approach taken to identity and class, as they are employed to build an understanding of the relationships between structure, culture and agency, through examining dynamic networks of structured social relationships. The functioning of this model is pursued through the subsequent investigation in the empirical chapters of how 'cultural texture' or 'habitus' gives meaning to individuals' experiences as they negotiate alignments and difference. Centrally, it addresses how this cultural framework is related to individuals' structural circumstances and to the consequent

distribution of resources, but also how these experiences become translated into various kinds of social activity. The interconnections between axes of class and gender are examined in considering how structural inequalities such as economic location, educational credentialisation and prestige are gendered in various ways, and the extent to which the relationship between class and gender has become more complex as a result of social transformation.

The broader themes of the chapters - spatial, collective and personal identity processes - in examining the interconnections between various aspects of individuals' lives, investigate how gendered structures originating in labour market inequalities are mediated by the cultural texture of social relationships and are reflected in patterns of agency in public and private sphere activities. In illustrating these interdependencies, the thesis will demonstrate that sociologists engaged in the structure/agency debate should reject explanations of direct causality, and redirect their efforts towards addressing a more complex relationship in which culture performs a mediating role.

The following methodology chapter discusses how the research study was set up to examine these issues in the context of the South Wales Valleys, before moving on to consider how a structured account of identity processes, set in the South Wales Valleys contributes to a broader theoretical understanding of social organisation and transformation. The conceptual difficulty in isolating any 'component' of identity implies that the empirical chapters should not be considered individually but regarded as interconnected, together feeding into broader discussions about social organisation. This interconnectedness serves to illustrate the relational nature of identity processes which is theorised in this thesis. The empirical material then, is organised in terms of an imaginary and subdivided triptych, examining spatial (national, regional, local), collective (occupational, political, communal) and personal (familial, leisured, self-understanding) identities. This structure is both empirically driven, a result of the data themselves, and is conceptually-validated in that the three chapters correspond with the three component questions. Super-imposed across these discussions, and facilitated by the research methodology, is the theme of time, demonstrating the essentially temporal and therefore fluid nature of identity.

Chapter Two: Methodology

2.1 The research approach

The focus of this chapter is the approach used to examine how the identity process of a specific population have responded to external restructuring forces. The project was particularly concerned to highlight the various temporal and structured resources drawn upon by individuals in the development of narratives, and it sought to establish a methodology which extrapolated these elements and complemented the thesis's broader theoretical perspective.

Social scientific research has been generally approached within two broad paradigms, those of quantitative and qualitative research methods. In recent years qualitative methods have achieved wide recognition, particularly within sociology, as encompassing epistemological tools at least as legitimate as those employed by quantitative methods, the latter having previously been regarded as establishing greater scientific validity. Qualitative research includes methods such as semi-structured interviewing and participant observation, although the more traditionally quantitative survey method can also be adapted to produce qualitative data. The advantages of a qualitative approach for social scientific research include its provision of 'rich' data, which facilitates the development of exploratory theory, and places the emphasis upon a complex understanding of subjectivity rather than representativeness. While quantitative research may be better placed to test hypotheses by processing data using statistical tests, in situations where research questions are open, as in this project which consider transformative identity processes, qualitative methods are better suited to addressing the research questions and facilitating an interpretative approach. Specifically, semi-structured interviews were adopted as the primary method of data collection, by virtue of their enabling informants to develop reflexive and exploratory accounts. However, in that the interview schedules conformed to a broad (but individually adaptable) structure, comparisons could be made between individuals, and patterns and trends accordingly drawn out.

2.2 A feminist perspective on research

The research process and its incumbent methodology has been constantly informed by a feminist perspective. This is distinct from a positivist approach which searches for an ultimate and justifiable ‘truth’, in its recognition that there is no one ‘truth’, but rather a plurality of experiences and interpretations of these experiences, which depend upon an infinite number of variables. ‘Truths’ are not neutral assessments but the product of contextualisations; they are the product of their authors, and inescapably reflect their politics and positionings. A feminist perspective recognises the contradictions within people’s accounts (see for example Marshall’s (1986) analysis of women managers), and rather than taking these as undermining their authenticity, suggests that assumptions regarding a unitary theory of subjectivity be discarded in favour of a reflexive approach, both context-specific and in terms of the researcher (self-reflexivity). Gender relations are a fundamental aspect of social structures but since this has been under-appreciated until fairly recently, people may be prone to reproducing certain ‘regimes of truth’, and contradictions within their accounts may point to underlying and as yet unacknowledged inequalities.

A feminist perspective also calls upon the researcher to recognise the significance in the research process of her own inherent biases and background. That is, the researcher is not a blank canvas, but the product of her experiences and perceptions which ultimately and uniquely inform her interactions within the research process (section 2.9). Only by acknowledging and contextualising our inherent biases can we produce honest accounts. This perspective, which informs the approach taken here has been termed ‘situated knowledge’, and is most commonly associated with Haraway’s (1991) work. Situated knowledge questions ‘truths’ and looks at what or whom those truths have concealed. It is ideally suited to this project since established categories and theories have failed to explain recent processes of transformation and reconfiguration in the South Wales Valleys, and it is therefore necessary to interrogate them and search for underlying and explanatory complexities.

Feminists have also stressed the value of working within a multiplicity of research methods and of interacting with a variety of academic disciplines, and while they have stressed the importance of giving women a voice, they have also sought to recognise other aspects of

difference and inequality such as class and age. Within this research project, the emphasis has been upon gendered differences rather than an exclusive focus on women's experiences, and it has correspondingly looked for patterns of similarity and difference both between and across gender, and accorded importance to a plurality of variables, of which class is identified as the most important one. In doing this, only one interpretation of the subject matter is offered, which is by no means the only one possible, but it is that which makes the most sense in these circumstances.

It is necessary, at the outset, to outline my relationship to the research matter, which has triggered the investigation, and which informs the research process. I was brought up in a Welsh industrial city (Swansea) and have been actively involved in the local Labour Party as Sketty Youth Officer, attending various meetings and actively campaigning and canvassing on behalf of party and single-issue political interests such as CND and the Anti-Apartheid Movement. After taking a politics degree, I returned to Wales to work voluntarily for the local MP researching the history of the local labour movement (Parry 1996). A contributory element in this decision is that my father's side of the family were coal-miners working the eastern district of the South Wales coalfield, although self-knowledge was not the conscious motivation for the project (see conclusion). All of these factors meant that I approached the research from a distinctive angle which no doubt was influential in how I interpreted its findings. Without this background it seems unlikely that I would have formulated the idea for the research project, which was to understand the dramatic changes experienced by the South Wales miners since the 1984/5 Strike, and to engage with the various puzzles as I perceived them, rather than to prove a particular hypothesis. In entering a new discipline (sociology) and a new city (Southampton) where my academic and social resources were more limited, at times I struggled to acquire the new resources which would authenticate my work, but it became increasingly clear that my background, which informed the research, provided fundamental (cultural) capital, most obviously in terms of its motivational power. Indeed Harding considers it a bonus for feminist researchers, "that the inquirer him/herself be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter" since only through such a process can, "the researcher appear to us not as an individual anonymous voice of authority, but as a real individual with concrete, specific desires and interests." (1987: 9)

2.3 Approaching research questions

The semi-structured nature of the interviews sought to explore the complexity and dynamism of identity processes. In order to cover a broad range of identity components, interview schedules were divided into various sub-sections which examined personal biography, community, nationality, the 1984/5 Strike, politics and future expectations. These focused on respondents' experiences, views and perceptions, and facilitated a consideration of the various interdependent and discrete elements embodied in 'identity'. Questions were 'moveable' in order to coincide with the degree of overlap between the various components of people's identities and the widely differentiating structures of people's lives and experiences. This methodology is in line with Holloway's (1989) argument that an examination of experiences as they are voiced and given meaning by interviewees leads to a greater understanding of the processes of identity and consciousness.

The temporal component of identity was considered through the interviewing process itself, which explicitly encouraged people to engage with the past, the present and the future and to examine commonalities and contradictions as they were perceived. However, a further consideration of temporality was embodied in the structure of the interview process, interviews having been conducted in three distinctive stages or 'waves', which coincided with macro transformation. The pilot study was conducted in January 1997 under a Conservative Government, the first stage of interviewing during May-August 1997 after the landslide Labour general election victory, and the second stage over March-April 1998, that is, after the September referendum assenting to a Welsh Assembly and amid a discussion about where it would be held. It was perhaps co-incidental that these took place against dramatic political change on the national stage, likely to have important local and regional implications, but that such occurred complemented and emphasised the temporally-situated nature of the fieldwork. This was also facilitated by (telephone) re-interviews with key informants, conducted approximately six months after their initial interview, which allowed an assessment to be made of the significance of time in attitudinal processes. Re-interviewed informants were selected on the basis of their covering a broad mixture of experience and on the basis of a good degree of inter-personal rapport having been developed during the face-to-face interview stage, suggesting that the interaction in the less personal context of the

telephone interview would provide more detailed responses and best address the research questions.

2.4 The informants

The interviewing schedule was also distinctive in a second way, in terms of the socio-economic characteristics of the informants approached in successive 'waves'. While the overall sample was broadly based in terms of gender and age (demonstrating normal curve distribution when plotted graphically), and the pilot comprised a particularly heterogeneous mix of individuals, the latter two waves were distinguished primarily in terms of male occupational identity. 'First-wave' informants were selected on the basis of a male member of the household (which could be themselves) having a 'former coalmining identity' in that he had formerly, but no longer worked in the coalmining industry. Conversely, 'second-wave' informants were selected on the basis of having a male member of the household who continued to work in the coalmining industry, that is, with a 'current coalmining identity'. The organisation of the field work into two distinctive sets of informants allowed comparisons to be drawn between contemporaneous and retrospective attachments to coalmining, and to consider what part these played in broader identity processes.

The pilot interviews comprised the most heterogeneous range of informants, in that potential informants were identified using broad parameters: individuals who had participated in the 1984/5 Strike effort. In particular, their geographical location covered a larger area than first and second wave informants. Piloting consisted of eight interviews, three of which were with couples, in addition to a focus group organised with members of the Labour Women's Council Section in Neath. These generated a total of twenty-one informants. This process highlighted issues regarding the suitability of individual versus couple versus group environments for the 'formal' interviews. Regarding the use of focus groups, organisational obstacles included transcription difficulties, personality clashes between interviewees, and pressure to conform to a 'group' (or party line) view. An interview environment comprising two people interviewed together was identified as providing the most supportive research context and consequently the more 'rounded' analysis, individuals interacting with each other's responses and providing the most consistent and considered collective memory. A

decision was therefore taken that while potential informants would be approached on an individual basis, these being most easily identified in the recommendation process, as part of the introductory telephone call it would be made clear that where this was convenient and/or desired, the participation of other household members or friends was welcome.

The 'first-wave' interviews, conducted over a four-month period comprised twenty-three interviews, generating a total of twenty-eight informants. Although not exhaustively distinctive from the latter group of informants because of the need to establish contacts among current miners early on, this period of interviewing concentrated largely upon the experiences of individuals from ex-mining families, the majority of whom continued to live in the Valleys. Two individuals who had moved away from the Valleys (to the southern coastal belt) were also interviewed to broaden the range of perspectives examined, as were key informants in community organisations. A central and perhaps defining element of this group were individuals active in the 1984/85 Strike. First-wave informants could be considered within four broad occupational groupings: the retired; the re-employed; the unemployed; and voluntary workers.

The 'second-wave' of research consisted of nineteen interviews (and twenty-one informants). These comprised a more tightly-defined group: people living in family relationships in which a male member of the household continued to be employed in coalmining. This did mean that there was a greater proportion of men than women in this sample, perhaps because the (female) partners of miners continue to be less 'visible', but also because the second group, representing a minority of the population, was more difficult to locate and consisted largely of men's former working colleagues. It seems likely that traditional gendered sociability patterns in combination with a snowballing method of sampling restricted access to recommendations based on cross-sex friendships. Additionally, the necessity for informants in this group to have an active household relationship with labour market, excluded an older and retired cohort. Second-wave informants were distinguished by three broad groups: Tower colliery miners and their wives; private-pit miners and their wives; and open-cast miners. Access difficulties were experienced in particular in connection with open-cast miners, a large proportion of whom were 'outsiders' temporarily resident in the area, and who were less integrated with 'traditional' miners, being therefore less identifiable using a snowballing method of sampling. This difficulty was overcome by looking at a self-

contained 'community' of open-cast miners associated with the East Pit Extension in the Amman Valley, rather than the open-cast miners associated with the more recently-arrived industry in the Neath and Dulais Valleys. Since these had few social contacts with the rest of the informants, they were largely approached through, and interviews conducted in the workplace. This did, however give rise to concerns regarding employer proximity and 'policing'. An additional apprehension was that workplace interviews restricted access to the wives of open-cast miners.

Informants lived largely in the Neath and Dulais Valleys, with a minority residing in the Swansea, Amman and Cynon Valleys (see map in chapter 3). Most were no longer able to find work in the village where they lived, and their search for suitable employment involved them travelling an average distance of fifteen miles (or thirty miles a day) to work. The Neath and Dulais Valleys are the two main valleys within the Neath constituency and had contained several working Coal Board pits during the 1984/85 Miners' Strike in addition to a proliferation of private pits, which until the wider programme of pit closures, had offered competitive rates of pay. However coal-mining now provides peripheral employment in these areas; although a large number of private pits remain they tend to be intransigent, employing only a handful of men who have little access to employment protection. While open-casting has been established in the Amman and Cynon Valleys for about fifty years, plans are now in motion for expansion into the Dulais Valley, which would bring an expansion of qualitatively different occupational identities (section 4.2). Tower Colliery at the upper end of the Cynon Valley has an unusually spatially differentiated (and younger) workforce, since having been the last colliery in the region to close, it was subject to transferrals from around the coalfield. In 1994 Tower was pronounced economically unviable by British Coal and was put out to tender. Under the shadow of another looming privatisation, 239 of Tower's workforce set up the Tower Employees' Buy-out team (TEBO) and raised £2 million pounds with which they mounted a successful bid to buy the colliery for themselves. On 2 January 1995 the miners walked back into their own colliery and over the past five years they have found long-term and profitable markets for their coal, while securing control over their own future, a 'third way' forward for working-class organisation, which contrasts favourably with the alternatives of closure or working in the privatised industry under a management buy-out, such as in Betws in Ammanford.

Particular attention was given to the village of Crynant (where 20 informants lived) so that a 'feel' for contemporary community relations could be established. Although it is difficult to typify any particular population as 'normal', Crynant is perhaps distinctive in that it is more Welsh-speaking than most Valley villages (a third of its population being fluent Welsh-speakers). And while Crynant informants conceded that its proximity to Neath had to some extent turned it into a commuter town, where there might be less deprivation, nothing in the census data (which is, however, now dated) suggested that it was the centre of any particular degree of affluence (for example, measured in terms of home or car ownership).

The areas studied are most easily considered in terms of the boundaries of the Neath electoral constituency. The rationale for this was that I was familiar with the history of this area, having previously researched it, and furthermore my established contacts could act as the basis for a snowballing method of sampling. A minority of informants living in the Neath and Swansea suburbs, but originally from the Valleys, were also interviewed to examine what had motivated this decision, and whether when Valleys' natives left that region, their sense of attachment to place weakened or was qualitatively transformed.

2.5 Negotiating access

The research was initiated by approaching local Labour Party contacts and friends made while working on the previous research project. These provided a handful of suggestions as to suitable key informants. At that time I had also been asked to speak at a local Labour Party meeting on the labour movement historical research, and used the opportunity to distribute survey forms. These covered basic biographical details, and were essentially utilised as a means of recruiting potential interviewees. Out of a total fifty voluntarily reserved forms, thirty were completed and returned, generating fifteen willing informants (individuals who had filled out the name and address section). Of these five fell into the relevant sample group (belonging to a mining family at the time of the Strike and residing in a particular geographical area). These, together with the earlier suggestions, comprised the initial piloting sample. The in-built bias of this method is recognised, in that it tended to generate informants who were Labour Party enthusiasts, but I found this acceptable for two reasons. Firstly Neath is a politically unusual constituency, even amid the Valleys, with a

high-proportion of its electorate voting for the Labour Party and engaging in associated labour movement activity (section 4.3). Secondly, I had reason to believe that the political distribution of the sample became more heterogeneous over time, as informants engaged with the purposes of the research project, recognised the wide application of the interview and made appropriate recommendations. The snowballing method of sampling also facilitated informants being increasingly tightly targeted as the fieldwork progressed. This was particularly important during the second-wave interviews, current miners being a proportionally smaller part of the population, and the desire to sample three discrete occupational groupings calling for informants to make very specific recommendations.

Initially potential informants were approached through a letter which introduced myself and the intended study, and asked them to complete a form as to whether they would be willing to participate in the research. A pre-paid envelope was enclosed to facilitate returns. However this approach did not prove productive, achieving a return rate of only ten percent, of which several people ruled themselves out because they misinterpreted their suitability. Additionally, it proved too self-selecting, respondents being particularly politically active, and insufficient numbers of 'normal' people being involved. Therefore it was decided to approach individuals directly, using the telephone. Despite my initial apprehensions about appearing pushy and intruding into people's personal space, this method produced a 100% recruitment rate, and so became a permanent part of the research process. It had the additional advantage of allowing people to question me about who I was, what the research entailed, what sort of questions might be asked, and how I had become interested in the subject matter. This opportunity proved productive at a later stage, in that informants had frequently spent some time considering our telephone conversation and had made notes on points which they wished to raise, and had also used the interim period to consider further potential contacts. Several had gone to the trouble of locating press cuttings and videos, which they allowed me to view and even borrow. Finally, the approach permitted flexibility regarding the timing and location of the interview, which was particularly important for second-wave informants, who were frequently engaged in shift work, and whose 'free' time was therefore more fragmented.

Regarding the location of the interviews, I was flexible in offering my own home, or alternatively suggesting that we meet on neutral territory such as a nearby cafeteria or public

house. However, to my surprise, considering that informants had no idea who I was but perhaps facilitated by the fact that was recommended by a friend or neighbour, most suggested I came to their homes, where I received an overwhelming hospitality. In a few cases, where contact had been established with an employer, the workplace was designated as a suitable location, and I was allocated the use of a suitably private room for conducting the interview.

Although in each interview, one particular person had been suggested as an informant, I made it clear that I was interested in the views of anyone else in the household who wished to participate, and this produced an eclectic mixture of interviewing situations, where whoever else was in the house at the time of our meeting tended to wander in, sit down and listen for a while, before gradually becoming involved in the discussion. This wider scope of informants made available through this process also accelerated the snowballing method of sampling.

2.6 The interview process

Although throughout this thesis the shorthand of 'informant' is used, the process was frequently more conversational and interactive. The interview format itself produced some interesting gendered dimensions, in that the men were often more comfortable with the structure of the formal interview, sometimes allowing very little space for interjection, while women tended to take a more informal approach, and were interested in my own opinions and experiences. They were also broadly more initially hesitant, but this tended to be quickly overcome, and could be countered by reconfiguring the interview schedule so that more open questions were left until a later stage. I quickly discovered that interviews provided the most interesting and useful information if their styles were dictated by informants.

I introduced myself to informants by saying that I was a student studying at Southampton University but originally from Swansea, and by explaining how that person had been recommended to me. I felt that these were important issues in terms of establishing trust and authenticity. In particular, I felt my student status facilitated the research process in that it was non-threatening and approved of by many informants, mining communities having

established their own institutions which encourage and foster the development of a political education, such as the NCLC classes, and my own degree being in politics. Additionally, the majority of informants had children or relatives in university and were generally sympathetic to the demands of higher education and the difficulties in finding employment, particularly in the local context. In this, it should be acknowledged that my age, gender and nationality inevitably impacted upon the interviewing process, but it is reasonable to suppose these were non-threatening, and indeed several of informants adopted a pat/maternalistic air towards me, which included 'feeding me up' and hugging me as I left the house.

Interviews were semi-structured, comprising a range of structured & open-ended questions (see Appendix 2 for interview schedule template). They thus produced both uniform and varied qualitative data. The organisation of the interview into this format was useful in emphasising the nuances of difference between individuals, in giving them their own voice, and in allowing me to develop a greater sense of connectedness to the data. In particular the semi-structured interview format was advantageous in emphasising the fluidity of identity, more open-ended questions allowing ideas to be developed and qualified, and in terms of revealing the contradictions inherent in identity. It also facilitated the development of rapport between myself and the informants, encouraging a tangential personal analysis, which hopefully provided a more relaxing and non-threatening environment for interviewees. This method certainly produced an informative and detailed account which was productive in terms of my own generation of explanatory theory.

Interview questions were devised to address the research questions on the basis of my prior knowledge of the subject matter, but were also informed by the ongoing interview process, piloting in particular allowing minor adaptations to be made to the schedule, and highlighting fruitful areas of further enquiry, prior to the selection of a more specific sample of informants. The temporally-spaced 'waves' of interviewing also facilitated on-going adaptations to be made to the interview questions, responding to immediate concerns identified by informants. This was then complemented by the non-standardised sequencing of questions, promoting the tailoring of the interview format to personal specifications.

Interviews were taped and transcribed immediately afterwards. Interviews varied in length, ranging from three-quarters of an hour to two-and-a-half hours, but averaging at about one

hour. At the end of each interview, there generally occurred a more informal phase after the scheduled questions, when informants raised supplementary issues and asked me more about myself and my conclusions regarding the research thus far. I made it clear that while extremely useful, taping was not compulsory, and only twice informants declined to be taped, in one case because of a lack of confidence, and in the second because she did not wish her comments to be recorded verbatim. Confidentiality was ensured, and it was explained that each informant would be provided with a pseudonym in quoting from their accounts, and that no identifying information, such as where someone was a councillor, would be made public. Transcripts were later made available to informants, and they were given the opportunity to make modifications. These, however, were minimal and limited to ensuring that I had correctly understood a point, and expressing embarrassment over the language used. Telephone re-interviews, the re-capping interviews conducted with informants already interviewed more comprehensively, were not transcribed for two reasons. Firstly the cost of suitable technology was prohibitive, and secondly it was felt that even assuming that respondents accented to the method, it was a more covert approach to data collection. Instead comprehensive notes were taken during telephone conversations. Direct quotation from these interviews is therefore not possible.

It is worth commenting on the dialectical nature of the interviewing process, in that the acquisition of new information inevitably affects the researcher's ideas and the consequential direction of the interviewing process, be it consciously or subconsciously. However, this was, to a large extent, advantageous to the research process in that the understandings developed by my interviewing experiences enabled increasingly relevant questions to be posed, resulting in a more rounded and, hopefully for the informant, more satisfying and personalised interview.

The significance of personality upon the direction and 'success' of the interview should also be noted. Although I did not introduce myself as having any sort of political agenda, it is perhaps inevitable that individual dynamics impacted upon the process, rapport developing more naturally with some individuals than others. My decision to go with what felt 'right' - acting as the more neutral observer with informants with whose opinions I found unsettling, and allowing a more interactive interview to develop with those who obviously relished engaging in that sort of a dialogue and appeared genuinely interesting in finding out more

about the project and myself - was established during the piloting phase as most productive in terms of the personality differences which inevitably affect the interviewing process. However, the issue of partisanship is an important one, and it is inevitable that a researcher coming from a different part of the political spectrum would have approached the issues differently and generated qualitatively different data. It is of course possible that I have been denied access to potential informants: I am led to this conclusion by my encounter with an informant whom I met at Tower colliery. Upon receiving a neutral introduction to the project, he immediately started voicing (reactionary) opinions and engaged in heated debate with other miners in the room. Nevertheless he suggested that I heard his opinions at greater length, and I took his contact number. However it was extremely difficult arranging a suitable time for the interview, which perhaps suggested that he had heard from colleagues that its content would be of little interest to himself, and when we finally met up he appeared to have already formulated an agenda regarding the interview's direction.

Informant reliability was an issue which was raised when I interviewed a friend's mother during the piloting phase, whom I was aware was answering questions somewhat imaginatively. This ties in with the tendency of some individuals to tell you 'what you want to hear', and there is little the researcher can do to counteract it, but check the data for internal consistency. However, here contradictions may be indicative of an undertow of considerable complexity, rather than an inconsistent narrative. Additionally, contradictions are to a large degree inevitable in studying identity, the perceived frequently being more important than 'reality' (section 5.4). Cotterill (1992) has drawn attention to the issue of the difference between 'public' and 'private' accounts of experiences, in particular how they can be utilised by informants as a 'coping strategy' in dealing with an unfamiliar situation in which they may feel compelled to please the interviewer with what they perceive to be the 'correct' responses to her questions. Within the research project I attempted to minimise this tendency by asking the same question in different ways at various points of the same interview, which allowed me to develop some degree of understanding of the composition of informants' narratives.

2.7 Ethical concerns

An issue which generated increasing concern during the interviewing process was that of 'cut-and-running'. Whilst in most interviews I felt a natural process of 'closure' had been established, it is difficult for me to imagine the old wounds which may have been opened up during interviews, and in some cases I got the distinct impression that informants were lonely and that more was desired of me than the interview process itself. Several individuals had gone considerably out of their way to help me and I felt a certain degree of guilt upon leaving them, that insufficient reciprocity had been established. While I would naturally come into contact with some of the informants again as a result of our shared interests, and also through the telephone re-interviews, I experienced more difficulty in dealing with how I should best reciprocate the demands of others whom I felt neither qualified nor able to suitably assist.

At times I also became aware that I was being given access to privileged information. This was dealt with in a number of ways. The simplest was when the informant forewarned me of the sensitive nature of information which they were about to disclose, and either requested that I turned off the tape recorder while they did so, or else trusted me to ensure that these disclosures remained 'off the record'. The second method involved ensuring clarity over how the material would be used: that certain sections of the transcripts would not be quoted from or archived, and would be kept between myself and the informant. Telephone interviews often provided a good opportunity in which to further this understanding, particularly since by this time I had been able to 'digest' the information provided in interviews and was alert to their potential identifying or confidential contents. This process was also facilitated by informants being given access to their transcripts and possessing ultimate control over how the information was used. This did not restrict the overall research process, since sensitive information was of most value in contextualising particular points and developing my own understandings of the environment, rather than in the explicit development of theory.

2.8 Supplementary research approaches

Although participant observation was not employed as an explicit research approach, certain opportunities were utilised to interact with informants and other community members in group settings, for example in attending village coffee mornings, visiting councillors' chambers, common rooms, an open-cast site, chatting at the local MP's constituency office and at the Tower Colliery canteen. In all these environments I enjoyed considerable hospitality and was usually taken 'under the wing' of one particular person, who took it upon themselves to introduce me to others, and to provide gossip relating to various encounters. This was an important part of the research process, facilitating my development of a more complex understanding of environments, and providing an opportunity for networking and establishing rapport. It also provided a chance to make various observations, which were noted in my research diary, for example in terms of the persistence of gendered environments.

During the course of the research, particular attention was devoted to community-based organisations such as the DOVE workshop, and the Dulais Valley Partnership, in considering their place in the fostering of communal attachments. In addition to studying the literature detailing their establishment and examining various reports, I also interviewed people involved in these organisations at different levels, in order to develop a more rounded analysis of how they were perceived and behaved, than a simple encounter with their 'public face'.

A supplementary part of the research process was to keep a scrap-book of press cuttings. My membership of several Welsh societies also gave me access to various reports and journals at a time of dramatic change within the Welsh political infrastructure. The research data were additionally considered in the context of various archival, census and local government data. Throughout the research process a research diary was maintained, which recorded methodological decisions and difficulties as they arose. Finally, my fieldwork diary provided a record of 'important' events, personal experiences and feelings about the research, in addition to observations on apparently striking or unexpected events and responses, such as the fact that most miners seem to keep a dog! These all provided an invaluable context against which to consider the interview data.

2.9 Data analysis

While my approach is a long way removed from the classical philosophy of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967), this was nonetheless an influence, and in order to produce situated knowledge, it is necessary to acknowledge its part in the research process. Obviously, the call for feminist researchers to be self-reflexive is not easily reconciled with the demands for grounded theorists to act as 'neutral' investigators. While as a feminist researcher I find it difficult to imagine myself or any other researcher coming to a project without personal baggage which might affect its outcome, I also found grounded theory appealing in that I was interested in generating theory from data rather than making data fit a theory. In essence, my research questions were open, a puzzle which motivated me to embark on the project. That the theory I eventually developed in fact complemented my background, was a phenomenon which I came to comprehend only after the thesis had been drafted (section 6.2). This was no doubt exacerbated by my background, which meant that I had not developed the resources associated with sociological theory until a later stage. The empirical chapters then, were to a large degree driven by the data, and that this process was facilitated by my analytical method. My approach was at odds with analytic induction, and in which potential hypotheses are posed against which the data is compared, in order to reinforce or reformulate hypotheses, and it was at this stage, that the influence of grounded theory proved most resourceful.

I undoubtedly came to the project equipped with various ideas and prejudices, resulting from the fact that it was essentially the 'part two' of an earlier project, and as such sought to engage with the uncertainties highlighted by the former. However, the data rather than these ideas, provided the emergent themes of the research. Some of my ideas did prove relevant, but they were simplistic, and in the context of the data, they were variously developed, interrogated or abandoned.

Essentially the analysis was developed within the context of a working framework which flagged up concepts and issues of potential relevance, and which had driven the interviewing schedule. Then began a process of familiarisation with the transcripts, after which a

preliminary coding scheme was developed. This can be considered as 'open coding' (Strauss 1987) or the initial way in which the data were categorised and conceptualised, a stage which was experimented with in several different ways. This was followed by 'axial coding' (Strauss & Corbin 1990) in which via the final coding system, interlinking was demonstrated between categorisations, employing variables such as gender and age. It became apparent that the decontextualisation of quotes within the thesis might be problematic in subtracting meaning from people's voices. This was dealt with by attaching basic details to quotes: pseudonym (demonstrating gender), age and occupation. These were considered to be important defining characteristics in terms of experiences and perceptions. Additionally brief anonymised pen portraits of all respondents are provided (see Appendix 1) for use by the reader to enhance their understanding of the relationship between perceptions and individual circumstances.

The development of codes led naturally to the development of preliminary concepts, themes and interpretations, which led eventually to the development of theories. However the process was not linear, but one of constant reflection and reconsideration which occurred over an extended period of time and throughout the interviews themselves. This is in line with Bryman and Burgess's (1994b) argument that qualitative data analysis cannot be defined as a distinctive phase within the research process, since it is inevitably interwoven with the experiences of research design and data collection. Sutton (1987) for example, described his own experience of data analysis as cyclical, in his development of a 'process model of organisational death'. That the conceptualisation and theorising were on-going processes in my work, was accentuated by the temporally-stretched structure of the fieldwork. It was in this aspect of the data analysis that grounded theory was most influential, although I do not claim to have implemented these techniques in their entirety.

It should perhaps be noted in any analytical consideration, interviews are essentially contemporaneous, and the extent to which they can be used to develop longer-term conclusions is debatable. However, since this research focuses on change, and emphasises the dynamic nature of identity, I consider their implementation to be appropriate to the research.

The issue of why I chose not to implement a specially designed analytical computer package such as NUDIST or Ethnograph also warrants some discussion. These pieces of software were designed with grounded theory in mind, and since my own analytical technique does not correspond directly with its specifications, I felt their use might prove problematic. In particular, after studying the literature (Fielding and Lee 1991; Richards and Richards 1994), I was unconvinced that they offered analytic accomplishments which could not be achieved manually. Another consideration was the time and financial demands which employing computerised techniques would impose upon the project. A particular concern was that mechanised coding might impinge on the flexibility of the analytical process, the potentiality for re-coding being essential to my method. Another issue was that the software might produce overly mechanical and decontextualised data. The latter two concerns are apparently overcome in the most recent versions of the aforementioned packages, which have not yet been purchased by my university. Finally, I felt that the sample size of the research project was sufficiently small that my familiarity with the data was comprehensive, and that word-processing tools like the 'find' and 'cut' and 'paste' commands were therefore sufficient for the analytic processes.

The following chapter begins to engage with the empirical data, using it to address the research questions identified in chapter one. In using quotations to illustrate points, it should be noted that unless otherwise specified, where quotations appear they are representative of an attitude and are not isolated instances. For reasons of succinctness, quotations are generally limited to one example in each instance. In considering then, how social transformation can be addressed through examining identity processes, it is appropriate to begin in chapter three with an examination of spatial identity, which locates the experiences of industrial restructuring in the specific context of the South Wales Valleys.

Chapter Three: Spatial Identities

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the impact of restructuring processes upon the spatial attachments of the populations of the South Wales Valleys. It draws upon Massey's (1994, 1995) work in arguing that spatiality is of central significance in the development of social relationships, anchoring them within particular cultural understandings. Perspectives which have regarded space as determined purely by geographical boundaries are challenged, since spaces are also created by and from social relations. Social and spatial formations are co-present and mutually reinforcing, people's understandings of space being constituted through their engagement in social relationships, and likewise individuals' social relationships being the product of their spatial understandings. However, since social and spatial relations rarely provide an exact match for one another, spatial definitions are problematic, and spatiality must be approached reflexively. Space then, is considered here as actively constructed, dynamic and responsive to social transformation, rather than a static entity. Massey (1993b, 1994a) has been central among modern geographers pushing for such a progressive view of space, a conceptualisation which posits space as processual rather than fixed. In regarding spatiality as dynamic, relational and multi-layered then, this chapter argues that spatiality is most accurately regarded as a series of lenses employed by individuals in their actions and interactions, which colour the nature and meaning of their social experiences, and emphasise broader commonalities amid diversity. These spaces rarely correspond with neat geographical boundaries, but are dynamic, interweaving and sometimes antagonistic, as individuals become engaged in an on-going process of constructing, employing and re-employing spatial understandings in seeking to add meaning to their social experiences.

This approach is set against homogeneous theories of globalisation which suggest that spatiality has become increasingly stretched, reflecting an apparent elongation of social relationships in an interconnected world. Massey and Harvey have been foremost among theorists emphasising the uneven effects of capitalist development, such that 'global' effects are not experienced uniformly across spaces, nor by the individuals inhabiting a particular space. Through examining the spatial attachments of the population of the South Wales

Valleys, this chapter analyses the patterning of the emergent commonality and diversity among individuals inhabiting the same 'space', and draws attention to how the inequalities between people are formative of their spatial experiences. In analysing the extent to which globalisation has elongated their socio-spatial experiences, it affords a central place to the role of structures in facilitating and restricting these relationships. It employs an inclusive theoretical framework to reflect the diversity of individual experiences embodied within a population. Blanket theories of globalisation have told only a part of the story, and Massey and Harvey's reflections on how people cling to place amid globalisation, is particularly relevant to understanding how less privileged individuals have mobilised space in the South Wales Valleys in response to the transformations of restructuring.

Spatiality is considered in this thesis as multi-dynamic, simultaneously operating upon interwoven experiential 'levels', ranging from the imagined nation, to the semi-imagined region, and down to the familiar face-to-face interactions of locality or place. As Massey (1994) has pointed out, space is not a discrete and uncontested category, but interconnected with social relationships and temporality. Thus space is the subject of multiple definitions, reflecting a multiplicity of dynamic experiences. Spatial interpretations also intersect with one another, so that for example, localist attachments are affected by the particular type of nationality formulated by an individual, and likewise feelings of Welshness cannot be considered in isolation from the spatial awareness derived from living in a coalmining region. Spatial boundaries should therefore be regarded as permeable, and spatial 'levels' inter-related rather than hierarchical or oppositional. Attempts to assign a stable meaning to space have been linked to gendered Western positivist thought which conceptualises in terms of prioritised binary dualisms, such as time-space (Massey 1994a), and to exclusivist claims to power. This chapter develops a more inclusive understanding of spatiality, which regards spatial attachments as indiscrete and responsive to a spectrum of socio-economic influences. This approach is in line with the broader ambition of the thesis to challenge unitary histories, and its theoretical approach of conceptualising identity as processual, multi-layered and dynamic.

Capitalist society has played a crucial role in the creation of space, and in striving for maximum efficiency has produced spatially uneven development and a social polarisation of spaces. Beynon and Hudson (1993) rightly characterise this as a political problem, capital

inevitably being more mobile than labour. For example, capital might choose to invest in gas rather than coal as an energy resource, and has been more likely to do so under Conservative policies of market deregulation. However, it is less easy for individuals to make this kind of switch, their occupational mobility being negotiated amid a broader range of socio-economic influences, such as familial and spatial attachments. In terms of coalmining, it was convenient for capital, assessing space purely in terms of its profit-yielding capabilities, that mining workforces were organised into pit villages geographically clustered around collieries. This simplified recruitment procedures and ensured a compliant female population distanced from alternative employment and the public sphere in general, who supported the male workforce through the provision of (unpaid) domestic services.

As this example reveals, spatial divisions are essentially political, reflecting the possession and demonstration of power within a society. As Harvey put it, “those who command space can always control the politics of place” (1989: 234). Capital’s mobility and rationalising reconstitution of space, in engaging in a constantly reconsidered process of investing in and henceforth (re)creating those spaces which promise maximum profitability, while simultaneously withdrawing from those less economically expedient, poses a threat to the social relations and powers constituted within and through those spaces. This is the challenge faced by the populations of the South Wales Valleys with the virtual collapse of the industry which formed the basis of their broader social organisation. This chapter examines how their spatial attachments have been maintained, reconfigured or destroyed in the context of this restructuring.

However, any attempt to identify a single and comprehensive spatial identity, discernible in relation to a particular population, over-simplifies the differential experiences and understandings of an increasingly fragmented society. The populations of the South Wales Valleys are a mass of differentiated individuals possessing a range of multiple, interweaving and sometimes contradictory spatial loyalties and emotions, which vary over time and interact differentially with their collective and personal identifications, as the following two chapters will explore. In order to develop a complex understanding of how restructuring has affected the spatial attachments of the populations of the South Wales Valleys, it is therefore necessary to view conceptualisations of spatiality as provisional and hence changing and changeable.

The imagery of a triptych, a framework consisting of three leaves, the outermost of which are hinged onto and can fold over a central panel, is utilised to explore spatial identity. This approach has a dual purpose: it offers simplicity in illustrating the inter-connected nature of spatial awareness; and being a product of the research, individuals having articulated their spatial awareness in terms of these inter-linked conceptions held side by side, it reflects the voices of the project's informants. Being both empirically-grounded and conceptually-driven, the categorisation has aided the analytical process and complements the thesis's broader theoretical approach which posits identity as relational and multi-dimensional. The central panel of this triptych is considered in terms of the regional attachments associated with the Welsh coalfield, through which individuals' medium-scale economic and social similarities are highlighted and reflexively considered in the light of the transformations experienced since the 1984/5 Miners' Strike. The second leaf then embodies the localised understandings associated with place, the village of residence, which were most immediately familiar to individuals, and where 'community' was least imaginary by virtue of immediate contact with physical landmarks and engagement in inter-personal relationships. The third part is made up of broader, and to an extent imagined, conceptualisations of national identity or 'Welshness'. The organisation of the material in this way provides an overview of the various economic, industrial and occupational changes which have taken place in the Welsh Valleys over the past fifteen years and which are explored in more detail in later chapters, but is also mindful of local and national variations, which respectively embody more detailed and general aspects of identificatory experiences. In considering the various symbols and experiences embodied in individuals' spatial understandings, each of these three aspects of spatiality are explored using a series of social-cultural experiences which represent the building-blocks of spatial attachments. Community has a re-iterative significance in each instance, underlining the centrality of social relationships to spatial understandings. As Roberts has pointed out, the various communities to which people belong, 'provide the contours of identity' (1993: 1).

3.2 Regional Identities : The South Wales Valleys

The South Wales coalfield, the setting for this project, was effectively created by the industrial revolution, which encouraged the rural Welsh into the Valleys to find employment. The demand for coal continued such that by the beginning of the twentieth century, immigration into Wales being encouraged from further afield. This created a heterogeneous population in terms of the region's ethnic origin and character. The Valleys Welsh are frequently bilingual, described as 'Welsh Wales' in Balsom's (1985) three-fold classification scheme, which puts them between 'Y Fro Gymraeg', the Welsh heartland, and British Wales, the region broadly correspondent with the north-east, the border, the southern coastal strip and Pembrokeshire. However, the Valleys have also imported and been heavily influenced by British culture. Parallels are evident between the populations of the Welsh Valleys and working-class communities in England's industrial north. Both for example, have been actively involved in a diverse local labour movement and are currently represented nationally by the Labour Party, experiences which have been influential in the formation of their cultural characters.

The social relations of the South Wales Valleys then, originate in the Industrial Revolution and the last century, and their populations have little recourse to ancient tradition in formulating identifications. The traditions and symbols mobilised by the Valleys' Welsh have instead been fostered within a particular organisational culture where institutions like the Miners' Welfare Institutes and the chapels had an important influence (Cooke 1985). The prosperity of the earlier years of the twentieth century facilitated a period of identity consolidation in which a particular form of occupational and class identity came to the fore, fostered by strong unionisation, while an acutely gendered identity was forged by sexual divisions in the organisation of work. The social practices associated with these attachments quickly became part of the Valleys' 'traditions', and less emphasis was placed upon defining spatial *boundaries*, which at least until recently remained relatively permeable in assimilating newcomers, while simultaneously facilitating an awareness of the distinctive space which constituted the 'Valleys' (with its rather more visible physical boundaries than in other British coalfield areas). Regional and occupational attachments then, have been intertwined to an unusual degree for the populations of the South Wales Valleys.

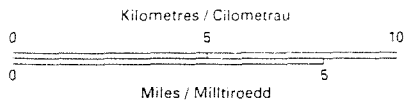
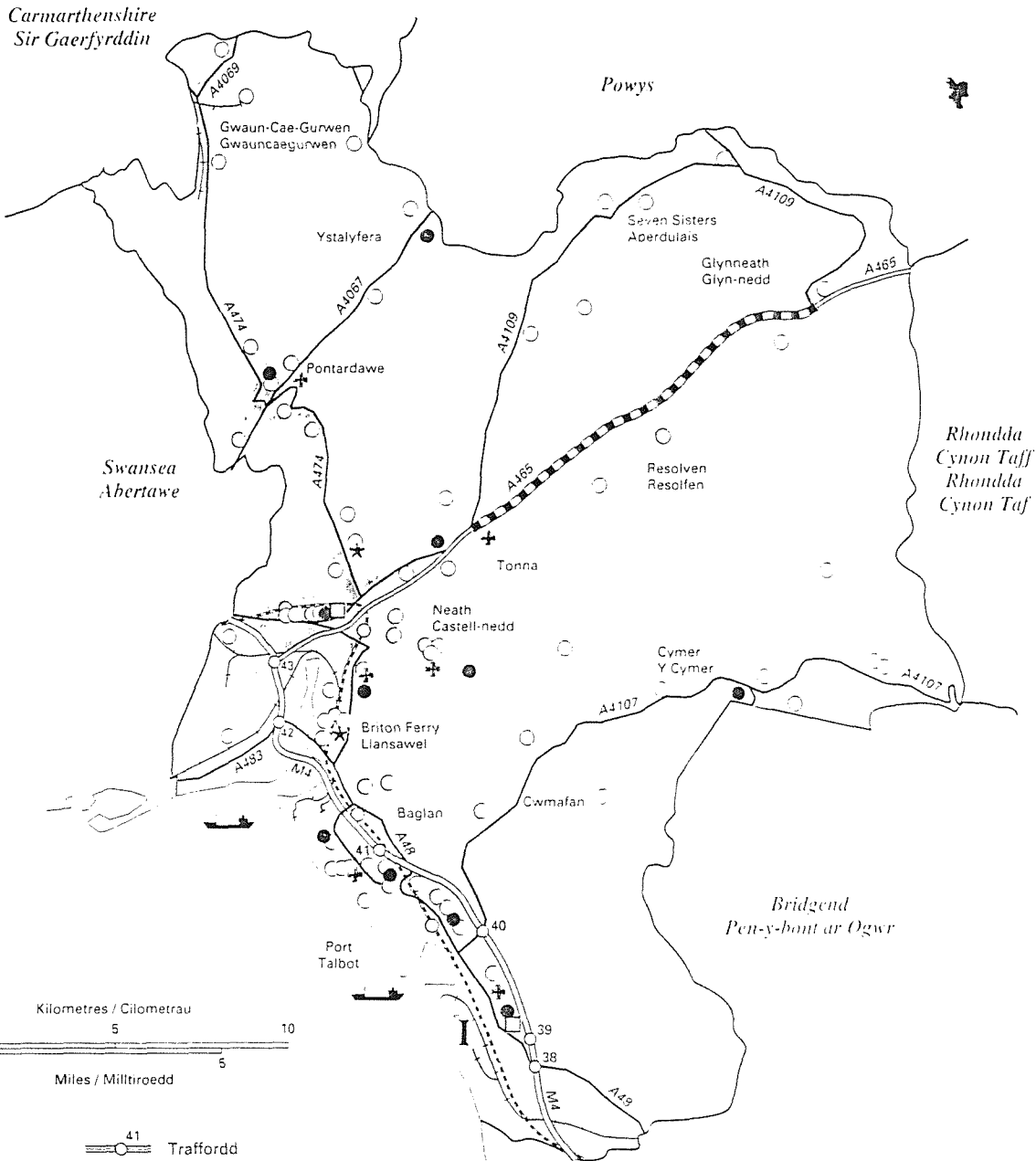
Within the South Wales Valleys, the Western Valleys provided the focus of the study (see map), which concentrated on the Neath and Dulais Valleys, whilst incorporating to a lesser degree, residents from the Amman and Swansea Valleys, and the upper end of the Cynon Valley (the location of Tower Colliery). This region has a number of distinctive sub-regional characteristics and is largely encapsulated within the Neath electoral constituency. It is politically radical (Parry 1996), a privilege afforded by the political leverage bestowed upon the region by its high-quality anthracite coal. To a large extent, the sub-region is also more Welsh-identified than the eastern valleys, the result of its relative geographical isolation and distance from anglicised Cardiff. In the 1997 general election, the Labour Party commanded a majority of 26,741 with 73.5% of the votes cast in the Neath constituency, making it Britain's tenth largest majority (Butler and Kavanagh 1997). In the Welsh referendum of September 1997, Neath recorded the largest proportion in Wales in favour of a Welsh Parliament, with over two-thirds of those who turned out voting 'yes', compared to a national average of little over fifty percent. While the national figure for Welsh-speakers aged three and over is 18.7%, and the Neath figure 26%, among the wards studied it ranged from 24.3% in Glyn-Neath (Neath Valley) to 78.6% in Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen (Amman Valley) (1991 Census). This inter-regional variation is unsurprising since as Davies (1990) has suggested, the Valleys' Welsh are the least linguistically homogeneous of any of the Welsh, a quirk linked to the fortunes of individual pits and the sorts of migration encouraged by economic prosperity and subsequent decline.

With their overwhelming reliance upon a single employer, the dismantling of the coal industry hit the populations of the South Wales Valleys particularly acutely. The social polarisation which accompanied this transition has been tacitly acknowledged with the allocation of Special Area status to the Valleys, although this has been withdrawn in recent years.¹¹ The region has become heavily reliant on inward investment, its place within a global economy highlighted by its dependent relationship with investors from the Far East. Virtually the only employment available within the Valleys themselves is that of light manufacturing, the much-cited high-technology service-sector economy characteristic of a 'post-industrial' capitalist age (Lash and Urry 1994) being more relevant to the economies of

¹¹ Although a 1989 survey by Glasgow University identified the former coalmining valleys as an area of *severe* disadvantage.

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
 CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL CASTELL-NEDD PORT TALBOT

NEATH PORT TALBOT
 CASTELL-NEDD PORT TALBOT



Motorway		Traffordd	Hospital		Ysbyty
Trunk Road		Cefnffordd	Higher Education Institutions		Sefydliadau Addysg Uwch
Under construction		Yn cael ei hadeiladu	Secondary Schools:		Ysgolion Uwchradd:
Principal Road		Prif Ffordd	LEA maintained		A gynhelir gan AALI
Passenger / Freight Railway		Rheilffordd Teithwyr / Nwyddau	Special schools		Ysgolion arbennig
Freight Railway		Rheilffordd Nwyddau	Primary Schools		Ysgolion Cynradd
Port		Porthladd			
Steelworks		Gwaith Dur			

the southern coastal belt of South Wales. This has made the Valleys particularly vulnerable to economic recession, and furthermore has disrupted its traditional cleavage of occupational and regional attachments. Edwards has drawn attention to the centrifugal tendencies of the South Wales region, describing it as, 'experiencing major geographical re-orientations of employment, cultural life and political influence away from the industrial valleys of the region to the coast plains' (1990: 16). Roberts (1993; 1994) meanwhile, has suggested that under these circumstances, and at a time when the Valleys' subsidiary-core relationship with the south-east of England has been accentuated, and threatens the region's economic future, a re-emphasis of a regional Welsh or Valleys' identity will occur.

3.21 The Miners' Strike and its Aftermath

Amid such a process, the 1984/5 Miners' Strike has taken on a special significance in the socio-spatial life of the populations of the Valleys, having embodied their most recent visible 'coming-together' in shared struggle. Furthermore, being shortly followed by a re-invigorated pit closure programme, it has come to represent a crucial moment in 'community time' (Crow and Allan, 1995). The reference point of the Miners' Strike enabled informants to more or less neatly psychologically distinguish the region's past from its present and imagined future. For the Valleys' population the Strike represents a starting point for the transformation which followed, despite the fact the seeds of restructuring had actually been sown in the preceding period. An initial focus on the transformative potential of the Strike thus provides a useful function in a project examining the formulation and negotiation of identity in the South Wales Valleys. The diversification of the labour market which followed in its aftermath is particularly significant for regional attachments, since these have necessarily become less homogenised with the spatial stretching of the occupational relationships which played a formative role in the creation of the region's former social spaces.

The most common theme characterising informants' reflections on the Strike concerned its significance in representing a time of crisis, when the Valleys' population had acted as a cohesive and productive community. A region being an area in which social relations are not uniformly familiar, but rather draw upon an implied similarity not always reflected in their complex differentiation, the cause of Strike embodied a sufficient degree of shared values for

the Valleys' populations to act 'as one'. In articulating this perceived solidarity, informants reflected upon how they had acted to protect themselves from external encroachments on their way of life, in a way rarely possible outside such moments of crisis, particularly since their social circumstances have become increasingly dissimilar with the gradual shift of the local labour market away from coal.

Everybody, most people rallied around. Another thing that helped us was, 'cause most of the old people here were miners or mining families, so you know, they would all help. Sheila Thomas; 50s; married to former striking miner

This response is also revealing of the fluidity of regional communal relationships, illustrating that they are subject to peaks and troughs of activity. The Strike then, represented a heightened moment in the mobilisation of community resources:

You know, although you all live in the same village obviously, that closeness isn't there until something like that [...] I think people fall back into a bit of a rut, you know, it needs something to give them an upsurge. So the Strike did, it sort of made people pull together and help one another out. We all mucked in together and made the most of it. Beth Jenkins; 40s; service sector worker separated from former striking miner

That recollections of the Strike were characterised by a discourse of 'pulling together' suggests that day-to-day communal interactions outside of the events of the Strike were not quite so warm and routine as previous accounts have suggested. While this theme was prominent, it was most enthusiastically employed by individuals who had played an active part in the Strike, for whom the event formed an important part of their community biography, providing a framework thereafter for their interpretation of regional belonging, and whose shared sensibility in this context posits them as an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983). Notably, as Anderson has pointed out, the imagining of communities in this way does not necessarily entail a fabrication, and frequently plays an important part in the development of representations of community (1983:15).

Notably, although the Strike represented a point in time when economic resources were most stretched, these were supplemented by an intensification of social and cultural resources

which enabled striking communities to meet the challenge and to draw positive experiences from their struggle.

We all got together and used to help the men as much as we could. Welsh people have never had a lot of money, the miners anyway. So it didn't matter much really, we had a good [food] parcel each week, we had our roles, a [Womens' Support] group here in this Valley. Oh it was good mind, I must say that, it was tremendous.

Glynis Smith; 60s; retired former WSG activist

Indeed social resources were mobilised to great effect in the period running up to the Strike, knowledge being disseminated of the Strike's imminence, and material resources consequently stockpiled, and social relationships utilised for maximum benefit in surviving the period of hardship.

We knew it was coming, we knew the Strike was coming. So beforehand we invested in a freezer and we filled it to the top. So I mean that held us in good stead for quite a long time before it started to eat into our finances. John's mum was really good, 'cause I mean she was local and her husband had been a miner. And I mean a lot of his brothers, they were always willing, if they went down and did some shopping, they'd pick up a couple of things for the kids. You know they were very good in that sense. And the miners' food parcels helped a lot.

Beth Jenkins; 40s; service sector worker separated from former striking miner

The Strike thus represented a densification of communal relationships, a time when capabilities proved most resourceful and when the activities of the Strike had the effect of accumulating individuals' social knowledge. It was also a time when 'normal' codes of conduct were stretched to accommodate the Strike's extraordinary demands, and this had the effect of promoting the development of new forms of social relationships and organisation (section 4.4.2.3).

The Strike's aftermath has been dramatic in terms of the degree of transformation enacted upon the Valleys' residents. However, as informants have negotiated increasingly more diverse lifestyles in the years following the Strike, a phenomenon grounded in their

differential assets, so too they have interpreted regional restructuring in a variety of ways. These interpretations can be characterised in terms of a series of positive and negative reflections, and although these were not always mutually exclusive, their distinction is useful in illustrating how established attachments have been reconfigured and new commonalities have emerged to characterise the Valleys' populations. They are sketched below, and attention drawn to the sorts of social groups who have tended to mobilise distinctive types of discourse, whose experiences are further analysed in the next two chapters.

In terms of the negative significance of the defeat of the Strike, a substantial proportion of informants cited a loss of faith in collective values as a direct result of their transformed occupational experiences, since these no longer tended to be provided through unionised, relatively secure employment, and furthermore, being less likely to take place near their home, drew upon a less familiar set of social relations. For these individuals, work has become a more individualised experience (section 4.2.2.2), a phenomenon which they considered to some extent as being reflected in their broader communal experiences, which had become more heterogeneous, and less obviously cohesive.

The Valleys then were ruined. They took the guts out of them men. They morally flattened them and financially flattened them. ... Our generation, and the older ones, they [the Government] flattened them. They took their pride from them, that's the only way I can explain it.

Kate Bayliss; 40s; former carer married to redundant former miner

Following on from this, the standard of living of this group of individuals has seen a substantial drop, the demise of coal-mining having had a negative knock-on effect upon local industry and implied a subsequent fall in the standards of local infrastructure and facilities.

One of the things that has happened since the Miners' Strike and the closing of pits, is the economy of the community. There are many, many shops and businesses being closed [...] it decimated the economy and people didn't have the money to spend in the shops.

Harry Ellis; 50s; clergyman

Furthermore, this group's relative confinement to the region in contrast to more mobile individuals, has heightened their feeling of social exclusion, a perception which is self-perpetuating in reducing their sense of possessing of a shared set of interests with fellow residents. One way in which this was expressed was through drawing attention to individuals who have recently moved into the region, identified as outsiders who disrupted the maintenance of close communal relationships.

In these Valleys now they're all related, in some way, in some sense. But there's so many now, they come from all over. ... And with all these people coming in, I think that spirit is going ... It's not as bad as it is in some places, but it is going from what it was. Sylvia John; 60s; retired, married to former miner

The Strike itself also played a role in the development of fissures in communal relations, since relationships with families who were perceived as unsupportive of the Strike effort have been slow to recover, and a sense of automatic trust between residents has been consequentially damaged.

You had your scabs and your blacklegs going back to work, and I think it made the atmosphere a bit bitter then. You know, neighbour against neighbour, isn't it? And believe me, there's some not talking from that day on ... some of the bitterness is still around. Jacky Powell; 70s; retired former colliery canteen worker

However, this element of the Strike should not be over-played; in general there was a very low degree of strike-breaking in South Wales¹², and correspondingly, participants tended to travel to other regions or to the steelworks at Port Talbot, which was importing foreign coal, to take part in picketing activity. Thus the notion of 'pulling-together' described above can have more authenticity for the South Wales region, than for example, the Nottinghamshire coalfield.

Notably, individuals who utilised negative interpretations of the Strike's aftermath had witnessed a qualitative decline in their social relationships during these years, and lacked the

¹² Personal communication, Secretary of the South Wales NUM.

opportunities or assets to negotiate the type of social experiences within a restructured labour market which compared favourably with their existence prior to the Strike.

The activities of the Strike and subsequent regional restructuring were also seen as providing potential opportunities for the constructive reformulation of old alignments and certainties. Notably though, informants who utilised these type of interpretations were socially distinctive in being more favourably positioned to adapt to circumstances, variously possessing more malleable (and less gendered) expectations, a broader range of social contacts, supportive families, and/or educational and material resources.

As regional relationships and the labour market have diversified, so there has been a challenge to the gendering of relationships in the Valleys (section 5.24). This was particularly true of individuals who had pursued an active participation in adapting to a reconfigured social environment. One group for whom this was heightened was the women who had participated in the activities associated with the Miners' Strike, for whom this had been a learning and frequently a liberating experience (sections 4.3.1 and 4.4.2.3). As a consequence of their efforts, these women increasingly engaged in non-traditional activities, entered new social spheres, and adopted a more questioning approach to their macro and micro circumstances. Their levels of self-confidence were boosted by these experiences, and in the post-Strike years, they have been prominent in enlisting in adult education classes, in re-evaluating their social roles, and in reformulating labour market experiences. These types of activities have had a politicising effect and furthermore have been productive in enabling the region to formulate new ways of responding to changed circumstances, through which to develop common bonds, and have enabled a wider social grouping than those women active in the Strike to benefit from participation.

I mean it was a terrific laugh, terrific community spirit amongst us all [during the Strike]. I think it made you think, 'Well, why am I just sitting at home all the time?' I think it gave a lot of us that extra boost we needed to think, 'Well you know, I don't just need to sit at home.' You know, I started to get part-time jobs after that ... I didn't think I could actually go back to work in an officer after all those years being away, but I did.

Beth Jenkins; 40s; service sector worker separated from former striking miner

As a consequence of the range of opportunities opened up in the wake of coalmining, the residents who have been able to engage in and benefit from them have seen their expectations raised by the broadening of their potential life trajectories. While these opportunities have not been unanimously accessible, some degree of their impact is reflected in the population's raised aspirations for the next generation, to the extent that the majority of informants' children who were of a young adult age, had engaged in some form of further education.

Notably, informants who employed the most acute descriptions of the region as remaining community-conscious possessed labour market biographies which entailed travelling outside their village to work, but within the coalfield. Their reflections corresponded with the Valleys' former industrial organisation in terms of distinctively spatially-defined coalmining communities, exhibiting an unusual intensity of social correspondence in working, leisured, familial and spatial experiences.

When I first came to live here I felt I'd come home. And I think the people were so friendly and welcoming. They just were lovely and they've really accepted me. I mean, when I first came to live here, I was the only English girl in the village. ... I think the people up here have got a different attitude altogether from Neath and Swansea. A warmness then.

Beth Jenkins; 40s; service sector worker separated from former striking miner

These interpretations directly matched individuals' own experiences of community, transgressing the local into the wider region. Possessing non-traditional and reconfigured occupational attachments, acted as an asset in enabling these informants to make regional comparisons in which their communal experiences emerged as a valuable commodity.

However, closeness of community was not universally regarded as a positive asset. For some it could be stifling, imposing upon their simultaneous existence as individuals:

When you've got isolated communities where there's a sense of more *closeness* in one way and a lot of jealousy in another way. You know, if you're all in the same boat

you're expected, that there is a little bit of envy that comes into it, if you're a little bit *different*. Sheila Taylor; 40s; professional and community activist

This recognition of the oppressive potential of geographically-isolated communities was restricted to women. This can be linked to the gendered organisation of separate spheres in coalmining regions, with women's spatial experiences, physical and mental, traditionally being more restrictive. Community has thus had a different *meaning* and was associated with different practices for men and women in coalmining regions (section 4.4). Significantly, more-upwardly mobile women tended to raise this issue, whose greater experience of educational and broader opportunities meant that they felt the restrictions imposed upon their social behaviour and mobility by community norms more keenly.

Men's more positive assessment of community in the South Wales coalfield region can obviously be linked to their occupational identity as coalminers (chapter four), and romanticising the past by drawing upon notions of regional communality enabled them to foster the broader self-understandings threatened by the contraction of coalmining. Thus while men tended to talk nostalgically about the past, highlighting the benefits of comradeship, community and a skilled job for life, and flagging up the importance of regional identity in these conceptualisations, women frequently referred to the dirt and dangers of the pits, and considered that static formulations of regional identity was constraining of broader opportunities.

Informants almost universally referred to the (specifically gendered) link between communal experiences and region, and frequently employed a note of regret observing that this had been weakened through restructuring. The recognition that the convergence of 'coalmining community' identities cannot preside over changing labour market circumstances, suggests that while these memories hold romantic appeal, they are no longer considered realistic. People have become more open to the possibility that their future attachments will consist of a less unified set of identities. Nevertheless, a strong regional attachment persisted, illustrated by the fact that when questioned upon their future residence, most informants expressed a wish to remain in the Valleys¹³, identifying the region as possessing

¹³ This largely continued to hold true when the question was extended to ask if this desire would be affected by their winning the lottery.

compensations which over-rode the inconvenience of geographical isolation. While these benefits included more localist relationships with friends and family, communal values were perceived as characterising the Valleys more broadly, and played a central role in the formulation of regionalist identities. In a context of industrial restructuring then, regional attachments have not been superseded by alternative spatial understandings, and individuals have been able to *reconfigure* their understandings of region, and draw more heavily upon alternative (non-work associated) alignments associated with regional belonging. Memory plays an important part in how these regional attachments are formulated, and intersects with present experiences and future expectations to form a unique and rich habitus. Thus individuals maintained their locatedness in region by reconceptualising a space which *grounded* their diverse biographies and enabled them to interpret the shared spirit which they regarded as being unique to the Valleys.

The various ways in which the Strike experience and its aftermath have been interpreted by the informants interviewed for this project, reflect the social divisions within a population and the constraining and enabling effect which these had on their experiences, a phenomenon explored in latter chapters. People do not inhabit an equal society, but are differentially positioned in relation to a series of resources, which they consequently learn to negotiate, reproduce and accumulate. This differential positioning has a major impact upon their spatial experiences and mobilisations, such that region becomes inhabited in a multitude of disparate and inter-related complex and temporally-contingent ways. While the region of the Welsh Valleys has been substantially transformed since pre-Strike times, it has never been a static entity, and the relative significance which informants attached to region reflects its dynamism, both in acting as a source of stability and knowledge but also through being reconfigured to facilitate the realisation of their expectations.

3.22 Language/Dialect

The next part of this chapter looks at some more specific ways in which regional distinctiveness has been maintained amid restructuring. The social heterogeneity of the Valleys' populations diluted the dominating influence of the Welsh language which had predated the industrial revolution. The variable nature of Welsh-speaking within the Valleys is

described above, pockets of bilingualism existing in particular villages, such as Crynant in the Dulais Valley. In order to appreciate the regionality of language, a distinction should be made between academic or north Walian Welsh and the Welsh spoken in the Valleys, which is sometimes regarded by North Walian as a 'slang' or 'pigeon Welsh'.

I think there's definitely a language difference between north Wales and south Wales ... I think culturally we're different, language speaking we're different. If you speak Welsh in north Wales and you speak Welsh in south Wales you're speaking two different languages you know.

Richard Powell; 30s; Tower shareholder

The Welsh used in the Valleys, but also the *way* in which English is spoken there, is regionally distinctive. Language thus provides a positive contribution to a distinctive Valleys' identity, a marker through which authenticity is established. Language and dialect are employed at once to establish distinctness from other regions, and simultaneously to emphasise similarity within the region: a common currency and cultural resource. Linguistic distinctiveness is cultivated and processual, certain words and expressions being used exclusively within a particular area at particular times, enabling subtle boundaries to be drawn around space which are difficult for 'Others' to penetrate. In this, language becomes a marker of belongingness, which those proficient in its 'rules', can play up or down in particular social situations, to facilitate their mobility across social space. While regionalist interpretations of the Welsh language were relevant only to Welsh-speakers, the English spoken with a Valleys accent was also an important and more inclusive aspect of regional identification. A degree of the permeability of dialect is highlighted in the experiences of several English-born informants, who had moved to the Valleys upon marriage. These had successfully assimilated and employed regional dialect, a source of much amusement to their English families that their child had 'gone Valleys'. While informants articulated the language/dialect issue relatively infrequently in their interpretations of regional identity, it was largely a taken-for-granted aspect of their self-understandings. However, it should not be inferred from this that language and dialect do not play an important part in facilitating attachment to region, since themselves having been assimilated into the self and largely sub-

consciously employed¹⁴, it is difficult to assess how an individual lacking these tools of engagement might differentially experience regionality.

3.23 Civil Society : The Devolution Process

Voting in the September 1997 Welsh referendum illustrated the entrenchment of regional attachments, displayed in terms of socio-political attitudes: eleven County Borough Councils having voted 'yes' and eleven 'no'. The coalfield regions voted largely in favour of devolution, the exception being Torfaen, the most easterly of the Valleys' constituencies, unusual in that it has recently become an industrially-mixed region, successful in attracting manufacturing, which can be linked to its proximity to Cardiff, Newport and Bristol.

However, several informants drew attention to Wales' differentiated social and economic composition, suggesting that regional government might be more appropriate than a Welsh Assembly, particularly since a recognition of the Valleys as a distinctive region would facilitate the promotion of their own specific socio-economic interests:

France and Belgium have already split their countries up into, you know, workable size. And rather than being an English-Welsh-Scottish syndrome, it would have been better if say seven or eight units ... were subject to the same procedures at the same time.

George Beddoe; 60s; local politician

This point illustrates the potential antagonism of particular forms of spatiality in relation to one another, in that an acute formulation of Welsh nationalism is stifling of regional distinctiveness, since in promoting broader homogeneity, it fails to recognise the unique needs of particular populations, who draw upon a range of mixed and specific reference points, of which 'Welshness' may play a relatively small part. That such a monolithic version of Welshness was rejected by these informants, highlights the complexity and multiple sources of their spatial attachments.

¹⁴ I'm sure I am not alone in experiencing blank looks when using the regionalist expressions which I grew up with, or in having others comment on my change of accent when talking to friends from home.

The debate over where the Welsh Assembly was to be held accentuated informants' perceptions of regional divisions. The ensuing discussions provided fascinating insights into the dynamic and relational mobilisation of space by individuals. Far from having fixed regional loyalties, individuals reflexively employed their own working and residential biographies, and those of their families, to negotiate these attachments. For example, two individuals who had lived outside the region on various occasions and who possessed multiple regional loyalties associated with where they had settled, imagined a focal point for Wales beyond the region, although this did not necessarily coincide with the capital city. By contrast, the majority of informants possessed more limited spatial sub-regional attachments, and correspondingly favoured Swansea as the location for the Welsh Assembly:

Well I would imagine Swansea city would be better if it could generate some sort of work, even if it's white-collar work, you know, office, secretarial, what have you, so we'd feel the benefit.

Jack Preston; 40s; miner working in private pits

Men were significantly more vocal than women in expressing a preference in the siting of the Welsh Assembly. This is to some extent unsurprising, since men who developed a coalmining occupational identity, tied to a particular region, and accentuated by their working with men living in other Valleys and villages, have formulated a sense of common residency associated with the South Wales coalfield. By contrast, women's traditionally more limited socio-spatial experiences can be expected to have a filtering effect upon their spatial attachments, prioritising those in which their experiences are located. That gendered interpretations of spatiality are still significant in an increasingly diverse labour market, can be attributed to a 'cultural lag' (see Warwick and Littlejohn 1992). A further explanation for these findings is that women continue to feel distanced from and less confident of voicing their opinions on matters which they perceive to be essentially masculine (chapter four). However, while women were less vocal than men in expressing regional loyalties in terms of the situation of the Welsh Assembly, they too exhibited a preference for its positioning in Swansea. This manifestation of regional attachment then, is a factor in their formulations of identity, albeit a less emotive one.

Attachment to region then, was displayed and mobilised in various inter-linked ways, which notably varied significantly according to gender and social positioning, and which drew upon a mixture of past, present and future interpretations of what it means to live in the Welsh Valleys. There is no single way that region informs the social organisation of the populations of the Welsh coalfield. In addition, regionality also plays an important part in broader spatial understandings, differentiating Valleys' populations from other regions, while not precluding social similarity with other spatial groups, such as Yorkshire miners, or the Welsh nation more broadly. Therefore, regional identity should not be regarded as discrete, but as one among several interconnected layers of spatiality employed by individuals in providing meaning to their experiences. Neither should it be regarded as static, linguistic practices evolving and being affected by educational trends, communal experiences being responsive to broader processes of restructuring, and political interpretations of regionality becoming variously manifested in general, Assembly and referendum voting, as well as in ongoing processes of debate. The unique part played by region in spatial and broader identity formulations, and its interaction with other social influences, can be accurately understood only through extending a processual, relational and temporal approach to its examination.

3.3 Local Identities

'Local' identities are here taken as meaning the spatial understandings associated with 'place', that is, the immediate environs in which individuals live, and perhaps also work and socialise. At this dimension of spatial attachment, a greater degree of face-to-face contact is likely to be experienced, spatial identity being least 'imaginary' and most tangible. Localist recognitions coincided to a large degree with village or community identification, evoking a discourse associated with concepts of 'home' and 'belonging' (Cohen 1982), and this section is therefore interlinked with the later section discussing communal collectivity (4.4). Carter *et al.* (1993) have contended that place rather than space grounds identifications, and that space becomes place by being named, by being given meaning by its inhabitants.

An examination of local attachments is particularly central to the broader investigation of how restructuring has affected social formations, since interpretations of the local have been

acutely disturbed by the dismantling of the coal industry. As the labour market has become increasingly diverse, so patterns of residence, work and leisure are less likely to co-exist within the boundaries of the local. An examination of localist attachments in the South Wales Valleys therefore contributes to broader debates interpreting the significance and meaning of place in a world where people's spatial understandings are subject to reconfiguration, differentiation and expansion.

At the time of the 1984/5 Miners' Strike, explanations for the dispute were frequently articulated in terms of the defence of pit villages, and linked to the survival of entire communities. Although striking communities made the link between what the excesses of Thatcherism meant for working-class culture more generally, the more potent attack was assumed to be towards place, pit closures threatening a particular 'way' of life. Harvey's claim (1989: 236) that working class movements are better at organising around place than space is relevant to an understanding of localist identity formations, as is O'Byrne's recognition (1997) that locality tends to take on a political significance in working-class cultures.

It was with regard to localised identities that the temporality of identity formation became most apparent. This was no doubt facilitated by the interviewing process which prompted informants to consider changes observed or experienced since the Miners' Strike within their own communities, to describe the local which they contemporaneously inhabited, and to conjecture on the changes they expected to witness over the next decade. The staggered timing of piloting and two subsequent 'waves' of interviewing furthermore emphasised temporality in relation to place.

Informants' considerations of place and community were the most vivid and emotive of their spatial attachments, being notably personalised and diversified, and less likely to concur with generalised 'accepted truths' about space. However, these interpretations also included more negative reflections than had been the case in their 'broader' spatial attachments. This is in tension with Williams' (1989) claim that 'community' is a term rarely if ever used with negative inference. The broader recognition of the local developed in this section draws attention to the various dynamic, related and contradictory elements of experience which cross-cut and co-exist with one another within a small-scale environment. Taking this

perspective, it is problematic to consider the local in terms of a single 'community', and this section describes how individuals who reject internal diversity consequently experience the local in terms of discomfort.

Since informants were drawn from a number of villages, it is impossible to provide a demographic picture of 'the local environment', the rationale of the project being anyway to collect data from a diverse range individuals and to draw out commonalities. However, about a third of informants (20 individuals) lived in one village, Crynant, which was selected for its being a fairly medium point in terms of various Census characteristics. However, it would be unfair to posit Crynant as 'average' in any real sense, and informants were keen to point out its uniqueness. The value of focusing upon a particular village was reinforced as the research progressed, since it enabled a 'feel' (obviously partial) for the place and its network of social relations to be developed, which was accentuated by attending social events and getting to know its inhabitants outside of a research setting. Thus it was observed how place changes over time, both in terms of the physical environment and the various activities and priorities of the village, which are responsive to external and internal influences.

3.31 The Environment

The thematic significance of geographical space emerged much more strongly in informants' reflections upon place than it did in terms of their broader spatial conceptualisations. Most informants inhabited an environment which can be classified as 'semi-rural', being places formerly dominated by heavy industry but recently deindustrialised and taking on a more rural character. This has been subject to intense transformation over a short period of time. The improvements represented by the 'greening over' of the slag heaps are countered by the huge investments made in the open-cast coalmining industry, the closing and boarding-up of village shops unable to compete with out-of-town shopping centres, and the ugly industrial estates adjacent to populated areas and standing three-quarters empty. Informants' reflections upon their immediate environment fell into two broad categories, those concerning their structural or institutional experiences, and those describing physical surroundings or natural phenomena. These are considered below.

Structural reflections upon the environment included informants' significant concern about the gradual erosion of the institutions which had formed the fabric of their locality. These included miners' institutes, community centres, pubs and clubs. This process was unanimously regarded as being irreversible and marking the start of an inevitable transition towards a different sort of local culture, in which mobility would become more significant in how individuals negotiated social space:

I see it as a dying village. Compared to Ystradgynlais, I see it dying to be honest with you. I mean there's no nice shops, no nice pubs here.

Keri Nicholas; 40s; part-time professional married to former striking miner

The tone of informants' reflections was thus characterised by loss; the traditional structures of their localities were disintegrating, leaving a void which remained unfilled. The environment was perceived temporally, in terms of the gradual drip, dripping away of facilities in contrast to the wave of progress which was supposed to characterise restructuring. Notably, however, informants articulating these sorts of reflections were more likely to be middle-aged individuals who had sought paid employment outside of the coalmining industry. This located them within a distinctive cultural context where they drew upon collective memories of the local as it was constituted through the coalmining industry, which contrasted with their present-day circumstances. Structures had been central in the formulation of this particular sense of localist identity, providing a formalised environment for social interaction. In particular, structural loss was experienced more keenly by men, for whom the structures of coalmining had provided a formalised social environment, in comparison to women, whose social interactions were more fluid. This gendered occupancy of the structures of place was echoed in the male domination of the village rugby club, one of the few traditional institutions which continues to thrive. In this context men were the performers, women their audience and servicers, providing food and drink:

But um socialising now, for me then, that's all, I go out on a Saturday and play rugby, go for a drink with the boys, my wife come down, we have a bit of fun, perhaps the boy [his son] comes with us now and again.

Hywel Rees; 30s; Tower shareholder

The example of the rugby club resonates with Taylor *et al.*'s (1996) work, which emphasised the gendered patterning of space in the cities of Manchester and Sheffield, which had become defined as 'male' environments. The rugby club was uniquely representative of a distinctive local environment, each village maintaining its own club, which provided a stage for the resolution of inter-regional conflicts. It thus provided a structure in which localist similarity was fostered, and simultaneously, distinction from other places emphasised.

Physical interpretations of local environments, together with the micro-relationships embedded in these (section 3.42), were regarded by informants as critical in their decisions to stay in their villages. The natural environment was one area where the decimation of deep mining has produced positive counter-effects in the 'greening' process which has subsequently occurred.

I like its isolation ... I think it's quite a pretty Valley, it's not as extreme as the Rhondda. The Neath Valley is quite extreme, but this is a very sort of gently rolling Valley. Claire Davies; 50s; voluntary worker and community activist

That the physical environment was more frequently invoked as an important component of localist attachment by informants not engaged in full-time paid labour is unsurprising, since their experiences were more prominently grounded in their place of residence, their financial circumstances restricting their mobility to a relatively local environment.

However, the isolated, rural nature of the environment was sometimes also be experienced negatively, in particular for individuals whose increased mobility under restructuring had opened up a broader range of experiential places.

The thing I *don't* like, it's a very small village obviously and there's not much [to do] [pause] you've got to have a car and to travel out to be honest.

Peter Clark; 30s; Tower shareholder and unionist

The restrictiveness of place, however, was rarely experienced as a constant emotion, rather was occasionally brought into relief by intersecting aspects of experience. More generally

the constraining physical elements of locality were over-ridden by the fulfilment drawn from membership of a close-knit community. This highlights the processual and relational character of attachment to locality, in that the various elements of localist experience are employed differentially over time, fluctuating as the strings between them are tugged in one direction or another by individuals.

The open-cast coalmining industry loomed large in the lives of several informants, imposing a negative impact on their environmental experience, greedily eating up the countryside. This was counterposed to the deep-coalmining industry of the past, the imposition of which upon locality was perceived as more regulated and controllable.

I think the open-cast mining's going a bit *too* far now. There have been too many sites and the plan up here is to basically take the mountain from one side from the start basically to Ystalyfera and then you'll be able to see straight over into Seven Sisters then. [laughs]

Hywel Rees; 30s; Tower shareholder

Tower shareholders were disproportionately represented among informants who reflected upon the locality's environment in terms of the encroachment of the open-cast, and their particular objection can be considered as two-fold. First, the open-cast industry operates in direct competition with the coal which they are marketing, and secondly, as owners of the means of production, the Tower miners have become more aware of the functioning of the local market and of the open-cast industry's future plans, which are increasingly likely to impose upon the local environment. First-wave informants by contrast, particularly those who were not politically active, tended to be relatively uninformed regarding the proposed expansion of the open-cast. The distinction between these groups reveals that the mobilisation of resources (political and economic knowledge in the case of the former group) facilitates broader temporal interpretations of spatiality, capable of drawing upon the past and the future in relation to the present.

3.32 Micro-Relationships: Community

Localist attachments, manifested with reference to communal relationships, are considered here in terms of three aspects, which are overlaid against one another to provide individuals with a sense of what it means to ‘belong’ to a particular community. The first of these embodies an examination of individuals’ interpretations of community as a shared enterprise. The second considers the role played by a matrix of personal relationships in comprising personal understandings of community, in particular those involving familial and neighbourly contact. And the third comprises an investigation of localist ‘closure’, the boundaries drawn around community to demarcate membership. In these, localist understandings of community identity differed from broader spatial attachments, in that direct contact between individuals was more visible and necessary to their formulations of place. Understandings of what constituted a localist ‘community’ were subsequently more explicit and less abstract.

a. Character and Cohesion

As in broader spatial conceptualisations, informants recounted a sense of community solidarity as being central to their experience of locality. However, localist communities comprised individuals actually *known* to informants, whose personal biographies intersected with their own, rather than those who were *perceived* to share values with them. Interaction with these reinforced informants’ sense of locatedness within the locale.

I like the fact that I know most people. I like the fact that most people know me. Um, I enjoy the fact that I’ve got quite a large circle of friends that I can go out with at any time, or just walk out down the village and go into a pub and I know people. So I enjoy the social life here.

Gary Peters; 30s; former striking miner now self-employed

Informants who articulated a sense of a close-knit community grounded in the locality more often fell into the ‘ex’ mining category. Furthermore, these individuals tended to reformulate their broader socio-economic experiences to co-incide with the local, rather than employing

spatial mobility. For example, as Gary Peters (see section 4.2) recounted, one of the main reasons for setting up his own business was so that he could work in his village and experience a heightened sense of communality, rather than travelling outside to work. These individuals therefore placed considerable personal investment in the continued vitality of their local community, and their knowledge of local social relationships were employed as a resource to counteract their relative lack of labour market choices. By contrast, informants who continued to be employed within coalmining (an option which tended to require a degree of movement outside of the locality to work) also placed an emphasis upon local community, but this was a less fundamental part of their spatial attachments, since they were more mobile and had a broader range of socio-spatial experiences upon which to draw. Thus occupational experiences can be seen to intersect with spatial attachments in individuals' formulations of community.

Simultaneously, informants' reflections also revealed a recognition of the diminished dynamism of localist experiences of community since the 1984/5 Strike. One reason for this is that with the shortage of jobs in South West Wales commuting to work over long distances has increasingly become a part of individuals' experiences, reducing the time available for socialising in the village. As a result, some individuals, particularly the young, have chosen to leave the locality to search for secure and satisfying employment elsewhere.

It was better than what it is now. Because, I don't know, since the collieries have finished everybody goes out of the village to work, 'cause there's no jobs around here. So really I think that has all broken down. You know, there's no *togetherness*.

Sheila Thomas; 50s; married to former miner

These concerns were largely associated with the experiences of a middle-aged cohort, active in the labour market, who drew upon similar memories of a coalmining community. This 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983) was demographically similar and overlapped with the one raising concerns about the structural decline of locality, in section 3.31. They too employed spatial reflections temporally, comparing their past communal experiences to the present, and with their expectations for the future. That this group experienced local community to a large extent in terms of loss, can be interpreted in terms of their stage in the lifecycle and their relative occupational positioning. Being middle-aged, their investment in

the quality of communal relationships was considerable, having a substantial active life ahead of them, and this investment was accentuated where their children were commencing their own careers. Their positioning at the centre of the life-cycle with generations on either side of them, also placed them uniquely for drawing comparisons, considering local experiences of community within a temporal context.

b. Family and Neighbours

Proximity to family was frequently regarded as important to informants' quality of life, accentuating the density of their local community networks. Of particular significance was the relationship between mothers and daughters, the older generation providing considerable help with the extended family, and facilitating paid employment for women who would otherwise be confined to the home caring for young children. Mother-in-laws played a similar role, but, reflecting the prioritisation of the mother-daughter relationship, where husband and wife came from different villages they were more likely to settle in the wife's native village.

Neighbours also played an important role in localist interpretations of community, providing a crucial external support network. The unique spatial concentration of mining villages in the past resulted in an unusual degree of overlap in social relationships, which meant that neighbours were frequently also friends and colleagues. The degree of closeness between neighbours observed in the present day bore the hallmark of this shared history.

I still think that, perhaps most important of all, you have got neighbours who have known each other a long time. And who are prepared to look out for each other.

Betty Morgan; 50s; local politician

The importance of known and trusted family and neighbours to a sense of localist community was an issue which drew no distinctions between various cohorts. In essence, shared experiences with and knowledge of these individuals *are* the backbone of local communal attachments. However, actual experiences or expectations of micro-social community interaction were far from uniform, gender for example providing a distinctive marker, in that women continued to be positioned as the 'gatekeepers' of community

relationships, correspondingly demonstrating considerably more awareness of the intricacies of community relationships, and the invisible boundaries which lay between them (section 4.4).

c. Boundaries and Closure

A bone of contention which frequently characterised informants' interpretations of local community was the number of 'outsiders' who had recently moved into the village, taking advantage of Wales' relatively cheap housing and what they perceived to be an idyllic hamlet-like existence. These newcomers were perceived as fitting uneasily into the general character and customs of villages. Their entry into the locale was described as having pushed up the price of local housing, making it more difficult for insiders' children to establish their own households. The issue was regarded as still more problematic by some informants, since through introducing 'new blood' with a more heterogeneous set of values and experiences, and through pushing the younger generation away, the 'coalmining community' identity associated with the locality's past was perceived to have been diluted. As Harvey (1989) has suggested might occur, this has stimulated a redrawing of boundaries around claims of authentic 'insider' status, based upon characteristics such as length of residence, family biography and dialect (see also Rosser and Harris 1983). Notably, this has been most pronounced amongst socio-economically deprived individuals.

Parkin's neo-Weberian notion of social closure argues that social class distinctiveness is corrupted by 'the progressive erosion of the communal components of proletarian status' (1979: 69). In formulating communal attachments, informants frequently drew distinctions between 'insider' and 'outsider' status, providing a contrast to the permeable boundaries and heterogeneous populations which had characterised local communities earlier this century (section 1.4.2).

There's a lot of outsiders come into the village and people changing views or whatever and it's all changed.

David Waters; 30s; miner working in private pits

The labour market positioning of informants most vehement in their opposition to the dilution of 'the community', is critical in explaining why they interpreted locality thus. The group who drew upon these explanations was disproportionately comprised of the unemployed and individuals working in the exploitative conditions of private mines, who had experienced the disenfranchisement associated with the dissipation of workplace solidarity particularly acutely. Individuals whose occupational contacts had been curtailed or limited attached greater importance to the maintenance of community relationships and were more suspicious of the presence of 'Others', regarded as undermining the localist experiences previously employed as a template for social identifications.

Concern was particularly high that the poor quality housing stock which had failed to find a market when put up for sale by the council, was now being used to shift 'problem' tenants out of Neath town centre. This concern was demonstrated in the mobilisation of imagery which conjured up 'feckless' single mothers and thieving and drug-taking gangs of youths descending upon the community, an attitude at odds with informants' political orientations (section 4.3), but promoted by the media and former Conservative Government. 'Outsiders' then, were comprised of two distinct elements, a relatively well-off group buying into a rural environment, and a deprived group dependent on social security. Dicks *et al.*'s (1998) recent work has revealed that health-care providers working in coalmining localities have been to some extent complicit in this process. They have employed similar social distinctions to mark out 'self-sufficient' mining families, the long-term residents of the community, from 'new arrivals', by which they mean single mothers, about whom various moral pronouncements are made (1998: 303-4). These can be considered as a reconfiguration of the differentiation between the 'rough' and 'respectable' poor, which characterises the literature on working-class communities.

what I don't like is they're shoving a lot of down and outs, that's all you could call 'em, I'm not saying that I'm a prude, but I mean they put a lot of people up here that are not very nice people.

Kay Lyn; 30s; unemployed factory worker, married to miner in private pit

As with the affluent 'outsiders', the group which felt most threatened by the reconstitution of local space represented by these new arrivals were informants whose labour market

positioning had been placed under threat in recent years. Rose (1995) has suggested that in the face of globalisation, place and locality will take on an increased significance in the search for stability and familiarity. The danger, however, is that as Harvey has suggested (1989), under circumstances of economic deprivation and increased competition, place will become defined by its inhabitants more regressively, in terms of an exclusivist membership, with recourse to the motivational power of 'tradition'. This promotes the kind of defensive and monolithic conceptualisation of place described above, which contrasts with Massey's championing of 'progressive' spatial understandings (1994). Thus in former coalmining communities, this has occurred amongst a particular group of economically marginalised individuals, who have focused upon the pit village as a vehicle for social cohesion, and have come to view incomers suspiciously as diluting its 'character'. This is not to imply that place has remained structurally and socially intact for these individuals, rather they have conceptualised it in terms of a fossilisation. Thus place is prioritised in terms of stasis rather than in process, boundaries re-emphasised, and 'insiders' regarded as diametrically opposed to 'outsiders'. By drawing upon the past, and making negative comparisons with the present, this group has attempted to consolidate a particular conceptualisation of community in which they have status, and which they perceive as having the power to protect them from the encroachments which restructuring has visited upon them.

Boundaries were more readily drawn local space than around broader spatial attachments. One explanation for this is that the latter, being larger and more imaginary spaces, have a greater capacity for assimilating social change. However the tightening of boundaries around place can not be regarded as a uniform response to restructuring. Individuals whose mobility was constrained by their lack of resources (such as occupational security) clung to conservative interpretations of place in which communal relationships were regarded inflexibly. By contrast, individuals who had effected a greater degree of personal mobility continued to value localist communal relationships as an important aspect of their spatiality, but employed these in parallel with broader spatial interactions, thus arriving at a more diverse range of satisfying social relationships.

That informants universally regarded their local experiences in terms of transformation, locates their spatial understandings along a temporal continuum. This presents a challenge to the rather static spatiality associated with coalmining communities, and while it is frequently

employed as a common reference point, the past intersecting with the present, the co-existence of a more diverse range of localist experiences must also now be recognised. While these demonstrate a degree of uniformity in prioritising community closeness, they simultaneously encompass a plurality of manifestations as they are utilised by individuals to negotiate their social circumstances.

The preceding examination of the localist attachments of the populations of the South Wales Valleys reveals the degree of specificity employed in individuals' understandings of place, both in terms of geographical space and the social relations which provide that space with meaning. As a consequence of how 'close' localist recognitions are to individuals' formulations of identity, these reflections comprised both the most enthusiastic and the most negative of their spatial conceptualisations. Place, as described above, takes on a negative meaning when personal resources are so constrained as to give individuals little choice but to prioritise that space. However, when individuals can employ resources to promote their own mobility, spatial reconfigurations become possible, and place can be valued without being contaminated through unfavourable comparisons with the past. The specificity of place, the knowledge it implies and the authenticity it imbues, assign it a central place among spatial conceptualisations, providing meaning to broader attachments. These are correspondingly inter-related with and negotiated via individuals' understandings of their specific place in the world, understandings which are in a process of constant reconfiguration, but which also manage to hold on to what is particularly valued about the co-present environment and the social relationships which exist in that place.

3.4 National Identities : The Welsh

Preston has defined the nation as, 'a community of people sharing in some important way a common culture' (1997: 33). Smith has been more specific, defining 'the nation as a named community occupying a recognised homeland and possessing shared myths and memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and uniform legal rights and duties' (1995: 135). It is estimated the first settlers came to Wales between 15,000 and 10,000 BC, and while the Welsh might now constitute a nation according to Smith's definition, drawing upon (perceived)

memories of a collective Celtic history¹⁵, it is less clear whether they qualify for nation-statehood, lacking as they have done since the 1536 Act of Union with England and their consequential dependent relationship with London, a sovereign state-apparatus. In 1964 Harold Wilson devolved a measure of bureaucracy to Wales with the establishment of the Welsh Office and the reservation of a place in Cabinet for the Welsh Minister. The Welsh Assembly, mandated in September 1997 and established in May 1999, has brought the Welsh closer to a state of common citizenship, but Wales continues to lag behind Scotland in its political autonomy, while simultaneously demonstrating a closer relationship between language and national identity.

It is difficult to talk about 'the Welsh' as a distinctive group, since the classification embodies a largely 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983) encompassing a relatively large geographical entity whose inhabitants have little face-to-face contact, and who draw upon a range of disparate and mixed cultural reference points. The historical and practical links fostered between English and Welsh society in the context of a United Kingdom, have meant that 'Welsh' culture has been to a large extent overshadowed by a dominant Anglicisation. This problematises the task of describing a unique 'Welsh' identity, but makes the spatial experiences of the Welsh a particularly interesting case study. The uneven nature of capitalist development is such that it has been frequently simpler to talk about various Welsh regions and subregions rather a single homogeneous 'nation', and regions have correspondingly drawn upon their differential histories in making competing claims of national 'authenticity'. However, the individuals interviewed for this project were unequivocal in considering themselves to be Welsh before (but in addition to) British. Therefore any attempt to establish a monolithic understanding of 'Welshness' oversimplifies the multiplicity of meanings embodied in that recognition, and it is necessary to disentangle the elements which constitute the building blocks of Welsh national identity, in order to understand how it is employed to ground a diverse range of experiences in a complex and dynamic understanding of commonality.

In focusing upon Welsh coalmining communities, this research makes a distinction between their attachments and those of other coalmining communities, in that a distinctive part of the

¹⁵ Although Jenkins (1997) has suggested that in actual fact the Welsh are equal parts Anglo-Saxon and Romanic.

former's identity derives from their 'Welshness', or sense of national identity. Attachment to the Welsh nation has been recently highlighted by the devolution process, which unfolded during the course of the project with the election of a Labour Government, the campaign and mandate for Welsh devolution, and in May 1999, the election of Wales' first National Assembly. A focus upon national identity is important in terms of developing an understanding of what makes Welsh coalmining communities unique, and in assessing whether the increased visibility of 'Welshness' in the context of the national assembly debate is indicative of a heightened attachment to national identity in response to industrial restructuring.

3.41 Language: Culture and Tradition

The Welsh language in a recognisable form can be dated to around 700 AD (Edwards 1990). The proportion of Wales' inhabitants who can speak the Welsh language currently stands at about twenty percent, which might seem to imply that the Welsh language plays a relatively small part in national identity. However, this figure is characterised by dramatic geographical diversity and makes little allowance for varying levels of linguistic competence and/or public modesty regarding one's abilities. Within the scope of this project, 40% of informants were bilingual (and 60% of these considered Welsh to be their first language), a further 20% speaking or understanding Welsh at a basic conversational level.¹⁶ The fact that the Celtic language of Welsh has survived colonisation makes it unusual, at least within the British Isles, and it is therefore imbued with a political as well as cultural symbolism. Davies goes as far as to describe it as being "the main carrier of Welsh identity" (1990: 42). While this approach is rejected as being exclusionary, the Welsh language played a significant role in the formulation of 'Welshness' for 40-60% of informants. For these individuals the *ability* to converse in fluent Welsh was regarded as a less important symbolic marker than the *opportunities* utilised to do so, through which particular social situations could be marked out as distinctively Welsh.

A significant proportion of informants emphasised that the role played by the Welsh language in national identity had primarily cultural rather than political significations, and

were concerned that it be dissociated from the type of Welsh nationalism embodied in the ideological platform of Plaid Cymru. That men were more likely to raise this point, can be considered in terms of their more established association with political institutions in the region, and also with their corresponding concern to distinguish between ‘private’ and ‘public’ sphere activities. The weak link between language as a manifestation of national identity and politics, is demonstrated by the continued support which the Labour Party receives in relation to Plaid Cymru in the region, in comparison to its relatively high degree of Welsh-language proficiency. Crucially informants who made this point, differentiated between Welsh distinctiveness and Welsh separatism, and between Welshness as part of a broader identity, and Welshness as a primary identity. An attachment to the latter was distinguished from an attachment to the language, and thus Welshness can be regarded as one among multiple elements of this group’s spatial attachments.

I’m Welsh, I speak Welsh. But don’t forget, I’m not like these Plaid Cymru ones. I don’t want you to think that sort of thing. No, I’m a Welshman through and through. I hope I am. David Williams; 70s; retired miner

While informants who possessed a sophisticated degree of political understanding were most keen to dissociate the language from political nationalism, by contrast, a small proportion (section 4.3) reversed the equation and espoused the ideology of Plaid Cymru. However, for the majority of Welsh-speaking individuals, language was assimilated into spatial understandings relatively unproblematically, conceptualised as primarily cultural, and only very weakly linked to political nationalism. Informants described the connection between the Welsh language and particular traditions which were regarded as being important to Welsh culture, in terms of a positive contribution rather than a cause for concern:

I don’t think we are as able to move with the times, I think we are more steeped in tradition. And I don’t mean that as a criticism. But I do think that there is a leaning towards traditional activities, such as the Eisteddfod. And I think that as a Welsh nation we do ... we do *cling* to tradition and traditional values, I think.

Betty Morgan; 50s; local politician

¹⁶ These figures should be interpreted in the context of the geographical specificity of the sample.

In drawing a link between language and Welsh culture, an older generation was more inclined to utilise memory in establishing commonality, while a younger generation additionally described a link with the future (their children's schooling¹⁷), perhaps recognising the political expediency and 'employability' of bilingualism in an increasingly autonomous Wales. This latter attitude highlights the need to approach identity processually in recognising that individuals mobilise spatiality flexibly, drawing upon the temporal reference points which are most useful in explaining their circumstances. This younger group of informants interpreted the impact of the Welsh language upon their experiences in three inter-related ways: in terms of the past through reference to a common heritage; through the present in establishing their relationship to a particular space; and in terms of the future in linking individuals to a distinctive Welsh bureaucracy, manifested in the then largely unknown quantity of the Welsh Assembly. However, these conclusions should also be considered in the context of the 40% of informants who could not speak Welsh, who felt that it played little part in their 'Welshness', except in a minority of cases, where it was voiced in terms of a personal 'absence', a membership criterion which they lacked. The distribution of Welsh language skills, according to variables like gender and age, was relatively uniform, linked to familial experience and the ability to familiarise children with both languages from an early age.

3.42 Civil Society: The Welsh Referendum

Over the course of the twentieth century the Welsh have formulated their political attachments by importing English political parties, and aligning themselves more generally to a left-of-centre part of the political spectrum. Following industrialisation, a Welsh working-class became visible which found its interests best represented in the Liberal Party. The latter part of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century saw a proliferation of labour movement organisation, and a gradual attachment of the Welsh working-class to the embryonic Labour Party, which achieved national recognition with the 1910 general election. Throughout the twentieth century, national Labour Party politicians

¹⁷ Welsh schools being particularly well regarded amongst informants in terms of their educational and cultural merits.

have discovered a fertile training ground in the hothouse environment of Welsh politics, and have included Keir Hardie, Ramsay Macdonald, Nye Bevan and Neil Kinnock, and 'honorary' Welshmen like Michael Foot. The Labour Party which currently dominates Wales' representation in Westminster has been particularly successful in formulating a reflexive spatiality, the Welsh Labour Party remaining distinctive, yet fundamentally also recognisable as part of a broader political organisation.

The Welsh nationalist party, Plaid Cymru (The Party of Wales) has tended to take a backseat in most constituencies¹⁸, its major role being in terms of a 'protest vote', particularly during by-elections. In recent years, Plaid has been a major contender in only a handful of Welsh-speaking constituencies. Thus political nationalism has not been taken up in Wales to the same degree as in Scotland or Northern Ireland. A major factor in Plaid's lack of majority appeal is its direct association of a political ideology with the Welsh language, a language spoken by only a minority of Welsh men and women. By contrast, in Scotland the more successful SNP has not inextricably linked political nationalism with the minority language. Among the informants, Plaid was frequently regarded with some warmth, but offered a serious political option over the Labour Party for only a minority. It did however, provide a route for protest voting, a means of expressing dissatisfaction with the national Labour Party. The attachment of the Welsh to the Labour Party then, rather than Plaid, particularly in the south (where the majority of the population live), can be interpreted in terms of their historical link to the British trade union movement which provided representation for an industrial population.

The 1 May 1997 general election saw the Conservative Party being wiped off the political map in Wales, and although the results in marginal constituencies were to some extent swung by peculiarities in the British electoral system, the Labour Party consolidated its support in the South Wales coalfield. Following its election, the new Labour Government published its White Paper for a Welsh Assembly in July, proposing that a Welsh Assembly be apportioned an executive rather than a legislative role. The referendum on 18 September, a week after the more decisive Scottish event¹⁹, saw a turnout of 50.1% and the yes campaigners scrape home with a mandate of 50.3% of the vote, or just over a quarter of the

¹⁸ In Westminster it currently holds 4 seats out of 40.

¹⁹ 74% of Scottish votes casting a 'yes' response, on a turnout of 60.3% of the electorate.

electorate. Still, this was a 15% swing since the 1979 devolution referendum, which led nationalists to suggest that support for a distinctively Welsh citizenship was gaining impetus.

The referendum was significant in terms of the visibility of national identity, and the extent to which this can be considered an important part of spatial identity. Prior to the referendum, in the summer of 1997 when the first wave of interviewing took place, enthusiasm for a Welsh Parliament was muted and unexceptional. A third of informants complained that they did not understand or had been poorly informed regarding what the devolution process actually entailed:

I don't think I really know enough about it to form a serious opinion. I voted against it in 1979 but I don't know.

Jill David; 40s; professional and local politician

Another 50% of informants wavered, wondering aloud whether Wales' economic status was sufficient to support an Assembly:

I don't know if we'd benefit. 'Cause when you think about it this whole country is not that big. I don't know if we'd be better off.

Sheila Thomas; 50s; married to former miner

Notably women were more likely than men to feel distanced and/or ill-informed regarding the Welsh referendum. While this is unsurprising considering women's traditionally weak relationship with politics in coalmining communities (section 4.4), it fails to explain the responses of individuals like Jill David who possessed active political biographies yet remained unenthusiastic about Welsh devolution. One explanation is that the Labour Party had initially presented its case in a format inaccessible to women, or that men were more reluctant to display confusion over political debate or dissent from Labour Party policy.

'Old Labourites' amongst the first-wave informants raised a more specific objection, which reflected their heightened sense of attachment to a specific political ideology, which they felt sat uneasily with exclusivist claims to space:

I'm not a believer in borders anyway, I'm one of the old socialists ... socialism sees no borders.
Ron Evans; 40s; former striking miner

By contrast, informants who were active within the Labour Party responded more positively to the devolution process. This is logical if their identifications are considered in terms of self-interest, and the greater degree of power they are likely to enjoy in a devolved Wales.

Oh I'm absolutely for it ... If we don't take the step now I don't believe we'll ever get the opportunity again. And I do believe that we need power devolved to Wales in order, at the moment, to reclaim democracy.

Betty Morgan; 50s; local politician

The telephone re-interviews conducted with first-wave informants during January 1998, saw a shift away from uncertainty, reflecting an engagement with the on-going debate and a consequent process of loyalty reconsideration. Thus respondents reported voting (unanimously) 'yes' in the referendum, the main reason given being that their affiliation with the Labour Party overrode the reservations voiced earlier.

The second-wave of interviewing, which took place during January and February 1999, contrasted dramatically with the earlier fieldwork (and also with electoral figures), in that most informants professed to having voted for a Welsh Assembly, and none admitted to abstaining from voting. Of course, the snowballing method of locating informants likely skewed the data in favour of political activists more sympathetic to Labour Party policy, but this in itself did not explain why second-wave informants were distinctively more enthusiastic in their endorsement of the Assembly than first-wave informants.

I *totally* agree with the Welsh Assembly, we've *got* to think about it in Wales. It's time the Welsh fought back.

Wyn Morris; 50s; Tower shareholder and unionist

Only two second-wave informants admitted to having voted against the Assembly, and they expressed embarrassment in voicing their doubts. The apparent scarcity of 'no' voters or abstainers amongst the informants, particularly amongst those interviewed at a later stage in

the fieldwork, can be considered with reference to the 1992 opinion poll fiasco which pollsters blamed on respondents' refusal to admit to voting Conservative (Butler & Kavanagh 1992). People who have been loyal Labour Party supporters or members are likely to feel guilt in casting a vote which defies the 'party line'. Similarly, that individuals might wish to be associated with a 'winning horse', is a factor which would skew the data in favour of an endorsement of devolution.

However, the most substantial explanation for the apparent differential endorsements of the Welsh Assembly of first- and second-wave informants, is that these groups were not in fact so dissimilar, rather individuals gave more speculative responses in the run-up to the referendum, and were later persuaded to vote yes by the Labour Party providing a more open and accessible debate. That is, the fieldwork demonstrated the *temporality* of spatial awareness rather than the co-existence of two distinctive groupings, defined by male occupational identity, who approached national identity qualitatively differently. This hypothesis is endorsed by the degree of concurrence between first- and second-wave informants on this matter, in that in both bouts of interviewing, individuals more closely connected with the Labour Party gave the most positive endorsements of the Assembly. Conversely, a substantial proportion of those who eventually voted yes, did so with little enthusiasm and demonstrated an ambivalence comparable to that of the first-wave informants:

To be quite honest, we voted [yes] *on* it, but I don't really think it was fair what happened, they just pushed it a little bit too quickly. I think we should have been, you know, told a lot more about it, like.

Hywel Rees; 30s; Tower shareholder

Significantly, these less enthusiastic endorsements of the Assembly came from informants who maintained a strong link to a coalmining occupational identity, but who were not political activists. Their lesser degree of political activity is likely to be more representative of the experiences of the populations of the South Wales Valleys. The broader results should be thus be interpreted in light of the disproportionate weighting given to informants in positions of political authority and influence within the interview schedule, a result of their greater accessibility, confidence and willingness to engage with the issues raised. Therefore

while the national identity manifested in enthusiasm for a Welsh Assembly can be regarded as strongly related to political activism, it is less clear that support for devolution is a necessary part of national identity for non-activists. However, the fieldwork did confirm that national identity, manifested in this political sense, is strongly linked to temporality, emerging and retreating at particular moments in time, and it should therefore be regarded as unfixed, reflexive and processual. That informants apparently provided a mandate for the Welsh Assembly, does not imply uniformity in their approach to Welsh citizenship, rather a 'yes' vote masked internal differentiation, dynamism and overlap, in the same way as attachment to the Labour Party has done (section 4.3).

3.43 Imagined Communities

Informants described Welsh identity most enthusiastically in terms of an idealised community, characterised by cohesion and co-operative values, which were perceived as distinctive from those exhibited in a wider Britain. This was perceived as being specifically communal and family-orientated in nature:

it's hard to sum it up but I think Welsh people are certainly more genuine or more, well I could say community spirited or they're more interested in each other's affairs, possibly for good and bad that may be, I'm not sure. But I think there is more of a community and an interest in other people.

Gary Peters; 30s; former striking miner now self-employed

Thus the English character was positioned as 'Other', as more individualistic, less concerned with spatial communities, and in some indiscernible way, a nation more spatially 'stretched', physical distance existing *between* individuals. First-wave informants were most prominent in making these distinctions. It is perhaps unsurprising that individuals whose perceptions of belonging to a 'coalmining community' were under most threat, drew strength from a consolidation and tightening of spatial boundaries. By contrast, second-wave informants who continued to work in coalmining had negotiated a greater degree of continuity in their occupational experiences, had less need to safeguard these experiences by counterposing their spatial awareness, understood through community cohesion, against that of an 'Other'.

A significant minority of informants defined their national experience in contrast to (southern) England's economic prosperity, perceiving the English as looking down upon the Welsh nation. This sense of 'secondary status' has been interpreted by theorists such as Roberts (1993) in terms of a substitution of class for spatial terminology in countering the weakening of an economic base which would otherwise provide an institutional context for the mobilisation of class interests. It provides an example of the intersection of spatial attachments, since Welshness in this sense is strongly linked to the regionality associated with an industrial class. Taylor *et al.* (1996) uncovered a similar phenomenon in their work in the North of England, which was regarded by its natives as an economically and politically peripheral region.

I would imagine that they [the English] think of themselves as different from, well I wouldn't say a *backward* country, but a country less well off than what they are.

David Waters; 30s; miner working in private pits

These informants were distinctive in that they worked under what can be considered traditionally exploitative proletarian conditions, comparable to those experienced under the coal-barons, with little employment protection or occupational security. The insecurity of this employment made proletarian solidarity and resistance more difficult, union membership being largely discouraged by private mine-owners. The size and individualist working patterns of these mines also effectively deprived employees of the 'camaraderie' which characterised 'traditional' coalmining, and provided a central source of occupational satisfaction (section 4.2). It is unsurprising that this group were more sharply aware of a qualitative decline in their experiences, and transposed their dissatisfactions into a heightened spatial awareness, articulated at a broader spatial 'level' than that at which their experiences occurred.

A significant minority of informants felt unable to identify their 'Welshness' as divergent from Englishness in terms of any particular characteristics, but instead drew attention to a distinctive spatial character, related to (an oppressed) region or class rather than to a nation, and made comparisons between themselves and those inhabiting similar circumstances:

I don't think ordinary people vary anywhere throughout the world, but the English as a ruling class, which I believe them to be, they've come down from a long line of interferers. But ordinary working people, I think are very much all together.

Wyn Morris; 50s; Tower shareholder and unionist

Again Welsh identity was defined in 'opposition' to an 'Other' (see Massey 1994b; Roberts 1994), specifically the southern English, who were perceived as representing the ruling class. This spatial definition, marked out by difference, but also drawing upon broader similarities, can again be interpreted as a reconfiguration of class interests under transformative social and economic conditions which disrupt the solidarities of traditional class formations. Bagguley *et al.* (1990) have predicted this happening, 'traditional' class cleavages becoming transmuted into more spatial phenomena, in areas suffering disproportionately from the effects of economic recession.

Attachment to national identity within the South Wales Valleys comprises an important part of spatial awareness, and is made up of various interconnected and disparate elements which are differentially employed by individuals, in combination with their more specific spatial attachments in formulating interpretations of belongingness. Jenkins' (1997) approach is useful in understanding the relative significance of national identity, when he describes Welsh spatial identity as a *nominal* identity, which overlaps with the virtualities of other attachments. The Welsh language, for example may be interconnected with political identity, but is more frequently linked to cultural attachments. Conversely, it might not be a part of an individual's experience of national identity at all, but is recognised as a factor embedded in others' social relationships, making an important contribution to perceptions of Wales as distinctive. Welshness was employed both oppositionally, for example in terms of its communitarian values which were presented in contrast to the less 'caring' and more restrained English national character, but also as embedded in broader spatial relations, for example in individuals formulating their national identity as Welsh, but beyond that claiming belongingness to the British population.

Welshness was employed more or less reflexively depending on the resources which individuals possessed, and became more or less visible when brought into focus by economic and political restructuring. Specific links, such as that between political activists and an

enthusiasm for Welsh national governance, and between a former coalmining community occupational identity and an emphasis upon communal values, suggested that various subgroups were undergoing a process of modifying their attachment to nation, but that this was not occurring uniformly and was linked to particular social characteristics and resources. Industrial restructuring cannot therefore be regarded as having transformed or reconfigured perceptions of national identity in any one direction, but a relational and processual approach facilitates a recognition of how individuals' attachment to nation is multi-faceted and dynamic, infusing their broader social experiences in complex ways.

3.5 Conclusion

The examination of the spatial attachments of the populations of the South Wales Valleys in this chapter, pursued through focusing on a range of 'levels' of spatiality, has revealed that distinctive spatial entities have different meanings and are utilised to interpret different sets of social relations. However, these are interconnected in complex ways and are re-assessed over time, in line with individuals' differentiated and dynamic social circumstances and resources. Notably the significance of communal relations was re-iterated across all three spatial stages, in contrast to geography's relative insignificance, its primary role becoming manifested in terms of (relatively proximate) localist interpretations of space. While it may be argued that this is because geographical space is taken for granted - we all know what Wales is and the coalfields were and can draw a discrete line around them - a more convincing response is that geographical space is less significant to individuals because it is, for the most part, psychologically distant. Social relations, however, are more malleable and can be imagined even where the relative volume of interactions are low. While spatial and social relations are co-present and mutually re-inforcing, spaces would be devoid of meanings but for those imbued upon them by individuals' perceived or real interactions. Social relationships are therefore central to spatial formulations.

Through exploring how individuals living in the South Welsh Valleys employ spatiality, an understanding of the specificity of these populations has been developed, which describes the distinctive cultural understandings informing their responses to restructuring. However, individuals' negotiations of space are mediated by the interaction of a plurality of factors including age, gender, occupational status and political awareness. The distinction of spatial

'levels' of attachment shed light upon the sophisticated process whereby a plurality of discourses simultaneously act and interact as influences upon individuals, being rejected, assimilated and reflexively employed in relation to their unfolding social circumstances. The framework of broader understandings provided by spatial attachments is part of the process by which individuals' social experiences become filtered through what Eder (1993) regarded as cultural *texture* and Bourdieu (1984) termed 'habitus', the assumed dispositions which uniquely colour the relationships of a particular social group, while simultaneously enabling them to negotiate difference. As these spatialities become progressively smaller, more specific and familiar, so they are perceived as less abstract, are responded to more emotively, and are more frequently drawn upon by individuals to imbue meaning upon and interpret their social experiences.

Restructuring has brought more acutely into relief the potential significance of a range of spaces, extending beyond the local, upon individuals' experiences. However, it has not simultaneously and unreservedly made these spaces accessible or comfortably inhabited. This reveals the inadequacy of employing globalisation theories to describe the spatial experiences of the populations of the South Wales Valleys. However, through extending the theoretical approach outlined in chapter one to analyse individuals' spatial attachment, their differentiated mobilisation of spatiality can be interpreted in terms of their reflexive appropriation of habitus. The degrees of spatial flexibility and mobility enacted by individuals is related to their possession of and ability to employ a series of resources, which cause them to gravitate towards and form social or psychological alignments with particular groups and their associated spatialities. These socio-spatial relationships are dynamic, interconnected and sometimes contradictory, reflecting the differentiated circumstances of individuals' lives. Massey (1994) has called this 'the power geometry of time-space compression'. Differential mobility is influenced by factors including gender, ethnicity and skill status. For example, women's traditionally weak relationship with the labour market in the Welsh Valleys restricted their ability to move freely between public and private spheres. This chapter has described how individuals' spatial attachments and negotiations are differentiated by their inheritance, accumulation and reconfiguration of a range of social, economic, cultural and symbolic resources. While more privileged individuals have been able to negotiate mobility and thus develop more flexible interpretations of spatiality, less privileged ones have remained relatively 'stuck' in the local, aware of what is going on

beyond them but unable to effect significant degrees of movement and engagement with non-traditional spatialities. For the latter this has the consequence of effecting protectionist interpretations of space. Spatiality should thus be regarded as structured by individuals' positioning in relation to the distribution of resources among populations, and this chapter has described the spatial experiences of a number of social groupings to illustrate this point. The following chapter builds on the social differentiation outlined in informants' accounts of their spatial experiences, to develop a more complex analysis of how this patterning is translated into differential probabilistic life-chances.

In examining the spatial attachments of the populations of the South Wales Valleys, it is argued that spatiality is flexible, looking to the past, present and future in establishing common reference points. Spatial attachments are not constant, but variable across time and among distinctive socio-economic groups. Spatiality is thus processual, unfolding with the march of time. It is also relational, 'levels' of spatiality being interconnected and having a reciprocal effect upon one another. Thus, for example, regional attachments, such as a labour movement affiliation in which alignments are made with similar social groups like the Yorkshire miners, affect the way in which national identity is formulated, such that a sense of Welshness cannot be automatically be assumed to translate unproblematically into an endorsement for Welsh devolution. Spatial attachments are also inter-woven with broader aspects of social identity, such as occupational and communal experiences, a phenomenon explored in later chapters. The findings of this chapter thus endorse the thesis's theoretical perspective which conceptualises identity formation as processual, relational and dynamic, and which draws attention to how the unequal distribution of resources in relation to a population result in particular social outcomes being more probable than others.

The next chapter considers issues of collective attachment as a component part of the identity formulations of the populations of the South Wales Valleys. In particular, it examines how group loyalties have been transformed under on-going processes of restructuring. In a structure similar to this chapter's, collective identity is considered in terms of a triptych, whose branches are ultimately interconnected, but whose distinction provides analytical clarity. In commencing with an examination of how holistic conceptualisations of occupational identity have been transformed by labour market restructuring, a theoretical approach is developed which maps out the relative distribution of resources among

individuals in order to analyse how these occupational solidarities, and then political and communal ones, have been disrupted and transformed, and are distinctively negotiated according to individuals' positioning within a specific social space.

Chapter Four: Collective Identities

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how group loyalties have been transformed by restructuring, and argues that collective attachments are central to understanding processes of identity formation in the South Wales Valleys. In this, it is necessary to challenge the context in which collectivity has been used to describe the experiences of coalmining populations, since behind the frequently employed shorthand of ‘coalmining communities’ is an implicit assumption that these populations unproblematically formulated and drew upon a set of coherent collective attachments. However, this over-simplified their constituent social organisation, and while it enabled social theorists to make comparisons with more obviously heterogeneous populations, it also masked internal differentiation, excluding the accounts of minority and less visible groups, whose biographies were less typical of ‘a’ common experience (Gilbert 1995).

Habitus is important in understanding the negotiation of collectivity: in the South Wales coalmining Valleys habitus was formalised through a series of interrelated institutions and their supportive social structures. However, as Mennell (1994) recognised, habitus is also multi-layered. In considering processes of collective recognition, this chapter directs attention towards the intersubjective character and variability of habitus across time and space, but also emphasises its role in providing a context where the ‘rules’ of localised interaction become formulated (Calhoun 1991; Bourdieu 1977). Habitus is comparable to what Raymond Williams called ‘structures of feeling’, theorising that while these laid the basis for social similarities, unexpected *discontinuities* would also be observed (1961: 63). This argument was developed to understand national relationships, but because Williams directed attention towards the *complexities* of relationships, it also facilitates an analysis of smaller social structures. Through employing the processual approach to identity outlined in chapter one, this chapter develops a dynamic account of the collectivised understandings associated with habitus. Attention is drawn to the *network* of collective attachments embodied in ‘habitus’, which are responsive to socio-economic transformation and its attendant renegotiation of micro-relationships. It is argued that restructuring has not negated

the significance of collectivity in social organisation, and through employing a processual approach, an appreciation is developed of the central role played by a plurality of collective attachments in individuals' negotiation of self-understandings.

This argument contrasts with the individualisation theories utilised in recent postmodernist accounts of identity. The position taken here, comparable to those of Calhoun (1991) and Skeggs (1997a), recognises that the instrumental self has privileged a Western bourgeois positioning, which is not universally accessible or even recognised. In understanding how populations peripheral to power nexuses position themselves, it is argued that collective loyalties be conceptualised fluidly, in engaging with the various and contradictory pulls upon human beings, frequently reconciled through individuals locating themselves within a plurality of groupings. Through developing an account of how resources unequally distributed throughout a population are employed by individuals, it is argued that collective attachments provide a form of social capital which facilitates the realisation of individual positioning, mobility and self-understanding. Accounts prioritising individualistic agency or homogeneous collectivisation are ill-placed to document how structural assets simultaneously differentiate and unite individuals' experiences, mediating their ability to access and employ particular collectivised discourses. A processual approach, however, highlights the matrix of reconfigured and dynamic social solidarities employed by individuals, which reflect their divergent experiences under restructuring, and which are inter-related to one another. Thus habitus is theorised as multi-dimensional, collective attachments simultaneously encompassing complex and temporally-contingent differentiation, and analytical indistinction.

While this project is concerned to demonstrate the temporality of identity formations, the retrospective accounts of informants are inevitably partial, reinterpreted and contextualised. As Samuel (1994) has emphasised, individuals become engaged in a process of selectively constructing and reconstructing the past in order to locate themselves within the present. The picture painted by informants' 'reflections' is therefore inevitably incomplete. While various studies of the populations of the South Wales coalmining Valleys (Gilbert 1992; Francis and Smith 1980; Sewel 1975) have provided an important historical source, they have not been comprehensive. They have tended to overemphasise the homogeneity associated with the social structures of coalmining (Rees 1986), a flaw which feminist theory

has attempted to remedy (Beddoe 1981; John 1984; Aaron *et al.* 1994; Miller 1986). While to some extent then, knowledge is partial, recognition of one aspect of individuals' experiences being achieved only at the neglect of another, through locating the fieldwork in relation to these texts, and providing a response to current critical debate, this project endeavours to develop a more comprehensive understanding of collectivity in the Welsh Valleys.

Utilising the approach developed in the preceding chapter, the examination of collective attachments is pursued through a tri-focal perspective, which looks at the three main ways in which coalmining populations have utilised common experiences in negotiating identity, and relates these to current experiences. Although these areas are considered distinctly as chronological sections, they are in fact mutually reinforcing, their inter-dependency having facilitated the ontological construction of 'a coalmining community'. Respectively, these categories are: work, or the collective occupational identity associated with coalmining, whose labour market basis has been undermined by the contraction of the industry; political identity in the form of a popular socialism, itself affected by the realignment of socio-economic positionings associated with occupational diversification, but also by ideological shifts in the Labour Party and progress towards Welsh devolution; and community identity, the institutions and social formations associated with a particular spatial territory, disrupted by the elongation of family and work relationships in a more mixed economy. These terms all imply a shorthand associated with the histories of coalmining communities in the South Wales Valleys, and this chapter examines the internal variations which these have masked and considers their analytical significance in a transformed socio-economic environment.

4.2 Occupational Identities

While in the past, occupational identity in the Welsh Valleys was primarily informed by coalmining experiences, the restructuring of the past three decades, accelerating after the miners' defeat in 1985, has dramatically transformed local labour markets. These have implied a fragmentation of the bonds of solidarity and collective organisation associated with coalmining populations. Labour market opportunities within the Valleys have contracted, necessitating that individuals employ a flexible mobility to avoid a life of benefit

dependency. The material basis of employment has also been dramatically altered, the region shifting away from a reliance upon manufacturing industry, a greater proportion of individuals going into service sector employment (see annual economic reviews in *Contemporary Wales* and figures 4.1 and 4.2), and travel-to-work areas being broadened. This has promoted a re-skilling of the workforce and a transformation of its gendered demography, women increasingly moving into public sphere employment, where however, they have been concentrated in insecure and part-time forms of work (Charles 1990a; Rees 1988; Winckler 1987).

Figure 4.1: Employees in Employment: 1978 and 1987 Censuses

Total employees (1,000's)	1978 S. and W. Wales	1987 689.1	1987 Dyfed	1987 Gwent	1987 Mid Glam	1987 South Glam.	1987 West Glam.
	778.1		98.0	146.9	159.1	168	117.1
% in:							
Agriculture	1.7	1.8	8.6	1.2	0.6	0.3	0.7
Mining, Utilities	6.3	4.1	5.3	2.9	5.9	3.0	3.9
Metals, Chemicals	12.1	5.4	3.3	9.2	3.2	3.7	7.6
Engineering		10.3	5.7	15.6	14.8	5.1	8.6
Other Manufacturing	19.4	8.7	5.8	8.7	14.7	5.4	7.6
Construction	6.2	4.9	4.6	4.9	5.1	5.0	4.6
Distribut'n, Tourism		17.3	17.8	16.3	14.3	19.3	19.4
Transport, commun'ns	54.4	5.2	5.2	4.9	3.6	6.3	6.1
Professional Services		6.9	6.5	5.9	4.3	10.8	6.3
Other Services		35.6	37.2	30.2	33.5	41.5	35.2

Source: Mainwaring (1990: 127) using Digest of Welsh Statistics.

Figure 4.2: Percentage of Employees by Industry, September 1993

	Neath/ Port Talbot	Wales
Primary	5	4
Manufacturing	34	21
Construction	6	4
Distribution and Transport	21	26
Banking and Finance	7	10
Public administration and others	27	35

Source: Welsh Office (1997).

Transformation of occupational structures has entailed a diversification of the life experiences and interests of the former coalmining populations of the South Wales Valleys, which complicates a consideration of their collective attachments. The working experiences of coalmining populations provided the mechanism through which their identity processes became gendered, and acted as a central point around which broader identity processes, including political and communal attachments, were formulated. The particular structuring function associated with coalmining, necessitates that that work receives particular attention in a project concerned with the broader formulation of social identity. This section then, examines how coalmining's central role in social organisation has been disrupted by the diversification of local labour markets, and considers the extent to which in this context, group experiences of work remain a primary factor in the negotiation of self-understandings.

In considering the meanings which occupation bestows upon identity, a temporal perspective is employed which highlights the dynamism of occupational attachments as they interact with and are negotiated in line with macroeconomic developments. Hence the examination of occupational identities commences with an outline of the 'coalmining' identity associated with the forms of the industry existing prior to the 1984/5 Strike. By examining this identity, and asking what it was about employment in the coalmining industry which individuals found valuable and which contributed to such a large part of their sense of selves, an understanding is developed of why social theorists frequently conceptualised coalmining

experiences holistically. The section then goes on to look at how these aforementioned occupational qualities have been experienced as achievable in other sorts of work, in particular examining the accessibility of 'new' forms of employment to the populations of the Welsh Valleys. Finally, in considering the relationship between work and broader social solidarities, the preceding evidence is utilised to theorise a more fluid conceptualisation of occupational identity. The primary argument advanced in this section is that restructuring has weakened the role of occupation as a primary means of social cohesion. The increasingly diffuse and dynamic nature of labour market experiences suggest that while work remains an important factor in social organisation, attention should now be directed towards a broader network of social relationships to understand the meaningful solidarities established between individuals.

4.2.1 The Past

The 'coalmining' occupational identity characterising informants' workplace reflections, is taken in this thesis as meaning that associated with the auspices of the NCB, coalmining prior to nationalisation having been controlled by various coal-barons. This occupational experience was characterised by strong unionisation, represented in the Welsh Valleys by 'The Fed' (Francis and Smith 1980), which provided the institutional structure for the negotiation of collective interests. This, the most common experience of coalmining, fostered a different occupational identity from the region's private mines, which provided a minority of employment and offered more attractive rates of remuneration than is currently the case. Whereas prior to mass pit closures, private mines competed with Coal Board collieries in recruiting labour, their relative labour market advantage amid a contracted coalmining industry has enabled them to prioritise productivity over attractive employment conditions.

Employment within the coalmining industry provided the labourer with occupational rewards which stretched beyond the paid wage. Coalmining's infrastructure extended outside the workplace, and this factor, in combination with the geographical isolation of villages in the South Wales Valleys, enabled the ethos of coalmining to inform a whole way of life. Men lived together, worked together and socialised together in the local Miners' Welfare clubs,

and in their associated brass bands and choirs, their wives providing domestic support and experiencing a heightened sense of communality. In seeking to reduce the size of and then privatise the coalmining industry therefore, the Conservative Government both deprived its employees of secure employment, and encroached upon a broader set of social assumptions and expectations which had informed the lived experience of coalmining communities.

The unusual social organisation of coalmining has allowed social theorists to conceptualise coalmining communities holistically (Bulmer 1975; Dennis *et al.* 1956; Lockwood 1975), in terms of a high degree of overlap between work, social and domestic experiences, and to champion them as archetypal working-class communities. However, this uniformity of experience has been exaggerated by social theorists, particularly in the post-war years when coalmining's status as a dominant employer was threatened. For example, while intensive labour processes increased manpower production, coal output per manshift rising from 2.13 tonnes in 1971/2 to 4.7 tonnes in 1990/1, the workforce simultaneously contracted from 362,000 employees in 1972 to 74,000 in 1991²⁰. Nevertheless, the degree of commonality associated with coalmining communities has been unusual amongst social groups, permeating informants' experiences in the years after coal's reign as king.

In retrospective consideration, informants identified coalmining as having played a central part in the process through which their self-understandings had been formulated. Life revolved around the rhythms of the pit for both men and women, coalmining providing women with specifically domestic identities, which while unpaid, played a vital role in servicing the industry, being therefore valued, if not universally recognised as constituting 'work'. Specifically, a coalmining employment provided a series of valued occupational qualities which enabled it to act as a dominant influence in identity formation. Primary among these qualities were status, autonomy, and most significantly, communality or sociability. Working in a high-risk environment, where the possibilities of physical injury and long-term illness haunted men's occupational experience, brought compensations. The most prominent of these was the highly-developed sense of camaraderie experienced by coalminers. This was necessary in order to endure often unpleasant working conditions, but also because coalmining called upon men to work together in small inter-dependent teams,

²⁰ Figures from *Annual Abstract of Statistics* (1982) HMSO no.118, table 8.15; (1980) Class 11 & 12; British Coal (1991, March) *Report & Annual Accounts 1990-1* British Coal.



characterised by reciprocal trust. This life-or-death scenario, aside from heightening male friendship, provided coalminers with a sense of their place within the means of production which greatly exceeded that of the factory-worker, and which frequently overrode the significance of formal considerations of occupational status. Management structures were fairly invisible in miners' day-to-day working lives, their work calling upon them to make pragmatic decisions within teams of 'buddies', themselves primarily egalitarian. The subjugated worker was thus more apparent in retrospective gaze; the majority of miners' working practices were actually governed by a high degree of autonomy.

Informants' reflections upon their former occupational experiences prominently articulated the loss of workplace bonds of friendship and trust. This was most acutely observed among individuals unable to secure paid employment in the aftermath of restructuring:

There seemed to be a, you know, if you work underground with somebody, your life depended on the people around you, there was an affinity there.

Bill John; 60s; retired miner

I miss the crack of underground life, you know what I mean? Like I haven't got that no more.

Huw Gwilym; 50s; unemployed former striking miner

By contrast women, not having personally experienced the workplace sociability of the coalmines, assessed the meanings associated with a coalmining employment differently. While they, too, frequently cited workplace camaraderie as a significant part of men's occupational experience, they counterbalanced it against miners' intense physical endurance, and the limitations placed upon communities dependent on a single-industry employer:

it's tough working in a mine, it really is *awful* working down a coal mine. ... I mean he's [husband] crawled on his belly in an eighteen-inch seam. ... he's worked in that horrible dust and there are rats down there and you have to eat your food down underground you see, and you're absolutely filthy I mean it is dreadful down a coal mine, I mean they deserve high wages.

Rose Edwards; 40s; migrant; married to former miner turned entrepreneur

You see this is the trouble, people live in a village where there is a pit and they're ten miles from town ... So you left school and hooray, work in the village you see. And my father was a clever boy, but there was no other lane for him you know. And the same thing happened to my husband. And it's unfortunate. There's a lot of wasted talent in a mining village.

Rebecca Evans; 60s; migrant and retired professional

The women most forcibly articulating the occupational *dissatisfactions* associated with traditional coalmining, had witnessed their husbands finding work in alternative industries, and thus observed that these hardships were not applicable outside of the coalmining industry.

While census data (Welsh Office Area Statistics) and previous studies (Beddoe 1981; Gibson-Graham 1996; Hebron and Wykes 1991; Measham and Allen 1994) have documented the gendered nature of paid labour in coalmining communities, this was little questioned by informants. Indeed, these arrangements were only recognised as a limiting factor by a minority who had, fairly early in their lives, decided that *their* futures lay outside of the occupational expectations of their communities:

But I think mind, the Valleys lack confidence because of the old idea that men had to go out to work immaterial of their educational ability, and then the women, as they got married, had children to go out to work to bring in the money. And I know for a fact, a lot of children I used to know who were very capable, they just weren't allowed to try exams and O-levels to further their education.

Stuart David; 40s; farmer

Most informants, however, valued the coalmining industry for its provision of secure employment and a familiar and warm interactive environment, an experience embedded in its matrix of structural institutions from which broader social networks emanated (section 4.4). The consensus facilitating the reproduction of gendered occupational expectations was reinforced through an important aspect of the socialisation experience, namely the type of education predominating in the Valleys. This was experienced as largely uninspiring and offering little diversity in promoting occupational aspirations. Women, in particular,

complained that their options outside of the private sphere had been portrayed as limited (although this had not, at that time, been recognised). Specifically, secondary school education was perceived as lacking a training for citizenship.

Informants' attitude to education provides an illustration of how cultural capital was reproduced by the populations of the South Wales Valleys. However, Bourdieu (1984) has identified cultural capital as existing in several forms, and it is of its embodied state, in terms of the formation long-lasting dispositions which incorporate discourses of masculinity and femininity, which is most relevant here. Skeggs has noted that, 'the cultural capital of the working-class is rarely legitimised in formal education' (1997b:129). The ability to draw upon, assimilate and utilise educational resources is mitigated by the conditions of individuals' experience, which are characterised by a series of unequally distributed resources or forms of capital. For example, the gendered expectations of parents, which typified the Valleys' populations for much of this century, and which are only now being challenged, had a major impact on the way in which girls and boys translated their objectively similar educational opportunities into differentiated labour market experiences.

When we were in school, you used to have the careers officer come round. That's all he seemed to do then was push you towards mining.

Mike Breeze; 50s; former striking miner, now in private pit

While parental expectations more broadly corresponded with an early graduation from school to labour market, men and women's experiences then displaying a public/private sector divide with the onset of marriage, this also left room for young men with a greater accumulation of resources to place an increased emphasis upon educational credentialisation, although these too tended to be utilised in formulating career strategies which complemented the cultural conditions of their existence.

My mother didn't want me to go down ... I was sponsored by the Coal Board, they'd issue you a day off ... a couple of years and I was awarded my national certificate ... And then I got a block release, a month of time off for education, then I got a year off to go to college, and then I came back from that. ... And then I got a job called

assistant to the manager. Did that for about a year, and then I got an under-manager's job.

Ellis West; 50s; retired former coalmine manager

One indication of the extent to which cultural expectations shaped individuals' ability to draw upon educational resources, is the movement away from the Valleys of informants who had deviated from shared expectations and formulated more individualist career strategies.

There's no future for someone like me. That sounds bad, but for what I want to do, a structural engineer, there's no future here for me ... I just feel there's better places for me, I can't explain it really. My mother calls me a snob sometimes. But I'm not, I don't think I'm a snob, I just want better for myself and my children.

Kat Trystan; 20s; student from former mining family

However, with the restructuring of the labour market of the Welsh Valleys, cultural expectations are becoming less standardised, a phenomenon which is most clearly illustrated in transformed parental expectations, even among individuals unable to reconfigure their own labour market experiences (section 4.2.2.2). Realising the limited future prospects offered by the homogeneous occupational expectations formerly associated with the Valleys, parents are now looking to academic credentials to provide a means of escape from economic marginalisation, even though their children's subsequent employment is unlikely to be located in the Valleys.

I wasn't academic. I wasn't bad, but I didn't have the encouragement, you know.

Now with my children, I pushed them into having an education.

Mary Hughes; 60s; local politician and widow of open-cast miner

One particular sort of education, that associated with the development of a political knowledge, was largely denied women under coalmining, associated as it was with the institutions attached to that industry, such as local lodges and NCLC classes. Knowledge of labour movement history and the consequent development of a political perspective entailed an important cultural resource which enabled men negotiate status within their communities. The vacuum in their experience was perceived particularly acutely by the women who later became involved in the 1984/5 Strike effort (section 4.3). However, as the next section

shows, this method of reproducing political attitudes has been disrupted by the demise of coalmining, and new ways of receiving a political education are being fostered. However, as this informant reflects, the shift towards educational credentialisation has to some extent had to struggle against a cultural lag which continues to posit education more statically:

The problem I find up here is that a lot of people are very stuck in their ways and they're a bit afraid of anything new. To try and get young mums and things to step over the threshold and go and join a class is very difficult. They all seem to think, 'Oh, education isn't for me,' you know, 'I haven't go it up here to do it.' And that's silly really because you know, a lot of people would gain a lot from going.

Beth Jenkins; 40s; service sector worker separated from former striking miner

The actual work performed by coalminers provided a series of meaningful experiences which Ransome (1996) has described as being central to 'humanistic' definitions of work. It constituted purposeful activity, a sensation enhanced through the politicising experience of union membership. It also provided work pursued relatively autonomously. However, most prominently, coalmining provided opportunities for social interaction, translated into a rich collegial working environment, a clear manifestation of a collective experience. Whilst financial rewards were little identified by informants as essential criterion in the establishment of their occupational satisfaction, they too should be regarded as important in this package of meanings, coalmining having provided access to a particular way of life now increasingly scarce in the Valleys. These occupational expectations and satisfactions are central to understanding how industrial restructuring has constituted a transformation of working experiences, and provide a comparative point for consideration of the qualitative meanings currently attached to work. The next section turns to examine how occupational attachments are currently being formulated outside of the 'traditional' coalmining industry.

4.2.2 The Present

In considering the meanings which the populations of the Welsh Valleys currently attach to their work, an analytical scheme was developed which distinguished between two broad groups, whose experiences encompassed distinctive manifestations of occupational

fulfilment. Utilising a distinction made by McCrone (1994), who described household strategies in terms of 'making out' and 'getting by', but more broadly drawing upon the work of de Certeau (1988), Giddens (1991) and Skeggs (1997a), this method differentiated between 'strategists' and 'survivalists', respectively individuals who approached their work in terms of long-term planning, and individuals who engaged in work primarily to survive. As demonstrated below, this system advanced the broader theoretical principles of the project, in highlighting temporality, in providing a framework for developing a more detailed understanding of how structuring capitals are embedded in individuals' circumstances, and in demonstrating the relational character of different aspects of social identity. The coalmining identity associated with the past is difficult to place within this framework, having existed within now extinct industrial conditions, but it shares occupational satisfactions with the 'strategic' group, most prominently described in terms of status, organisational and sociability factors. However, this analogy is not comprehensive, the motivations of 'strategists' being more active than the rather passive process through which men in the past drifted into, and stayed in coalmining.

This analytical scheme is useful in its distinction between occupational groupings, not in terms of their relationship to a particular industrial sector and its associated skills (an understanding less relevant in the Valleys' more dynamic and transient current labour market), but for their qualitatively different occupational aspirations and prioritisations. These factors are foremost in the development of an understanding of what work actually *means* to people, and of its consequent place in their broader social identities. By conceptualising occupational attachments in terms of strategists and survivalists, the links between individuals engaged in an increasingly heterogeneous range of labour market activity are attributed visibility and can be interrogated. Focusing upon this matrix of commonalities facilitates an analysis of how the broader collectivities associated with traditional coalmining occupational experiences have been reconfigured in a transformed labour market where the particular structural mechanisms promoting a shared working experience have been diminished. This is a priority for class theorists seeking to conceptualise occupational solidarities outside of traditional structures and across extended spatial boundaries.

4.2.2.1 Occupational 'Strategism'

Informants then, were distinguished in terms of their demonstrating either 'strategic' or 'survivalist' approaches to their work. Respectively, individuals consisted of those displaying a longer-term tactical approach to their employment, frequently articulated in terms of a 'career', who were differentiated from those employing shorter-term motivations and valuing work primarily for its monetary reward, as a means to survival. Individuals exhibiting longer-term strategic occupational behaviour are considered below in terms of four broad groupings, whose differentiated experiences mirror their various structural resources. Strategists comprised a minority of informants, and their behaviour should be considered alongside the emigration already effected by similarly 'strategic' individuals to more prosperous regions. Strategists those who have adapted to restructuring by reassessing their occupational attachments and adopting a broader range of options than those traditionally available in coalmining communities. This process has necessarily implied a degree of risk-taking, and often a short-term drop in income, in a calculated process intended to accrue longer-term benefits. Studying strategists' experiences then, not only provides theoretical insight into identity formation, but also facilitates an analysis of how policy-makers might respond in encouraging the replication of progressive behaviour.

An examination of strategists' occupational identities and experiences revealed that the ability to become strategic was less an agentic one, being linked to individuals' utilisation of resources which are unevenly distributed throughout the population. Using Bourdieu's (1984) inclusive recognition of 'capitals', a disparity emerged in individuals' ability to access and employ capital in negotiating their labour market positioning. This corresponded with the strategic/survivalist distinction. Resources most important in this process included more typical labour market signifiers such as financial security and home-ownership, but extended to levels of education, parental ambition, political experience, degree of flexibility in negotiating gendered cultural influences which to a large extent was associated with younger individuals, and a willingness to enact personal mobility. These factors incorporate the mobilisation of various types of 'capital' (see chapter one) over a temporal continuum, and demonstrate the need to look beyond economic resources in understanding how circumstances are negotiated by individuals. 'Strategic' behaviour then, was only to some extent a choice; the ability to become adaptable in a restructured labour market was primarily

structured through the distribution of various types of capital in relation to the population. In that life-chances continued to be determined by structural inequalities, class processes can be regarded as having a continued significance in explaining social transformation. However, pre-existing labour market inequalities do not in themselves structure class experiences, and a broader consideration of interlinked inequalities is necessary to understand the complex composition of social solidarities. Theorists attempting to examine social inequality should therefore adopt a less linear approach to class analysis, and move towards a processual and relational account of structural inequalities.

Using the strategic/survivalist distinction to describe individuals' responses to restructuring, it became clear that besides representing the formulation of qualitatively different approaches to work, these also embodied distinct experiences of occupational satisfaction. Individuals employing 'strategic' approaches reconfigured their occupational experiences in such a way that while they experienced transformed working practices, they also enjoyed occupational satisfactions similar in quality to those associated with their former labour market experiences. Strategists fell into four broad groupings: the Tower Colliery miners, 're-trainers', the self-employed, and voluntary workers, whose working experiences are considered below.

The Tower Colliery miners had taken the culturally unprecedented step (within South Wales) of investing their Coal Board redundancy payments in maintaining a constant coalmining employment, through becoming employee-owners at the Tower mine. While their working environment was transformed by this process, it brought new occupational satisfactions, most prominently articulated in terms of the empowerment achieved through the reconstruction of traditionally antagonistic working relations. The Tower miners provide a fascinating insight into how strategism can facilitate the kind of imaginative reconceptualisation of occupational collectivity capable of confronting the fracturing potential of restructuring.

The motivations for Tower miners engaging in this initiative, however, were more wide-ranging and complex than this sketch suggests. The majority of (notably rank-and-file) Tower colliery miners referred to the lack of individual autonomy actually involved in the investment process; they recognised that investment represented a risk, but regarding

unemployment to be their alternative, did not really consider there to be a sensible alternative:

What persuaded me to invest was that I didn't have any, well I did have an option, I would have been on the dole. So I thought then, it's either I'd invest the money and have a job, or go on the dole.

John Matthews; 30s; former striking miner and Tower shareholder

At the other extreme was a politicised scenario, more typical of the experience of individuals with union credentials and an informed knowledge of labour market prospects:

you've got to make these assessments before it happens [...] So I learnt about my industry. [...] So by the time it came to buy the pit I knew as much about this company as anybody else did in Britain. [...] So if we're thinking like this, but not just when the company is *closed* and it's shut down, but in the months preceding it, then you're starting to get that plan.

Wyn Morris; 50s; Tower shareholder and unionist

While 'strategism' then encompassed a broad range of experience, the Tower miners as a whole can nevertheless be regarded as strategic in that their decision to buy into the colliery distinguished them from those informants who rejected that option. This latter group were uniform only in terms of their being over the age of forty and in their attribution of priorities to mortgage and familial commitments rather than to their own occupational satisfaction. They possessed fewer of the resources described above, which have a cumulative effect in the development of strategic behaviour. As the following (non-strategist) informant put it:

I'd have gone myself, but unfortunately at the time I knew my wife was dying and I wanted to be at home with her. I was hoping that we would have had trips out of the redundancy money like, but ...

Fred Hale; 60s; retired striking miner and unionist

The Tower colliery miners, in juggling the occupational identities of owners and workers, have attempted to reconstruct the 'Other' in a process which, while the duality was not

entirely removed, it was deproblematized. This experience represents an attempt to reconfigure class positionings in transformed circumstances where traditionally rigid hierarchies are more fluid.

Out of the workforce there, they couldn't have selected a better two [as employee-directors] because they were so aware, street-wise. No qualifications, but I think what they call it is the University of Life, they've been there, dealt with situations, spoke to people, a lot of things through a common-sense basis rather than bookwork. What management *should* know, and what should be done, is to look at things realistically.

Peter Clark; 30s; Tower shareholder

However, this assessment was not universal, a minority of Tower shareholders perceiving the employee-directors as mirroring the authority of Coal-Board managers. Their experience of collectivity was more constrained, since they tended not to become actively involved in shareholders' and union meetings (which were conducted as distinct entities, representing as they did different interests). Individuals who were more active participants in these meetings, were more able to reconceptualise their situation, and experience the Tower colliery initiative as empowering.

Well basically for the first time in our lives, and I say mine because I'm talking about myself, is that we're actually making a difference to our destiny. Now whether that destiny's good, bad or indifferent, at least it's *our* destiny. Most times you work under an employer, when things are going good, they just take the benefit. When things are going bad, you suffer the bad. But [...] if you can create any sort of company that shares the ups and downs, it makes a huge difference to the company. [...] We were representing the society of the working-class

Wyn Morris; 50s; Tower shareholder and unionist

Membership of the Tower Colliery initiative was thus posited as furthering miners' class interests. Individuals who interpreted their experience thus notably possessed proportionally more political resources with which to locate themselves in a reconfigured occupational experience:

Returning to occupational satisfactions, in addition to coalmining's social benefits, which continued to be maintained, though with some changes, at Tower, the initiative also offered other benefits, such as its less hostile workforce-management relations:

A lot more freedom, a lot easier. You're not *ordered* to do things now, you are asked. It's much more pleasant.

Phil Brooks; 40s; Tower shareholder.

Additionally, becoming a shareholder has led to an enhanced sense of miners' status, a feeling that each now had an equal stake in the company, and an equal right to an opinion. These benefits, in combination with the widespread expectation that Tower would be guaranteeing a working wage for the next ten years, added up to a more comprehensive package of occupational satisfactions than those provided by 'traditional' coalmining experiences.

The Tower Colliery experiment has been an imaginative and largely successful exercise in the reformulation of collective occupational attachments. While shareholders utilised some of the 'old' structures identified as best promoting collective interests - the unions - they also sought to identify and then to reconfigure status divisions (between skilled and unskilled, and between positions of power and non-power) which in the past had proved divisive. This was achieved through creating a formalised environment (shareholders' meetings) for the negotiation and maintenance of collective interests. Further, they recognised that the formation of collective identity was a *process*, a dynamic in constant motion, whose vitality could not be assumed or simply created. Thus the Tower miners brought together a heterogeneous group of miners living in several villages and from diverse industrial backgrounds. In the process, a new and cohesive workforce with intertwined collective interests was created. Some indication of the success with which this collective identity has been established is illustrated by the fact that during the fieldwork, people easily identified local Tower miners, and likewise, the Tower miners themselves nominated which of their colleagues lived in particular localities.

The self-employed also approached their occupational experiences strategically. Although the proportion of informants in this category was small (only one being able to talk about

current experience, another drawing upon memory, and a third being married to a self-employed businessman), they illustrated the occupational satisfactions drawn from a strategic route, and the motivations informing the adoption of an occupational identity distinct from those traditionally fostered by coalmining communities. While self-employment represented a movement away from the collective occupational experience of coalmining, it substituted one form of a collective experience (the occupational) with another (most notably the communal), which was reflective of the necessity to reconfigure collective attachments in a transformed labour market.

Informants who became self-employed were primarily motivated by financial and status benefits, having formulated this strategy in response to labour market insecurity where their traditional occupational expectations were no longer guaranteed. However, it became evident that self-employment offered only limited prospects for meeting these expectations. One informant's business went bankrupt, a second became subject to constant financial worry and stress, which was detrimental to his familial life, and the third, while objectively successful and satisfied with the personal autonomy provided by self-employment (selling food door-to-door), drew little personal satisfaction from his work, and missed the sociability of a colliery working environment. This individual devoted some time to retraining only to discover that the field in which he had qualified was peripheral to the local labour market. He detailed his difficulties in making the transition to a qualitatively different occupational identity, and expressed dissatisfaction with the career advice he received, in discouraging him from pursuing the type of work which might have fulfilled those occupational satisfactions which he considered most valuable.

I wish I'd had, the thing I am a little bit, not bitter, but the actual advice you were given when you finished at the colliery was pathetic [...] It was a joke. [...] But like if I look back now and I was starting again, there were things that I was interested in which I could have done. I would rather have done something more vocational like physiotherapy or something like that, with my involvement in sport. And possibly I could have got a job at the end of it, instead of just being directed just to get on any course.

Gary Peters; 30s; former striking miner now self-employed

Gary valued work providing social contact, and while his occupational strategy enhanced his relations with his residential community, he missed the collegiality associated with his former employment, expressing a desire to secure a place at Tower. Another informant's husband who had forged long-term employment through self-employment, addressed this issue by working in a team of similarly skilled labourers with whom he socialised. He thus established a collegial occupational experience within the more individualistic route of self-employment, although in contrast to 'traditional' coalmining, these social networks possessed a low degree of overlap with his familial ones. These experiences of self-employment illustrate that this occupational strategy is unlikely to be perceived as successful by actors unless it provides the meaningful experiences associated with their former occupations, or offers significant compensatory fulfilments. Collectivised experiences are thus central to this populations' occupational attachments, and require sensitive consideration by educationalists and careers advisors.

The third group of strategists, '(re)trainers', consisted almost exclusively of women, and represents an important shift from men to women as earners caused at least in part by the demise of mining. While the former two groups invested economic capital in their occupational futures, this group dedicated temporal resources to an intensive vocational or educational training period, during which they accepted a lower standard of living than would be achieved by participating in the labour market. This was the result of measured analysis which recognised a poor bargaining positioning in the local labour market, and rectified this through promoting personal employability. This process frequently coincided with women's time out of the labour market to raise children, when they re-assessed their occupational future within the sorts of shop and factory work which comprised their previous occupational experiences, but which in the context of pit closures was subject to increasing competition. (Re)trainers thus displayed a strategic approach to their work. A notable characteristic of the group was that with one exception, all the women pursued careers deemed 'acceptable' according to gendered cultural stereotypes, being concentrated in nursing, teaching and social work, while the man went into management. The exception was a woman training to be a structural engineer in Cardiff, who recounted the obstacles she had faced in stepping outside of the gendered expectations of her (former coalmining) family:

My father and my brother would be talking about construction and stuff like that, and I'd get into the conversation and they'd just blank me out.

Kat Trystan; 20s; student from former mining family

Interestingly, while Kat challenged coalmining communities' conventionally gendered roles, she *simultaneously maintained her family's occupational identity*, developing skills traditionally associated with skilled coalminers in an environment characterised by its camaraderie, an experience she both enjoyed and struggled to find acceptance within as a woman.

(Re)trainers' strategic behaviour also took into account how their choices complemented their partners' responsibilities, and were in this way mutually agreed. This reflects the findings of McCrone's work (1994) in which men's occupational expectations were prioritised within overall 'household strategies'.

And at that point I didn't know whether I was going to work in casualty, orthopaedics or burns. But um, we'd just got engaged and I thought if I'm going to go all the way up there now [to another city to do her preferred specialist training], I'm always going to be away. You know, it's an hour's travel back and forth and with us both working shifts, we'd hardly have seen each other. So I never ended up going there straight from my training. [...] And it has worked out for us.

Racheal Harris; 30s; professional and wife of Tower miner

This contrasted with the prioritisations of the Tower colliery miners, who continued to approach decisions as though they were primary breadwinners. The more integrated approach of (re)trainers, however, is more consistent with transformed local labour markets, in which 'family wages' are increasingly rare.

Having previously experienced paid labour sporadically, (re)trainers' re-entry into the labour market in more clearly structured occupational roles enabled them to draw particularly acute recognitions of the occupational satisfactions provided by these strategies. The most important motivation reported by (re)trainers was the enhanced social contact they experienced in the labour market, comparable in quality to that experienced in the

'traditional' coalmining industry. (Re)trainers' social fulfilments were also experienced in a more personal context, contributing to their sense of worth and social positioning, rather than fulfilling an occupational *expectation*. This can be attributed to women's traditionally more limited experience in coalmining communities, their social contact having been defined by partners' occupations.

I love it [...] you get out of the house and meet different people every day. And my job's so varied.

Beth Jenkins; 40s; service sector worker separated from former striking miner

Oh I loved it. Yes. I *really* loved to teach. I always worked with very young children and because I wanted a family and I didn't have a family, but I had all these gorgeous kids you know, for a whole year. I *loved* it.

Rebecca Evans; 60s; migrant and retired professional

Notably (re)trainers employed a more emotive language in describing their occupational experiences than similarly strategic men. While women continued to afford importance to their familial responsibilities, employing flexible conceptualisations of work in valuing both paid- and non-paid labour, gendered expectations had also been experienced as unduly restrictive, unable to provide the same quality of satisfaction as these 'new' working experiences.

That (re)trainers, a group who pursued particularly dramatic action in reformulating traditional occupational expectations, in some cases moving between quite unrelated sectors of the labour market at a relatively late stage in life, should be overwhelmingly female, requires some explanation. An important factor is that women in coalmining communities have traditionally had a weak relationship with the labour market, so their occupational expectations have been less fixed and are more amenable to undergoing the type of reconfiguration required by transformed industrial circumstances. While women in the past tended to exist outside the institutional structures which fostered men's experiences of occupational collectivity, their tendency as (re)trainers to seek employment in large organisations with a high degree of professional identity and unionisation, has facilitated their development of workplace collectivity, and their relative lack of comparative

experiences, has facilitated these attachments being more unproblematically assimilated into their broader social identities.

Voluntary workers comprised the final group of strategists, individuals who had reformulated working experiences outside the paid labour market. They consisted of a broad-based group of politicians, community activists, charity and social welfare workers, who having experienced an extended period of unemployment, recognised their qualifications were little sought-after in the paid labour market, and sought to maintain occupational satisfactions by utilising their skills for emotional rather than material rewards. These individuals tended to be older, having achieved a certain degree of financial security in buying their own homes and bringing up children. They were therefore able to make a pragmatic decision that the low wages achieved through unskilled labour were outweighed by the quality of life provided by voluntary work. Gendered patterns were prominent, individuals drawing upon previous working experiences to formulate their contemporary identities. For example, former union men might become community councillors, and former (female) carers work voluntarily with children.

The behaviour of voluntary workers suggests that some occupational satisfactions are sufficiently valuable to prompt individuals' strategic waiving of financial rewards to maintain those experiences. The most important aspect of these was workplace sociability. Mark Sims, for example, a young man unable to find paid employment, experienced considerable occupational fulfilment, socially through sitting on his local community council, and personally, performing local historical research. Others, like Sheila Taylor, a woman in her early forties whose domestic responsibilities lessened as her children grew up, took a pragmatic approach to reconfiguring their relationship with the labour market: she had recently obtained a degree and combined charity work with seasonal employment as a tutor on a local adult education programme. These various roles were continually reviewed, and provided a happy array of occupational benefits. However, the majority of this grouping consisted of individuals between the ages of 45 and 60 who had made a realistic assessment of their likelihood of finding future employment, taking up local political posts which provided opportunities for social interaction and enhanced their personal status. Primarily then, voluntary work enabled individuals to experience enhanced social contact in an environment where their efforts were valued, and correspondingly afforded respect and

status. These working experiences permitted flexibility and autonomy, individuals largely working upon their own terms. The quality of the occupational satisfactions experienced by voluntary workers were reflected in their devoting more time and enthusiasm to their work than any other group of individuals.

4.2.2.2 Occupational 'Survivalism'

Individuals employing 'survivalist' approaches to their work comprised the majority of informants. In contrast to strategists, survivalists were less able to effect occupational flexibility. Their relative stasis and prioritisation of local employment, made it more difficult for them to compete within a constrained labour market. They thus became focused upon getting by with their existing qualifications and skills in the short-term, seeking out personal satisfaction in other areas of their lives. Paid labour diminished in significance as a meaningful activity for survivalists, who regarded work as a scarce resource providing only instrumental rewards. Whereas strategists were characterised by their relative youth, mobility, political education and parental aspirations, survivalists possessed significantly less of these attributes, and their access to additional resources was more limited. Survivalists avoided confronting an uncertain occupational future, and were more emotively linked to the past, expressing resentment at their loss of a way of life and their inability to adapt to transformed circumstances. They consisted of six broad groupings, whose experiences of work are outlined below. These were: miners working in private pits; open-cast miners; factory and shop workers; the unemployed; the retired; and carers.

Private-pit miners, the first 'survivalist' grouping, consisted of men who sought to maintain their coalmining occupational identity within a radically different working environment. While they thus continued to utilise their occupational skills, working experiences in the private mines provided a negative contrast to those in Coal Board mines. In addition to the lower rates of remuneration, the work was less secure, miners being employed largely on an ad-hoc basis. Further, employers, individuals rather than organisations, were more visible and, presiding over a buyers' market, suppressed union activity. The small-scale nature of private mines also facilitated employers monitoring the performance of their employees more closely, and this combined with the piecework payment of private mining, and the

competitiveness between miners in a constrained labour market, impinged upon the development of workplace camaraderie. This lack of a collective experience was noted by one informant who compared the private pits with his subsequent and more positive experience at Tower:

I think there's a different outlook altogether in a private mine, I would say [...] one of the first things that struck me was how independent and selfish people were then, they weren't concerned about the shift behind them or their friends on the shift. That's something that struck me straight away. The bond, if you like, wasn't that strong in those mines. Peter Clark; 30s; Tower shareholder and trade unionist

Notably, the other informant prominent in lamenting the lack of collectivity in the private mines, also went on to develop an occupational strategy facilitative of workplace sociability:

you were working far harder and in worse conditions for a lot less money [...] I don't know if you could have joined it [the union], but to be honest with you I didn't really push it or create waves because if you had, it was very much if they didn't like you or you didn't get on there, then they'd get rid of you. [...] where I was working I had to spend all day on my own, so the only time I'd see people was when they'd come in to actually take the drams out.

Gary Peters; 30s; former striking miner now self-employed

That these two informants had been able to leave the private mines can be attributed to their possessing various characteristics and resources, generally more scarce among private-pit miners, in particular their relatively high levels of politicisation which made them unable to tolerate the lack of communality in private mines.

In formulating occupational aspirations, private pit miners demonstrated little ambition, and revealed a high degree of assimilating local cultural attitudes to education, which deterred them from formulating less static occupational expectations. Notably, private pit miners' experiences of occupational satisfaction were overwhelmingly located in the past. They laboured for purely financial incentives, acutely aware of a qualitative decline in their working experiences, but unable to utilise the resources necessary to effect mobility, become

trapped in a negative occupational identity. Most prominent of these occupational losses were the social fulfilments associated with their previous experiences:

Treforgan [Coal Board mine] was a cracking place to work. The atmosphere there was marvellous. There *wasn't* me and you.

Jack Preston; 40s; former striking miner, now in private pit

Increasingly experiencing occupational *dissatisfaction*, private-pit miners utilised experiences outside of their paid labour to formulate self-understandings, particularly political discourses which provided an explanatory power for their situation, and communal activities offering a refuge from unfulfilling occupational experiences. Jack's comments in particular, reveal that the efforts of private mine owners to weaken their employees' industrial resolve, can actually accentuate their awareness of their peripheral class positioning in the labour market.

The open-cast miners studied were an unusual group, having experienced relatively little occupational restructuring. They were also geographically isolated and socially distinctive from other informants, forming an acutely self-contained community whose first-language was Welsh. Additionally, and connected to their lack of social contact with 'deep' miners, they possessed little experience of union activity. While affiliated to the TGWU rather than the industry-specific NUM, they joined in proportionally reduced numbers, demonstrating a distinctive set of interests. The working experiences of the 'sunshine' miners are also different from those of 'traditional' coalminers. While the community studied²¹ experienced the open-cast industry as a long-term employer, open-cast mining does not provide the same sort of communal working environment as deep-mining. It is a highly mechanised industry requiring a relatively low volume of labour, and its spatial relations do not necessitate that the same *degree* of high-risk, high-trust relationships develop between colleagues.

Open-cast miners were considered occupationally 'survivalist' because they did not display long-term planning in negotiating the labour market. Rather, like 'traditional' coalminers,

²¹ 'Community' is used here in a broad sense to incorporate the experiences of miners working at the East Pit Extension, who are drawn largely from the nearby villages of Tairgwaith, Gwaun Cae Gurwen and Lower Brynamman in the Amman Valley.

they drew upon expectations that the industry would continue to meet their employment requirements:

that's the only jobs around here that are any good, more or less.

Alan Morgan; 20s; open-cast miner

Like other 'survivalist' groups, open-cast miners experienced relatively little sociable contact, and thus encountered few workplace opportunities for the formulation or mobilisation of collective interests. While they more than deep-miners regarded themselves as skilled labourers utilising high-technology equipment, their collective experiences were less explicitly associated with the workplace, and were more closely linked to their close-knit communities: the density of networks between the two being more diffuse. Their relatively high rate of financial remuneration was instead articulated as a major source of occupational satisfaction, along with the autonomy provided by open-cast mining:

the open cast [...] maintains working-class, well-paid work for men.

Ewan Banning; 50s; open-cast miner

That Ewan employed a class discourse, can be attributed to his unusual social positioning, living in the Dulais Valley²², away from his work, an area formerly home to 'traditional' coalmining. Here, his familiarity with and experience of the politicised institutions associated with coalmining has been greater than his workmates, who living in the more isolated villages surrounding the open-cast pit, failed to conceptualise their work similarly.

While the open-cast coalmining industry on one level represents a microcosm of 'traditional' coalmining communities, its work being interlinked with the interests of a close-knit and spatially-defined community, insofar as the industry has lacked the political impetus of a strong union, and possesses a unique occupational structure, it fails to fulfil the social and organisational criteria associated with 'deep' coalminers. Thus workplace collectivity has played very little part in open-cast miners' assessments of occupational fulfilment. Monolithic descriptions of coalminers sharing collective workplace experiences have thus

²² He had also worked as a deep coalminer prior to restructuring, and was relatively new to the open-cast industry.

overlooked the specific effects which distinctive structural forms of the industry have upon employees. The open-cast miners have recently become aware of their occupational insecurity as the life of their pit draws to a close, and this was articulated in terms of a loss of technical skills and its devastating impact upon their communities, the isolated nature of open-cast villages foreclosing the possibility of finding alternative work locally. However, in failing to respond by utilising this knowledge, open-cast miners revealed a short-termist approach to their work, consolidating past experiences as a defence against future uncertainties.

Shop and factory workers comprised an occupational category made up largely of women, for whom this sort of work has long been utilised to make up shortfalls in domestic income. While it was insecure, low-paid and largely ununionised, this was less problematic when women were not expected to be the main breadwinner, and correspondingly held lower expectations of secure employment. It has typically been utilised as work which is adaptable to the changing demands of domestic responsibility over the life-course. However, these expectations have been threatened for two main reasons. First, with rising levels of unemployment among men, shop and factory work is frequently being relied upon as the main source of domestic income in the Valleys. Secondly, as restructuring continues, small-scale employers struggle to compete with national and multi-national companies, and as industries formerly dependent upon coalmining contract this work is becoming increasingly scarce. Since families have become increasingly dependent upon this sort of income, and the work offers few opportunities to develop marketable skills, they are ill-placed to respond to redundancy.

In line with its 'survivalist' categorisation, factory and shop work was particularly transient, informants moving between it and periods dominated by unemployment or caring obligations. This behaviour can be linked to women's assumption of gendered cultural expectations, negotiating their occupational experiences within a broader matrix of responsibilities. However, in contrast to the past, the degree of 'choice' involved in this process was less clear, macroeconomic forces tending to override the negotiation of micro-relationships.

Factory and shop work was rarely discussed in terms of its provision of occupational *fulfilments*; this type of employment was pursued primarily to forge an economic existence. In the past shop and factory work conferred occupational benefits beyond monetary ones, providing social fulfilments which confirmed individuals' place within the community and facilitated the development of collective attachments. However, this experience has become more infrequent, since under restructuring this type of work is one of the few remaining occupational options located in the Valleys, and is correspondingly subject to increased competition.

when we finished school and went to jobs you could go from one job to the next. You could finish one week and start the following week somewhere else. That's all finished now. Sheila Thomas; 50s; married to former miner

Factory and shop workers were acutely aware of the deficit in the local economy in providing un- and semi-skilled employment, and hence reassessed their expectations for their children, whom they were adamant should capitalise on the educational and mobility opportunities which they had lacked. In contrast to their own survivalist occupational behaviour, this encompassed strategic responses to the future, likely to imply a challenge to cultural gendered expectations among subsequent generations. This response can be regarded as reflecting women's more fluid understanding of the labour market, having traditionally approached employment in terms of the greater good of their households, and employing less specific and permanent occupational expectations. While the individuals in this group have been unable to access the types of resources necessary to develop occupational strategism, their increased ambitions for their children should be regarded as an important factor in the accumulation of resources better placed to confront labour market transformations.

The final categories of informants comprised a relatively large group of informants whose experiences were peripheral to the paid labour market. It should not be assumed, however, that only the 'employed' work, since work is performed in a variety of forms and contexts, and for a variety of reasons, not all of which are financial. Contrary to accounts which consolidate the experiences of individuals outside of the labour market, these groups were diverse in their occupational attachments and in their fixity, a large proportion moving between the labour market and becoming peripheral to it as dictated by circumstances.

While workplace-based solidarities were made inaccessible to these groups through age, domestic responsibilities and their marginalisation under a restructured labour market, they drew upon communal and kinship networks in reconfiguring the collective experiences associated with their former work. They consisted of three broad groupings: the unemployed; a retired population; and carers.

The unemployed were somewhat distinctive to the other two groups, in continuing to actively pursue a paid labour market role. Ransome (1995) has suggested that unemployment is itself a 'process', and indeed the unemployed cannot be conceptualised uniformly, the newly redundant for example, displaying a more coherent sense of occupational identity than the long-term unemployed. Notably, and demonstrating the continued poignancy of gendered occupational expectations, and women's more fragmented employment experiences, informants regarded unemployment as more 'serious' for men than women. Only men described their experiences of unemployment-related depression, and likewise women expressed concern that their husbands' unemployment would impinge upon their self-esteem, which they clearly linked to an occupational experience. Men, however, did not reciprocate and apparently devoted very little thought to their wives' experiences of unemployment.

Experiences of unemployment brought more clearly into focus how individuals draw fulfilment from paid labour. The unemployed were most consistent in detailing the occupational fulfilments described in section 4.2.1, suggesting that the functions provided by work are most clearly appreciated in their absence. The unemployed were variously described as being 'lost souls', under 'tremendous pressures' and 'missing the company', the experience being neatly summarised by the following informant for whom unemployment had acted as a catalyst, forcing him to seek out political explanations and develop occupational strategism:

I was unemployed, on the dole, first time for a lot more years than I care to remember. I was on the dole, I had too much time on my hands to be honest, and I did get into a bit of a rut as regards the usual circle of life. I tended to, where you had targets before and you're working and had goals to go for, once you're on the dole you stay up late at night, why bother getting up in the morning? Nothing to aim for, to go for. It was

very, certainly shook me up, definitely, definitely. I found out how easy it was to get into that position. It certainly made me more aware.

Peter Clark; 30s; Tower shareholder and trade unionist

Negative experiences of unemployment highlight the important role which paid labour plays in self-understandings. That male informants most demonstrably missed the 'camaraderie' of their former occupational groupings is indicative of collectivity's significance in this population's conceptualisation of occupation. Notably the unemployed frequently engaged in the informal economy and domestic responsibilities in ways which mirrored the gendered labour associated with coalmining, women gravitating towards caring and domestic sphere activities, and men tending to take on work comparable to the manual labour performed in coalmines. These activities can be regarded as attempts to formulate surrogate occupations, actors' corresponding levels of effort frequently exceeding those displayed in the paid labour market. While informants employing reconfigured working identities outside of the paid labour market have thus been able to achieve social interaction and purposeful activity, their positioning in relation to structural inequalities has prevented them from acquiring the type of occupational recognition associated with formalised financial recompense for their efforts. Nor have the activities pursued by these individuals been able to provide them with the degree of status associated with their former labour market positioning, which accordingly continues to be drawn upon in their formulations of social identity.

The retired consisted of a broader age span than might typically be expected within a population, encompassing those who had taken early retirement when faced with the early indicators of restructuring. Younger individuals made an informed decision that a financial payoff from their life-long employer might exceed earnings in a labour market where their skills were marginalised. Retired individuals drew heavily upon experiences of occupational collectivity associated with 'traditional' coalmining communities, and were less willing to confront their positioning within a reformulated labour market. However, they also expressed relief that they had been spared the difficulties of adjusting to modern labour market, which they perceived as unable to provide the social fulfilments they associated with occupation:

Well the point is, if you've worked in a pit, to go and work in a factory, it's a hell of a difference. It's a different world altogether.

Bill John; 60s; retired miner

The retired then, did not demonstrate a significant degree of transformation in their occupational attachments. Work continued to define their identity, their lives being organised as much as possible along lines informed by previous labour market experiences, and networks of former work colleagues being utilised to maintain their association with occupational collectivity.

The final group of survivalists was an exclusively female group, consisting of women caring for young and disabled children and elderly kin, whose domestic responsibilities foreclosed the possibility of interaction in the paid labour market. Caring can be regarded a stage in the life-cycle rather than a permanent positioning outside of formal employment. While women's more typical caring role raising children receives further attention in chapter five, in dealing with familial identity, they are sketched here in relation to occupational attachments.

While the more general trend was for a younger retired group to assume or share caring responsibilities for the elderly, coalmining communities, with their history of colliery-related illness and disability, also encompassed much younger women as carers, who had cut short their own occupational experiences to care for elderly and disabled family members:

I did all the leaving school certificates and I passed well. I did the entrance to go nursing, but then my Dad went ill. Story of my life! [laughs] So I had to give that up.

Kate Bayliss; 40s; former carer married to redundant former miner

Interestingly this informant, whose occupational identity was diminished by various familial obligations, was perceived by her extended family as the most suitable carer by virtue of her gendered occupational identity, that is, because she had been a nurse.

While no informants were caring for very young children during the time of the fieldwork, most women had taken considerable time out of the labour market before their children

reached school-age, this being a cultural expectation (section 5.2). The two women who had taken minimal career breaks recognised the vital contribution of their respective extended families in this process, without whose support they would have been financially crippled by private child-care arrangements, and the impetus would have been for them to give up their employment, which was more secure than that of their husbands. Their experience provides evidence of the continued resonance of the male breadwinner model, under circumstances when it has lost plausible rationality.

The feminised composition of carers indicates that while assumptions regarding male life-long employment continue to hold currency in former coalmining communities, and caring responsibilities play a small part in men's prioritisations, women will be expected to deploy a fluid approach to labour market activity. While the emotional labour associated with caring undoubtedly brings its own rewards, the interview schedule was not designed to address these. The brief attention given to the role here suggests that it is weakly related to the development of collective experiences of work, its heavy responsibilities entailing restricted access to social networks. Indeed, carers were united in their perception of the role as invisible and isolating labour.

The main difference between strategists and survivalists is that strategists have been able to reformulate their employment experiences in such a way as to achieve *collective* occupational satisfactions, comparable in quality to those provided by traditional forms of coalmining. Their work was thus construed as constituting purposeful activity, providing the opportunity to pursue sociable relationships. Survivalists on the other hand, have been less able to achieve these fulfilments in their paid labour, which they pursued primarily for its material value and perceived as lacking in 'higher' meaning. They thus experienced the sort of occupational alienation described by Blauner:

Alienations exist when workers are unable to control their immediate work process, to develop a sense of purpose and function which connects their jobs to the overall organisation of production, to belong to integrated industrial communities, and when they fail to become involved in the activity of work as a mode of personal self-expression.

(1964: 15)

This is not to say that purposeful activity and sociable activity were relinquished by survivalists, rather that these were no longer achieved primarily through their paid labour.

4.2.3 The Implications of the Transformation of Work upon Collectivity

The transformation of the labour markets of the South Wales Valleys has fundamentally disrupted the mechanisms which had facilitated the establishment of collectivity. However, this has not negated the significance of collective relationships, and while workplace solidarities are negotiated in line with individuals' positioning in relation to structuring capitals, collective relationships more broadly are central to social organisation, continuing to provide a context for the formulation of identity, albeit in more diffuse forms. While the subsequent two sections extend this analysis of collectivity, the focus upon workplace solidarities here provides a starting point for understanding how a processual conceptualisation of a matrix of collective attachments holds central explanatory power in explaining the negotiation of social identity.

This section has argued that the populations of the South Wales Valleys formulate their occupational attachments in two qualitatively distinct ways. Uptake of these approaches is informed by their ability to access a series of resources, manifested in cultural, economic, symbolic and social forms, and intersected by axes of class and gender. Where individuals' positioning in relation to structural inequalities has been more favourable, they have been able to reconfigure working experiences which coincide with their occupational expectations. Thus for example, the Tower miners received their redundancy payments at an optimum time for participating in the buy-out programme, and their politicisation in local lodges provided them with the knowledge that this investment was likely to provide secure and well-paid employment for the foreseeable future. Through their strategy, Tower miners have been able to achieve enhanced status, experience less antagonism in dealing with management, and enjoy enhanced relationships with colleagues. Their occupational 'satisfactions' being achieved, labour market experiences have continued to play a large part in strategists' self-understandings.

However, most informants were unable to negotiate working experiences capable of providing the levels of security and fulfilment associated with their experiences under 'traditional' coalmining. In these cases, occupational experiences became a less significant factor informing personal identity, and individuals sought to 'escape' from alienating labour market experiences. Thus for example, private-pit miners were likely to have experienced sporadic unemployment for an extended period, and had subsequently seen their redundancy monies eaten up. Where they had dependent families, options like re-training were curtailed, and they became resigned to depending upon the ad hoc and unsatisfactory employment of the private mines. Experiencing low degrees of occupational satisfaction, survivalists employed past experiences, in combination with current communal, political, familial and leisured experiences to plug this 'gap'. Work then, was regarded as a means to an end rather than fulfilling broader humanistic needs.

These findings have various policy implications, if a larger proportion of individuals are to be enabled to formulate meaningful working experiences. While integrated social policy is urgently required, the single most useful implementation would be the provision of detailed, personalised and regular career advice and training opportunities to individuals throughout their schooling, and during their adult years. This should be undertaken in consultation with local employers and teaching professionals to meet local labour market requirements, and should facilitate individuals becoming mobile where local labour markets are unable to utilise their talents. Towards these ends, greater provision of social welfare, through educational grants and improved transport infrastructure is necessary. Where political ideologies regarding a degree of unemployment as a necessary evil remain dominant, attention should be directed towards the socially useful activities performed *outside* of the labour market, their necessary function being acknowledged through the provision of inclusive social welfare programmes.

This section has described how individuals' occupational identities are developed not simply through their current experiences of work, but in a complex interplay between past and present influences. Biographical experiences continue to play a large part in determining how individuals attach meaning to their work, particularly where there is a shortfall between occupational expectations and present circumstances. Work has a variety of meanings, fulfilling a variety of material and emotional needs, which change over time. The evidence

provided here suggests that the dangerous working environment of coalmining was offset by its provision of a secure working wage, a sociable working environment, and meaningful, relatively autonomous, status-providing employment. These correlate with the occupational expectations discussed in earlier studies of working experiences (Blackburn and Mann 1979; Mackenzie 1973). The labour market opportunities created by industrial restructuring have met these needs only for individuals more privileged in relation to the unequal distribution of resources. Hence, individuals have increasingly sought meaningful activity outside of the labour market. Through studying the interdependencies *between* social relationships, it can be seen that as work provides less meaningful experiences, and occupational expectations are articulated in primarily pecuniary terms, so work is a less central factor in social organisation.

4.3 Political Identities

In understanding how political attachments are formulated over time, it is necessary to differentiate between the political identifications associated with political parties, which bracket together collective beliefs in a somewhat simplistic fashion, but which are necessary to elect an executive branch of government, and the more complex multi-faceted, yet in varying degrees, derivative personal ideologies dealt with in the next chapter as self-understandings. That political identifications possess this 'janus-face' goes some way towards explaining why theorists have found it so difficult to disentangle and separate the tensions existing between collective and personal identifications. During times of election, personal motivations are collapsed into the cultural discourses associated with political parties, which provide a 'convenient fiction' of plausibly representing a plurality of dynamic, disparate, interwoven and contradictory individual interests. However, the moment when an individual's multiplicity of political interests is collapsible into a political party's programme of policy initiatives is frequently less fleeting than the second it takes to cross the ballot paper, or the moment of excitement when Tony Benn encapsulates on *Question Time* their views on a particular subject. This phenomenon has been described by Rosa Luxembourg as the crystallisation of consciousness during particular moments in time, and it raises important questions about what happens to the disparate elements of political understanding in between these critical moments. However, this chapter focuses upon the collectivity of

political interests embodied within various structural institutions, most notably the Labour Party, and examines how these have been disrupted and reconfigured in the context of restructuring processes.

As described earlier, for the greater part of the twentieth century, the populations of the South Wales Valleys sustained a relatively unproblematic relationship with the Labour Party, to whom they looked to represent their interests. Whether these were adequately upheld is another matter, the masculinisation of the Party illustrating the restricted representation provided through institutional forums. However, if voting statistics are taken as a measure of political interest, then the populations of the Welsh Valleys undoubtedly regarded the Labour Party as their most expedient political option (figure 4.3). The Neath constituency in particular, has maintained a strong relationship with the Labour Party during the twentieth century, while concurrently fostering more radical politics, the Revolutionary Communist Party making its first parliamentary stand there in 1945, a tradition latterly continued when Howard Marks²³ contested the seat in the 1997 general election. However, the more established relationship between the Labour Party and electorate has been challenged in recent years, which can be attributed to the simultaneous influence of three main factors.

Figure 4.3 : The Labour Vote in General Elections: Neath Constituency

Year	Percentage of Vote
1970	71.4
1974 Feb.	62.2
1974 Oct.	61.4
1979	64.5
1983 (after SDP defection)	53.6
1987	63.4
1992	68.0
1997	73.5

Source: Times Guide to the House of Commons

²³ Standing on a 'legalise cannabis' platform.

Most obviously, the political attachments of the populations of the Welsh Valleys have become less homogeneous because industrial restructuring has transformed the region's economic base, diversifying the electorate's socio-economic interests. With the demise of the coal industry, social organisation entered a phase of reconfiguration. In particular, the region's traditionally gendered political climate was challenged by the contraction of political institutions associated with coalmining. As the labour market has become heterogenised and women increasingly engage in paid labour, so too the masculinised context of workplace-based political activity is being transformed. Established political attachments have also been disrupted by the extension of political participation during the 1984/5 Miners' Strike, whereafter the NUM was no longer regarded as the region's primary political actor. Political interests became more broadly interpreted, awareness shifting to the longer-term impact of the Conservative Party's political programme upon a plurality of communities, and localised responses becoming manifested in more heterogeneous political contexts. This localised transformation is confounded by recent ideological transformation in the national Labour Party, which has sought to extend its electoral appeal to the middle classes, and to respond to reconfigurations in broader class structures. A third factor in this equation is the establishment of a Welsh Assembly, the attached process of candidate selection, and the use of the additional member system in the 1999 election. Should Welsh political culture emerge in the longer-term from this process as more acutely distinctive, this would represent a significant shift in the electorate's relationship to party politics. In recent years the Valleys' populations have been more politically similar to the former manufacturing regions in the north of England than to their fellow Celts in North Wales or Scotland, support for Plaid Cymru in South Wales remaining peripheral. However, the 1999 Welsh Assembly election saw the Labour vote slide to 46.7% (compared to 43% in Scotland), and the Plaid vote rose to 28% (compared to 27% for the SNP in Scotland). While the factors producing this result are complex and cannot be simply read off in terms of a surge in support for Welsh nationalism, the change to the electoral system has had a significant effect upon the political representation of the Welsh Valleys, which vindicates a more processual approach being employed to examine political attachments.

Thus, as a result of socio-economic and political restructuring, the formerly homogeneous political climate of the South Wales Valleys has undergone transformation, and this process

has been extended as Wales has become one of the first recipients of the national shift towards PR. This section argues that the transformative effects of restructuring thus imply a challenge to homogenised conceptualisations of collectivity, which inadequately represent how political attachments have been reconfigured in the Welsh Valleys. Through employing the processual and relational approach outlined in chapter one, it is argued that political attachments should be conceptualised in terms of a matrix of interlinked *collectivities*, with permeable boundaries, facilitating movement in response to the shifting circumstances of individuals' lives. The temporal schema outlined in the previous section is re-employed, commencing with an examination of the political identities associated with the region's past, moving on to consider how these relate to current political awareness, and concluding with an analysis of how reformulated political attachments, while more sophisticated and dynamic than assumed by traditional party political arrangements, by virtue of their interconnectedness, can during times of election still be incorporated into the despatches of a forward-looking Labour Party.

4.3.1 The Past

For much of the twentieth century, the political culture of the Welsh Valleys was defined by a labour movement ideology. In Neath, this is most obviously visible in its representation since 1924 by a Labour MP, customarily enjoying up to 70% of the constituency's vote. The Neath, and especially the Dulais Valleys, have been a hotbed of leftist politics, electing Communist lodge officials, setting up a plurality of successful co-operative organisations, becoming involved in peace movements during the two World Wars, and organising efforts in support of the Spanish Republic during the 1930s which were unsurpassed elsewhere in Britain (Francis and Smith 1980). This history provided a formative context for the process by which informants negotiated their political attachments, and was conspicuous in having been regarded as an automatic recourse for the location of their experiences. The inherited accumulation of political interests and understandings personified in the national Labour Party was virtually unquestioned, its power resting in its 'naturalisation' as a provider of political representation:

As a miner it's just that you're brought up in these Valleys to support Labour.

John Matthew; 30s; former striking miner and Tower shareholder

However, the means by which men and women formulated this understanding was sharply differentiated (Cooke 1985; Parry 1996). For men, the workplace and its associated miners' lodges had provided the context for politicisation. By contrast, informants' reflections revealed that women tended to remain dependent upon the reiterated knowledge of their male family members in formulating political attachments, a process which was reinforced by their confinement to the private sphere. Specifically, this was realised in whatever explanatory framework their husbands chose to provide:

I see the moves on here, and I see what they're like. I can read between the lines what they're saying, you know. And I can tell her [his wife] then what's coming up.

Huw Gwilym; 50s; unemployed former striking miner

Women's largely indirect experience of politicisation nevertheless exerted strong pressures upon them to maintain a Labour Party affiliation. The following informant felt compelled to vote as dictated by a collective loyalty associated with her past, rather than influenced by her current personal convictions. This occurred despite the fact that she had voluntarily estranged herself from her ancestral community and experienced no motivations to return:

You didn't get much choice in Neath [in council elections], but when I voted in Cardiff last year there was a variety. And I wanted to vote Liberal Democrat, but I knew if I did my parents would probably kill me.

Kat Trystan; 20s; student from former mining family

In this political environment unionist and party political interests were intertwined, the association of local lodges with a masculinised occupation concurrently fostering a distinctive style of political behaviour virtually impenetrable to women. To a large extent then, politics was *male*. Political activity employed discursive practices alien to women's experiences, evoking a confrontational character at odds with the gendered behaviour (co-operation, deferentialism) deemed appropriate by their cultural frameworks of reference. The cultural codes structuring gendered behaviour, as Skeggs (1997a) has pointed out, were not, however, largely experienced as repressive; rather 'doing gender' well facilitated women's acquisition of status, notably in the form of respectability. But the transgression of

cultural codes, for example in terms of women becoming 'political' in this 'masculine' sense, engendered a potential loss of status, knowledge of which prohibited this action and maintained the status quo. Thus women's political experience, located in the private sphere, was predominantly *not* a collective phenomenon in the sense of manifest and formalised organisation (as opposed to a common experience). This contrasted with men's political experiences, which were unusually formalised, and constituted a mass institutionalisation of collective interests enacted through local lodges and their associated welfare clubs. The Miners' Strike of 1984/5, however, challenged this gendered model. While its effects are coupled with the impact of broader restructuring, the Strike provided a route into the political arena for a significant number of women in the Welsh Valleys, which henceforth informed the way they approached politics.

The group of women most active in the Strike effort in the South Wales Valleys are now middle-aged with grown-up children, having then had young families. They possessed particularly acute motivations for participation, both financial, and in attempting to safeguard a regional occupational future for their families. Growing up during the 1960s and 70s (what R. Williams (1961) would describe as their particular 'structure of feeling'), a period of social transformation when discourses of feminism became widely available, is also likely to have had a significant impact upon their consciousness and understandings of social positionings. The particular activity of this group of individuals highlights informants' differential temporal perspectives: while younger women had more limited recollections of the Strike, and it became a reference point in their industrial history, for older women it was a part of their lived reality which informed their subsequent experiences. As such, these women constitute an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983), whose actual experience of face-to-face interaction was less important to their self-understandings than their perceived shared political understandings.

In line with women's hitherto gendered experience of the political process, their route into politics was a familial one, specifically fostered through husbands and social networks:

I got tricked into it in a way! As soon as the support group was set up, I went over to the Labour Hall in Crynant. My husband and another friend were trying to sort out the food and I had a phone call: "Please come up and help us." So I went up and ever

since that day, I was sort of roped into things then, and it just went from one thing to another, you know.

Keri Nicholas; 40s; part-time professional and WSG activist

In this way women's entry into the masculinised environment of politics was 'naturalised', legitimated through their familial location. Their political participation was deemed acceptable because it posed no threat to the distinctively gendered institutions of their communities:

It was just a natural process really wasn't it? I mean it wasn't something you [...] actually thought consciously, 'I must go and do.'

Anne Evans; 40s; WSG activist married to former striking miner

Indeed women's participation in the Strike effort in a supportive role was encouraged by their communities. Correspondingly, they utilised the institutionalised political framework of their environment, holding meetings and distributing food parcels from local welfare clubs. However, as women began to take a greater interest in the Strike and developed a broader framework for understanding social exclusion, they stepped outside of this 'supportive' role, and consequently experienced opposition from local political power-holders:

There was a lot of *animosity* between the men and the women. The men tried to take charge, well some of them, you know, the union men. They wouldn't take any telling or they wouldn't take any suggestions if somebody, you know, had a good suggestion. So a couple dropped out that way, 'cause they were so arrogant about it.

Sheila Thomas; 50s; voluntary worker married to former striking miner

These obstacles ranged from disparagement to overt hostility, and reluctance to allow WSGs to use welfare clubs. However, women were beginning to experience satisfaction through their political activities, which provided them with a new-found group or collective experience, from which they drew confidence:

we were a *group*, I wouldn't have gone on my own! We were about twelve women, good picketers they were, good voices. [...] You'd have more *worth*, you weren't just there to be told what to do.

Sheila Thomas; 50s; voluntary worker married to former striking miner

The women who played an active part in the Strike and for whom this facilitated their politicisation, frequently became involved in allied activities after the Strike. This occurred through local participation in the Labour Party, becoming involved in community groups, embarking upon (re)training as paid labour became increasingly accessible, and taking a greater interest in how they were affected by broader political processes. In particular, they became aware of how the prescriptive economic policies of a Conservative Government uninterested in individual circumstances, had produced socio-economic marginalisation beyond their own communities:

these green people and these protesters [...] and you've realised what they've gone through and we've only just picketed en masse. [...] 'Cause if they *believe* something, I think yes they should fight for it.

Sheila Thomas; 50s; voluntary worker married to former striking miner

I think I got paranoid during the Strike. I hated the Tory Government obviously, who were in, and I used to listen to politics more on television, debates and everything like that. And I used to think after the Strike, what I was thinking of was joining the Labour Party perhaps and working for the Labour Party. But I thought, well I'm a bit *young* for that. So I thought I've got some working life in me, so I'll go and work for myself and my family first, just try and make a life for myself and then perhaps work for the Labour Party *later* on.

Keri Nicholas; 40s; part-time professional and WSG activist

By the late 1980s a significant group of women had become politicised through the Miners' Strike, their attitudes to political participation and collective organisation significantly transformed by these experiences. Their new-found expectations posed a challenge to the continued gendered organisation of the political process in the South Wales Valleys, and when their experiences are considered in conjunction with the broader effects of

restructuring, it becomes increasingly urgent that meanings which the South Wales Valleys' populations attach to their political experiences are re-addressed, and monolithic assumptions challenged.

4.3.2 The Present

4.3.2.1 Political Understandings: Structural versus Partisan

In order to understand how the political attachments of the populations of the Welsh Valleys have been transformed in recent years, it is first necessary to ascertain what politics means to them. The fieldwork indicated that politics was conceptualised in two different ways, marked by individuals' distinctive socio-economic characteristics. Gender and occupational orientation (section 4.2.2) emerged as key distinguishing factors in how people understood the political process. The first, slightly more common, way of conceptualising politics is characterised here as 'generalistic', that is, politics was perceived to constitute the structures and mechanisms of government and representation, and their inherent power relations:

Well probably I would say politics is a mix of political beliefs and ideals, different people, what different people would have, and how that would mix in. How people think the country should be run and what the priorities should be.

Gary Peters; 30s; former striking miner now self-employed

Politics I believe, means to me, people who represent us and people who I hope look after the community in general and the people that put them there.

Tony Bayliss; 50s; redundant former miner.

While men and women equally conceptualised the political process in non party-political terms, sharp differences emerged in that while a heterogeneous group of men utilised generalistic discourses to form the basis of their unproblematic relationship with politics, this contrasted with the perceptions of women active in the Strike effort, who described the political process as unattractive, initiating little personal interest:

I'm not one to say a lot, I'm not much reading. [laughs] They use a lot of words whereas they could do it in one sentence.

Sheila Thomas; 50s; voluntary worker married to former striking miner

Well my husband was a councillor, so you know, that's all we have: politics, politics. You know, especially when you see 'em on the television. Gets you down, I think so.

Sian Weston; 50s; WSG activist married to former striking miner.

This group was describing the masculinised political environment traditionally associated with coal-mining communities, rather than the broader interpretations of political activity which they had experienced during the 1984/5 Strike, the latter having been the source of a great deal of personal satisfaction. The unitary conception of politics employed by coalmining communities, linked to its particular structural framework, has thus been off-putting to women, whose positioning in the private sphere has provided them with fewer opportunities to become familiar with its style and organisation. In particular, this conceptualisation sat uneasily with the experiences of the group of women active in the 1984/5 Strike, who had developed a more inclusive interpretation of political activity. It is therefore restrictive to continue to utilise homogenised political frameworks in understanding political attachments in the South Wales Valleys.

The second approach employed to interpret politics, was linked to political parties, and in particular to the political objectives of the Labour Party. This understanding associated regionalist and class interests with the representation provided by the Labour Party:

I think it's got to start from a classes [pause] I've always felt that the Labour Party is the party of the working-classes, and I don't believe that John Major's intention, or what he said was his intention, to achieve a classless society worked at all.

Betty Morgan; 50s; local politician

In line with this definition's specificity, it was more frequently utilised by men, a recourse to party-politics having been embedded in their unionised experiences as coalminers. Revealingly, individuals defining politics thus, overwhelmingly belonged to the 'strategic' category described earlier (section 4.2.2), and further, comprised the most occupationally

mobile group of informants. One interpretation of this finding is that the more diffuse working experiences of these individuals granted them access to a greater range of spatial experiences, which facilitated their contextualising social exclusion as a phenomenon best tackled by a Labour Government.

Supporting this interpretation, individuals actively involved in the local Labour Party, tended to be occupationally 'strategic'. Their experiences confirm the emergent explanation that political activity in the South Wales Valleys was limited in its restriction to men's social world, and that the transformation of the local labour market has further restricted entry into traditional institutions, particularly amongst the younger generation whose labour market experiences have provided less access to these structures:

It can be inferred from this that if the Labour Party wants to maintain the support of former industrial regions, it needs to implement a structural reorganisation incorporative of broader spheres of activity, that is, beyond the unionised workplace of men. That the formalised political process continues to be conducted utilising a series of unwritten (and therefore privileged) 'rules', impedes recruitment at a time when individuals are formulating broader political understandings and activities:

I haven't been in politics long to be honest [...] it surprised me because I've got to sort of bite my tongue now and you carry on, because they say the same things, but they say them in a long drawn-out fashion. I know you've got to be careful, but at the end of the day if something's got to be said, let's get it out in the open and discuss it. That's the way *I* think. Unfortunately, some people take offence at that.

Peter Clark; 30s; Tower shareholder and trade unionist

The political process of the South Wales Valleys has been disrupted by its populations having become increasingly diffuse, and with the dismantling of the institutions associated with coalmining, the Labour Party has been deprived of the framework it relied upon to enlist allegiance. While this has not yet jeopardised its regional electoral success, local Party membership (which gives some indication of political *activity*) has witnessed a recent decline (*Guardian* 12.11.98). The following section considers how informants have

responded to recent transformations in the Labour Party, providing an indication of how well the national party has been able to confront reconfigurations in political attachments.

4.3.2.2 Responses to 'New Labour'

Reactions to the ideological shift in the national Labour Party fell into three broad groupings. These were: negative assessments; the withholding of judgement; and positive assessments. None of these differed significantly from the others in its composition of strategic to survivalist occupational orientations, but they diverged markedly in other ways.

Negative assessments of 'New Labour' comprised the largest grouping of informants. The over-riding theme distinguishing this category was that informants assessed Labour's 're-branding' in terms of a betrayal of socialism and the party's traditional basis of class support:

there is a feeling that they could be moving forward too fast. Some people I think, are beginning to feel that. Especially again the working-classes, who Labour gets a lot of its support from, they feel that they've been taken for granted, and are concentrating on Middle England.

Sheila Taylor; 40s; professional and community activist

This group was predominantly comprised of a middle-aged group of informants, whose biographies were characterised by political activism, and who were more likely to have played a central part in the 1984/5 Strike. It is unsurprising that this group was hostile to 'New Labour', having already witnessed the more moderate Party of the 1980s distancing itself from their interests during the Strike (Parry 1996), and thus expecting any further movement towards the right to constrain their political representation within the Party.

The second group of informants were more cautious in their assessments of 'New Labour'. They that felt it was too early to make an informed decision regarding the long-term effects of rebranding upon the Party to which they were attached. More generally they considered Labour in governance to have thus far behaved rationally and with decisive impact:

Well, they haven't really had a chance to prove themselves yet, have they? I mean they haven't been in long. But I mean some of the things they're doing, you know, I think are fairly good. But I think we've got a long while before we can judge them.

Mike Breeze; 50s; former striking miner, now in private pit

The most defining characteristic of this group was its composition of a proportionally large grouping of informants interviewed during the second wave of fieldwork, that is, in January-March 1998. This might be taken as an indication of the temporality of identity formation, in that while major events (such as the 1997 general election) encouraged the crystallisation of acute identifications (positive or negative assessments of New Labour), less dramatic political environments (the second wave of interviews were conducted eight to ten months after the general election) invited more modest assessments. However, this speculation should also be considered in the light of the fact that the opinions of this group cannot with certainty be assumed as different if interviewed at an earlier stage of the fieldwork. The responses of the small control group, however (a handful of miners interviewed during the first-wave of interviews to establish early contacts), did lend support to this interpretation.

The third, and marginally smallest group of informants consisted of individuals whose responses to transformations in the Labour Party were more positive. Their interpretation was that the Party had 'modernised', and that this was consistent with the mood of the electorate:

I think they've looked at themselves and thought, 'Right, we're falling behind a bit now and we've got to look at things in a different perspective and be more *honest* and open to people.' And I think Tony Blair [...] he's the type of fellow that, his heart is there [...] I think he's done a lot of good and he's brought a lot of unity into the Party.

Hywel Rees; 30s; former striking miner and Tower shareholder

In this grouping of Labour Party loyalists, men outnumbered women by four to one. This can be explained in terms of the gendered political process which existed in coalmining communities, which fostered a loyalty to Party which has over-ridden the dismantling of the institutions associated with that process, constituting a cultural lag. Additionally, men's greater access to a political education in the past, enabled their employing a more historical

perspective in interpreting the fortunes of the Labour Party, less expectant of ideological stasis in a dynamic society.

Only thirteen years after the Strike, quite diverse configurations of political attachment have been formulated by the populations of the Welsh Valleys. While these are still fostered in the broad context of the Labour Party (only two informants voted Plaid), and an appreciation of a localist labour movement heritage, this masked internal differentiation. When transcripts were studied as a whole, and compared with telephone re-interviews, it became apparent that informants' political attachments were more complex than holistic interpretations of identity have suggested. Political identities vary with time and circumstance, and the various communities of the South Wales Valleys can no longer be considered as possessing a single coherent collective political identity, if indeed this was ever the case.

4.3.3 The Implications of the Transformation of Politics upon Collectivity

That political identities have undergone diversification in the South Wales Valleys as a result of micro and macro transformations, does not detract from the continued significance of collective interests. Important distinctions marked the ways in which informants formulated political attachments, groupings being distinguished from one another in terms of a plurality of socio-economic characteristics, which were indicative of the multitude of experiences and interests existent within populations. Membership of political groupings was not necessarily permanent, rather boundaries were permeable, as were those between collectivities associated with occupation and community (see next section). The increasing differentiation of the populations of the South Wales Valleys then, necessitates that a broader and more dynamic conceptualisation of political identity is employed to describe their matrix of collectivised understandings. Political attachments are reconfigured over time, in response to various socio-economic factors, and there is an interactive impact of broader identificatory experiences upon political understandings. The unitary frameworks utilised to describe the political attachments associated with a single-industry employer are inapplicable in the context of diversified socio-economic experiences. They have masked internal differentiation, only adequately describing men's political understandings; women's most

important collectivity was measured in terms of their communal experiences, as the next section describes. With the withering of the institutional context which structured coalmining communities' formulation of political identity, and the increasing participation of women in paid employment, the basis for collective identifications has become increasingly diversified. Men's opportunities for collective political identification have become less comprehensive, while those available to women have broadened. Nevertheless, individuals' political heritage continues to exert a significant impact upon their understandings, and thus the realignment of political interests will occur only gradually. This, however, fails to justify the procrastination of the Labour Party, who should re-examine their appeal to populations whose reconfigured social organisation no longer provides an institutional cultivation of Labour loyalism. A move towards AMS will have serious longer-term implications for a Labour Party which fails to address these issues.

As the life experiences of the populations of the South Wales Valleys have become more disparate, so too their political interests have become increasingly fluid. The empirical material revealed that it is abundantly possible for individuals to pursue political interests upon a plurality of levels. For example then, while an individual's political identification might be advanced as a school governor, within a union, on a community council, within a pressure group, through further education, or through utilising any combination of these and other activities, so it might be broadly represented in the Labour Party during times of election. This brings us full circle to the problem outlined at the beginning of the section, that political parties can at best represent only an imaginary and transient collectivity of political interests. This tension has been heightened by an increasing awareness of the dynamism of individuals' temporal and spatial experiences. The complexity of political identity is revisited in the next chapter, which considers it in relation to personal ideologies. However, first the impact of restructuring upon communal attachments is examined.

4.4 Communal Identities

Conceptualising communal identities is fraught with difficulty, because 'community' is so often restricted to spatial definitions, and incurring an emotional discharge, has led to the 'romanticisation' of communal experiences. This section examines how 'community' has

traditionally been employed by the populations of the South Wales Valleys to imbue meaning upon their social relationships. The empirical material is used to develop a processual framework which interprets communal attachments inclusively, reflecting the diversity of the modern environment, but also draws attention to the persistence and reconfiguration of commonalities. This is set against the restructuring which has been posited in various ways as detrimental to communal forms of identification associated with 'the working-class' (the 'decline of community' thesis). It is argued that individuals employ temporality complexly in relation to their communal experiences, invoking both dynamism and stasis as they wrestle with the simultaneous pulls of wider social change and the explanatory power of tradition.

Crow and Allan (1994) have pointed out that working-class communities have never been distinguished by a singular fixed pattern, rather their relations have been diverse and shifting, variable according to a plurality of socio-economic factors. They emphasised individuals' differential embeddedness in communal relationships, reflecting their various levels of commitment and exchange potentialities (1994: 182). This approach is valuable for its recognition of communities' dynamism in response to economic transformation. Gilbert (1995), looking specifically at coalmining communities, re-emphasised this, in particular encouraging social theorists to become more critical of monolithic conceptualisations of collectivity, and to examine a broader range of experiences, such as those of women and non-militant miners. Willmott (1986) went some way in developing a more inclusive understanding of community, conceptualising similarities in terms of 'geography', 'interest' and 'attachment'. His approach highlighted the overlaps between these distinctions, and thus provides a useful starting point in examining the diverse range of experiences encompassed within 'community'.

The difficulty in establishing a working definition of 'community' is illustrated by some methodological difficulties experienced during the fieldwork. Decisions regarding the constitution of the sample were influenced by the availability of informants whose experiences were important in addressing the research questions, but who in some way or another breached parameters which had initially been set by the research. For example, some coalminers lived outside the Valleys, but had been active unionists; some local politicians and community activists had no experience of coalmining but were otherwise integrated into

'coalmining communities'. These difficulties were reconciled through the realisation that the spatial stretching of social relations makes it impossible to draw a circle around 'community'; this would still have been the case in the absence of restructuring since difference and sameness are co-existent within community. The position taken here, located both in theory and empirical evidence, is that conceptualising community as a holistic, homogeneous and bounded social structure is problematic; community is more accurately understood as a plurality of solidarities, which interlink and cross-cut one another in various ways in constituting the building-blocks of that entity. While interaction is important in maintaining the momentum of communal relations, so too individuals belong to 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1983), which provide a vital part of the interpretative framework through which the meanings attached to collectivity are understood.

In appreciating the impact of industrial restructuring in the Valleys, it should be recognised that transformation has been gradual, social relations having been increasingly stretched over the past thirty years in response to the rolling programme of pit closures. Correspondingly, the region's populations have become more mobile, seeking work outside of the industry and in the remaining pits, some distance removed from their homes. While this has entailed a degree of emigration, this project was more concerned with the increased implementation of commuting strategies, which have widened the social spheres of individuals' interactions. Restructuring then, has entailed that communal relations in the Welsh Valleys have become less spatially-specific. This has occurred gradually, and not just since the 1984/5 Strike, although events catalysed by it have brought the situation into greater relief.

Another factor important in understanding the transformations which Rees (1985) has suggested will affect the cohesiveness of coalfield communities, is women's relationship to the public and private spheres. Warwick and Littlejohn (1992) understood women's responsibility in the past for 'traditional social institutions' (the domestic sphere and local informal networks) within working-class communities, as entailing part of the resources of 'local cultural capital' which helped maintain communal identity. Lummis (1985) thus described women's communal relationships as constituting their class experience. Women's greater integration into the workforce is therefore likely to be reflected in their reconceptualisations of communal relations and class. In terms of the former, Devine (1989) has suggested that women's involvement in wider social networks will restrict the time

which they can consequentially devote to localised communal relations, although she does not imply that these relationships will not be reconfigured. The gendered basis of coalmining communities in South Wales should thus be regarded as a primary consideration in an analysis of how they have responded to restructuring.

4.4.1 The Past

It is difficult to translate informants' various partial, interpretative and comparative accounts into an integrated understanding of community belonging in the past, and buying into these interpretations carries its own problems relating to exclusionary practices, and the non-recognition of diversity. Furthermore, fieldwork data demonstrated little uniformity, interviewing not following a cross-sectional model of, "Describe the community in 1955," which arguably might have given rise to some sort of holistic 'account'.

However, 'community' can with some assurance, be described as having been highly gendered, its public or institutional face - the various trade union lodges and welfare clubs, sports and drinking establishments - having been male-dominated, while its private sphere - maintained through informal kinship and neighbourhood networks - was female-dominated. The conceptual difficulty in distinguishing between various aspects of collective organisation became apparent in overlaps between communal institutional structures and those associated with occupational and political fields. Further, gender distinctions were not uniformly manifested in terms of separate spheres. For example, local chapels were attended both by men and women, and performed an important social function, yet gendered hierarchies included a male clergy²⁴, distinctive male and female voice choirs, and largely female fundraisers. While community is here considered in terms of collectivity, communal attachments also mediated the familial and friendship relationships discussed in section 5.2. These conceptual difficulties illustrate the difficulty in analytically isolating 'community', composed as it is of a plurality of structures and relationships. This difficulty has been reflected in ongoing theoretical debate (Crow and Allan 1994) regarding the sociological use of the term 'community', a problem which is addressed here by adopting a relational approach which highlights the range of interdependencies implicit within communal mobilisations of collectivity.

Reflecting the gendered character of communal attachments, informants' reflections fell into two broad categories: those concerning the material structures of community, gendered male; and those associated with the informal networks creating its 'atmosphere', gendered female. These are described as the 'structural' and 'relational' faces of communal interactions. These recollections were most prominently manifested by the 'Strike generation', the imagined community distinguished earlier for its particular mobilisation of habitus. The first response painted a picture of coalmining communities as territories heavily 'bounded' or isolated from wider society. This understanding was maintained through a comprehensive body of spatially-situated structural institutions, many of which were directly related to the industry's infrastructure, which promoted collective interaction:

Crynant then where you had Treforgan and Blaenant working [local pits], you had a few shops in the village, whatever, pubs, clubs. You didn't *need* to go so far out of the village apart from Tescos, etcetera. Anything else they wanted, I should imagine they could have had in the village, socially.

Jack Preston; 40s; former striking miner, now at private pit

Conversely, coalmining communities were *qualitatively* described using the more feminine characteristic of caringness. Knowledge of, and frequent supportive interaction between neighbours, apparently promoted a sense of collective responsibility, which tied in with the popular socialism characterising coalmining communities' political outlook (section 4.3):

When I first came here to live I felt like I'd come home. And I think the people were so friendly and welcoming. They just were lovely and they've really accepted me. I mean, when I first came to live here, I was the only English girl in the village. And a lot of people told me back home, "Oh, they won't want you in a little Welsh village!" You know, "There's no way they're going to want you there!" But they've been brilliant, they really are good to me.

Beth Jenkins; 40s; service sector worker separated from former striking miner

²⁴ I have yet to come across a female cleric in the Valleys.

Notably this conceptualisation regarded boundaries as less important, the ability to move freely within a collective 'safe space' being emphasised. However, emphasis upon movement belied some individuals' more restrictive experience, particularly in relation to women's domestic confinement:

But the old community spirit with my father and my mother, he went down the boozier and she looked after the kids. No two ways. He'd have earned the money and she did as she was told. It's bloody awful, isn't it? So I'm not sorry that's gone either! [laughs] You know, to be honest with you. There's lots of good and bad things about the colliery and the old ways.

Kate Bayliss; 40s; former carer married to redundant former miner

However, Kate was somewhat unusual in recognising that her occupational mobility had been curtailed by the domestic expectations of the social world of coalmining (section 4.2.2.2). Most women were less explicit in recognising this gendered public/private divide. The experiences of migrants living outside of the Valleys, subject to less constraining gendered expectations, are illustrative of gendered communal roles, and while migrants continued to value the 'caringness' associated with their community of origin, none wished to return:

the sense of community was wonderful and you could go out and leave your door wide open and no-one would go in there. They all helped each other and you would borrow butter or eggs off your neighbour and she would borrow back off you. And they would help if someone had a new baby; if someone had a baby the neighbour would do the washing and feed your family for you until you were out of bed, you know. And if there was any bereavement they would come and you know, really good support, wonderful friendship. [...] I couldn't go back now. I've lived a different life.

Rose Edwards; 40s; migrant married to former miner turned entrepreneur

While communal gendered expectations provided women with a resource furnishing satisfaction and strength, they also imposed restrictions upon their behaviour. However, these were largely unrecognised while women were embedded in these social relations. Skeggs's (1997a) work on working-class women engaged in 'caring' courses is illuminating

on this phenomenon. Skeggs argues that while working-class women distance themselves from the over language of class, perceiving it to have negative implications for their identity, it informs their self-understandings as they buy into discourses of respectability and caringness, subject positions she describes as 'cultural capital', being used to destigmatise women's experiences of inequality. Thus through mothering, taking the sorts of 'caring' vocational courses associated with Skeggs's informants, and participating in the social welfare communal activities described later, women acquired status amid broader socio-economic disadvantage. Migrants, in Skeggs's terms, represent a movement towards a middle-class positioning, from where they can explicitly recognise the restrictions of their former experiences, their upward mobility protecting them from association with the potentially pathologising influence of class. Class thus operates dialogically to measure the 'other' (1997a: 74).

4.4.2 The Present

Restructuring has affected communal attachments at both conceptual levels described above: the vitality of traditional institutions is threatened by the decline of coalmining, and women's supportive networks have been challenged by increasing demands upon them to move between private and public sphere activities amid rising male unemployment. Current interpretations of community are described here in terms of three main themes, the co-existence of which highlight its inherent dynamism. These are change, stasis and reconfiguration. While these evoked qualitatively different emotive responses and attributed differential weighting to structural and relational aspects of communal interactions, a degree of fluidity emerged in individuals' ability to utilise various discourses. This served to emphasise the multiple meanings which individuals simultaneously attach to their communal experiences, habitus serving as a pool from which explanatory power is drawn in relation to individuals' dynamic circumstances. Habitus is thus a flexible resource.

4.4.2.1 Community Change: A Negative Experience

The main theme characterising collectivised interpretations of community, unsurprisingly considering recent accelerated socio-economic transformation, was change. This was raised equally by men and women, and was manifested in five main ways. Most prominent of these was informants' perception of a decline in their level of communal interaction. This was attributed primarily to the disintegration of institutions associated with coalmining, which had provided a forum for communal activity. However, women's increased participation in paid employment and the increased prevalence of commuting were also regarded as contributory factors, restricting individuals' time to engage in localist interactions. Thus informants' perceptions of reduced communal interaction invoked both parts of the gendered equation outlined in section 4.4.1. However, the causality of these responses was gendered, men attributing reduced communal interaction to the loss of communal structures, and women explaining it primarily in terms of the spatial stretching of social networks:

One of the things that has happened *since* the Miners' Strike and the closing of pits, is the economy of the community. There are many shops and businesses being closed. I can't quote literally, but somebody said to me that in Cwmgwrach there were about twenty shops and now there's about three. And that main street in Glyn-Neath, it was *all* shops. [...] So I think that was one of the major consequences of that, was it decimated the economy and people didn't have the money to spend in the shops. And a lot of local shops were, sort of ancillary practically to these industries. But it's certainly changed, certainly changed.

Harry Ellis; 50s; clergyman

I think it's got a lot to do with the wives working personally, because the wives are not here to communicate. [...] I mean a woman never went to work years ago. So she was the one that was the centre of that sort of community thing.

Kate Bayliss; 40s; former carer married to redundant former miner.

The implication of these experiences is that as spatial-social relations have become more stretched, interaction has occurred on a number of levels, but this diversification has ultimately reduced the significance of a unified 'communal experience'.

The second communal change concerned the conceptualisation of boundaries. Informants defined these less in terms of institutional criteria (membership of chapels, clubs, etc.) and more in relation to the density of local and kinship networks. Boundaries were perceived as having become less permeable, contrasting with the spatial stretching of communal relationships under restructuring. This experience can be considered using Elias and Scotson's theory of 'the established and the outsiders':

the more threatened and insecure they feel, the more likely it is that internal pressure, and as part of it, internal competition, will drive common beliefs towards extremes of illusion and rigidity. (1965: 95)

The sharpening of the boundaries perceived to encapsulate communal relations was a process in which the 'Other' emerged as distinctive, their presence detrimental to the coherence of community:

You see there's different people come to live in this area. We don't know who they are. So it's not the same as it used to be. You used to know everyone.

Bethan Dafis; 60s; WSG activist married to former striking miner

The accentuated visibility of 'Others', discussed in section 3.42, identified as not incorporating local communal behaviour and social norms, in this context incurred a process of stigmatisation, single mothers for example, being labelled 'unrespectable'. An oppositional dialogic is in operation here, which Skeggs (1997a) has suggested 'insiders' employ to position themselves as 'respectable' in contrast to 'Others'. Through acquiring respectable status insiders safeguard their collective status. However, this emphasis upon difference contrasted with informants' recollections, incomers having in the past been unproblematically assimilated into 'the community', the fortunes of the coalmining industry having been dependant upon this process. The accentuation of boundaries amid insecure economic circumstances can be regarded as an attempt to conserve scarce resources against

further encroachment, a conclusion which is supported by the fact that informants employing this response experienced restructuring as most constraining.

Communal relationships were also understood as having undergone recent transformation in terms of an upsurge of social problems. These were particularly attributed to the disillusionment and under-employment of the younger generation:

The thing that's changed is the violence. God, and they've changed more than any village now, the street corners with kids with nothing to do.

David Howells; 50s; former striking miner and local politician

Notably, 'youngsters' were frequently 'othered', imagined as coming from 'up the Valley', and therefore not belonging to informants' own 'community'. Othering also occurred in a second more obvious way, youthful offenders being defined in contrast to the individuals identifying them, who were all over fifty. This dialogue absolved informants from implication in negative communal change. However, the irritants themselves tended to be regarded as less culpable than central and local government who had failed to provide facilities, general policing, and employment. Thus the change in communal experiences was linked to the transformation of occupational relations.

A fourth theme characterising perceptions of communal change was that prolonged Conservative rule had marginalised communities from economic prosperity, resulting in public apathy. This perception was most closely tied to the responses of 'active' members of the community, who found it increasingly difficult to enlist support and interaction for their causes:

it's changed because of Thatcherism. Because one thing that Thatcher taught everyone in the communities was to look after themselves and forget about everyone else. And because of the climate that people find themselves in with no work, then you are forced into a situation of looking after yourself. And not much time to look out for anyone else really.

David Howells; 50s; former striking miner

Again a dialogic was set in motion to construct explanations, informants 'disidentifying' with the apathy they associated with 'other' members of the community. Notably while communal apathy was heightened by the withering of traditional institutions, informants concerned to counter indifference did so by turning to new communal structures, participation in which was still limited to certain sub-groupings of the population (section 4.4.2.3).

Finally perceptions of negative communal transformation were manifested in terms of concern that the younger population was generally less interested in 'community'. It tended to be older informants who formulated this response, whose experiences of communal relations had apparently been unchanged by socio-economic restructuring, but who envisaged broader communal experiences as being transformed by an ageing demographic:

I find it's [the community spirit] disappearing, and particularly with the younger generation. I mean you still have the [older] element where they have their coffee mornings and they go dancing together. But as they die off, nothing fills their place.

Claire Davies; 50s; voluntary worker and community activist

This response was also characterised by a recognition that part of the problem lay in the Valleys' reduced employment opportunities, which necessitated a considerable proportion of the younger generation migrating to find work. This re-emphasises the inseparability of communal and occupational identifications in traditional understandings of coalmining communities. Additionally, the reportedly greater communal activity of an older retired population, should be considered in the light of their greater locatedness in the region and availability of free time to pursue 'community' activities.

These experiences of communal change, relying heavily upon dialogic exchange, highlight the inappropriateness of a unified conceptualisation of 'community'. While individuals continued to employ holistic conceptualisations of community in emphasising social similarity, this was only one part of a broader matrix of communal relationships in which they were located. To understand the complex process of communal identification, it is necessary to look beyond idealised models of 'community', and recognise that communal identifications are forged upon a plurality of levels, and amongst groups 'othered' by the

‘authentic’ community, such as single mothers and ‘rowdy’ teenagers. Single mothers, for example, are a group whose spatial concentration and full-time commitment to caring places them in a position where they might be expected to draw heavily upon supportive networks with similarly positioned individuals.

4.4.2.2 Communal Stasis

The second way in which communal experiences were conceptualised drew upon continuity discourses. About a quarter of informants responded in this way, equal proportions of whom were men and women. However, continuity discourses were manifested in three distinctive ways, which were characterised by a gendered differentiation. Articulations of communal stasis employed the informal community networks highlighted in section 4.4.1. It is unsurprising that these should be more persistent than structural frameworks, the latter having been more explicitly embedded in the fortunes of coalmining.

The first subgroup articulated stasis in terms of a ‘communal space’. This was however, a minority experience, employed by only two women. They described communal spaces as facilitating free movement, a non-institutional environment, which explains why men, whose communal experiences had been more formalised, did not respond thus:

it’s nice, I can go up the road and I can always see somebody and have a chat.

Mary Hughes; 60s; local politician and widow of open-cast miner

That women’s lives have become spatially stretched, goes some way towards explaining why relatively few women recounted this experience. For while women are increasingly likely to work and shop outside of the locality, and while the spatial contexts of leisure have been simultaneously extended (foreign holidays, daytrips in the car) and restricted (television, cable and satellite, etc.), the time spent within *localist* communal spaces has contracted.

The most prominent theme characterising static perceptions of communal relations, concerned the resources embodied in local social relationships. These were described as providing security, individual positioning, and communal ‘authenticity’. Since this

perception entailed a route to status, it is unsurprising that it was employed largely by men, who had experienced a transitional occupational status in recent years, and for whom knowledge of local social relationships provided a counterbalancing source of stability:

The majority of people in the village I know, they know me, brought up with them, you know. They're sort of friends or family, I've always lived quite round about. So yes, there is a good community spirit there, definitely.

Peter Clark; 30s; Tower shareholder and trade unionist

Morris (1990) noted in her research on redundant steelworkers in Port Talbot that communal networks were particularly important to men, providing access to employment opportunities in formal and informal labour markets. The same conclusions can be applied to the Welsh Valleys, communal networks being to some degree maintained as a pragmatic survival tactic.

The third element of community stasis comprised the persistence of mutual support and reciprocity between friends and neighbours. Informants regarded this as providing significant material and emotional benefits, contributing to their experience of communality, which contrasted with those in more heterogeneous or urban environments:

And I still think that, perhaps most of all, you have got neighbours who have known each other a long time. And who are prepared to look out for each other. I think you see this in the winter when you've got concern within the community for the elderly.

Betty Morgan; 50s; local politician

Women were more likely to experience community stasis thus, which also corresponds with Morris's (1990) research, conducted in a similarly gendered environment. She argued that communal networks provided women with an important resource in coping with restructuring, specifically one promoting the flow of material aid and support.

That communal experiences were thus experienced as unchanged, was regarded positively, providing an important function in compensating for the losses incurred in the demise of coal-mining. While a minority of informants experienced close-knit networks as suffocating (section 3.33), more generally their benefits were considered to outweigh their

disadvantages. However, notably communal networks were still perceived in gendered terms, men valuing them for their provision of status and information, while women articulated their benefits primarily in terms of the provision of emotional support.

4.4.2.3 Reconceptualisations of Community

Moving on to reconfigurations in communal interactions, the establishment of new communal structures was generally regarded as a constructive step, and the group most active in these organisations was distinctive. They included a ratio of strategic to survivalist individuals of six to one, women out-representing men by two to one. Strategic individuals then, were not only concerned to reconfigure their own working practices, but were instrumental in formulating imaginative responses to restructuring more broadly. Furthermore, this process was gendered, women making the most dramatic re-formulations of traditional attachments.

'New' community organisations varied in form dramatically, but a process of integration occurred whereby individuals' initial involvement began on an informal, even unconscious level (compare to women's 'naturalisation' into political activity, section 4.3.1), the rewards of participation encouraging movement into more formalised and powerful organisations. Hyatt (1992) has termed this phenomenon, women's 'accidental activism'. Prior involvement in the WSGs during the 1984/5 Strike, and connections made with Labour politics through husbands' enthusiasm, were strong starting points for facilitating involvement. The new community organisations generated considerable enthusiasm and success among participants, providing a positive counter to structural losses, and fostering communal values amongst a younger generation. This new type of communal activity is considered in terms of its three main forums, which displayed leisured, educative and economic functions.

New communal organisations associated with leisure were particularly appealing to women, being frequently associated with improvements in children's quality of life. This implicit link to traditional gendered expectations facilitated women's involvement in these institutions, generating little communal hostility. Lister (1997) has noted the significance of

care-giving, particularly of motherhood, in acting as an impetus to women's involvement in collective activity. That leisured communal organisations tended to be *ad hoc*, requiring little specialist knowledge or experience, also appealed to women, having experienced marginalisation in terms of these criteria within more traditional political institutions (section 4.3.1):

What we did then was get together the action committee [from a previous campaign] and formed the basis of a *new* grouping. And then we got together one day and we asked people, "If we have the money, what would you want to see developed here?" And we got all these suggestions. And anyway, from these cards that people filled in saying what they wanted to see if we had this half a million pounds - it was a wish list really - we issued a sort of strategy for the village and submitted it to the Welsh Office. And it was successful! We used it for a sports centre.

Jill David; 40s; professional and local politician

Another former WSG activist, Beth Jenkins, talked at length and with relish about how, in seeking to establish a play area for children on local disused land, she and local parents had formed a committee and set about researching how this might be turned a successful formalised organisation. Having done so, and encountering scepticism from their community council, they decided to 'go over their heads' in applying for external funding and enlisting the support of local politicians and national organisations. At this level they were successful, receiving the financial backing to build a sports centre:

I mean it was unbelievable, within eighteen months it was there and now we've got community groups that actually hire it and use it on a regular basis all though the winter! And you know, it just goes to show, if you do sort of say, you know, well we want something, you know, you can get it if you push for it.

Beth Jenkins; 40s; service sector worker separated from former striking miner

Crucially, involvement and in particular, success in these organisations, acted in a similar way to women's involvement in WSGs during the Miners' Strike, increasing their confidence and fostering their enthusiasm. These qualities then tended to foster broader

participation in communal activities, and encourage activists to spread the word about their experiences.

The second form of new communal activity, that associated with education, focused around the DOVE workshop, a spin-off organisation emanating from women's activities during the 1984/5 Strike. Originally established as a co-operative teaching non-traditional skills to women, it adapted to circumstances, becoming co-educational, and fourteen years later, had established its place in South Wales as a respected centre of adult education. There was a small element of disappointment from some women involved in setting up DOVE, who later felt themselves becoming surplus to requirements with its 'professionalisation'. However, this was offset by the many women (and some men) who benefited from attending various courses, held in the supportive and familiar context of their own environment. These frequently opened up new career or personal development possibilities, previously dismissed as inaccessible:

It's been beneficial, a lot of women have taken it up, and it's given a lot of women confidence in themselves. [...] my daughter is talking about going up there, going on to the computers. They do a bit of everything, but I do know that there's a crèche there, because my daughter has said about it.

Kate Bayliss; 40s; former carer married to redundant former miner

One of the more important elements of DOVE is its specialist focus on socio-political education, often with a localist emphasis. While individuals taking these courses did not always expect them to provide a route into local employment, they offered a context in which the region's history was kept alive. This fostered a pride in local community life at a time when restructuring might otherwise have had a demoralising effect.

The third form of new community activity comprised organisations associated with promoting regional economic growth. These were more formalised, and correspondingly, access to them was restricted to elected and paid members. Therefore only a minority of informants related insider knowledge of these organisations, which for reasons of informant identifiability, cannot be documented. The broader response to these organisations was that they had been initially welcomed, and were still encouraged, but were increasingly regarded

as outside agencies with a cosmetic function, little concerned with promoting a dialogue with the communities whose interests they apparently served. In line with men's longer-term relationship to formal political structures, they were more likely to have experience in dealing with these organisations.

However, these were not the only forms in which community has been reinterpreted. An annual festival has recently been set up in the Dulais Valley, which fosters communal attachments. A well-attended coffee morning was visited during the fieldwork, and informants' accounts were sprinkled with descriptions of clubs and social activities, many of them utilising premises vacated by the institutions associated with coalmining. Thus while the communities of the South Wales Valleys have experienced considerable transformation, much of which has been experienced as detrimental to their continued vibrancy, this has not left a vacuum, a plurality of formal and informal organisations having taken on the mantle of more 'traditional' structures in fostering communal relationships. That this activity has ranged from and across formalised contexts to more impermanent and informal ones, can be regarded in terms of a bridge having been created between the formerly analytically distinct gendered frameworks of the 'structural' and 'relational' aspects of communal interaction.

Participation in new communal organisations has had a considerable impact upon individuals, facilitating the development of more 'strategic' interpretations, made possible through the knowledge and confidence-building imbued upon participants. Section 4.2.2 has suggested that the flexibility and knowledge implied in such a process positions individuals more advantageously in negotiating the demands of a transformed labour market. However, the development of 'strategic' orientations has not steered individuals towards more individualistic lifestyles and nor has it suppressed collectivised activity as 'detraditionalisation' theorists have predicted. Rather, participation in these organisations has fostered a new enthusiasm for communal participation, and broadened the context in which this occurs. As new communal organisations increasingly meet with success, and their experience implies a process of knowledge-building, they have cast their net wider in recruiting 'survivalist' individuals. DOVE is a good example of an organisation adopting this approach. That men have found it more difficult to develop strategism in reconfiguring their relationship to communal organisations, can be linked to their historical relationship with more formalised institutional structures, which are 're-imagined' more slowly.

4.4.3 The Implications of the Transformation of Communal Relations upon Collectivity

This evidence poses a serious challenge to the 'loss of community' thesis. The identification of a single common communal experience is lazy sociology, and theorists have recently challenged its material basis, pointing to the gendered nature of coalmining populations as an example of internal differentiation. The data suggest that the momentum of communal activity is dynamic and in constant motion, simultaneously encompassing gain, loss and stasis. Informants rarely experienced this momentum in terms of a common experience, but rather formulated communal solidarities across a plurality of groupings, membership of which was multiple, overlapping and disparate. Membership of these groups was patterned in various ways according to gender, age and strategic/survivalist orientation. So while 'community' as a unified entity is infrequently employed to make sense of collective identifications, communal relationships continue to have significance in ways specific to the diversified socio-economic circumstances of people's lives.

The matrix of attachments represented by communal relationships is so interwoven that it has, in particular circumstances, been possible to mobilise an imagined community. This was the case in the collective action witnessed during the 1984/5 Strike, which drew upon understandings of what it meant to belong to 'a' coalmining community. However, the interactions constituting the mobilisations associated with an 'imagined community' are increasingly less comprehensive, representing only one particularly abstract form, among the multiple layers of communal association, employed to ascertain individuals' social positioning.

When questioned directly about their expectations regarding the configuration of communal attachments, informants' responses reiterated patterns observed earlier, being marked by distinctive socio-economic groupings. Men were generally more negative, combining their communal and occupational expectations, the latter being prominently informed by the decline of the structural framework associated with coalmining:

It will deteriorate immensely. Thirty guys, no fifty guys I guess are employed at the site, there must be about fifteen employed by the washery. Although it's not much,

fifty jobs in an area where there isn't much already, I'd assume that within about ten years, that these jobs would go. It's going to deteriorate, there's nothing to replace what we have unfortunately. There's absolutely nothing to take its place.

Owen Lloyd; 30s; open-cast professional

In contrast, the grouping most optimistic about the persistence of communal solidarities, and who considered these in terms of the new conceptualisations of community discussed in section 4.4.2.3, was dominated by women who had adopted a strategic outlook both to their employment, and to their wider relationships and social positioning:

if you said about twenty years ago that you came from Tonmawr, only a few miles down the road it was looked down on. Now it's a *nice* community. In ten years' time I think it will keep going forward. This community is looked after.

Sheila Taylor; 40s; professional and community activist

These were only two of a multiplicity of groupings. Numerous others revolved around specific expectations, such as individuals who regarded political transformations as providing a positive or negative context for maintaining communal relations, those interpreting the heterogenisation of communities positively or negatively, and so on. Each grouping was marked by social similarities. Thus communal expectations mirrored the conclusions of the current data: the communal relations of the Valleys can be understood only in terms of a plurality of groupings, membership of which is permeable and diverse. These groupings conceptualise their understandings and expectations of communal relationships in various ways, and their experiences are interlinked with their occupational and political relations. Occupational, political and communal solidarities emerged as the three main factors around which informants formulated collective attachments, and as such they are conceptually inseparable.

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter has argued that collective solidarities are central to understanding how the populations of the South Wales Valleys formulate identity, providing a major element of

their locatedness, and an explanatory power for their circumstances. However, it moves away from a position which posits these as homogenised experiences, theorising that collectivity is dynamic and relational, reflecting temporal, spatial and socio-economic transformation. In particular it has drawn attention to individuals' differential locatedness in relation to structural resources, which correspondingly differentiate their ability to assimilate and employ various types of collectivised discourses.

The conditions of restructuring have made it increasingly necessary that the collectivised discourses embedded in habitus are conceptualised in terms of a *network* of knowledge and relationships. These discourses are themselves potential resources, and are fluid in reflecting the dynamic circumstances of individuals' lives. Habitus is differentially drawn upon as commonalities become more or less apparent and necessary in explaining individuals' changing circumstances. The analytical distinction between strategists and survivalists is central to this understanding, bringing into relief the intersecting structures distinguishing individuals' ability to draw upon and mobilise various collectivised discourses. These structured inequalities are complex, encompassing dynamic combinations of social, cultural, economic and symbolic differentiation, and continue to be cross-cut by gendered axes.

While prior to restructuring, the more homogeneous conditions of social organisation enabled theorists to impose simplification upon the circumstances of the Welsh Valleys by allocating a primary structuring function to work, in more diffuse industrial circumstances, a processual and relational approach is necessary to understand how a complex range of structured inequalities simultaneously constrain and enable individuals' membership of a plurality of socio-economic groups. This approach is well-placed to confront current working practices, where male hierarchical progression within a single workplace environment less frequently typifies individuals' experiences. Through adopting this approach, the plurality of commonalities manifest within a diverse range of social experiences are made apparent, and can be posited in terms of an interlinked and dynamic network.

Revisiting the example of private-pit miners provides an illustration of the complex negotiation of collectivity. Unable to achieve sociability in the workplace, and deprived of the resources necessary to reconfigure their occupational experiences, private miners have

drawn more heavily upon alternative sources of collectivity, variously manifested in local Labour Party activity, and through maintaining extensive communal and kinship networks. These have provided a context for purposeful activity and sociality, a necessary counterbalance to their unsatisfactory working experiences. This sociality, and identification *with* provides the subtext of collective interaction, and while imagined collectivity also provides an important source of explanatory power, the real interactions constituting individuals' experiences play a fundamental role in the formulation of self-understandings.

The detailed attention devoted to strategists' and survivalists' assumption of collectivised discourses in relation to structural inequalities, reveals that these behaviours themselves constitute *processes* forged in the context of specific socio-economic circumstances. While this analytical distinction is initially developed in terms of economic location, it becomes more broadly interpreted, demonstrating the interdependency of social relationships, occupational experience itself being a product of socio-cultural circumstances, informing the interpretation of these circumstances, and vice versa. However, individuals are unequally privileged in negotiating social space, and their adoption of strategic or survivalist behaviour, and their corresponding membership of social groups, should be considered relatively. For example, a female teacher living in the Valleys is likely to draw upon social groupings associated with her profession, in addition to political and communal groupings, which may be located in the region, more broadly, or both. In contrast, an unemployed miner is likely to experience restricted mobility, drawing heavily upon networks associated with his community, and invoking recollections of previous occupational experiences to imbue meanings upon his experiences, perhaps also becoming involved in local politics. He is correspondingly likely to experience a greater density of local social relationships than the teacher, but the quality of these respective collective experiences is not comparable. These examples are manifested in infinite variation, and individuals also move between groupings, drawing more heavily upon particular solidarities according to their circumstances. But these groupings provide fundamental meaning for their self-understandings, and are the product of individuals' particular allocation of structural resources. It can be inferred from the broader experiences described above that strategists are more capable of reconfiguring collectivity, in moving beyond (but not necessarily away from) 'traditional' group experiences.

Calhoun has advised:

we cannot understand individuals as fixed bearers of interests ... there are always internal tensions and inconsistencies among the various identities and group memberships of individuals.... acting on certain identities must frustrate others. This is a key reason why the politics of personal identity and the politics of collective identity are so inextricably linked. (1994: 27-8)

The next chapter goes further in disentangling these tensions by examining how individuals' personal interpretations of their experiences act as a melting pot in which the various aspects of lived existence come together, are assimilated and prioritised, imposing a unique sense of order upon an otherwise chaotic set of influences.

Chapter Five: Personal Identities

5.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters have argued that recent socio-economic transformations in the South Wales Valleys require spatial and social processes to be considered as dynamic to uncover how identity processes have been affected. This chapter extends the analysis by arguing that spatial and social formations are inextricably linked to personalised understandings, and interact with them in the formulation of broader identities. Through examining how the diversified circumstances of individuals' lives under restructuring are articulated and prioritised in informal social structures and understandings, it completes the identity triptych described in chapter one. A more thorough overview of how these processes interact is provided in chapter six.

This chapter then, develops an understanding of how personal experiences are intermeshed with broader spatial and social processes in the development of the dynamic self, and focuses in particular upon how personal identity processes respond to broader social transformation. This dynamic self is regarded as locatable within various environments, deriving meaning from the interconnections made between a plurality of recognitions. In understanding this process, the 'strategic' and 'survivalist' categories described in chapter four are employed to illustrate how wider orientations are also informative of specific and complex identifications. This approach highlights the diverse nature of experience as it becomes subject to temporal reconfiguration. Thus it can be seen that conceptualising identity as a coherent or fixed phenomenon over-simplifies the dynamic and relational character of personalised attachments. In building upon the solidarities and recognitions described in chapters three and four, and by extending the analytic gaze to the specific circumstances of personal experience, this chapter provides further evidence of the necessity of employing flexible interpretations of identity in understanding of how the populations of the South Wales Valleys have responded to restructuring.

Beck (1992, 1997) and Giddens (1990, 1991) have been foremost amongst sociological theorists seeking to make sense of personal identity. Both theorised that the diversification

of experiences implicated in the move towards 'late modernity' have led to processes of 'individualisation', a concept afforded central place in their interpretations of personal negotiations of experience. The basis of their theory is that the diversified modern world where experiences are mediated by a local-global dialectic, has broadened the possible range of life-courses. Inherent in this process is an increased sense of individual responsibility in the unfolding of personal biographies. They have suggested that the pluralisation of risks inherent in the abandoning of old securities has led to a 'crisis of accountability', traditional sources of power being regarded as no longer capable of protecting individuals' interests.

While Beck and Giddens's work is valuable in highlighting the plurality of experiences existent within the transformed socio-economic environment of the late twentieth century, it also displays serious and unresolved shortcomings, in particular its failure to recognise that access to opportunities and choices are not universally available, but are structured. Beck in particular, focused upon increased educational, employment and self-empowerment opportunities to substantiate his work, suggesting that rites of passage have become less standardised. However, empirical studies suggest that he employed evidence selectively to formulate this theory. Social inequalities of gender, class, space and ethnicity persist, are reproduced, and interact in continuing to constrain and structure individuals' circumstances (Jones and Wallace 1990; Furlong and Cartmel 1997). 'Choice' is therefore limited, particularly amongst less privileged socio-economic groups.

Secondly, there is scant evidence that current existence is actually more risk-laden than it was in the past. For example, during the Middle Ages people were one-hundred-and-thirty times more likely to die of an infectious disease, and one hundred years ago, twenty times more likely to die of a sexually-transmitted disease (*Equinox* 12.4.99). Add to this medical developments, particularly in terms of maternal and child mortality, and it is clear that lives today are significantly safer than they were in the past. This is particularly true of miners, who faced the very real dangers of death, reduced earnings due to injury, and colliery-related illness on a daily basis. What can be said of the risk society thesis is that risks have become more visible (consciously rather than optically) through increasingly mediated experiences, for example in terms of news reports describing environmental pollutants. A diversity of potential risk factors are thus recognised as impacting on people's lives. While, as Furlong and Cartmel have pointed out, mediated experiences can henceforth be responsible for a

'distortion of reality' (1997: 113), personal assessments of risk are also determined by individual access to discursive frameworks of knowledge, which are themselves linked to external constraints such as the link between social class and academic credentialisation. Perceptions of risk then, are fundamentally unequal, individuals' behaviour in response to potential risk factors being differentiated according to pre-existing inequalities.

Nor can it be argued that a crisis has occurred in the trust placed in traditional authorities, as more individualised solutions to representation have been sought. This is not reflected in electoral statistics, which confirm a consolidation of support for the Labour Party in the Welsh Valleys during recent years (section 4.3). The continued significance of the collectivised identifications provided by traditional agencies in allowing economically marginalised populations to negotiate continuity in their life experiences is therefore emphasised. However, as chapter four has argued, institutional forums possess only symbolic representative credentials, and to suggest that this is recent overlooks the differentiation and dynamism present in imagined or enclosed 'communities'. It is also argued that 'strategic' individuals are capable of negotiating access to a broader range of institutions of power and becoming involved in decision-making processes, but that traditional institutions have continued to provide a necessary and respected framework of authority, within which these negotiations are grounded. Institutional contact therefore is, and always has been, mediated by structural positioning, but this does not negate its broader collective function. This argument complements the broader thesis that individual behaviour is fundamentally the product of structural inequalities, and is negotiated in line with relational assets which proportionally constrain and enable agency. Correspondingly 'survivalist' groups are less able to exercise personal preference, and tend to utilise 'traditional' behaviour as a familiar template. Furthermore institutions themselves are not static, but capable of responding to the demands of a transformed socio-economic environment (such as the recent re-branding of the Labour Party, and the process of representation developed for the Welsh Assembly). Thus while the social differentiation inherent in industrial transformation has reduced the extent to which broad collectivities can be drawn upon in processes of identity formation, this has not led to endless diversity, but has been countered by a complex process of re-definition and reconfiguration, in which a range of shared experiences and commonalities are employed to imbue meaning upon personal narratives.

In understanding how structured inequalities mediate personalised experiences, this chapter considers three areas where individuals might be expected to exercise most personal autonomy in responding to socio-economic transformations. It begins by focusing on the family, the location of a set of particularly gendered social structures within coalmining communities, which drew upon dominant ideologies implicitly expressing appropriate forms of 'masculine' and 'feminine' behaviour. The first section examines the extent to which these identifications have been reconfigured under industrial transformation. Secondly, in considering leisure experiences, the problematic association of 'leisure' with a specific and masculinised series of activities is examined, and the extent to which traditionally gendered and spatially-restricted experiences of leisure and friendship networks have been challenged by restructuring investigated. Finally the self is considered through a series of case studies which illustrate the way personal narratives are employed to reflect the processual negotiation of individual and mediated experiences. Together, these aspects of personal identity are utilised to further the understanding of how the strategic/survivalist distinction serves as a broader marker of identificatory experiences, mapping out the way in which structured inequalities are formative of individual trajectories.

5.2 Familial Identities

5.2.1 Introduction

As Aaron and Rees (1994) have documented, familial roles in industrialised Wales were highly gendered, a situation reinforced by the dominance of the patriarchal Nonconformist Church and the region's industrial infrastructure, which made more restricted economic demands upon women than elsewhere in Britain. Women's virtual confinement to the domestic sphere in coalmining communities meant that the family provided central structure in their formulation of personal identity, and had a wider impact on how they approached politics, community, leisure and work. This has been recognised, for example, by Measham and Allen (1994) who specifically located women's political identities within their familial relationships. The centrality of the family to women's identities, facilitated by dominant ideologies upholding cultural assumptions about appropriate 'feminine' behaviour, was variously experienced as imbuing meaning and purpose upon their experiences, but also

sometimes in terms of restriction. This contrasted with men's identificatory experiences, which were primarily negotiated through a homosocial occupation (Dennis *et al.* 1956; Warwick and Littlejohn 1992; Williamson 1982). The family, of course, *was* women's work, but the 'work' of the occupational and domestic spheres in coalmining communities had qualitatively different meanings for identity. However, the increasing secularisation of Wales, and the diversification of industry, which has in turn drawn more heavily upon a female workforce, in the late twentieth century, have challenged the economic rationale for continuing to draw upon this fixed conceptualisation of familial identities.

The particular types of familial relationships which characterised coalmining communities and the impact which these had upon identity processes, were to a large extent tied up with the neighbourhood and kinship communal networks discussed in section 4.4. This section, however, concentrates upon the personal negotiation of gendered familial roles in recent years. The reason for this focus is that women's responsibility for the domestic sphere in coalmining communities was central to the maintenance of the gendered ideologies which governed men and women's respective roles, and transformation in this area has broader implications for identity processes. However, since industrial transformation has implied a more heterogenised range of labour market activity, familial identities cannot be described in terms of a singular shift of experiences. While recognising this, several broadly distinctive patterns of behaviour emerged in the fieldwork, distinguished by particular socio-economic groupings, which echoed in various ways in the strategic/survivalist approaches described in chapter four. The three broad groupings, which are discussed below, comprised 'traditional familial identities', 'transforming familial identities' and 'egalitarian familial identities'. These distinctions were not mutually exclusive, the complexities of domestic circumstances locating some individuals on the boundaries of one or more categories. Furthermore, families negotiated varying degrees of movement between these categories over the course of the lifespan and in line with their various circumstances and motivations.

The personal narratives studied in this section illustrate the complex organisation of familial and domestic structures, in particular revealing the extent to which earlier work categorisations provide only a snapshot picture of circumstances. Working and family histories are subject to considerable change over the lifecourse, and are interwoven, necessitating the implementation of adaptive 'strategies' drawing upon a plurality of

resources. Domestic circumstances therefore cannot be regarded as static arrangements, being subject to negotiation, particularly during the early years of childrearing. However, the cultural texture of gendered expectations regarding familial responsibilities continues to exert a powerful influence in constraining individuals' behaviour, and thus personal interpretations of the family should be interpreted in the context of the broader social relationships in which individuals are located.

5.2.2 'Traditional' Familial Identities

The first group, comprising the numerically largest proportion of informants (60%) are described as displaying 'traditional familial identities', measured in terms of family structure and the distribution of domestic responsibilities. 'Traditional' families consisted of households comprised of the marital unit and dependent children, and operating in close collaboration with nearby extended families. They displayed a gendered distribution of labour, women being overwhelmingly responsible for cleaning, washing, food preparation and shopping, while men performed supplementary ad-hoc tasks such as fixing fuses and mowing the lawn. While superficially women retained control of the purse-strings, major financial decisions and authority were deferred to husbands.

I'm very lucky that Martin's mum doesn't work, so she does the majority of my baby-sitting for me, and my parents only live across the road. ... I do it [housework] when the baby's asleep, they've gone to bed, or when there's somebody here really. [...] So I *manage*. I occasionally flip my lid and I say, "Right, you've got to take them out for a couple of hours." But I try to keep *on top* of everything, I try not to let anything get out of hand. Racheal Harris; 30s; professional and wife of Tower miner

Male informants outnumbered females by two to one in this group. Crucially, family units displaying a 'traditional' outlook comprised more 'survivalist' individuals. However, within this generalisation there were important gendered and occupational distinctions. Among women, survivalists outnumbered strategists by six to one. However among men strategist/survivalist proportions were roughly equal, 'strategists' being made up overwhelmingly of Tower Colliery miners. Indeed, almost all the Tower Colliery miners fell into a 'traditional'

familial grouping. This suggests that the Tower miners are a quite distinctive group, whose continued relationship with coalmining has allowed them to maintain the types of familial identities traditionally associated with that work, at a time when other occupational groupings have pursued a more diverse range of domestic arrangements, reflecting their households' changing relationships with the labour market.

If the Tower colliery miners are excluded from this category, it becomes a more homogeneous group of 'survivalist' households, distributed across a middle to elderly age range. The remaining cohort has felt the repercussions of industrial restructuring particularly acutely, and has negotiated little dramatic change in its' lifestyles. Central to understanding this behaviour is that the fact that constrained economic circumstances provide individuals with fewer resources with which to negotiate familial structures. However additionally, 'traditional' domestic circumstances have been to some degree consciously maintained by this cohort to provide a sense of continuity in their personal circumstances as a counter to the increased insecurity of their socio-economic environment. The following informant, for example, finding the workplace increasingly insecure, focused upon maintaining a traditional family structure which provided a necessary degree of comfort and familiar knowledge:

I think people are now very much concerned with keeping themselves to themselves in their job. Their *own* way is important to them. They've *got* to look after their families, they've got to look after their dwelling, they've got to look after number one.

Jack Preston; 40s; former striking miner now at private pit

A significant characteristic of this group was that where informants were of an economically active age, their labour market activity did not match a 'male breadwinner' model, although their domestic arrangements continued to be organised as if this were the case. That is, necessity has demanded that women become engaged in paid labour alongside their husbands, but this not being matched by a re-allocation of domestic responsibilities, women's workload constitutes a 'double burden'. Furthermore, in contrast to more egalitarian arrangements, women with 'traditional' family structures tended to be engaged in work earlier described as 'survivalist'. Women's adoption of 'survivalist' work, however, was regarded by family members as a short-term expediency measure, requiring little adaptation to accommodate its demands. Thus women's behaviour in taking on a dual

workload, can be considered in terms of 'protecting' their partners' sense of occupational identity, in addition to maintaining their own 'traditional' identity. Having already taken a knock in the labour market, these women recognised that their husbands would interpret a redistribution of domestic workloads as personally 'demeaning' (see Wight 1993). In displaying self-sacrifice and deference to their husbands' happiness, women thus conformed to cultural expectations of femininity.

The 'traditional' family model described here then, was significantly different for most informants from the gendered 'separate spheres' arrangement which shaped the lives of mining populations for much of this century. To a large extent it can be regarded as a regressive step, women's responsibilities being heightened. The theme which emerges, and which will be developed in examining alternative family structures, is that while most informants experienced transformation in their familial relationships, the negotiation of this change was closely linked to *women's* relationship with the labour market. However, a significant challenge which 'traditional' families will face in the future are the implications of their aspirations for their children. For while they placed a higher *premium* on their children finding work nearby than those in more egalitarian family structures, this was counterbalanced by their greater tendency to simultaneously encourage children to seek work further afield. This tension is likely to reduce the resources which can be drawn from the extended family in the future. 'Traditional' families then are perhaps best regarded as a transitory stage, their behaviour being the product of particular temporal circumstances, rather than indicative of a longer-term response to industrial transformation.

5.2.3 'Transforming' Familial Identities

The second group of informants, those possessing a 'transforming familial identity', comprised 17% of those interviewed. These informants decided to renegotiate their domestic circumstances to accommodate the demands of changing employment and caring responsibilities. They thus approached familial arrangements pragmatically, adopting a longer-term perspective which recognised the need for dynamism. While women continued to assume a greater degree of responsibility for the private sphere, they did so less extensively than among 'traditional' families. Indeed women's experience of a 'double burden' of work was minimal among 'transforming' families, being able to draw more freely upon the support of husbands and extended families in line with changing circumstances:

He [husband] was marvellous, because when I was working he'd do it, you know, he would pitch in *and* food and everything. So I can't moan. As soon as he started back to work, it sort of goes back the other way then, you know.

Kay Lyn; 30s; unemployed factory worker, married to private pit miner

Notably this group of informants was made up entirely of women, and significantly also comprised individuals outside of the labour market or engaged in 'survivalist' work in response to husbands' intermittent bouts of unemployment. Many descriptions were therefore retrospective. Notably however, these were all women whose experiences in WSGs during the Strike and in various 'new' community organisations, had informed their interpretations of industrial restructuring. Thus whilst they were not (yet) able to translate the opportunities offered by this participation into a 'strategic' occupational orientation, their longer-term and flexible responses to domestic and social circumstances, demonstrated the applicability of the 'strategic' label to activities outside of the labour market. Furthermore, the evolving nature of this strategism was reflected in women's attitude toward their children's employment, which was envisaged as located outside of the region. 'Transforming' families then, recognised the inexpediency of mobilising highly gendered familial identities in a restructured labour market, and mounted a pragmatic challenge to these assumptions:

they're [men] so set in their ways, innit? [laughs] It's not something that you can change in a few years, is it? I think it'll take longer.

Beth Jenkins; 40s; service sector worker separated from former striking miner

The behaviour of 'transforming' families provides valuable insight into the nature of the 'strategic/survivalist' distinction, for while they were not occupationally strategic, they displayed strategism in how they approached their familial arrangements. This was facilitated by their access to particular resources, including a political education, mobility and supportive families, and this broader interpretation of 'strategism' has begun to impact upon the next generation, who are subsequently being brought up with less fixed expectations regarding appropriate familial gender relations, and consequently approaching their own employment more strategically.

5.2.4 'Egalitarian' Familial Identities

The final group of informants, those demonstrating an 'egalitarian familial identity', comprised 23% of the interviewees. Although this cohort's behaviour was not literally a role-share, they represented a considerable shift away from the highly gendered familial ideology associated with coalmining communities. Within this grouping, mutual respect was attributed to partners' working patterns, and domestic responsibilities were attributed accordingly:

I think you've got to do it on a shared basis. It's got to be teamwork. [...] And we are also trying to combine the role of carers [for her mother], which has taught me a lot. [...] I don't see why there should be this gender thing about housework and shopping. And I'm very, very lucky in that that's my husband's attitude and he's prepared to be part of a team - calling the family a team. And indeed I can see it coming out in my son. He doesn't *expect* his wife to do this or that and it's nice to see sharing and enjoying the sharing. Betty Morgan; 50s; local politician

This group was made up of slightly more women than men, and revealingly, 'strategists' outweighed 'survivalists' by seven to one. In comparing 'egalitarian' families with the

former two groups, it emerged that domestic arrangements were more likely to be allocated proportionately where women possessed a job which had been acquired via some strategic effort. Indeed the wider family unit became involved in the deliberation process whereby a woman became occupationally strategic, and underwent adaptation in accommodating the demands of her employment. The sorts of work labelled 'strategic' were clearly more valued by the family unit than 'survivalist' forms. Women's position within 'egalitarian' family structures was also attributed value through their allocation of independent resources - while money continued to be 'pooled' for familial outgoings, women were more likely to possess their own bank accounts, resources to be managed at their own discretion which were not accountable to their husbands - an important source of personal autonomy.

Significantly, individuals demonstrating an 'egalitarian' familial identity were more likely to describe the region's future in terms of similarly reconfigured domestic arrangements, and correspondingly encouraged their children to adopt 'strategic' approaches to their work:

Well, attitudes have changed towards the role of the father within the village. At one time, you know, twenty years ago, it was the mother's job to basically bring up the children. But now, there's fathers that are very involved.

Stuart David; 40s; farmer, married to professional

'Egalitarian' families are informative of the cumulative effect of occupational 'strategism' upon broader social identities. The utilisation of longer-term planning and personal flexibility in one area of life has a significant knock-on effect on other areas which are consequently subject to similar processes of negotiation. Furthermore, the 'strategism' operated by families perpetuates down to the next generation who are also encouraged to become flexible in response to industrial transformation.

5.2.5 Familial Identities: Conclusion

Looking at how people prioritise relationships and responsibilities within their own families, their most personal of relationships, is important in developing an understanding of how socio-economic transformations have affected individuals' gendered experiences. Changes

occurred here almost universally, a finding which suggests that the highly gendered familial patterns associated with the Valleys' past are ill-suited to contemporary demands. One notable exception, however, was a significant proportion of the elderly, whose relationship with the labour market meant that socio-economic transformation had little direct impact upon their lives; this co-incides with Pilcher's (1994, 1995) findings that older women's identities are more deeply embedded in traditional gender roles, and that they are therefore more resistant to domestic transformation.

The examination of familial relationships also reveals the large extent to which the domestic sphere is interlinked with working arrangements, in particular with women's participation in paid labour. This was reflected in the greater manoeuvrability of 'strategic' women's familial arrangements in comparison to 'survivalist' women. While these occupational distinctions were not exclusive, and change also occurred more broadly, it did so more slowly amongst 'survivalists'. In particular, occupationally 'survivalist' women demonstrated a considerable degree of adaptability in their household routines where they had access to resources such as a political education, which facilitated transitory behaviour. So while 'strategic' behaviour occurs outside as well as within the labour market, it continues to be linked to access to resources. Since the distribution of resources is a product of existing structural inequalities, the diversification of familial identities must be regarded as limited by external constraints.

The findings do demonstrate, however, that a considerable challenge has been mounted to the highly gendered familial ideology which informed personal identities in Welsh coalmining communities for much of the twentieth century. As the occupational sphere becomes increasingly accessible to women, and a new generation comes of age who have been subject to less gendered and more 'strategic' expectations, subsequent transformations are likely to occur in which the family will be less defining in women's identifications. The considerable proportion of 'strategic' men who negotiated a greater role within the family, also presents a challenge to gendered expectations regarding men and women's behaviour, and suggests that a process of re-addressing the relative significance of occupational and familial identities is occurring within certain socio-economic groups. This challenge to the reproduction of gendered identities, embedded in the family, has implications for the broader

negotiation of identity in the Welsh Valleys, identity being a multi-layered and inter-dependent process.

However, while gendered familial expectations have undergone processes of transformation, certain continuities should also be noted in family structures. Women in the Western Valleys are younger on average at the birth of their first child and more births occur within marriage, than within Wales as a whole (Welsh Office, 1997). Cohabitation continues to be a rarity in the Valleys (Haskey and Kiernan 1989), and couples marry younger and divorce less frequently in Wales than in Britain as a whole (Welsh Office 1992; OPCS 1987). So while the Valleys are moving in the same direction as wider Britain in terms of increased divorce, cohabitation and remarriage, and the postponement of marriage, they also lag significantly behind. A 'traditional' familial formation dominated by the nuclear family is therefore more firmly embedded in the social expectations of these populations. These figures are also spatially variable; for example, lone-parent families tend to be concentrated in council estates peripheral to villages, where they have been re-housed from the Neath town area. Due to their relatively recent settlement in the area and scant biography of coalmining, this group was not interviewed. When these groups are 'lifted' out of the data, a greater degree of homogeneity in the family formations of the 'established' populations of the Valleys emerges than official statistics suggest.

Beck's (1992) predictions regarding the diversification and 'individualisation' of processes of family formation then, are exaggerated with respect to the experiences of the populations of the South Wales Valleys. To a large extent this can be attributed to class structures, a matrix of structured inequalities, reproducing themselves and continuing to inform life chances. While considerable flexibility was employed in the negotiation of familial responsibilities, little evidence emerged of role *swaps*, the degree to which transformation was possible being determined to a large extent by access to resources, which were themselves a product of existing structural inequalities. Women's broader understandings of themselves, and in particular their gendered identities, continued to be informed to a greater degree than men's by their familial experiences (section 5.4). In this context, the later case studies go some way towards demonstrating the significant influence which the maternal role still provides in women's broader understandings of their social circumstances.

5.3 Leisure Identities

5.3.1 Introduction

The cohesiveness of the Valleys' 'coal-mining community' identity, associated with its recent history, was linked to the high degree of overlap which existed between leisure, domestic and occupational experiences. People tended to socialise in the same village as they lived and worked, these processes being highly gendered. The restructured labour market, however, demands a mobile workforce, which places considerable stress on these expectations. This section examines the various ways in which leisure is currently being experienced, comparing these with the relationships and environments which fostered leisured experiences in the past.

Leisure experiences are illuminative of identity for two main reasons. First, in providing the opportunity for social interaction on the basis of choice rather than necessity, leisure provides a context where the character of the relationships binding people together in various ways can be examined. Second, and central to this section, since leisure interactions are not compulsory (although neither, it will be argued, are they a matter of pure choice), the relations in which people become involved are revealing of their personal identities, being inscribed with meaning. This section unravels the implications which 'leisure' has for personal identity, through a consideration of the form and context of leisure experiences. However, it also highlights the ways in which leisure choices are negotiated according to a series of external constraints.

As Dennis *et al.* (1956) have documented, leisure experiences in coalmining communities were bound up in particular spatial circumstances, most specifically the institutions attached to individual villages. Notably, leisure in the Valleys, as in other coalmining regions, was highly gendered and matched by homosocial friendship patterns, echoing the networks developed by men in the collieries and women in their communities. Miners' Institutes, Workingmen's Clubs and public houses provided leisure institutions catering predominantly for a male clientele, and were supported by ideological and structural processes which restricted women's movement within these arenas. For example, where women were admitted to these buildings, they were often restricted to a 'lounge' or 'family' area, or

alternatively their presence was legitimised through a male escort. The gendered language demarcating these spatial distinctions illustrates the role played by ideological processes in maintaining social control over women's movements. The bands attached to collieries provided a 'cultural' element to male leisure, as did the male-voice choir, both of which offered men the opportunity to move in wider socio-spatial circles, in travelling to competitions where they represented their village. Sporting activities too, most prominently visible in the form of village rugby clubs, supported gendered patterns of leisure, men playing the role of active participants, while women provided supportive and servile functions. That these forms of leisure were specifically located in villages, provided an important context for the development of localist attachments.

There were exceptions to the gendered differentiation of leisure, for example dancing events and regular attendance at church, but these too were marked by social norms governing gendered behaviour (see Dennis *et al.* (1956) on dancing etiquette). More broadly, however, women's leisure was located in the private sphere and the community, issues of 'respectability' concerning appropriate feminine behaviour restricting their freedom of movement beyond this realm. Hence women's friendship patterns tended to be developed largely through kinship and neighbourhood networks within the community. Conversely, men's friendships were linked to their workmates, with whom they also socialised through the more formalised leisure institutions of their villages.

Coalmining communities then, fostered distinctively gendered leisure experiences, in which formalised leisure was closely connected to the infrastructure of coalmining, and where women's access to institutionalised leisure was more restricted. This section examines how the demise of coalmining in South Wales, and its attendant transformations in socio-economic behaviour, have affected leisure experiences, and thus broader personal negotiations of identity.

5.3.2 Problems in Conceptualising Leisure

Two major problems were encountered in examining current leisure experiences and how these affect the formulation of personal identity. First, the concept of 'leisure' encompasses

a broad range of activities within which subjective perceptions of relative significance are widely differentiated. A definition of leisure as an activity occupying 'free time' is insufficient (and masculinised), since the empirical material revealed widely differentiated responses in demarcating the boundaries of personal time. 'Leisure' is broadly experienced and understood, so while for example, activism within a community group is considered as fulfilling leisure-time requirements for some informants, this sort of activity was viewed very differently by others, and similar observations could be made about other potential leisure activities such as informal socialisation, 'time to oneself', involvement in the local Labour Party, participation in adult education, cooking, or looking after one's grandchildren. Hence while leisure activities can in some instances be distinguished through their allocation of distinctive personal time, they are frequently also inseparable from community, political, occupational and familial experiences or obligations. This highlights the conceptual difficulty in separating identity into analytically distinctive elements, and re-emphasises the multi-layered understanding of identity developed in this thesis.

The second problem in conceptualising leisure, interwoven with the issue of analytical clarity, is that, as Green *et al.* (1990) and Deem (1986) have pointed out, the persistence of gendered divisions of labour restrict the extent to which women's and men's experiences of leisure can be regarded as comparable. As these authors have pointed out, the amorphous nature of leisure is accentuated by the structurally distinctive natures of men's and women's lives. In particular, they have highlighted the more diffuse nature of women's leisure, demarcations between work and leisure being more blurred, particularly where women's work includes a heavier burden of domestic responsibilities. This point was also recognised by Dennis *et al.* (1956) in their study of the Ashton mining community, and it continues to be relevant today. Griffin (1981) has added that men's more structured 'leisure time' is possible only because women continue to service their domestic needs.

The implication of these gendered experiences, as noted by Green *et al.* (1990), is that women attach qualitatively different meanings to leisure than men, and are less prone to consider it in terms of formalised activities in institutionalised settings. In their Sheffield study, for example, Green *et al.* observed that women attached value to having time to relax, and that this was pursued in a variety of ways. However, this type of 'leisure' was unlikely to be structured, indeed was often 'snatched' amid temporally competing demands.

Furthermore, women's economically subordinate position, accentuated in regions like the Welsh Valleys, informs their leisure 'choices' through the unequal distribution of resources. The gendering of leisure then, complicates the task of developing sociologically rigorous conceptualisations of how and when leisure can be said to occur.

Green *et al.* (1990) provide analytical clarity here, suggesting that rather than considering leisure as a series of static events, it should be regarded as a social *process* occurring across a temporal continuum, where the choices made by individuals are constrained by class, gender and racial inequalities. Leisure is therefore a political process, shaped by dynamic external constraints and ideological perceptions. This approach is conducive to the broader understanding of identity developed in this thesis. In developing an understanding of how gender acts as a structural inequality informing leisure experiences, attention should be drawn both to the contexts in which leisure occurs, and to the 'quality' attached to these experiences. Only through this type of approach can the differentiated implications of leisure experiences upon personal identity be understood, and the variable nature of leisure choices appreciated.

In examining individuals' experiences of leisure and considering their relative significance in personal identity, the difficulties of drawing out women's leisure activities from their broader experiences became apparent. For example, accounts tended to overlook activities such as reading, yet with regard to this, a village coffee morning attended during the fieldwork was visited by a well-attended mobile library (notably men were absent, although borrowing may have occurred on their account). Likewise gardening was not described in terms of either leisure or work, but considerable evidence was observed of lovingly-tended gardens. The failure to acknowledge certain leisure activities, however, concurs with Green *et al.*'s (1990) observation that women frequently find it difficult to explicitly recognise their leisure experiences which occur within personal rather than public spaces, which are pursued on a flexible basis as opposed to within a structured time-frame, and which may be indistinct from their work. Regarding the latter point, section 4.2 revealed that the (public) workplace frequently provides fulfilments important in personal identity. This highlights the difficulty of conceptualising 'leisure' as a static entity, since within the working day activities occur which provide similar satisfactions to more distinctive leisure activities, such as informal chats and lunchbreaks. The concept of leisure itself is thus problematic in this analysis,

being linked to masculinised distinctiveness of activity, which are inappropriate to the less homogeneously structured circumstances of restructuring, and which sit uneasily with women's more fluid experiential reflections.

Section 5.2 illustrated that gendered relations continue to have a significant impact upon familial identities in the Welsh Valleys, and although these have been challenged in various ways, women remain primarily responsible for domestic labour. The gendering of the domestic sphere has also fostered a distinctive gendered structuring of time in which men are allocated a greater degree of 'personal' or 'free' time. Accordingly, men and women provided sharply divergent accounts of their leisure. Although leisure identities varied in relation to personal identity prioritisations, familial relationships continued to provide an important structure informing men and women's distinctive experiences of leisure.

5.3.3 Public Experiences of Leisure

Public experiences of leisure were most easily extracted from informants' accounts. However, they were also highly gendered, men being three times more likely than women to participate in leisure activities outside of the home and of a formalised character. Furthermore, within the institutions housing these leisured activities, gendered roles predominated. This was observed for example, within rugby clubs, the most popular public form of leisure, cited by over twenty percent of informants. While men frequently played rugby and gravitated towards organisational roles within clubs as they got older, women's domestic experiences were utilised in providing food and drink, and in supervising (as opposed to coaching) junior clubs:

Well I mean I do a lot of junior rugby because of Mark [her son] and it's the same sort of crowd, like all David's [her husband] friends, they're still playing.

Kay Lyn; 30s; unemployed factory worker, married to private-pit miner

An important resource in maintaining access to public sphere leisure was the possession of distinctively homogeneous friendship networks. Hence the Tower Colliery miners, a group who maintained friendship networks with a high degree of overlap between their work,

domestic and leisured relationships, comparable to those of ‘traditional’ coalmining communities, were heavily represented in public leisure institutions:

[in the] actual village here now there’s only a few boys over there that work up there [Tower]. So I bother with quite a few of them. And play rugby with a few of the boys from Crynant and that. And we socialise up in Tower with our own, like you get the face men, you’ve got your sort of cliques ’cause you work with them all of the time.

Hywel Rees; 30s; former striking miner and Tower shareholder

By subdividing public leisure into ‘old’ and ‘new’ forms of institution, gendered divisions became more visible. What is implied by this distinction is that while many of the leisure institutions associated with coalmining communities, such as the Miners’ Institutes, have disappeared in recent years, a great many have survived, drawing their identificatory cohesiveness from the communality associated with individual villages rather than (as they did) from attachments located in the collieries. Among the institutions to survive the fragmentation of the coalmining industry, are the rugby clubs, local Labour Party associations, and working-men’s clubs. However, as the previous chapter revealed, recent years have also witnessed a proliferation of new forms of organisation, and leisure often occurs within these, for example in arts-and-crafts adult education classes, in purpose-built leisure centres, and within community organisations. To a large extent these ‘new’ public leisure institutions utilised the infrastructure left by the coalmining industry. For example:

we renovated the old pit-head baths. Took us fourteen years to do it, raising funds. But we managed to do it, and there’s everything in it: a health suite, body-building. There’s a sports hall which the rugby club and the soccer club use in the winter to do their training. Um, there was a big hall there where you could hold meetings. There was a cafe there. People used to use it as a playground centre, lots of things going on there.

Bethan Dafis; 60s; WSG activist married to former striking miner

The distinction between ‘old’ and ‘new’ forms of leisure institution revealed that while men, particularly economically active, and more specifically, strategic men, dominated ‘old’ leisure organisations, women were disproportionately more likely to become involved in ‘new’ forms of leisure organisation. Furthermore, women’s participation in these contexts

was facilitated by their developing an occupationally 'strategic' outlook, which as chapter four has illustrated, produces a knock-on effect, in encouraging movement across a broader social context. It was also notable that the informants involved in 'new' forms of leisure were more likely to have a family identity of a 'changing' or an 'egalitarian' character. Women's friendship networks too, become more heterogeneous within these environments, an effect which was recounted as important in personal identity, opening up new areas of interest and facilitating the development of reciprocal relationships grounded in commonality.

This evidence re-emphasises that the development of a 'strategic' outlook is of fundamental importance in formulating adaptive responses to socio-economic transformation. As various social attachments are considered, it becomes evident that the development of a 'strategic' occupational approach is facilitative of political activity, participation in new community organisations, the development of more egalitarian familial relationships, and broader relational networks and contributions to public leisure institutions, themselves outlooks which can be regarded as 'strategic'. Considerable benefits are accrued in developing this sort of strategic identity, which outweigh the initial outlay of risks in developing a longer-term perspective. Furthermore, boundaries to this 'strategic' grouping are permeable, so that while an activist core exists, their activity embodies an energy which encourages participation at a less comprehensive level amongst 'survivalists' who can then formulate similarly strategic approaches in a variety of ways. Going back to leisure identity, the strategic group of women who had effected a greater participation in public leisure institutions, possessed significantly more resources, and these were further accumulated through their experiences as 'strategists'. These resources include paid employment and an independent income, confidence, more equitable marital relationships and more heterogeneous supportive friendship networks, all factors which Deem (1986: 141) suggested are implicated in women's minimisation of gendered and class restraints in negotiating leisure experiences.

However, this does not imply that 'old' forms of leisure institutions have remained static and continue to provide an interactive context for the male half of the population. Industrial restructuring has highlighted the extent to which social inequalities inform access to leisure activities. Correspondingly, the significant proportion of the Valleys' population whose

resources have been constrained by decline of the coalmining industry, experienced restricted opportunities to participate in public leisure activities. As Furlong and Cartmel (1997) have pointed out, this can be regarded in terms of a cultural exclusion of the underprivileged.

A somewhat stilted social life [...] The size of the village that's got to cater for, one, two, three, three pubs, two clubs. Three pubs, three clubs. There's only so much money to go around. So you don't get the social activities, or a good night out, if you like.

Jack Preston; 40s; former striking miner, now at private pit

Leisure activity then, rather than being purely a matter of personal choice, is fundamentally informed by external constraints, which vary over time. Inequalities of gender and income, for example, interact with one another, and with factors of personality, to shape leisure experiences.

That a gendered differentiation of leisure experiences was observed is unsurprising considering women's history of restricted access to formalised leisure institutions in the region. Despite the decline of coalmining, 'old' leisure environments continue to display a masculinised character inimical to absorbing female participation, particularly when women are concerned to adhere to socially acceptable ideas about 'femininity'. Additionally, the persistence of gendered leisure experiences is intertwined with women's greater assumption of domestic responsibilities, at a time when they have faced demands to become economically active. These competing temporal demands have necessitated that women formulate more fluid distinctions between work and leisure activities, and these have complemented the more unstructured, reactive and frequently less hedonistic remits of 'new' leisure organisations. Notably also, women's public experiences of leisure were more variable than men's over the lifecourse. As described above, women have tended to make themselves flexible in accordance with temporal demands such as childcare and caring for elderly relatives.

Of course, an institutional framework is not the only context within which leisure and friendship occur. As the previous chapter documented, women have been, and to a large extent continue to be, more heavily situated within the 'community' in the former mining

villages of South Wales, and this provides an important, but more informal context for their leisure pursuits:

all my friends are here. [...] I know most of the people in the village. And especially, I know all my neighbours, if not by name, by their face. And like, I know most of the people coming back and forth here. [...] When we moved down the road, everybody in the street was helping, a lot of people coming back and forth and everything else. And just *being there* for you, that sort of thing. I'd miss that if I moved somewhere else.

Racheal Harris; 30s; professional and wife of Tower miner

So for example, ad hoc visits from friends, family and neighbours, can provide valuable opportunities for socialisation and the passing on of information and support. As such they can be regarded as leisure, although this activity occurs in a fairly unstructured way. Paid employment also fulfils this role, and as the previous chapter illustrated, a major compensation for women's assumption of a dual load in entering the public sphere, are the sociable experiences associated with workplace.

Notably however, some women, most prominently those politicised by their experiences in the Miners' Strike, sought to re-negotiate their leisured experiences, and subsequently found a public context for these activities:

We [herself and husband] go out regular, we do go out quite often, but I mean we don't go out every Saturday. We go *out*, like we come to bowls Tuesdays and Thursdays. I go swimming with *women* only, I like that, on a Wednesday. And sometimes we go out on Saturdays, but we're getting older now, don't go out so much like, drinking.

Sheila Thomas; 50s; WSG activist married to former striking miner

This is significant both in terms of women's experiences during the Strike facilitating their recognition of the benefits of public sphere participation, but also in their claiming a right to more structured personal time, which is facilitated where this approach is extended into familial relationships. Women's public sphere leisure participation is symbolically important, emphasising their equal entitlement to personal money, and while activities such as shopping and aerobics could be framed and negotiated in the context of activity which

benefited their families, the increasingly popular bingo, for example, provided the opportunity to accentuate homosocial networks and demarcate personal time, and was authenticated through its allocation of household resources.

The scope of leisure activities has also been broadened in line with the stretching of socio-spatial experiences engendered by industrial restructuring, and 'globalisation' made visible opportunities outside of the local. For example, leisure experiences now feasibly include holidays abroad, or surfing on the Gower peninsula. However, access to these experiences is subject to the availability of resources, and therefore 'strategic' and financially secure informants were more likely to pursue these types of activities:

I like my holidays and my wife likes her holidays, so a lot of our time is spent saving for holidays, like we're going away tomorrow now skiing. So rather than go out spending on socialising all through the week, we'd rather put it towards a holiday.

Hywel Rees; 30s; former striking miner and Tower shareholder

Hywel's 'strategic' occupational orientation was mirrored in his personal choices, planning ahead and undergoing certain hardships in order to achieve longer-term leisure satisfactions. However, that broader experiences were achieved through utilising privileged resources, illustrates that while the commodification of leisure has been posited as opening up the field of personal choice, access to these leisure experiences is constrained by class and gender divisions. One notable aspect of spatially-stretched experiences of leisure, however, was that they tended to occur within the context of the family, whereas formerly, according to Dennis *et al.* (1956), they were more strongly related to the community (for example, 'tourist' and travelling sporting and musical clubs) and had less a privileged appeal.

5.3.4 Private Experiences of Leisure

There was considerable evidence of a more private experience of leisure, which is unsurprising given consumer pressure which has increased the scope of 'home entertainment', such that most homes now have television sets and video machines, and where satellite television has become increasingly common. Notably also the marital

relationship has been reified as the source of much personal fulfilment, and while this project did not seek to examine marital relations, the empirical material did suggest that partners were more likely to engage in leisure activities together than they had done in the past. A major difficulty in examining private experiences of leisure, however, is that it is hard to separate them from familial experiences, and (in the case of women) from working experiences, and they are therefore rarely attributed explicit meaning as 'leisure'.

A great deal of women's leisure experiences continued to occur within the home in the form of solitary pastimes like cooking and sewing, activities which are difficult to differentiate from 'work'. These experiences are interlinked with the various demands imposed upon women's time by paid labour and family responsibilities. As Talbot (1981) has pointed out, home-based domestic leisure is particularly strongly linked to women from lower socio-economic groups, an association which should be understood in terms of the constraints upon women's lives (lack of resources and mobility), restricting their movement to particular contexts. Whether these activities can be regarded as 'leisure' depends upon the extent to which they were personally experienced as enjoyable. Claire Davies, for example, was an enthusiastic home decorator, and whilst this obviously constituted a great deal of work, it was also an activity from which she drew immense personal satisfaction and it contributed to her construction of a living environment in which she felt comfortable, a 'reflection of my personality'. It was by and large this sort of activity, more peripheral to necessity, which informants identified as leisure, whereas activities more submerged in their day-to-day routines, like cooking, were overwhelmingly regarded as work. Women's experience of home-based leisure also varied over their lifecourse to a greater extent than men's, both in its content and structure, since as the previous section has demonstrated, women's continued greater responsibility for domestic labour and childcare has meant that the demands of a young family and caring for elderly parents leave them with less opportunity to engage in home-based leisure, or relaxation, itself a leisure activity, although not one necessarily requiring that anything be actively 'done'.

However, while it should be recognised that home-based leisure often served as a source of solace and satisfaction for women, the crucially determining factor in whether these activities count as 'leisure', is whether they are engaged in through choice or necessity. The accounts of women whose access to resources was most restricted ('survivalists'), revealed that

constrained economic circumstances had necessitated their retreat into the private sphere. While they reconciled themselves to these circumstances, they were aware of a personal sacrifice having been made in order to facilitate their husbands' maintenance of public leisure activities. For example, the following informant's description of her leisure time and the note of regret it reveals, should be viewed in the context of the vividly-described community activism of her youth, and the fact that while she spoke proudly of her family's long-standing residence in the village, at the time of her marriage, her husband had been an 'outsider' who found it difficult to negotiate his place in the community:

I don't go out much any more. [...] I've gone more anti-social if anything. He [her husband] knows most of the people in Crynant, they say, "Oh, there's Tony, he sings in the choir." There's a lot of charity work with the choir, mind you it's a damn good excuse for the men to go out and enjoy, be under no illusions.

Kate Bayliss; 40s; former carer married to redundant former miner

Home-based leisure then, informs personal identity differentially, depending on the circumstances under which it occurs. While it could be experienced positively as a safe environment within which to exercise personal freedom, or a convenience for those unable to stretch the temporal demands of their lives to incorporate more structured leisure activities, for those with fewer resources, it was more often a route of necessity, correspondingly experienced as personally constraining. In this experience, the deprived resources necessitating a privatised leisure included restricted personal finances, a heavier domestic burden, and a lower level of confidence with which to negotiate the masculinised context of public leisure.

5.3.5 Leisure Identities: Conclusion

Leisure experiences confer and express meaning in people's lives, encompassing a broad range of forms and activities, which are attributed shifting value over the life-course. An examination of the leisure experiences of the populations of the South Wales Valleys reveals both change and continuity in the types of leisure activities in which people are engaged. These however, are experienced qualitatively differently according to factors of gender, class

positioning and personality. Broadly speaking, 'strategic' women were more able to effect change in their leisure experiences and occupy 'new' leisure institutions, while 'survivalist' women were more heavily confined to the traditional spheres of the community and the family. On the other hand men, who in the past enjoyed privileged leisure in coalmining communities, were more able to consolidate their public sphere position where they displayed 'strategic' behaviour, and conversely where their financial resources were restricted, their leisure experiences were also more constrained. While one type of leisure is in itself no 'better' than another, and leisure was experienced both positively and negatively in all spheres, what is important in understanding the contribution of leisure to personal identity, are the qualitative meanings individuals attach to their experiences. An analysis of personal understandings of leisure experiences revealed that the activities most valued were those where personal choice was felt to have been exercised, and these were located more broadly, but not exclusively, within public sphere institutions.

This section has demonstrated that although personal choice can be exercised in how, when and what sort of leisure is pursued, these processes are simultaneously subject to external constraints which limit the degree of 'choice' which can actually be exerted. In the Welsh Valleys, the most visible of these constraints was gender. Women's experiences of leisure continued to be more privatised, which illustrates the extent to which men's leisured identities remain prioritised in dominant discursive practices, a process which is facilitated by gendered familial relations. However, class, and in particular wage differentials, are also fundamental in informing leisure experiences, and interact with gendered ideologies. The unequal distribution of resources in the Valleys has been highlighted by the differential extent to which external constraints are negotiated according to strategic/survivalist distinctions. Since the male homosociability of the public sphere, recognised by Wight (1993) and Dennis *et al.* (1956), has been an important context within which cultural ideologies describing masculinity were confirmed, and 'survivalist' men experienced greater difficulty in maintaining 'traditional' leisure experiences, a serious challenge has been mounted to the reproduction of gendered roles through these institutions. While the data revealed a broadening of leisure experiences among the Valleys' populations, so too has there been a significant decline in communal institutions such as pubs and clubs. However, a more fundamental consideration is that informants were almost universally constrained by relative deprivation, to leisure experiences within their immediate spatial environment.

Beck's (1992) prediction of a diversification of leisure experiences is in this light over-optimistic, more relevant to the less constrained circumstances of middle-class populations.

Leisure experiences are also informed by factors such as domestic commitments, stage in the life-cycle and type of employment. Leisure experiences therefore cannot be examined in isolation, being a product of a multitude of interlinked occupational, political, communal, and familial attachments. In considering the impact of structuring factors and their negotiation by individuals, it becomes apparent that leisure experiences and the meanings which they afford to personal identity can be understood only in their plurality, and are amenable to only the broadest processes of categorisation.

5.4. *Self-Identity and the Personal Narrative*

5.4.1 Introduction

The examination of identity is fundamentally incomplete without more a careful examination of the steering role provided by self-understandings in negotiating the various influences impacting upon the individual. Giddens (1991: 53) described self-identity as, "the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of his or her biography." He went on to explain that, "A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor ... in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going." (1991: 54) A personal narrative then, encompasses understandings of the self across time, having a past, a present and a future. Crucially, as Sarup (1996) has pointed out, the development of self-concepts depend upon the *retrospective* interpretation of events, which developed through personal narratives, have the power to transform identity. That is, by giving meaning to various transitory experiences through a personal narrative, which is reflexively mobilised according to circumstances, the individual makes sense of his or her own life in relation to a wider society, developing a coherent sense of self, and ultimately what Giddens has called 'ontological security' (1991). While ontological security is more obviously sustained through a series of routines, Giddens also emphasised that self-identity is both robust and fragile, narratives being dynamic and selectively employed according to individuals' context and the demands which they face. Reflexivity, is not however, a phenomenon specific to late modernity, but a process long utilised by individuals in negotiating transitory experiences;

take for example Dennis *et al.*'s (1956) description of the process undergone by young women marrying miners who underwent dramatic personal transformations, drawing upon various bodies of social knowledge to adapt to the restrictions of this new role. Furthermore, to suggest that coalmining communities had less need of reflexivity because of their uniformity in life chances, overlooks their internal differentiation, a factor exacerbated by labour market heterogenisation over the past thirty years.

Personal narratives are therefore always fundamentally incomplete, and in this light self-identity should be understood as a process of continual creation and re-creation in line with shifting circumstances. Furthermore, in developing a narrative, the self draws upon both its immediate environment, and temporally- and spatially-distant reference points. This is what Giddens has called 'the mediation of experience' (1991). Sarup (1996) clarified this by emphasising that subjectivity is formed both *by* and *within* the social, a point which highlights the inexpediency of attempting to counterpose the individual against society, and re-emphasises the interdependency of personal and social processes. In developing a personal understanding of events, local experiences become intertwined with perceptions of the wider environment. However, while self-identity is essentially processual and linked to the perception of significant events across time, this section argues that it is also constrained by individual access to material resources, which are themselves the product of historical and cultural location, and therefore determined by class, gender, ethnicity and generation. The continued significance of structural location upon self-identity, however, is neglected in Giddens's otherwise valuable account, and its interaction with processes of subjective reflexivity are examined in the case studies which follow. The various influences upon the individual are experienced in complex ways, and for this reason, Sarup (1996: 25) has suggested that identity be theorised as a 'multi-dimensional space' in which individuals attach meaning to various influences, which are reflexively employed in developing self-understandings.

Self-identity is of particular importance to this study because it provides an understanding of how the dramatic changes experienced by the populations of the South Wales coalfield have been internalised and explained in a way that makes sense to individuals. This section then, examines how the various choices made by individuals in response to socio-economic transformations are reconciled with the particular narratives they employ to maintain a

coherent sense of self. It is argued that Beck's (1997: 15) conceptualisation of this process as 'reflexive modernisation', implying an individualised response to and negotiation of industrial society is an over-simplification, and his counterpositioning of the self against society is problematic, overlooking the complexity of processes occurring *between* in addition to *within*.

This section then, examines how people's various circumstances and attachments are internalised and reflexively employed to allow them to think and behave in a manner which feels 'right' to them and which facilitates their development of a consistent narrative. In a broad sense, it endeavours to build an understanding of the personal ideologies briefly described in section 4.3 as the building-blocks of political affiliations, which are developed in line with unfolding of personal biographies in the search for explanatory narratives. The enormity of this task surpasses what can be realistically achieved in this section, and thus three case studies are presented which examine how individuals' reflexively employ their experiences to make sense of these situations and in forming opinions. This focus demonstrates the impracticality of attempting to separate 'identity' into constituent elements, each 'part' of identity being interlinked in various ways with other 'parts'. The detailed examination of self-identity also reveals how 'strategic' and 'survivalist' ways of thinking are incorporated into individuals' behaviour, providing coherence to their attachments and to the various life-choices they make as a consequence of these mobilisations.

5.4.2 The Case Studies

The case studies described below do not claim to be 'representative' of the interviews, since while they illustrate qualitatively different experiences of restructuring, an examination of specific biographies can shed light upon only a fraction of the ways in which this can occur. However, they were selected for their coverage of a distinct and a broad range of experiences, to illuminate in particular the significance of the survivalist/strategic distinction and gender as structuring influences upon personal experience and self-understanding. They therefore provide an appropriate method for developing an understanding of the complex project of self-identity, enabling a more detailed understanding to be developed of the various restraints and opportunities governing individuals' lives, which inform the meanings

which are attached to personal narratives, and the way in which relative 'choices' are correspondingly framed.

5.4.2.1 *Kate Bayliss*

Kate is a housewife in her late forties. Her husband Tony is a former miner, who has recently experienced periodic unemployment, and who was on 'lay-off' period at the time of the interview. They have three children, one of whom is still dependent. Kate comes from a mining background, and her sense of self is strongly bound up in her family heritage, of which she is immensely proud. She was interviewed on her own, being later joined by Tony who became involved in the interview. While both partners were highly vocal, Kate appeared to be the dominant personality.

Kate trained as a nurse, but relinquished this career to provide full-time care for her father and father-in-law, who had been invalided with colliery-related illnesses, and who subsequently died slow and painful deaths. Her experience of the harsh realities of a life working coal, combined with her admiration for the good and honourable men she considered made up the workforce, have led to her experiencing contradictory and troubling emotions about the demise of coalmining, feelings which she describes as "bitter-sweet". Today Kate experiences ill-health, which has necessitated Tony assuming periodic responsibility for domestic tasks. However, this is not an arrangement which either of them finds satisfactory, but one which conflicts with their gendered expectations.

The community is extremely important to Kate's self-understandings, although her relationship with her social world is more complex than simply assuming membership of a 'coalmining community'. Her personal experiences of coalmining have led to an abhorrence for the lifestyle it imposed upon miners in terms of economic insecurity, health and gender relations. However, Kate also described her communal past in terms of collective reciprocity, of looking out for one another whatever the costs. She found it deeply troubling that this positive experience was interlinked with a negative one, and her emotions became manifested in terms of anger directed towards the external forces which she perceived to

have torn her community apart. Her narrative was clearly temporal, drawing upon past and present experiences, which she related to a (pessimistic) future.

In her youth Kate had been a community activist, often to be found at the forefront of local campaigns. These activities, however, became curtailed as her mobility failed. However, she continues to maintain an active and passionate interest in political and local affairs. A particular source of regret was that she had been unable to become involved in the WSGs during the Miners' Strike, having been then caring for her baby and elderly parents. She described this in contrast to Tony's participation in the local choir which had travelled the country fund-raising, an experience which she perceived as having been personally satisfying, and which had provided a collective experience through which he made sense of the Government's political agenda in opposing the coalminers. Kate experienced her loss of a politically active lifestyle in acutely personal terms.

Despite having lacked a collective experience in recent years, Kate had formulated a passionate political understanding, which she obviously mobilised in frequent heated debate with her husband, whom she regards as somewhat chauvinistic. She was particularly bitter towards the (then) Conservative Government, which she considered had systematically destroyed her beloved community. While she considered politicians as primarily self-motivated, she had great admiration for a handful of political figures whom she described in terms of principled action, honesty, strength and determination. When asked to name a politician who embodied these values, her answer was revealing in choosing Barbara Castle, one of the few women visible on the political stage during Kate's youth. While a female figure likely provided a more natural identification, Kate's answer also revealed her deeper hostility towards what she considered to be the machismo of the political environment. This was a recurrent theme in the interview. However, furthermore Barbara Castle, rather like Kate in her community activism, is a woman who was unafraid of making herself visible in defence of her principles, who faced subsequent criticism for her behaviour. In this she, like Kate, mounted a challenge to restrictive traditional definitions of femininity.

I like Barbara Castle. Barbara Castle is brill, I love her. I love her attitudes and I just love her for being a woman before her time, you know. Staying with the men and

having a strong say in it. Not only that, but carrying out what she believed in. Do you know what I mean?

In developing a personal narrative, Kate employed a variety of explanations to make sense of her present situation. These were frequently experienced as contradictory and led to troubling feelings. For example, while she frequently attributed the problems experienced by her community as stemming from a lack of employment opportunities, at other times she located the problem within the community in not forging the sort of collective responses to external encroachments which she would pursue if unhampered by her disability:

But they're not very good around here. I always found myself in the headlines and the others behind, that sort of thing, to be honest. There's not a lot of hope for them, is there? We've had a lot of bumps in our life, but the point is, you've got to fight, haven't you?

However, at times this perception was countered by Kate's formulation of a narrative which described a coherently collective community response to restructuring, of solidarity in the face of adversity:

I don't know why people aren't more disheartened than what they are really. I think it's probably our community spirit that we've had for years built into us, to have survival, isn't it?

Interestingly, towards the end of the two-and-a-half hour interview, Kate's abhorrence for what the Conservative Party had done to her community, which had been a recurrent theme, reached a passionate crescendo:

We're not stupid or thick or anything. I mean I haven't got any certificates or anything, but I'm not stupid. I'm not as bright as my sister, but I'm not stupid enough to know that they're not, I know that they're making fools of us. I know that we're not worth the dust under the carpet. [...] I can see my father sitting there with a bandage, with his finger cut off and his broken back, and yeah, him on the oxygen. I do remember. Yeah, I think that if they gave me a gun, I think that I'd go and shoot a few of them. I

feel, don't get me started, 'cause deep down I feel very strong. I think if there was a revolution I'd be on the front line. And I would like to shoot Maggie Thatcher very much, thank-you. And I would like to, and I think if I'd shot all of Maggie Thatcher's, then I think I'd have to start on the Labour Party. So what's the point of getting yourself in really deep into it when you can't really change it because they've got the power?

At this point, Kate's narrative became more revealing of the deep sense of injustice she experienced. The formal interview finished, a more reciprocal discussion of related issues was occurring, which allowed Kate to become explicit about her sense of disempowerment and disillusionment which had been an ongoing theme. That I found this interview most personally rewarding but also most troubling, is perhaps revealing of the relational nature of the self: we selectively 'reveal' ourselves to others in relation to observed empathies and dissimilarities which have been established. This is what makes it so difficult for the interviewer to achieve uniformity in the interview process. While Kate's narrative revealed a hatred of the Conservatives, it also encompassed a distancing from the Labour Party, who she considered to have betrayed its traditional constituency in recent years. This was problematically reconciled with her alignment of her political beliefs within a labour movement ideology. Her formulation of a personal code of morality revealed an attempt to reconstruct a socialist understanding which she felt had lapsed in the policy agendas of political institutions. In particular, Kate's own moral code was altruistic and looked beyond the self, since she was aware that her own property-owning credentials provided her with a certain amount of personal resources. It was tied to communal welfare, and Kate was most prominently concerned with the lack of local opportunities for young people to pursue personally satisfying lifestyles. She attributed this to broader political failings. In that Kate reflexively mobilised her experiences to develop an interpretation of events which related to a wider society, she demonstrated not only an understanding of her own sense of self, but also a code of morality which was explicitly collective. This contrasted with the individualistic responses which Beck (1992) has suggested are produced by a 'risk society'.

Throughout her life, Kate has felt constrained by her class, and perhaps more visibly by her gender, which she recognised had prevented her from pursuing the causes and opportunities which she most valued. She was however, optimistic that these gendered expectations were

now being challenged and would provide less of an obstacle to her children. Although Kate's circumstances and responses broadly correspond with those of a 'survivalist', her account reveals that her ambitions were curbed by her structural positioning, in that she was denied access to resources at various crucial points in her life which might have facilitated her making more strategic life-decisions. Notwithstanding this, however, Kate's personal narrative displayed a considerable degree of reconfiguration, but in contrast to 'strategists', the resources she drew upon in this process were primarily located in her past experiences. Kate's narrative then, demonstrates that the formulation of a strategic or survivalist orientation is only to some degree a process of choice, external constraints weighing most heavily upon socio-economically deprived individuals.

5.4.2.2 Gary Peters

Gary is a former miner in his early thirties, married to a school teacher. They have three young children. Gary was made redundant from his Coal Board job shortly after the Miners' Strike, and he then spent several years working in a local privately-owned mine. Finding the atmosphere there contrasted unfavourably with his earlier experience, he left the private-mine and embarked a university degree, a decision which he confessed feeling somewhat pushed into by job-centre careers advisors, whom he perceived to have been primarily concerned with keeping him off the unemployment register. In particular, he felt that too little consideration had been devoted to assessing his talents and the type of work which he would be likely to enjoy. In this, he was able to reflexively recognise the relative impacts of external agencies and his own preference in this transitory experience (see section 4.2.2.1). However, at this point in his life, his personal resources were insufficiently powerful to override the 'wisdom' of external authorities, and henceforth the notion of 'choice' in his personal narrative was limited.

Gary found that his degree provided little advantage in finding regional employment. In response to this lack of employment opportunities, he recently set up his own food-sales business in the locality, a position which offered him the personal freedom to work his own hours, and to participate more fully in the domestic affairs of his household. However, his personal narrative continues to draw heavily upon the communal experiences he enjoyed in the mines, although he expresses doubts that he will be able to realise these in a workplace environment again. His current occupational identity is experienced in terms of contradiction; while he recognises its advantages, he is also uncomfortable in the role, and does not consider that it really represents who he is:

I just don't feel right doing it somehow. I just don't see myself selling door-to-door.

But I quite enjoy it, it's all right.

Work is an important part of Gary's identity, and his current sense of self is inseparable from his past experiences. As his narrative developed, Gary expressed regret at not having taken the strategic decision to invest his redundancy payment in the Tower Colliery buy-out. For

while his behaviour in setting up his own business can be regarded as ‘strategic’, the initial risk involved in becoming an owner-employee in Tower involved greater or *more* strategic action. Gary perceives the fulfilments at Tower to be more valuable than those which he experiences in his current work. In particular, his repeated comments about the ‘family atmosphere’ at Tower are revealing of the communality he considers to be a valued part of occupational identity. Gary explained that although he had possessed the resources to invest in Tower, he was deterred by the prevalence of wider discourses regarding its feasibility:

If I’d have known what I do now, I’d have tried to buy in I think. [...] it was a *big* mistake not to go up to Tower for me I think, a big mistake. What they did, they did such a good job on you in the collieries in the end, the atmosphere sort of went from good to terrible. So in the end, everyone was thinking, ‘Let’s get out.’

This revealed that Gary’s development of a sense of self in which experiences were reflexively mobilised, was subject not only to the influence of his immediate environment, but was also mediated by more distant sources of authority. In this instance, he approached the situation through a process of weighing up his own preferences against the scare-mongering of the Conservative Government, and the collective dissatisfaction which work colleagues had recently experienced in the mines. It was notable, and represents some challenge to Beck’s (1992, 1997) theory of individualised life strategies, that his personal preference was insufficiently powerful to win out. This process mirrored the earlier one when Gary embarked upon a degree programme.

Gary’s identity is very much situated in the locale, and he rejected the idea of working outside of the region, valuing the continued communal interaction provided by his current work. The space and communality of village life are fundamentally important to his sense of self: “I don’t think I could settle much outside a village.” He explains his attachment to space primarily in terms of the personal knowledge and security provided by the local environment, the positioning they offer.

Gary devotes a considerable proportion of his spare time to the local rugby club, from which he draws a great deal of personal satisfaction, and which facilitates his maintaining the sort of sociable contacts associated with his experiences as a young miner. Money is less

important to him than being able to enjoy a particular quality of life, and he chooses to work three days a week because this permits him the flexibility to pursue his leisure interests and to maintain a domestic workload compatible with the demands of his wife's work. Thus his strategic outlook extends to his familial and leisure identities, although his egalitarian family structure is also linked to his wife being slightly older and hence having already established a career when they married. Thus personal choice is not entirely autonomous, but is negotiated according to the relationships existing between a plurality of factors which constitute an individual's experience.

While Gary does not regard himself as particularly political, his narrative revealed a 'natural' affiliation with the Labour Party, revealing of his embeddedness in localised processes of identification. In particular, his response to the Labour defeat of 1992 revealed the extent of this identification, it being experienced acutely in terms of personal loss:

Neil Kinnock. I thought a lot about him. When they lost the last general election I can remember feeling absolutely gutted 'cause I think he could have made a really good prime minister.

Neil Kinnock was an interesting choice of focus, having unified the Labour Party during a politically difficult period, and therefore an individual who might be regarded as a coherent embodiment of collective socialist values, at a wider metaphorical level representing solidarity amid fragmentation. Additionally, Gary's choice of a Welshman as his 'political hero' locates his narrative spatially and personally, and furthermore Kinnock's Valleys' Welshness posits him as someone able to appreciate how restructuring has affected the Welsh coalfield.

Although Gary's own occupational future is fairly secure, his expectations are tied up with a desire for better quality employment to be attracted into the region. In particular, he displays a deep empathy with the unemployed (men), having himself experienced periods of unemployment, and recognising its inertia-generating potential. His appreciation of the importance of work in self-identity was also illustrated by his comment that people require 'dignity' in their work, and his recognition that the sort of factory work currently available in the Valleys falls some way short in this provision:

I think, especially a lot of the people who work[ed] in the colliery, you could have your own say to a certain extent, and you had your pride. But a lot of that finished once the colliery finished. A lot of the jobs, a lot of the pride went out of it, you know. You had to swallow your pride just to hold on to the jobs, that's the way *I* found it anyway.

Crucially, Gary's self-understandings utilise a temporal narrative. He does not regard himself as static, but reflexively mobilises his past and present working experiences to construct a future which maximises his own personal resources in a transformed socio-economic environment. While he employs this process successfully and has developed a relatively self-sufficient strategic orientation, his longer-term ambitions focus upon the possibility of joining the Tower workforce should opportunities become available. That Gary has experienced and experimented with a broad range of occupational identities, but continues to prioritise his early experiences, demonstrates the centrality of communal working experiences to his sense of self-identity, and his newly-developed strategism places him favourably in realising these ambitions.

5.4.2.3 Sheila Thomas

Sheila is a former factory worker in her late fifties, who upon being made redundant, and recognising the shortage of locally-available employment opportunities, framed her position in terms of an early retirement. Married to a former striking miner, they have two grown-up children one of whom is a miner and the other unemployed. Sheila is bilingual, but tends to speak English at home since her husband understands little Welsh. During the Miners' Strike she became locally active in the WSGs, and became politicised by the experience. Sheila currently pursues voluntary work, and together with her periodically-employed husband, they support their children by baby-sitting for their grandchildren. Sheila's various responsibilities are subject to a process of continual re-negotiation, but she prioritises her familial obligations.

Although Sheila no longer participates in the formal labour market, her behaviour is nevertheless considered 'strategic', since she has formulated a long-term plan contextualised

by her past and present experiences, which involves her undertaking financial risk in order to achieve a particular valued quality of life. Her experiences during the Miners' Strike and a death in the family at that same time, can be analysed using Giddens's (1991) recognition of 'fateful' moments, being subsequently formative of her personal life-philosophy. This is voiced through a narrative which privileges the ability to live a particular lifestyle over financial security:

And then my brother-in-law died in an accident, you know, in a house fire. Do you know, after that, let's see now, this was in September, and I was thinking, why worry? [laughs] ... our philosophy was then that when this happened to my brother-in-law, Hugh, when he died young, 'cause he was only 42, you put your priorities in order.

Sheila found the collective experience of her activities in WSGs during the Miners' Strike liberating, particularly in terms of its having been an all-female environment. She has subsequently been able to maintain this camaraderie in her leisure experiences, making an effort to go out "with the girls" at least once a week. Notably, when she started working in the food-kitchens, Sheila found men's presence off-putting, both because she felt constrained under their watch to conform to a particular model of femininity, but also because she disliked the masculinised, adversarial character of the political environment which men sought to transfer to these forums: "the men tried to take charge ... they were so arrogant about it." In contrast, as men gradually relinquished this part of the Strike effort to pursue more explicitly political activities such as picketing, Sheila grew more comfortable with the environment, perceiving the atmosphere to have undergone a qualitative transformation. In this more comfortable environment, she surprised herself at how 'mouthy' she became, "the only time I think I've ever been militant". This was significant since she made repeated efforts elsewhere in the interview to disassociate herself with 'militancy', which she felt had implications of de-feminisation. Her comments that, "You'd have more *worth*, you weren't just there to be told what to do," suggested that this 'militancy' represented her 'true' self coming to the fore, a self which posed a challenge to traditional definitions of femininity. The Strike, however, provided a safe context for expressing this 'militancy', and she regarded this behaviour as morally justifiable for these ends.

The Strike also represented a defining moment in Sheila's sense of self; mediated experiences began to interact more prominently with localist experiences in her development of a personal narrative. She became increasingly aware of the Conservative Government's impact upon a broader society, and of the sorts of groups who had experienced oppression under Conservative policies, with whom she subsequently developed a sense of commonality and empathetic understanding. During the Miners' Strike too, Sheila's familial identity underwent a process of transformation, since her husband was supportive of her Strike activities, and subsequently took over some of the domestic responsibilities. Indeed, her relationship with her husband was described as one of reciprocal support.

The Miners' Strike was a fundamentally important reference point in Sheila's development of a personal narrative. She spoke of it with great affection, and as having transformed both the way in which she thought about herself, and her understanding of wider issues:

I think it put more confidence in myself and, oh yes, you see how the other[s live], 'cause when you think about it miners, mining communities seem to be the same [...] and we met influential people as well, and then you realise they're no different to you. You get into a conversation with them now. Once you're in a group or a meeting now, you get to talk to them. It's surprising. It gave you a feeling of your own worth, I think that's what the Strike did, it gave me a feeling of my *worth*. My worth was higher. I wasn't nobody. I could be somebody if I wanted to be.

The sense of personal empowerment which enabled Sheila to confront a transformed socio-economic environment, however, was not developed through employing individualised solutions, as suggested by Beck (1992, 1997), but through the supportive environment of collectivised experiences. The self-confidence which Sheila derived from these experiences is an important resource which she has used to develop personal strategism. This has enabled her to negotiate risks which had hitherto been avoided, for example, becoming involved in a broader range of community activities. Thus Sheila has reflexively employed her subjective experiences to negotiate access to a wider range of social spaces and experiences where she has been able to establish authenticity and security:

I will, and I'll talk now and I'll say my view. I won't sit down and not say anything if I disagree with somebody ... Yes, but I think that comes with age as well.

It is worth describing in more detail the contradictory feelings expressed by Sheila in relation to her understandings of 'femininity'. When talking about other local women's political activism, she repeatedly refers to their 'militancy', a label from which she maintains a personal distance. Sheila feels that women have to play a careful balancing act when becoming involved in political activity, since she counterposes politics against femininity. This narrative was reinforced by the linkages she makes between masculinity and politics; the characters she most admires (Dennis Skinner and John Prescott) contrast with the 'New Labour' line. She thus regards 'militancy' as admirable in men. Her conflictual feelings about femininity and politics are also revealed by her response to Margaret Thatcher, which refers to her personality, an aspect lacking in her judgements of male politicians:

I didn't like Thatcher, as you say, the iron lady, she was too hard a lady, too hard a woman. I like a strong woman, but I like a woman to be a woman. Very aggressive.

While Sheila regards women's radicalised political behaviour as problematic more generally, she deems it acceptable, even commendable, within the context of the Miners' Strike, and her own politicised experiences in WSGs subsequently informed her sense of self, her discourse, and her actions. However, in contrast to her perception of Thatcher's political approach, this was a *caring* political identity, one therefore more easily reconciled with her familiar model of femininity:

Yes, if I was into something I would go around talking about it and seeing whether others were interested, or if [pause], I'm not militant but I would fight for something what I believed in. And there's always someone of like mind.

Sheila's political narrative is revealing of the contradictory emotions she experiences in interpreting and reconciling internal and external influences. Her coherent sense of self is maintained through her failure to explicitly regard her own behaviour as 'political'. Indeed, her perception of the 'political' is restricted, limited to an institutionalised field, within which she affiliates with a Labourist political identity, in line with the Valleys' heritage of

labour movement politics. Her own behaviour then, she perceives not as ‘political’, but rather is understood in terms of a personal code of morality, authenticated through reference to a caring femininity located in her familial identity. That is, her concern for the region, and her justification for political action is expressed through a maternal narrative, which displays an altruistic concern for “the youngsters”:

you’ve got to think of the young ones coming up for the future. [...] I do feel sorry for them, you know, the ones that leave school and there’s no jobs because of the society. Because they haven’t got jobs and they’re out all day, but they haven’t got nothing to do. So it’s making jobs for the youngsters, I think we should be allocated so many hours each, I mean so they have *something* to look forward to.

This is comparable to Kate Bayliss’s narrative, and contrasts with Gary Peters’s, who understood the threat to occupational identity largely in terms of his own and his workmates’ experiences. This is unsurprising considering the embeddedness of gendered identities in the South Wales coalfield, men having prioritised paid labour in their development of self-understandings, and women having drawn more heavily upon their familial identities. As section 5.2 demonstrated, these identities are transformed only gradually, and in relation to the structured distribution of resources.

Sheila’s sense of self is to a large extent tied up in the collective space of ‘her’ community, which provides status through kinship, neighbourhood and friendship relationships:

my roots are here. I wouldn’t go anywhere else I don’t think ... if I won the lottery, I don’t think I’d want to move. I’ve got nice friends, good friends and there’s always somebody. I’ve got family, all my friends are here.

While work is important in Sheila’s narrative, she employs a communally-bound rather than a financial definition of ‘work’. Her work own consists of domestic labour, caring for her grandchildren, and voluntary work with local disabled children. This work identity affirms her femininity and makes her feel valuable. However, Sheila has also developed a longer-term communal vision, employing a more explicitly economic definition of work, which recognises the significance of paid labour in personal satisfaction. Sheila’s narrative

demonstrates a clear upward trajectory. Her activities in WSGs during the Strike facilitated a confidence in her self-worth, and recognising the economic restrictions imposed upon her by restructuring, and utilising communal and familial resources, she has consequently created a role for herself where this is maintained. At times Sheila struggles with restrictive definitions of femininity, and reflexively draws upon her past and present experiences both to challenge these, but also to authenticate her behaviour as corresponding with 'traditional' definitions of femininity. Although Sheila is in various ways constrained by her class, her gender and her age (she considers herself too old to retrain), she is able to draw upon resources grounded in her Strike experiences, to forge a 'strategic' route in establishing a stable and fulfilling sense of self.

5.4.3 Self-Identity: Conclusion

The case studies above provide an illustration of the complex process by which individuals reflexively employ a plurality of influences and experiences to develop personal narratives and hence self-understandings. Specifically, they pose a challenge to Beck's (1992), and to a lesser extent Giddens's (1991), understandings of the development of the self in line with these circumstances as essentially a process of choice. For while personal choice can be exercised, it is mobilised within the constraints of available and unequally distributed resources, which are utilised to mount a challenge to external constraints of class, gender, age and ethnicity. These resources, as discussed in section 4.2, include a political education, supportive family structures, education and finances. Giddens's understanding of 'fateful' moments is informative in understanding this process, and events such as the Miners' Strike and redundancy were frequently regarded as defining moments in the consequent trajectories of personal narratives. The concepts of 'strategism' and 'survivalism', respectively representing long-term and short-term planning, are particularly significant for understanding individuals' responses to transitory experiences. For example, 'fateful' moments might be confronted strategically in terms of personal empowerment and re-skilling, or through a more survivalist approach where existing resources are consolidated and the individual engages in unskilled employment. 'Fateful' moments occur only periodically, however, and are complemented by a plurality of less dramatic potential opportunities, when individuals' behaviour and their movement in and out of more privileged circumstances, are negotiated

according to the availability of resources. As Giddens has put it, “consequential decisions, once taken, will reshape the reflexive project of identity through the lifestyle consequences which ensue” (1991: 143).

While Beck (1992, 1997) suggested that the diversification of socio-economic circumstances in recent years would lead to an ‘individualisation’ of life-trajectories, this over-simplifies the project of the self. While personal preferences are an important aspect of self-identity, the self is embedded within a variety of influences which interact to inform the development of personal narratives. These become more or less significant according to circumstances, and are prioritised through the reflexive mobilisation of experiences which enable individuals to develop appropriate responses in particular contexts. The case studies reveal that foremost amongst the influences informing personal narratives are collectivised communal, occupational and political identities. These are mobilised differentially by men and women in relation to the embeddedness of their gendered identities, and contribute fundamentally to the development of ‘ontological security’, overriding the influence of more individualised understandings and solutions. This conclusion can be extended to the wider interviews: that is, collectivised identities remain an important resource through which the self is navigated; the nature of these collectivised experiences varies with gendered identity; personal trust continues to be invested in traditional agencies such as the Labour Party, although mediated experiences have also broadened personal understandings of agency; and ‘strategic’ individuals in particular are able to negotiate more diverse responses to restructuring, although these too are grounded in collectivised understandings. The separation of the self and the collective by individualisation theorists is therefore erroneous; the self is embedded in the social, and the two are engaged in a process of constant interaction. It is only through the development of an understanding of their social contexts that individuals can develop a narrative capable of making sense of their own selves in relation to that environment.

5.5 Personal Identities: Conclusion

In looking at how personal identity processes have responded to broader social transformation, this chapter provides substantial evidence that individualisation theories are

simplistic. While individual experiences in the South Wales Valleys have become more diverse in recent years, collective understandings, mediated by cultural texture, continue to provide a central resource in how people make sense of their lives. Furthermore, broadly similar patterns of structural inequality continue to inform life-chances, and while these can be culturally negotiated to produce personal identities quite distinctive from the past, individuals are constrained in their formulation of personal identities by these factors. This is most clearly illustrated by the structural forces of gender which are culturally mediated in designating a limited range of 'masculine' and 'feminine' types of behaviour, which only those individuals able to access privileged resources can challenge. However, through employing a reflexive personal narrative, individuals 'order' their multiple individual structural attributes and experiences according to cultural knowledge, minimising apparent conflict and providing a coherent account of their experiences which appears personalised and chosen rather than the result of structural determinism.

This examination of the family, leisure and self-understandings as areas where individuals might be expected to exercise most personal autonomy in navigating their lives reveals a complex, but fundamentally unequal and structured distribution of risks and opportunities. While individual agency is an important factor accounting for personal variation in the interpretation of circumstances which can broadly be considered in terms of social similarity, an unequal distribution of resources more fundamentally determines the degree of manoeuvrability available to individuals, and their consequent ability to act 'freely'. Choice or agency is thus only possible within certain structural parameters. These more 'private' aspects of experience then, are themselves structured before they are negotiated via individuals' relative embeddedness in cultural understandings, producing personal strategies which social scientists can identify as broadly similar according to individuals' location in comparable structural circumstances.

While industrial restructuring has led to the creation of new inequalities, such as between the employed and unemployed, fundamentally these distinctions are determined by pre-existing inequalities of class, gender, age and ethnicity. Class processes more broadly structurally inform personal identificatory experiences in the Welsh Valleys, restricting and enabling life-chances, but also provide a collectivised explanatory framework from which strength can be drawn. Dominant ideologies prescribing gender, provide an important explanation for men

and women's differential negotiation of processes of identity formulation, informing their social roles, and their development of self-concepts. However, although intertwined class processes and dominant gendered ideologies still exert a strong influence upon identity processes in the Welsh Valleys, they are re-negotiated in new ways where individuals have are able to utilise certain personal resources. The strategic/survivalist distinction developed in chapter four, provides a valuable tool in understanding how at the micro-level, a plurality of experiences inform identifications through a complex reflexive process juggling personal preferences and resources with mediated experiences and broader structural and ideological behavioural constraints.

The focus upon personal identity then, reveals that individuals are embedded within a plurality of complex spatial and social process which have a significant impact upon their interpretation and representation of personal experiences. These influences cannot be separated from one another, their impact upon personal identity being cumulative, interactive, contradictory, negotiable and dynamic. However, the degree to which socio-spatial relationships are experienced as constraining or liberating depends to a large degree upon the development of 'strategic' or 'survivalist' behaviour. This chapter has seen an extension of these concepts to identificatory experiences outside of occupation, and in particular 'strategic' behaviour is predictive of an ability to draw upon the strength of existing social structures, and to reconfigure this in ways more attuned to the restructured industrial environment. So, for example, a group of 'strategic' women who drew important personal resources from their experiences in WSGs during the Miners' Strike, were able in various ways to become involved in retraining and the pursuit of careers, a range of political activities, new community and leisure organisations, and to negotiate more egalitarian familial relationships. This provided them with a great deal of personal fulfilment, which would not however, have been possible without the strength drawn from their embeddedness in localist social structures. Collective experiences then, are a vital resource in the negotiation of personal satisfaction, utilised by both strategists and survivalists, albeit in qualitatively different ways. The personal cannot be separated from the social, the two being interdependent. The social environment has an important impact upon the negotiation of personal experiences, but also provides a fundamental resource which is employed in developing personal understandings of broader society and individual location within it. These personal understandings themselves inform social processes. While informants'

experiences have more broadly tended to be 'survivalist', identity is not a static project, and further interrogation of strategic/survivalist behaviour, reveals the permeable boundaries existing between categorisations, facilitating individual movement across time and social space.

This chapter further contributes to an understanding of identity as a dynamic process in which spatial, social and personal processes are intermeshed and interdependent. The following chapter provides an overview of these processes, drawing out conclusions about the patterns of identificatory processes revealed by previous chapters, and developing an understanding of their relationship to existing structural constraints. These feed into a broader theoretical discussion of the relevance of class and gender in identity processes, looking in particular at how 'class' should be re-employed to understand the transformed structures of the modern industrial environment.

Chapter Six: Conclusions: Reconfiguring Class

6.1 Introduction

This evidence presented by this thesis has demonstrated that one-dimensional conceptualisations of identity formations are ill-placed to accurately represent the social circumstances of the populations of the South Wales Valleys. However, neither is it sufficient to regard identity as free-floating. The social circumstances of the Valleys' populations have undergone considerable diversification under industrial restructuring, to the extent that a singular 'coalmining community' now constitutes an all but redundant description. However, commonalities have persisted, become reconfigured, and remain centrally significant in understanding how identity processes are negotiated. Furthermore, the patterns constituting these commonalities have become increasingly complex, reflecting socio-economic diversity.

In taking these findings further, this chapter sets out to develop a theoretical model of the 'social space' or relational circumstances of the populations of the South Wales Valleys. By concentrating primarily on what is referred to as their specific class culture, it provides an understanding of how people negotiate movement through social space, and how their experiences are structured and grounded by this environment. In this task, it brings together the three axes of identity processes described in the preceding chapters: those representing spatial, collective and personal experiences. Structure is the essence of this model, since as the thesis has shown, individuals do not move about their environment freely, but are facilitated or hindered in their progress by the accessibility of various resources, which are to a large degree, the product of their embeddedness within cultural expectations. By making a distinction between individuals who are resource 'rich' and resource 'deprived', the use of the categories 'strategists' and 'survivalists' has illustrated how these individuals differentially appropriate habitus in formulating social attachments and exerting agency, and has thus added meaning to how the persistence and reproduction of structured inequalities inform probabilistic life chances. Structured inequalities are central to understanding how lived experiences and identifications are patterned in relation to one another, and these inequalities are given meaning and negotiated through the knowledge incumbent in

inhabiting a particular cultural environment. This provides a central justification for why the social relations of the Welsh Valleys have been interrogated in terms of a class analysis. This is focus also meaningful in terms of a relational interpretation of identity processes, since it enables linkages to be drawn and examined between the various aspects of individuals' lived experiences.

As Mahony and Zmroczek (1997) have pointed out, the marginalisation of class by the popular press, a process in which a large part of the sociological academy is implicated, is a political issue, and not substantiated by empirical evidence. The evidence of this thesis has supported their argument, and this chapter takes these findings forward by re-examining class theory, to make it responsive to a socio-economic environment dramatically transformed by the post-war settlement, globalisation and consequent restructuring of labour markets. This environment is ill-suited to the linear models of occupational hierarchy employed by traditional class theorists, which mask the diversity and dynamism of individual circumstances. Yet it continues to reproduce structured inequalities which are translated into broadly similar probabilistic life chances, and in order to recognise these patterns and generate meaningful theory, class theory provides an essential tool. This chapter draws upon the work of Bourdieu to generate a more complex understanding of class processes as based upon a matrix of structured inequalities extending beyond labour market positioning, and goes further in uncoupling class from the structure-agency relationship, positing that its influence is more complex and less direct than traditional class analyses have suggested.

The previous chapters have demonstrated that while in recent years the Valleys' populations have seen their social circumstances undergoing dramatic transformation, common experiences and understandings continue to provide an important framework within which their personal experiences and attitudes are expressed and negotiated. This framework has been variously conceptualised in terms of a 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1984), or a 'structure of feeling' (R. Williams 1961), but is discussed here in terms of a 'class culture'. By this is meant a specific and internally structured social space inhabited by individuals sharing a broad socio-economic location and therefore 'status', which becomes incorporated into the way they live their lives, through which their experiences are correspondingly ascribed meaning and become integrated. Specifically Bourdieu and Williams's work is valuable for its emphasis that individuals employ 'habitus' to reflect back as well as onwards, and in thus

offering dynamism and fluidity in relation to tradition, their concepts offer new insight for a relational examination of class processes. Class culture is the vehicle through which structural positioning becomes purposefully inhabited. The use of the analytical terms 'strategic' and 'survivalist' enabled a preliminary order to be imposed upon the social space of class culture, which furthered an understanding of how individuals' lives owe more to the hierarchies they inhabit as a result of the uneven distribution of resources, than they do to their relative exertion of agency.

Class culture refers not to a holistic and distinctive group, mobilised to challenge external encroachments, but to an interconnected set of relationships, which are constantly reconfigured by individuals in response to macroeconomic, social, and political change, and dynamically employed to imbue meaning upon their apparently diverse range of experiences. Its power lies in its interrelatedness and complex, dynamic embeddedness within a cultural matrix of collectivised understandings, rather than in a specific institutional structure. Through a 'class culture', individuals' experiences are structured according to their relative access to resources in negotiating the labour market. These resources are both the product of, but also in part, formative of class culture. As Bourdieu has suggested, individuals take on dispositions which are not so much chosen, but which complement their allocation of resources and therefore objective opportunities. He describes these dispositions as a 'necessity made into virtue' (1977), and employs them to distinguish distinctive class practices which correspond with underlying structural conditions of existence. Swartz (1997: 103) described the inter-relationship between structural circumstances and 'class culture' in terms of the following circular process,

Habitus tends to shape individual action so that existing opportunity structures are perpetuated. Chances of success or failure are internalised and then transformed into individual aspirations or expectations; these are in turn externalised in actions that tend to reproduce the objective structure of life chances.

The understanding of class culture posited in this chapter is comprised of a series of resources and understandings which are differentially drawn upon by individuals in different contexts, across time, and in relation to the meaningful relationships which these resources have with their circumstances. So while experiences are primarily structured, class culture

also facilitates a behavioural 'stylistic affinity' which entails an adaptation to unique (and dynamic) structural circumstances, which Bourdieu (1989) likened to handwriting differentiation given the structural constraints engendered by language and materials. Class culture affects individuals differently according to their positioning within social space, and their consequent relative distribution of 'capitals' across time, but has an overall effect of harmonising their inter-actions.

Gender is central to appreciating the structuring impact of 'class culture', since it mediates how it is embodied and employed by individuals. Bourdieu theorised the inseparability of class and gendered processes thus:

sexual properties are as inseparable from class properties as the yellowness of lemon is from its acidity: a class is defined in an essential respect by the place and value it gives to the two sexes and to their socially constituted dispositions. This is why there are as many different ways of realising femininity as there are classes and class fractions, and the division of labour between the sexes takes quite different forms, both in practices and in representations, in the different social classes. (1984: 154-5)

The separation of industrial and domestic production within capitalist society, as Hunt (1980) observed, has served to uphold a traditional gendered division of labour, accentuated in areas which relied upon a single (male) industry, like the South Wales Valleys. This has had implications for the way in which men and women have approached class. While men have developed an explicit 'class consciousness' through their paid employment, politically formalised in the trade union movement, women's 'work' identity developed primarily within the privatised sphere of the family, and these responsibilities militated against the development of a formalised sense of collectivity. Furthermore, where women have engaged in paid employment, their earnings were frequently regarded as a 'luxury' supplementing the male breadwinner's wage (even though these were often essential to their families' survival), and their identities continued to be formed primarily within the private sphere (Hunt 1980; Morris 1990). However, as chapter four revealed, 'community' has considerable significance in gendered societies, as a vehicle through which women accessed a common experience or 'class culture'. Furthermore, as J.Pahl's (1972) work on patterns of money management illustrated, working-class men's 'individualised' approach to their personal

money, contrasts with women's prioritisation of finances in terms of the collective welfare of their families. Nevertheless, broad-brush approaches to gendered identities conceal a broader range of masculinities and femininities existent within coalmining communities, which are interlinked with structural inequalities, so that for example, a 'strategic' woman is able to conceptualise femininity more flexibly than a 'survivalist' one. A traditional understanding of class culture then, which regards men as collectively conscious and women as individually motivated, which therefore prioritises men's class experience as more 'authentic', is flawed in its failure to recognise the differential class practices assumed by men and women under dominant ideologies which informed gendered behaviour, but also because it overlooks the differentiated experiences within even apparently homogenised populations.

As a result of the way in which class interacts with gender in capitalist societies, men and women have qualitatively different experiences of class culture. Skeggs (1997a) and Raey (1997) are insightful on this process, arguing that a dominant ideology employing restrictive definitions of masculinity and femininity provides an important mechanism through which women become confined to a private sphere and men restricted to a public one. This ideology is culturally mediated such that deviation from its norms meet with cultural disapproval. Skeggs goes further in suggesting that the effectiveness of this mechanism in determining behaviour, lies in that fact that explicit cohesion is only rarely employed, since conformity to gendered roles brings its own rewards in terms of social status. In other words, through 'doing' femininity and masculinity proficiently, women and men acquire cultural validation within their social spheres (or class cultures), and hence become complicit in sustaining dominant ideologies. Considering the embeddedness of the dominant ideologies which have governed gendered behaviour in the South Wales Valleys, a fact substantiated by earlier evidence, it is vital that a re-examination of class experiences broadens its analytical lens by rejecting masculinised definitions of class which ignore women's class experiences, and develops a more inclusive recognition of class behaviour.

A frequent criticism made of class analyses attempting to demonstrate the fundamental significance of gender in understanding how class is differentially lived and articulated, is that gender is merely 'added on' to the analysis, one among several 'less important' variables, which might include ethnicity, sexuality and age. However, this thesis has

approached class from *within* a feminist perspective, gender relations having been from the outset regarded as central, and their persistence, and the recognition that traditional class theory inadequately represents women's experiences, having been the motivation for the project. This recognition of gender differences has been a driving force in the development of a more inclusive class theory, gender divisions being regarded as a fundamental part of class structures, being interrelated with 'capitals' in all their forms.

6.2 Class, identity processes and social transformation

The explanatory power which class lends identity processes unfolded during the course of the research project at two levels. First it allowed me to explore the relationship between the various disparate voices of my informants and broader explanatory theory, bringing into focus the interconnections between their life projects. But secondly, it was personally revealing, and enabled me to interrogate my own self-knowledge and understandings. While I had not set out consciously to confront these issues, as I reflected upon the experiences of my informants, class increasingly surfaced as a process which made sense of the various similarities and distinctions in identity formation.

My own background is relevant here both because it informs my work and interests, but also because it has inevitably affected how I was perceived by my informants and how they chose to engage with me. I lost count of the number of times I was asked the question, "Where is your father from, bach?"²⁵ While this initially confused me: how did people realise my father was Welsh?, I soon realised that my name²⁶ positions me perhaps before all else. I learnt to appreciate the doors which were opened by something which I had taken for granted, since in some imperceptible way, my name established my authenticity in researching my roots rather than being an 'objective' and dispassionate observer.

My parents were first-generation university graduates, and met in university having benefited from the post-war establishment of the welfare state. My father's background is eerily similar to the main character in Raymond Williams's novel *Border Country*. His family had

²⁵ 'Bach' being Welsh for love or dear.

²⁶ Parry is the Welsh version of Harrison.

been miners, and his father, the eldest son, spent his life working on the railways. My father's decision to take A-levels and later go to university, was initially opposed by his family, and he was forced to conform to cultural expectations for some time by going out to work in order to contribute to the domestic income. While his mother evidently came around to his decision to pursue a scientific career, and was latterly extremely proud of his academic achievements, his father experienced more difficulty in coming to terms with what he perceived to be my father's rejection of his roots. Over the years, this has led to endless heated arguments in which my father was described as a 'class traitor', an accusation which I and my brother have perceived ourselves to be implicated in.

My mother came from an English rural background, an altogether different class location. Her father was a farm labourer, and she challenged both cultural and gendered expectations in going to university, studying science, completing her doctorate and settling in South Wales. As a result, a large emotional gap opened up between them, and my mother frequently complains that her mother never talks *to* her, but continues to act as if she were that child who never left home. I was brought up with the knowledge that my mother's parents considered her to have married 'beneath' herself, a recognition which has never been overridden by my father's class mobility in having become a senior academic. Both sets of grandparents have simultaneously dealt with my mother's unfamiliar class and gender positioning by 'imagining' her in terms of a full-time housewife, and choosing to ignore her career in cancer research (Parry 1994).

I was born and brought up in Swansea, attended a local comprehensive school, with a heterogeneous mix of backgrounds, and never experienced any particular difficulty with my class location, presumably because of my comparative privilege and ability to access resources in assimilating the 'rules' of interaction, such as appropriate use of accent and dialect. However when I left Wales at eighteen to go to university, it became clear that being Welsh was regarded as something 'other' by my contemporaries, that being audibly Welsh located me as being intellectually inferior, and I had to learn a new set of social rules. I have noticed this more visibly with my brother, who has acquired a whole range of 'voices' which he employs in moving through social space²⁷, and with my father, who moves in and out of

²⁷ In addition, an interesting strategy my brother has adopted professionally is to use his 'real' name, Edward, rather than his social or family name, Matthew. This started because while studying at Bristol, an environment

Welshness as a political gesture. Meanwhile my own accent has become indistinguishable from my mother's (itself changed from a Lincolnshire accent) as we have become (we imagine) non place-specific. Perhaps this is linked to the anonymity of living in a city, or in my mother's case, the inhabitation of a globalised scientific community. Moving through social space, I am constantly aware of how my class experiences position me in the world, and in particular I have become aware of the public school class domination of the academy, which at once makes me angry, but which also highlights my own lack of that cultural capital. I wonder who really fits in, since in comparison to the women writing in the *Class Matters* (1997) anthology, I am obviously privileged, yet I continue to feel 'othered' by the academy for not looking, articulating, moving in the right way. I have the wrong cultural background and the wrong type of femininity.

Yet, as several contributors to the book note, I have a powerful resource at my disposal, that of socialism, which I have been able to use in developing an understanding of structured inequalities, and in forming an opposition. My access to this discourse, I can see now, has been the product of particular resources which I have been able to access: a privileged education; parental ambition; my father's determination that I should challenge dominant ideologies; exposure to alternative ideologies, and the combined influence of two particular (male) teachers at school and university, who I can now see were not dissimilar to my father in being egalitarian, eccentric intellectuals. The feminist resources which I later discovered (explicitly; they have always been implicit in my socialism) complemented this personal political capital, although these were more privileged, and became visible to me only when I took a third-year university course outside of my discipline.

Class and gender then, have shaped my own experience, and led me to ask how the tools of empowerment can be made more accessible. I shall pursue this theme, relating to the practical implications of my thesis, in a policy document which I plan to write and distribute to suitable external agencies and interested groups. Our identities are from the beginning classed and gendered, but lacking a recognition of this, our knowledge of these processes is 'disembodied' (Morley 1997). This makes it difficult for us to challenge the assumptions

in which he felt 'othered' because he was not public school, he noticed that names assumed a class symbolism, and that 'Edward' carried with it a different class status to the one he inhabited.

and expectations which we make and which others impose upon us, which are a fundamental part of the process whereby the structures constraining us are maintained.

If the reader will forgive this diversion into reflexivity, I believe that it illustrates three important points which are fundamental to an understanding of class. Firstly, it goes some way towards demonstrating that class processes are central to our identity, to how we develop an understanding of who we are, although their influence is largely implicit. Secondly, in the way that we are constantly positioned both by ourselves and by others, but also travel through classed and gendered subjectivities, it reveals that class positioning is not static, but a relational process in constant motion. For example, I occupy divergent, yet interrelated class positions as a unionised council worker, as a Labour Party activist, as the daughter of academics, as a graduate student, as the progeny of a Welsh comprehensive and coalminers, as a homeowner, as a single young woman, and in living with a teacher (who himself comes from an English forces background). And thirdly, it demonstrates that our understanding of class is broader than its traditional occupational interpretation. More important in my own understandings of class than my current (transitory?) position, or my partner's occupation, have been my background, location and the symbolic manifestations of class which I have negotiated.

The shortcomings of class as an analytical tool identified in chapter one are not insurmountable, rather through reconceptualising class, and making it attentive to a transformed social environment, it offers the single most relevant implement for interrogating the inequalities which continue to structure individuals' lives. Class illustrates that individuals are not an undifferentiated mass, but related to one another in complex and structured ways which correspond to probabilistic lifechances. It thus provides a tool which imbues meaning upon coexistent difference and similarity, and which is capable of exploring the tensions incumbent within these. However, in any discussion of class, it is important to differentiate between class 'consciousness' or class subjectivity, that is, between an awareness of social positioning, and class the theoretical tool. This thesis has employed class in the latter context.

Skeggs (1997a, 1997b), Savage *et al.* (1999) and Reay (1997) have been foremost amongst theorists recently seeking to make sense of the problematic character of class subjectivity,

and have raised awareness of issues like ‘disidentification’ (Skeggs 1997a) in understanding this process. A factor implicated in why people find it so difficult to socially position themselves, is that they have been faced with a simplistic three-layered model, which in broad effect is only two-layered (working and middle-class), between which lies a problematic boundary, in that its relative permeability makes its conceptualisation an abstract project. Bottero (1998) has recently commented on the inadequacy of relying upon boundaries to demarcate social positioning, particularly in light of the relative proximity which may exist between individuals of distinct ‘classes’ simultaneous to their social distance from members of the same ‘class’. Furthermore, the processes through which class boundaries become constructed and are maintained involves a continual process of stereotyping and ‘othering’, with the effect that individuals frequently feel uncomfortable locating themselves upon either side of these boundaries. Bourdieu (1984) would add to this that understanding class structure is itself a product of cultural privilege, and Skeggs (1997b) and Reay (1997) would point to the various penalties accrued in the form of pathologisations which working-class women experience in mobilising recognitions of their class location.

The weak nature of class identities however, does not negate from the utility of class as a theoretical understanding, indeed conceptualising class as a multidimensional *process* sheds light upon the tensions inherent in class subjectivities, and facilitates an analysis of the complex relationships between individuals. Savage *et al.*’s (1999) empirical material demonstrates that ambivalence about subjective class location is not matched by a rejection of the continued existence of class inequalities. In particular, a focus upon class *culture* is well placed to bring together identificatory experiences at a time when terms like ‘community’ have proven inadequate for these purposes. ‘Class culture’ in this context then, is employed as a theoretical tool to further an understanding of structured life chances, rather than as a description of an environment of which individuals are actively aware, although it is also used to make sense of their experiential articulations. As with Raymond Williams’s (1961) ‘structure of feeling’, the term is used to highlight the significance of cultural memory in constructing a current social environment. Common understandings are passed down through the generations, but these are reflexively employed, and the subsequent description of the class culture of the South Wales Valleys should be regarded as specific to a particular period in time, and as potentially and fundamentally dynamic.

This brings us on to the question of why it is a *class* culture in particular, that is central to understanding the identificatory experiences of the populations of the South Wales Valleys, rather than a gender culture, or ‘culture’ more broadly. The answer to this lies in the correlation which Bourdieu observed between social class distinctions and cultural practices, which imbues the concept with useful qualities in disentangling the structure-agency equation and in looking at the relational character of social relationships. Exploring the ‘class cultures’ of the studied population facilitates an understanding of how objective structured inequalities become translated into meaningfully integrated dispositions and types of behaviour. If class is understood as a tool which is used to impose meaning upon the unequal positioning of individuals in relation to one another within a society, then ‘traditional’ class analyses employed a narrow definition of ‘class’ which stemmed from economic, and specifically, occupational criteria. This allowed class analyses to be conducted relatively straightforwardly in regions such as the South Wales Valleys in the past, since work experiences could be mapped fairly unproblematically onto an occupational schema. However, employment experiences have recently become more pluralistic. With the contraction of the coalmining industry, and a widening of the employment experiences of the Valleys’ population, it is no longer sufficient to employ class as a shorthand for linear career progression within a single field. This has been compounded by married women’s entry into the labour force, particularly into ‘new’ types of employment which fit less convincingly into the occupational categories of old-style class stratification schemes (see Abbott and Sapsford 1987). ‘Class’ has always derived its power from a broader source of social structures than those grounded in the labour market. This thesis, in describing commonalities experienced in terms of politics, community, family, leisure and space, and in emphasising how these are structured to a greater degree than they are chosen, sheds light upon a broader and more illuminating set of class processes.

The restrictive understanding of class as linked to paid employment stems from the masculinised character of sociological thought which characterised much of the twentieth century, prioritising men’s social experiences in the public sphere. While one response to this might be to replace the term ‘class’, this detracts from its symbolic value in highlighting structural social inequalities. A more productive response is to approach class inclusively, reconfiguring class understandings to incorporate women’s experiences, and highlighting gender divisions within social relationships extending beyond the labour market. The

employment of a terminology of 'class culture', in developing a more complex understanding of social relationships, allows movement and constraint within a population to be theorised relationally. Class culture is therefore a useful theoretical tool in understanding the patterning of social relationships as they are mediated through broader frameworks of interpretation or 'cultures'. It allows sense to be made of the lives of the populations of the South Wales Valleys, who occupy a diverse range of experiences, but who nevertheless share complex similarities, which they interpret in the context of their broader social experiences.

6.3 A model of the social space of class culture

A broader understanding of class relationships and the 'cultural' framework which they form, however, does not lend itself to a linear hierarchical model of stratification. Individuals possess a plurality of interweaving, dynamic and sometimes contradictory social characteristics, such as gender, age, familial relationships and occupation, which complicates any attempt to chart their social positioning hierarchically. Bourdieu (1984) has usefully distinguished individuals' differential positioning within a class, in terms of the various 'capitals' which they respectively possess, and which they are able to employ. He understands these 'capitals' to exist in various forms - economic, social, cultural and symbolic - and he furthermore stresses that these should be conceptualised in terms of the overall volume of capital which individuals possess, its composition, and its distribution across time. Bourdieu's description of 'capitals' in these terms, is comparable to the understanding of 'resources' employed in this thesis. So resources, which are the structuring engine of class, are not just occupational (related to income and status), but also include familial relationships and political education, factors which are themselves affected by gendered experiences.

Constant change occurs within class processes, both as individuals move through the life-cycle and as they move through social time in which structures and expectations have become increasingly dynamic in a globalised environment which has made accessible an increasingly broad range of social spaces. As this movement occurs, so too people's access to and subsequent employment of capital is transformed. Class formations then, as Skeggs (1997a) points out, can only ever be regarded as partial, and when we attempt to describe

them, we do so in terms of a snap-shot, simplistic picture, which serves a heuristic function. In recognising this complexity, Bourdieu (1984) has suggested that class be theorised as a 'social space'. This is a useful concept in describing the class culture of the South Wales Valleys, since it enables the spaces of interaction to be imagined as multi-dimensional, non-static entities, revealing not endless diversity, but rather highlighting simultaneous social distance and proximity. Using such a model it becomes possible to develop an understanding of the specific power of a 'working-class experience' which clusters together individuals occupying similar social circumstances, and marks them out as distinctive from 'middle-class' experiences. Crucially, it allows diversity and movement to be charted within a broader understanding of the social space of class culture. The remaining part of this chapter 'fleshes out' this model by mapping onto it the case studies described in chapter five, in so doing providing a more pragmatic understanding of how a processual and relational conceptualisation of class facilitates a complex understanding of the fundamental momentum of structured inequalities in driving individuals' lives.

A simplified model is developed below of the network of social relationships revealed in the preceding chapters, which together describe the social spaces of the 'class cultures' of the populations of the South Wales Valleys (Diagram 1). The overall model then, represents the entire 'social space' of the populations living in the studied area, and various groups of individuals are positioned across this social space in approximation to their relative social distance. While the horizontal axis represents a spectrum of masculinities and femininities, the vertical axis represents the accumulation of resources. For example then, extensive communal networks (cultural capital) are employed to participate in new forms of leisure; supportive partners (social capital) are drawn upon by women in developing egalitarian relationships and in becoming re-trained; and personal or inherited finances (economic capital) are used to initiate strategies of self-employment. The reader can then imagine various circles being superimposed on top of these groups which illustrate the context of a multitude of interrelated 'class cultures', which become larger and less uniform as individuals are able to employ a greater amount of resources.

This model is contrasted with that describing the social space of class culture which existed under coalmining. This illustrates a more holistic set of social experiences, which were structured primarily through labour market positioning and gender (Diagram 2). Through

charting the relational patterns which can be described as class experiences, it can be seen that structure persists in describing social movement. Notably the current model continues to recognise the significance of occupation and gender as structuring forces, but also denotes the relative importance of familial, political, leisure, and communal factors. Class experiences then, are embedded in a variety of social relationships. Of course, there are several difficulties associated with this model being represented on a two-dimensional scale. It is difficult, using such a framework, to accurately convey social distance between relationships, and it provides little understanding of the temporal dynamic at work in patterning social relationships. However, the value of the model rests in its illustration of the positioning of various collectivities in relation to one another within a broader 'class culture' or habitus. Furthermore, it distinguishes between a 'working-class' culture and a 'middle-class' one, whilst recognising that permeable boundaries exist between the two, which can be penetrated by certain socio-economic groups and in the course of individual trajectories, such as the self-employed, who consequently share cultural experiences within the social spaces of both class cultures.

It should be noted, however, that the labels of 'working-' and 'middle-class' in this model are less important than the structured differentiation which it reveals. A binary division is inadequate in recognising the plurality of socio-economic differences and commonalities which exist both within and between the oppositional categories which it sets up. Furthermore, the populations of the South Wales Valleys, still less the informants who were interviewed, cannot be considered 'representative' of class stratification, largely because women's working experiences are less established there, and also because the population lacks a significant white-collar service sector class. Therefore 'middle-class' experiences constitute a less significant part of the model. Unusually also, in comparison to regions with more mixed labour markets, the spatial context of the model is central in providing the knowledge which permits movement through the social spaces of class culture. What the model, in its entirety demonstrates, is that structure is an important determinant in understanding individual mobility, with those furthest down the model least able to access resources, and therefore experiencing a narrower range of social spaces. Agency then, is a scarce asset, developed through proximity to forms of capital: those with the most capital can exert the greatest amount of 'choice' in negotiating social space, while those with least are constrained to a more limited social experience. Agency is never completely unbounded; the

choices which can be exercised are themselves a product of the particular composition of capital which can be utilised by an individual at a given moment in time, and these are the consequence of the particular structural circumstances of their biography.

The model should be considered primarily as a heuristic tool; in practice the social space of class culture must be imagined on at least three dimensions. A consideration of how individuals' class experiences are informed by their familial relations, reveals the necessity of this conceptualisation. Individuals do not exist in isolation within social space, but are the product of their various relationships, their families being a particularly significant factor in this process. The social spaces inhabited by the people we are close to, directly affect how we negotiate social space, and furthermore we do so in an interactive process which considers their experiences and attitudes. So for example, a woman's part-time work may be a direct consequence of her husband's full-time employment and the understandings which the two of them have formulated regarding gendered behaviour, rather than a reflection of her inability to find a more permanent occupation. The consequential relationships she develops within the community and the family are thus a direct result of her husband's occupational positioning. This however, is not to suggest that social class reading should be determined, as implied by traditional class analyses, through households, but rather that class understandings derive from a variety of sources, and are both individually experienced for example through occupation, but are also mediated through relative embeddedness in social relations. As Charles (1990b) has pointed out, husbands and wives thus have a mutual impact upon one another's class experiences, rather than a *coincidence* of class interests.

The axes of identity examined in the preceding chapters can now be brought together to develop a more holistic understanding of class experiences, and can be seen to apply to the model on different conceptual levels. Spatial identities are superimposed over the top of the social space, since while the model can be generalised to apply to Welsh coalmining communities more broadly, informants' experiences related to the specific class cultures which they inhabited and negotiated through the acquired knowledge which embedded them within these relationships. Collective identities can be conceptualised in terms of the various broad groupings which are juxtapositioned to signify the degree of social space existing between them. And personal identities can be understood in terms of the trajectories which individuals are able to affect within the social space of their class culture. As the next

section returns to the case studies described in chapter five, and employs them to examine the complex process whereby individuals negotiate and are constrained by the social spaces of their class culture, Diagram 3, positioned after the case studies, provides an illustration of how Kate, Gary and Sheila's trajectories can be mapped onto the conceptual model developed in this section. Once again, it should be emphasised that the final diagrammatic model represents only a snap-shot picture of class experiences, since its two-dimensional scale cannot take into account past and future mobility in relation to current social positioning.

Diagram 1:

The social space of class culture within the South Wales Valleys: the present day

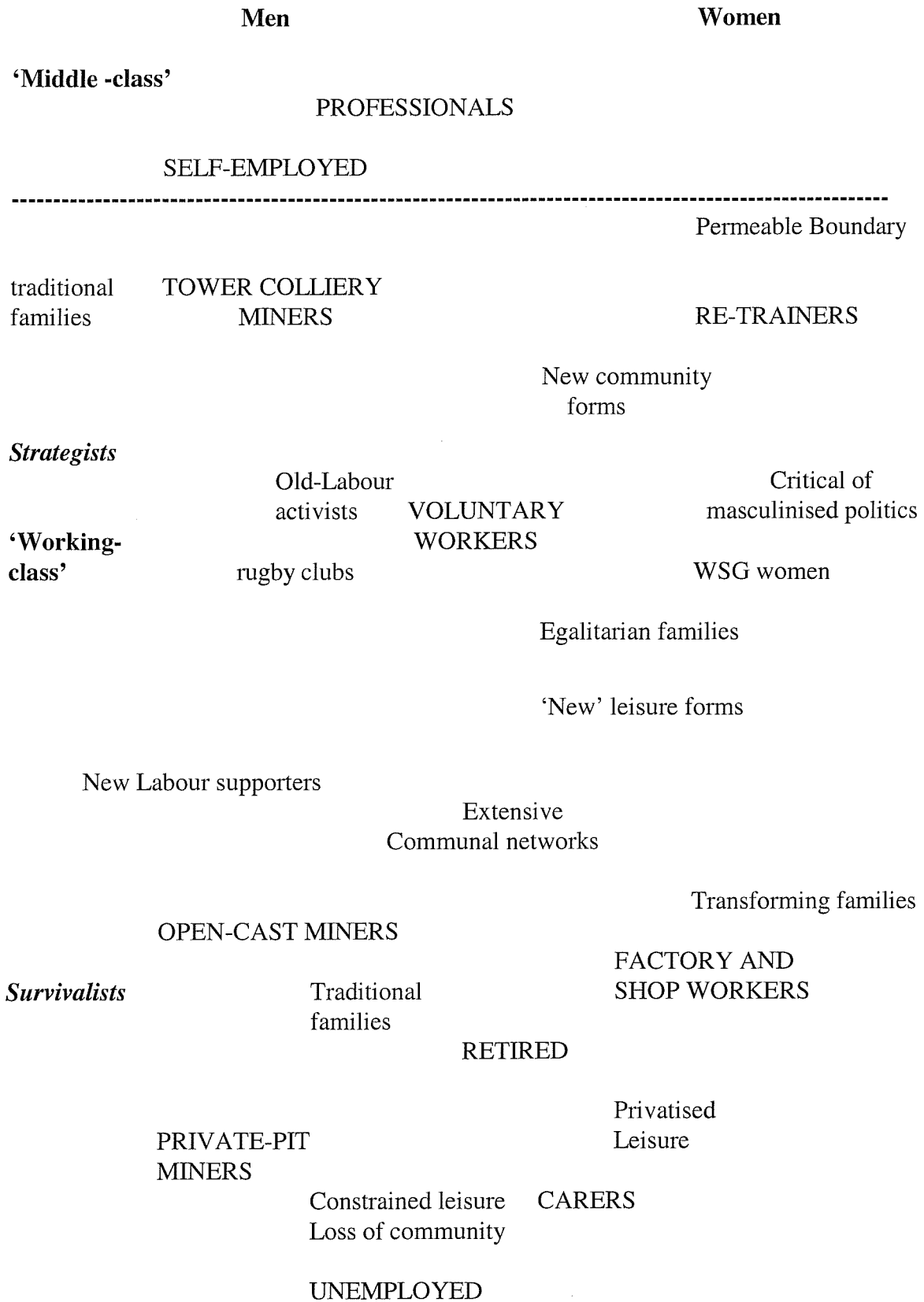
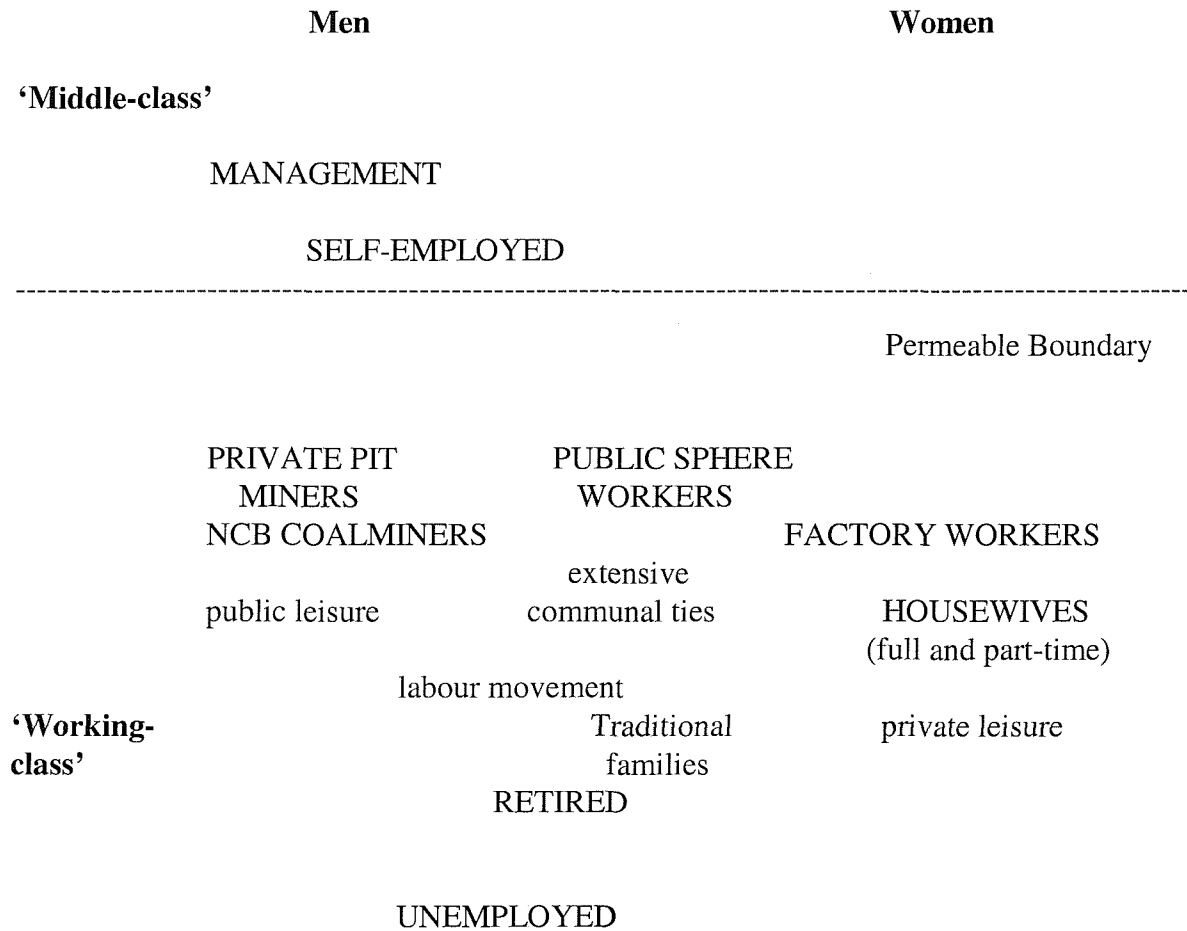


Diagram 2:

The social space of class culture within the South Wales Valleys prior to industrial restructuring



6.4 The Case Studies Revisited

6.4.1 Kate Bayliss

Kate's trajectory across social space has been limited by the structural restrictions she experienced as part of the gendered expectations associated with her class location. In coming from a 'traditional' family background, she perceived herself to have little choice but to assume the role of a caring daughter when her parents fell ill. In doing so, she sacrificed her occupational ambitions, which (as a nurse) had in turn been shaped by a dominant cultural ideology which laid out appropriate models of masculine and feminine behaviour. The embodiment of these understandings of femininity have correspondingly informed Kate's behaviour within her marriage: she has devoted herself full-time to the needs of her family, and become increasingly subsumed in a privatised experience. While Tony has taken on more domestic duties in recent years, this has owed more to their material circumstances - his own unemployment and Kate's physical inability to bear the full burden of domestic responsibility - than to fundamental transformations in their gendered identities. Kate guards her husband's gender identity in positing his domestic assistance as temporary and continuing to identify him primarily as the breadwinner. While she recognises his present unemployment as problematic in terms of his psychological well-being, she has come to terms with her own thwarted occupational ambitions more pragmatically. This demonstrates that cultural expectations regarding appropriate gendered behaviour continue to be embedded within her own identity.

Nevertheless, Kate regards her gendered role as to some extent regressive, and is more optimistic about gender equality in the future. Indeed, she describes her children's future in terms of a more equitable distribution of responsibilities:

this generation hopefully is that last generation of male chauvinist things in this Valley. My next generation, where my children are going to be involved, is going to be grand. It will be because I've got two sons-in-law and they are definitely better. They're definitely more of a share-share basis. [...] But the old community spirit with my father

and my mother, he went down the boozier and she looked after the kids. No two ways. He'd have earned the money and she did as she was told. It's bloody awful, isn't it?

However, her daughters' current experiences continue to demonstrate a replication of gendered expectations. The dominant ideology operating in Kate's class culture can thus be seen to structurally embed these types of attitudes within the social spaces in which individuals move. Her youngest daughter is expected to take on a heavy domestic load, and her eldest daughter is currently experiencing the maternal role as restrictive of her career. Their relative immobility within their class culture, a product of structural restrictions, thus confines their movement within social space to a fairly narrow range of experiences. However Kate's middle daughter is more mobile, having 'married well' and works for a large organisation, where she has been able to access particular resources, such as affordable crèches. These have facilitated her movement through social space to a greater degree than her sisters, who are more dependent upon culturally-specific resources like the family.

As industrial restructuring has transformed the composition of social space making up local class cultures, and individuals have found themselves bound to a more heterogeneous set of social relationships, people like Kate whose embeddedness in the private sphere structurally constrains their social experiences, have experienced class culture increasingly in terms of loss and restraint. Unable to access the type of resources which might facilitate her challenging a traditional familial ideology, or moving into paid labour and new community forms, Kate struggles to maintain kinship and neighbourhood ties in order to consolidate her status within the community. She explicitly recognises her communal relations in terms of loss, and regards this as being tied to the restructuring of the local labour market, rather than due to a more fundamental change in the character of the population. She therefore understands this experience as a structural rather than an agentic issue. This is revealing of her continued class awareness, since despite Kate's constrained collective experiences, she is able to formulate a broader analysis of her situation, imagining a collective experience which extends beyond actual face-to-face contact, and which thereby employs structural rather than individualised explanations. She describes how people are increasingly having to commute into work, which dilutes their available time for fostering communal ties, and in particular she highlights women's entry into the labour force as crucial in this process, women in the past having been the bedrock of coalmining communities:

they're so busy keeping up the standard of work or keeping a home like this going, they haven't got time. [...] I think it's to do with the wives working personally, because the wives are not here to communicate. [...] I mean a woman never went to work years ago. So she was the centre of that sort of community thing. You know, if there was a concern, she was the one that baked the cakes and did all this nonsense [...] you take these people next-door, they've got two children, she works in a bank. She comes home, she's got to cook food. You know, she hasn't got the time to communicate. And she communicates with her colleagues in work.

So while coalmining communities operated a system of separate gendered spheres which might be regarded as oppressive to women, this did provide compensations to women like Kate, who derived status from their knowledge of communal relations, and for whom these constituted a significant resource in facilitating their movement through social space. Industrial restructuring, however, has seen a diverse range of transformations in individual experiences. Individuals like Kate who are least capable of mobilising resources, have found themselves marginalised, and have witnessed a dual loss, in terms of the occupational expectations of their families, but also in the quality of their communal relationships. Thus their ability to move freely through social spaces has been severely restricted. Furthermore, Kate refers repeatedly during the interview to a decision which the family is currently facing, regarding moving to a smaller house. While this process is initially presented as a choice, it becomes evident that it is in fact a structural necessity since without a guaranteed income, the family are no longer able to meet mortgage repayments. This move seems likely to impose further constraints upon Kate's experience of class culture, as those neighbourhood ties which she has been able to maintain become severed, and her isolation in the home due to her physical immobility limits her ability to forge new relationships.

However, despite the structural restrictions which restructuring has placed on Kate's mobility, her explanatory approach to her circumstances continues to be informed by her collective class experience, which is navigated through her communal and familial relationships. She emphasises the continued qualitative difference existing between communities such as her own and 'English' ones:

The community spirit is still here, but it's just distant through lack of time. [...] The English people just don't have this community thing anyway. Never. I don't think they do. You can walk down, I mean I've lived in Nottingham, and you could walk down the road and people would just not see you. Busy doing their own thing, you know.

The national distinction, however, should be interpreted as being less significant than a *class* cultural difference, since the increased visibility of coalmining communities during the Strike enabled Kate to conceptualise commonality at a much wider spatial level. Furthermore, the distinction Kate makes between her own community and those of North Wales, which she describes as 'lovely mind ... but there is a different sort of attitude ... they're a different sort of people to us,' can be regarded in terms of the qualitatively different class cultures inhabited by these groups, the latter not being an industrial population.

Interestingly, a more explicit class identity, articulated in political terms, Kate derived not from her husband, but rather her father, which she thus conceptualised in terms of familial biography and positioning. For example, in describing her feelings about the Miners' Strike, she said:

I felt really strongly about it because I know that the, my father and my grandfather had fought well and really hard for the unions, to get the unions there. I just knew that Maggie Thatcher wanted to get the damn unions out.

This poses a challenge to traditional class analysts who have classified married (non-working) women according to their husband's occupation, since class understandings derive from a more complex combination of sources. Notably also, Kate's embodiment of cultural gendered assumptions regarding class terminology was revealed in that fact that she described her experiences using an explicit class language only in relation to politics; more generally, her collective experiences were articulated using the feminised discourse associated with community:

I mean you've got to vote for somebody haven't you, but even the Labour Party, as far as, I think they're still better for our sort of people, lower working-class people, I suppose, but they still look out for themselves.

So while Kate drew upon inherited knowledge to frame class politically, her more personalised employment of class related it to her localist experience, the specific 'class culture' of which she has knowledge, and within which she possesses an authenticated status.

The re-examination of Kate's interview raises a number of important points for the understanding of class developed above. It re-affirms the conceptualisation of social space as to a large extent a *structured* space, which while dynamic, imposes limitations upon individual mobility according to the distribution of capitals or resources. Kate occupies a marginalised position within this social space, being able to effect relatively little movement. Secondly, class is clearly a central analytical term in understanding processes of identity formation, since it informs the character of the habitus or class culture inhabited by individuals. However, as Kate's experience highlights, class understandings derive from more than one source, and are differentially employed in facilitating individuals' unproblematic assimilation into social space. For example then, while it was appropriate for Kate to refer to class explicitly when describing her political attachments, particularly since she deferred expertise to her father, it was less so when talking about the community, representing as it did, a 'feminised' sphere of class experiences. Correspondingly in describing her communal experiences, Kate employed an appropriately gendered language which drew upon her knowledge of kinship and neighbourhood collectivities. That Kate focused primarily upon her class understandings as experienced through the community and the family then, reflects the degree of her conformity to traditional gendered cultural expectations. However, she also experienced class in more diluted forms, through her own (former) occupation, through her husband's socio-economic positioning, and through the cultural heritage passed on to her by her father. Charles (1990b) in particular, has advocated employing a more complex multi-dimensional understanding of class in describing women's experiences, which are likely to draw upon a more diffuse range of influences, and Kate's experience vindicates the use of such an approach.

6.4.2 Gary Peters

Gary's experiences of class provide a sharp contrast to Kate's. This highlights both the diverse range of experiences which exist within the above model of the social space of class cultures, and the continued significance of gender as a structuring factor in these experiences. As chapter five detailed, work is of central importance to Gary's self-identity, and he has been involved in an on-going process of attempting to reclaim the collective experience associated with his work as a Coal Board miner. While he remains unsatisfied that this is being achieved within his current occupation, the communal relationships which he has fostered through his customers and in his leisure activities, can be regarded as an attempt to reconfigure his class experiences, and they go a considerable way in facilitating his knowledge of and movement through the social space of his class culture. In developing a mobile status, Gary has made use of resources or capitals which to a large extent have been the product of his structural gendered positioning within this social space.

In order to pursue a career of self-employment, Gary has utilised a combination of resources. Most obviously these have been financial, as he used his redundancy payment to set up his business, but equally important has been his ability to mobilise his knowledge of local social relationships to develop a client base. This knowledge has been established primarily through his former occupational relations within the collieries. His knowledge of how to move through social space, and also his established authenticity within the community, have facilitated his occupational progress in a way that women, 'outsiders' or more structurally marginalised individuals would find it difficult to achieve. The communal relationships which Gary enjoys are a product of his established structural embeddedness, the result of the specific circumstances of his biography, and it is apparent that these provide him with an authentic knowledge which could not be replicated through mere observation: that is, this knowledge requires participation. For example, he claims to be able to tell who is from the Valleys when out in a night-club in Swansea, due to his awareness of the rules of engagement employed within his class culture - the way people look, speak, *are*. It is a privileged knowledge, made more powerful through its being non-explicit, and provides him with status within that social space. While Gary's mobilisation of resources to facilitate his movement through social space was earlier described as 'strategic' behaviour, it is also

directly comparable to Bourdieu's (1984) analysis of how 'capital' can be deployed in 'reconversion strategies'.

A less visible, but fundamental resource as Gary compares his relative mobility with that of former colleagues currently experiencing unemployment, has been his wife's occupational security and relative affluence. This has allowed him to risk investing his redundancy payment in his own business since they could survive on her wage if the venture failed, but also to pursue a wider and more privileged range of occupational options, as for example, when he studied for a sociology degree. Gary recognises the impact which his familial resources (a form of 'social capital') have had upon his occupational experiences, but also notes that the embeddedness of gendered expectations within his class culture might make it more difficult for older (and presumably less adaptable) men to pursue a similar option:

You see, my wife's in a good job, and you also see often now it's the *woman* that's, it's very much a reversal of roles. Perhaps not with the house, excluding the house. But if it weren't for my wife working and earning the good money that she is ...

His relative youth too then, and the exposure he correspondingly received to a more pluralistic set of gendered expectations, has been an important resource in facilitating Gary's negotiated movement through the social space of his class culture. Gender also plays an important role in structuring his experiences. While Gary's familial relationships were rather more egalitarian than most, he conceded that his wife continued to bear a heavier burden of the domestic load, and the disproportionate nature of this relationship is compounded by his greater availability of 'free' time (he worked only three days a week). However, the greater part of this free time was prioritised for his pursuit of leisure activities. Nevertheless, Gary's familial relationships demonstrate dynamism since he has taken on more domestic responsibilities as his wife's career (which requires commuting) has become established. Indeed, while her occupation as a teacher conforms to culturally validated models of feminine mobility, within that profession she possesses an unusual degree of authority, although Gary's vagueness in describing her as 'head of something or other', might be considered in terms of a masculinised attempt to diminish the challenge which her status poses to his perceived role as 'breadwinner'. It was notable in the above quotation, that he used the phrase 'excluding the house', denying the reality of these relationships in positing

women's frequent dual load of paid employment *and* domestic responsibility as a role 'reversal', as if only through such a distribution of roles can a challenge to men's expectations of occupational primacy be borne.

Gary's attainment of accreditation in the form of a degree can also be regarded as a resource, one which Bourdieu would identify as constituting 'symbolic capital'. However, while Gary challenges its categorisation as such, suggesting that its utility has been minimal in his class culture, his description of the course content reveals that his degree has been significant as a source of knowledge through which he has developed a sophisticated understanding of the local labour market. This knowledge in turn, has enabled him to set up and successfully manage his own business. Resources or capital then, need not necessarily be explicitly recognised by individuals in order for them to be accessed and subsequently facilitate movement through social space:

Well to be honest with you, I think the course I done was so *pathetic*, I couldn't see where it was going to get me, you know. I reckon if you have done an O-level, I think you could have done [it]. [...] I don't know, I wasn't very impressed with the course at all. I quite enjoyed some aspects of it, like there was urban renewal, and social and industrial studies.

Gary's initial aversion to his credentialisation also reflects his lack of confidence in his own intellectual ability, his previous occupational experience having been one in which physical fitness was valorised - that is, since he found the course easy and he had no academic background, the course must be in some way deficient. However, in his ability to draw upon and reflexively relate particular aspects of the course to an applied environment, he demonstrates a level of analytical sophistication rare amongst undergraduates. His attitude, however, considered in the context of his relative privilege within the social space of class culture, demonstrates the significance of the structural restrictions which a dominant cultural ideology which devalues education can impose upon individuals inhabiting a particular 'class culture' in accessing symbolic capital such as credentialisation. It is only in theory that individuals possess equal opportunities in relation to educational resources.

However, in other ways, Gary has lacked the necessary capital which would allow him to move freely within the social space of his class culture. This is illustrated in his decision not to invest his redundancy money in the Tower Colliery buy-out, a decision which he now regrets. In retrospective discussion it can be seen that he was hampered through having been subject to a misinformation campaign which posited the opportunity as naive and feckless, and correspondingly he lacked the close social contact with unionists who might have been able to counter this discourse with insider information as to the auspicious nature of the investment. However, Gary's knowledge of the local labour market, and status within local social relationships have since been consolidated, and he has consequently been able to develop the necessary capital to facilitate his inclusion in such opportunities in the future. Gary's ability to accumulate cultural capital in this way demonstrates the on-going temporal dynamic present in the negotiation of class experiences.

Gary clearly occupies a relatively more privileged positioning than Kate within the social space of class culture, and furthermore he is able to demonstrate considerable mobility. This however, is not to suggest that structure is unimportant in Gary's life, rather that he has been more able to access certain resources facilitating his mobility, and an important factor in this process is the advantage afforded him through his gendered location within the social space. Notably familial relations are regarded by Gary as less important in establishing his class positioning, although fundamentally they have structured his mobility across social space. Like Kate, communal relations are an important source of his class experience, but unlike her, these are employed through a masculinised discourse which posits them in terms of occupational experiences. Traditional understandings of class then, are more applicable to Gary than Kate, since his occupation remains a primary source of his collective experience. However, this understanding still underplays the significance of wider sources of his class experience, such as leisure and familial background (his political identity having been unproblematically inherited from his father). Gary's interview also highlights the necessity of employing a dynamic model of the social space of class culture, since his experience demonstrates a diverse range of occupational attachments which he goes to some effort to relate to his understanding of class.

6.4.3 Sheila Thomas

Sheila's distinctive location within the social space of class culture has encompassed a degree of movement, and her experience sheds further light upon the diversity of positionings coexistent within a particular 'class culture', which are structured by positioning in relation to resources or capital. She provides an interesting comparison to Gary and Kate, since she has effected greater mobility than Kate, yet the dominant gendered ideology of her class culture continues to exert a prohibitive glass ceiling effect upon her experiences. The power of this ideology, however, rests in its ability to prevent a challenge from being mounted, through its providing the individual with a metaphorical magnifying glass which fosters their appreciation of those aspects of mobility which have been made possible.

As chapter five has shown, Sheila's experiences within her class culture have been diffuse, and she has moved in and out of the labour market in adapting to the temporal demands of her family. While in particular, she has experienced a greater degree of mobility since her experiences during the 1984/5 Miners' Strike, her familial relationships remain central in being prioritised over other experiences. This is despite her having formulated a fairly adaptable approach to domestic obligations with her husband, who while taking on domestic burdens as and when required, continues to be positioned primarily as the 'breadwinner'. The ongoing centrality of the family as a resource through which Sheila's class experiences are navigated demonstrates the continued degree to which a dominant cultural ideology continues to designate gendered behaviour, but the personal significance which she attaches to this role also reveals the compensations and status which women derive from this positioning.

Sheila's familial identity has been a key resource through which she has located her positioning within communal relationships, and she repeatedly employs a discourse of 'belonging'. Thus her class identity, understood through her status within the community, is authenticated through reference to a gendered discourse of kinship relations. Sheila's use of a familial discourse to negotiate social space, however, impacts upon her class experience in two quite distinctive ways. In terms of its positive significance, Sheila's familial heritage provides her with knowledge and status within the collective relations of the community. However, more regressively, her gendered interpretation of familial roles has deterred her

from seeking a full-time and permanent location within the public sphere, which as she has experienced through her voluntary work, can be one way of negotiating the communal loss associated with labour market restructuring.

Like Kate, Sheila identifies the qualitative change in local communal relationships as being largely attributable to macroeconomic forces - the heterogenisation of labour market experiences, and in particular, the need to seek work outside of the locale, which has restricted the amount of time invested in local social relationships. While she too paints a broader picture of communal loss, she also develops a sophisticated understanding of communal relationships, not as 'one' undifferentiated mass, but as a web of interlinked relationships, comprised of qualitatively different experiences. In this, she comes close to describing the theoretical model of the social space of class cultures described above. Her more refined level of analysis can be attributed to her 'strategic' approach to social relationships, which has facilitated her discovering new ways of moving through social space. This reconfigured understanding of social space also informs the linkages which Sheila makes between micro-level and macro-level relationships, for example in her attitude to the Welsh Assembly (in a conversation prior to the devolution referendum). In this discussion, it was clear that while Sheila felt that strength could be drawn from cultural distinctiveness, she also thought that it was crucial that this appreciation did not mask internal differentiation, and furthermore that dangers were inherent in separatism, since the complexity of social relationships ultimately meant that the local and the national, while distinctive, were also interlinked:

I wouldn't mind the Welsh having a say in what's happening, if they have an Assembly. But it's no good having ... 'cause you have different areas and different areas have to have different things, haven't they? You know, so I don't know about separate things. But an amalgamation would be all right.

Thus Sheila developed a class awareness upon two simultaneous levels: at a personal level in terms of her own social relationships, but also more broadly with an 'imagined' class with whom she shared commonalities. This latter, more traditional understanding of class, stemmed from her experiences during the Miners' Strike, when she came into contact with a

political discourse which had previously been inaccessible, and whereafter she became aware of the experiences which she shared with other socially excluded groups.

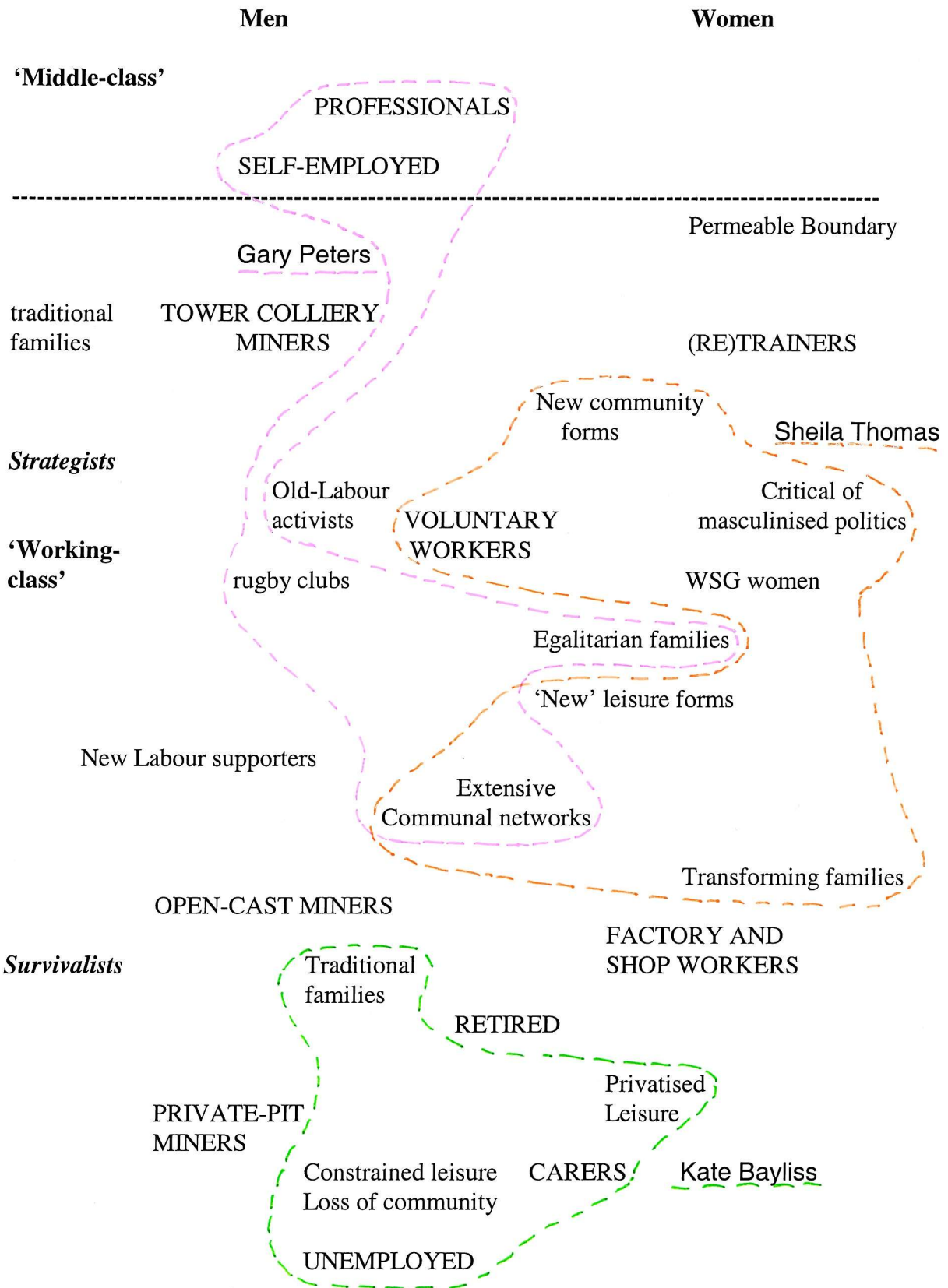
Sheila explicitly identified the Miners' Strike as a crucial moment from which her class identity came into sharper relief. Not only was it a time when her political consciousness was raised, and she started to make links with external groups with whom she shared commonalities, but the complexity of communal relations also became visible to her, as she perceived her community becoming divided into 'supporters' and 'others'. In this way, the Strike acted as an impetus for Sheila to challenge the idea that community could unproblematically constitute a holistic 'class for itself', and to recognise the internal differentiation comprising communal relationships. In particular, she drew strength from relationships which became visible through their mobilisation, for example, in her experience of the WSGs. Through these Sheila met like-minded women, with whom she formulated a new understanding of political behaviour which challenged the masculinised approach to politics previously dominating her cultural experience. This consequently led to her forging new routes of movement through the social space of her class culture, for example in her leisure activities, and also through her voluntary work, which in its 'caring' nature draws upon the class discourses both of her communal identity and also her political understandings, which are forged in a labour movement ideology of social justice.

Sheila's interview provides further insight into the structured differentiation which characterises the model of the social space of class culture developed above. While Sheila's experience of class is distinctive from Kate's and Gary's, a comparison between the three lends weight to the argument that the single most significant factor driving how individuals negotiate structured inequalities is gender. While Sheila has effected a greater degree of mobility than Kate, and a lesser one than Gary, her navigation of the social space of class culture is primarily a product of the resources which she has been able to access, which are themselves partly attributable to her gender positioning. So while, for example, her experiences during the Miners' Strike have provided a central resource in facilitating her reconfiguration of communal relations, her activities in the WSGs were a natural extension of culturally appropriate gender behaviour, and furthermore, her decision to pursue voluntary rather than paid work, complements a model of feminine caringness and does not challenge her husband's position as familial 'breadwinner'. Like the others, Sheila derived her class

understandings from a number of sources, but perhaps more than the previous case studies, an important factor in this process was her personal political experience. This was located in her activities during the Miners' Strike, which implied the formulation of a sophisticated level of socio-political understanding. However, this is belied by her conformity to the dominant cultural discourse governing gendered behaviour, which has led to her denying her own political expertise, a phenomenon which Skeggs (1997a) would interpret in terms of 'misrecognition', a strategy to avoid the pathologisations directed towards behaviour at odds with cultural definitions of 'femininity'. Instead, her knowledge of communal relations, navigated through her familial location and her voluntary work, is identified as most significant in informing her class experiences. Thus Sheila's class understandings derive from a complex combination of familial heritage, communal knowledge, work experience, and political activity, the latter of which is linked to her husband's former occupation as a coal-miner.

Diagram 3:

The social spaces of class culture experienced by the three case studies



6.4.4 The implications of the case studies for conceptualising the social space of class culture

An examination of how individuals negotiate class understandings, employed through the above case studies, reveals the diversity existent within a broad conceptualisation of class culture. While this conceptual framework, like Bourdieu's habitus, is fundamental in fostering common understandings and attitudes, its real power lies in its ability to provide individuals with the illusion of behavioural choice (employed through notions of 'taste' and 'lifestyle'). This in turn makes differences between individuals appear self-evident and hence promotes the reproduction of structures which inform their experience, and simultaneously masks subjective class consciousness. Diagram 3 maps the case studies onto the conceptual model to illustrate the 'class cultures' most familiar to the individuals studied. The more elongated shapes of Sheila Thomas's, and especially Gary Peter's class habitus, reflect their greater mobility in comparison to Kate Bayliss, which has been effected through their utilisation of capital, and which allows them to travel more freely through social space. If the process was continued of mapping informants' class experiences onto the diagram, a complex web of relationships would become apparent, highlighting the interlinked networks of commonality which exist between populations sharing a spatial location, but also their infinite diversity. Traditional understandings of class have failed to address the complexity of these relationships, still less to provide a dynamic model of structuration.

The social space of class culture then, should be regarded as a network of interlinked social relationships, structured primarily by occupation and gender, within which mobility is effected through the utilisation of available capitals. The theoretical model developed above, however, is dynamic, since as the case studies demonstrate, class is never a static experience, but a process in constant negotiation as individual circumstances are transformed over time. The diagrammatic model then, captures only the specific experiences of informants over the timeframe (1997-8) when the fieldwork was conducted. Since the research was qualitative, advocating a detailed understanding of individuals' experiences rather a more representative categorisation, the individuals interviewed cannot be considered 'typical' of the population in any statistical sense. So while the above diagram remains specific to the research, the conceptual model it embodies has a broader and transferable relevance to class analysis.

6.5 Class: Back to the Future

This thesis has presented evidence of the continuing pertinence of class for understanding how structural inequalities inform processes of identity formulation. However, it is necessary to revise the analytical context of class in order to counter the inherent sexism of traditional class analyses, and also to address the effects of a transformed industrial environment in which socio-economic experiences sit less happily within a linear mode of class stratification, deriving from a broader range of structured inequalities. While the populations of the South Wales Valleys have demonstrated considerable imagination in reconfiguring their class experiences in adapting to a restructured labour market, the diversity of their experiences is patterned such that the most structurally disadvantaged populations have been the least able to utilise resources to their own advantage. The structured distribution of resources is therefore key in understanding how individuals negotiate responses to industrial transformation. The case studies demonstrate in some detail how class experiences are stratified within a multi-dimensional conceptual model which traces the social spaces of their occurrence. Clearly traditional public sphere understandings of class have fundamentally neglected to address the complex process whereby class understandings derive from a plurality of sources, of which paid employment is only one. Central to the understanding of class culture developed in this thesis, is the unequal distribution of resources informing social experiences of mobility and stasis.

The single most significant factor in understanding the patterning of the class experiences of the populations of the South Wales Valleys continues to be the dominant ideology which culturally mediates and informs gendered expectations. However, while gendered experiences have been in all circumstances dynamic, both progressively and regressively so, cultural memory plays a significant role in continuing to permit the mobilisation of these discourses. The longer-term implications of industrial restructuring will become apparent only with the coming of age of the next generation, who are likely to have been brought up in circumstances where a model of male breadwinner/female carer is more flexibly mobilised in relation to broader social identities. Furthermore, it seems likely that the demography of the coalfield will be significantly transformed in the future by the demands placed upon young

people to become occupationally mobile and to leave the villages where they were born, particularly as house prices are pushed up by middle-class incomers attracted by the 'rural idyll' left in the wake of coalmining.

Perhaps more than anything, however, an examination of the identificatory experiences of the populations of the South Wales Valleys has revealed that in order to understand these processes, class must be employed dynamically. By conceptualising class as a *process*, a greater appreciation is developed of identity reconfiguration in adapting to a transformed labour market which has seen the emergence of a more heterogeneous range of occupational experiences, and which has fundamentally challenged men's traditional expectation of single-industry secure employment. This process differentially and simultaneously draws upon spatial, social and personal experiences, embodying a plurality of unequally but patterned resources in relation to individual circumstances, and interpreting them through a unique class culture which imbues meaning and provides direction in how they become manifested as agentic behaviour. Restructuring has had a multitude of effects in the Valleys, and to some extent it has made a broader range of masculinities and femininities accessible to suitably positioned individuals. However, more fundamentally it has elongated the social distance comprising individuals' experience, making it increasingly difficult for the less privileged to access and employ various types of resources. The populations of the Valleys have demonstrated an impressive ability to draw upon pre-existing social and cultural resources to effect mobility. Nevertheless, inequalities continue to be reproduced, and we can expect to witness further polarisation between 'rich' and 'poor' populations, and in particular a social isolation of the underprivileged, unless a more proactive policy agenda is presented, capable of drawing upon the region's existing strengths.

Appendix 1: Pen Portraits

The pen portraits listed below provide background information on the individuals interviewed for the thesis. Individuals who participated in the focus group are not described here, since the purpose of that exercise was to raise issues rather than to collect background information. It should be noted that where details of an informant's background might lead to them becoming identifiable, these are not reported, rather similar social circumstances have been substituted.

Kate and Tony Bayliss

I spoke to Kate and Tony, a middle-aged couple, during January 1997. Kate had self-selected herself for interview following pick-up of a questionnaire. The interview was set up with her, but Tony returned to family home while it was taking place and joined in. This was the longest interview, two-and-a-half hours. Tony had been a miner, had been made redundant and had found industrial work locally, but in recently this had become increasingly insecure, and he had recently been made redundant. Annice was a former nurse, then a carer, took an active part in various community crusades, and now suffers from ill-health. They have three children, one of whom is school-age, and continues to live at home.

George Beddoe

George was interviewed in June 1997. Coming from a mining family, his own labour market history covered a wide range of experience, from shop-work to skilled manual labour. However, he retired early due to a disability, and plays an active part in local politics. He is particularly concerned with the environmental impact of restructuring. Now widowed, David's two children are the source of much pride, having become professionally qualified, and having moved outside the Valleys.

Mike Breeze

Mike is a private-pit miner who was interviewed in February 1998. Having formerly worked for the Coal Board, and taken part in the 1984/5 Strike, he was made redundant shortly afterwards, and has since worked in a variety of private pits wherever the work has been available. An affable man whose social relationships tend to revolve around his work, he has nonetheless experienced a qualitative decline in workplace camaraderie in the private sector. Middle-aged now, and accepting that his workplace experience is unlikely to dramatically change, Mike's wife works full-time, and they encourage their children to broaden their horizons in finding work.

Phil Brooks

Phil is a middle-aged Tower Colliery miner who was interviewed in January 1998. Having formerly worked for the Coal Board, he was transferred to Tower shortly after the Strike, where he remained until its closure. He was pleased to be offered the opportunity to become a shareholder, and was supported in the decision by his family. His wife works full-time, and his hours at Tower have enabled him playing a more active part in their domestic affairs, a role which he has been pleased to pick up.

Peter Clark

Wayne is a Tower Colliery miner who was interviewed at his workplace in February 1998. In his 30s, Wayne took part in the 1984/5 strike, after which he was made redundant and worked for some time in various private pits, before finding a place at Tower shortly before it closed. An active unionist, he was enthusiastic about the buy-out process and remains so, it having secured him a satisfying and secure occupational role. Wayne is married and has two children, his wife working part-time.

Bethan Dafis

Bethan, a recently retired woman, was interviewed during January 1997. Her husband had been a striking miner, and she had played a central part in local WSGs, an experience which was liberating and which transformed her self-confidence. She continues to be active in the local Labour Party, through voluntary work, and in various community campaigns. Bethan worked in a local shop for most of her life. She has three adult children, who live locally.

Jill & Stuart David

Jill and Stuart were interviewed in July 1997. Stuart comes from a mining family, but himself has gone into farming, which he currently combines with part-time white-collar work. He is active in the local community. Jill works in social welfare, which involves some commuting, is active in various community campaigns, and also provides considerable assistance on their farm. They have two children, who they would like to become involved in the farm, but whom they realise would be more pragmatic to look for alternative work outside of the region.

Claire Davies

Claire was interviewed during June 1997. Now middle-aged, she has lived her whole life in the region, but being professionally qualified (like her husband), has commuted out to work. Coming from a mining family, she has an extensive local networks, and has been active in various community campaigns over the years. Recently however, she has become increasingly concerned at a growing apathy amidst 'her' community having taken early retirement, is now considering moving away from the area. Claire's domestic affairs were organised on an egalitarian basis, and she was ambitious for her teenage daughter to find professional employment outside of the Valleys.

Maria Eccles

Maria was interviewed in August 1997 as a representative of the Italian community in South Wales. Herself a professional who has settled in the region, she provided historical background on Italian immigration into South Wales, and particularly on the balancing of co-current Welsh and Italian identities, and how the Italian cultural attitude to the family has adjusted itself to a Welsh Valleys environment.

Rose Edwards

Rose is a middle-aged married woman who was interviewed in August 1997. Having come from a mining family, like her husband, they moved out of the Valleys shortly after their marriage, and her husband has set up his own business. They continue to maintain strong family links with the Valleys, and miss the close-knit communal relationships associated with their past, but appreciate that it would be more difficult to establish a similar quality of life there for themselves and their daughter.

Harry Ellis

Harry is a middle-aged married clergyman, interviewed in August 1997. He took to the clergy relatively late in life having formerly been industrially employed, and his position provided him with a unique perspective on communal relationships. His brothers had been striking miners, and have since taken early retirement. He is more ambitious for his own children, for whom he cannot envisage an occupational future in the Valleys.

Ron and Anne Evans

This interview took place in June 1997, and had originally been arranged with Phil, but being in the evening in the family home, his wife naturally joined us at a later stage. Phil is a former striking miner and unionist, who has found alternative industrial employment, and maintains his political interests by becoming involved in community politics. His wife, Kay, because involved in the WSGs during the 1984/5 Strike, and latterly in various community campaigns. She works in a local shop. They have three children, all at transitional stages of

the labour market, and whom they actively encourage to become mobile in finding secure employment.

Rebecca Evans

Rebecca is a now-retired former teacher who was interviewed in February 1998. Having been brought up in the Valleys, and marrying a miner, shortly after their marriage they moved into Neath town centre, where her husband found alternative industrial skilled work. Their families have gradually followed them, such that only recently they have found that they no longer have any ties left in the Valleys. Rebecca found great personal fulfilment through her work, and experienced the sort of supportive marital relationship which she observed was less common among her friends in the Valleys.

Rhianon Field

Rhianon is an elderly and disabled widow, who was interviewed during January 1997. Her husband worked in local mines all his working life, and latterly suffered from colliery-related ill-health. She had engaged in a variety of shop-work, and her longevity in the region enabled her developing dense communal networks. Rhianon has one daughter, who left the region to find professional work in Swansea.

Rhys Griffiths

Rhys was interviewed with Nigel Hughes at a local community centre in June 1997. A former miner made redundant after the strike, he is now reaching the age at which he would naturally have retired. His wife has been a full-time housewife and mother, bringing up their three children, who have recently moved out of the Valleys. Being unable to find suitable paid labour, Rhys fills this gap by playing an active part in community affairs. He is considering also leaving the Valleys, in order to be near his children, but weighs this against the dense communal networks he, and particularly his wife, enjoy in the region.

Kim and Huw Gwilym

Kim and Huw were interviewed in January 1997. Kim was suggested to me, on account of her having been active in the WSGs during the 1984/5 Miners' Strike. The interview took place in her home with her husband Huw also participating. They live outside of the Valleys, where Huw had formerly worked as a miner. However, he was made redundant shortly after the Strike, and has been unable to find suitable alternative work. Now middle-aged, Kim supports the family through her part-time work. Their daughter, a graduate, has also been unable to find work locally, and continues to live in the family home.

Fred Hale

Fred is a former striking miner who took early retirement after the 1984/5 Strike, and who was interviewed in August 1997. A widower, his grown-up children have been unable to find work locally and have hence moved away from the Valleys. While a miner, Fred was active in the union, an experience which more recently inspired his involvement in local politics. Having lived his whole life in the village, he has close-knit communal networks and enjoys an active social life.

Racheal and Mark Harris

Racheal was interviewed in January 1998, and was joined half-way through the interview by her husband, Mark. A couple in their 30s, Racheal is a nurse, while Mark works at Tower Colliery, having formerly been a striking miner. They have young children, and rely heavily upon their extended families for the provision of childcare. Mark was less satisfied with the Tower experience than other shareholders I spoke to, and described a similar hierarchy emerging to that which had existed under the Coal Board.

Lucy Hemp

Lucy is a retired woman who was interviewed in January 1997. Coming from a mining family, she has mixed part-time work with raising her family. Marrying a Labour Party activist, Lucy herself became involved in political activity in her 20s, and this has been an

ever-present influence throughout her life. At times taking up elected positions within her community, Lucy has now retired from the active political sphere, but maintains a strong interest and continues to socialise with her old Labour Party friends and colleagues.

Nerys Henry

Nerys is a middle-aged woman married to a former miner. She was interviewed in June 1997. Coming from a mining family, herself and her husband established their home in the village where they were both brought up. After the Strike, her husband was made redundant, and experienced a period of unemployment, before finding alternative skilled manual work. Nerys has mixed part-time work with raising her family, but at the time of the interview was not working: an active decision since her children having left him, her husband's wage was now adequate to provide for the family.

David Howells

David, a middle aged man, was interviewed in June 1997. A former striking miner and unionist, he was made redundant after the Strike. He admitted to finding unemployment a particularly scary prospect, and felt that his qualifications would be little sought after in a restructured labour market. However, he has been able to capitalise on his political knowledge, and has found local white-collar social welfare work which he greatly enjoys. His wife is a full-time housewife, and his son, now grown-up, works in a local factory.

Mary Hughes

Mary is an elderly widow who was interviewed in June 1997. Her husband had been an open-cast miner, but died relatively young, and she was left to bring up their children and care for elderly parents. Now living with her sick mother, in recent years, Mary undertook adult education classes, which apparently have given her the confidence to become involved in local political affairs, an experience which she finds extremely satisfying. She worries a great deal about her children, who have recently entered the labour market, but who have found only insecure and unfulfilling work.

Nigel Hughes

Nigel was interviewed with Rhys Griffiths at a local community centre in June 1997. A former miner who took early retirement, he is married to a former teacher. His son is qualified professionally, but being unable to find work in his field, works in a local factory. Like Rhys, in the absence of a labour market role, Nigel plays an active part in local community affairs, an experience which provides him with a certain amount of locally-validated status.

Beth Jenkins

Beth is the former wife of a striking miner, interviewed during July 1997. She was actively involved in the WSGs during the Strike, and this provided the impetus for her to move from local shop work into a social welfare occupation. She has since become more actively involved in a range of community campaigns, an experience which she finds immensely satisfying. Two of her sons still live at home, while the eldest has recently graduated, and is a source of much pride having found a professional occupation, which however, has called upon him to work away from the Valleys.

Sylvia & Bill John

Sylvia and Bill are an elderly couple who were interviewed in June 1997. Sylvia is a retired teacher, and Bill a former miner, utilises his spare time for his leisure activities and surrogate work with one of his sons, who is reconverting a derelict house. Sylvia meanwhile has extensive communal networks, despite having moved to the village upon marriage, and has an active local social life. Their sons have moved away from the Valleys and have professional occupations, while their daughter continues to live nearby, caring for their small grandchildren.

Matthew Jones

Matthew is a middle-aged unemployed former miner, who was interviewed in July 1997. Since his redundancy from the mines, his search for work has been hampered by ill-health, and the majority of his time is devoted to community and local political and leisure activities. His wife supports the family through her work in a local factory, and their two children have been unable to find work despite having taken part in various 'job creation' schemes.

Arthur King

Arthur is a middle-aged man who was interviewed in February 1998. An open-cast miner, he was one of the few who made the transition from deep-mining when the pits closed. A factor which may be important in his having been able to become assimilated into a different sort of mining community, although he continues to live in the Valley where he was born, are his Welsh-speaking credentials. He is divorced with grown-up children, who have left the Valleys to find work.

Maggie Lee

Maggie, a retired woman living in the Valleys, was interviewed in June 1997. Married to a former striking miner, her husband has been fortunate in finding secure and well-paid alternative local employment. She did not play an active part in the Strike effort, although she agreed with its principle. Maggie's working identity has been constructed in terms of a full-time housewife, and mother of their three children, who are now grown up and work locally. One of her sons continues to work as a miner, in a private-pit.

Owen Lloyd

Owen works in the open-cast management, and was interviewed in February 1998. In his early 30s, Owen became credentialised before returning to the area and entering the field in which his father and brothers worked. Owen lives with a professional woman who has moved to the Valleys. Although his skills are fairly transferable, Owen places a high premium on the communal relationships he enjoys in the region and area's natural

environment. This creates some tensions in his relationship, his partner not being so well-established in the area, and it being inconvenient for her work.

John Matthews

John is a Tower Colliery miner in his thirties, who prior to that had worked under the Coal Board, and had been a young man living with his parents during the time of the Strike. He was interviewed in June 1997. John lives with his partner, who works locally, and their young children. A softly-spoken man, John is pleased that he decided to invest in the Tower Colliery initiative, and it provides a good quality of life for his young family, and enables him to maintain the camaraderie associated with the mines.

Alan Morgan

A young married open-cast miner, Alan was interviewed in January 1998. Welsh-speaking, Alan currently supports his family, his wife being engaged in caring for their young children. Both their families living in the same village, they enjoy close-knit communal relationships and an active social life. While Alan's mother, Betty, is politically active, Alan remains fairly apolitical

Betty Morgan

Betty was interviewed during January 1997 at her workplace. She is middle aged, and later in life found satisfying work in a social welfare field. Herself and her husband live in a mining community, one of her sons is still a miner, and during the 1984/5 Strike, their relative occupational security allowed them to provide substantial support to striking friends and family. Politically active, and occupationally independent, Betty's egalitarian marriage has played a fundamental part in allowing her to pursue her own career. Since the interview took place, Betty has been promoted to a position of significant power.

Wyn Morris

Wyn was interviewed in January 1998 at Tower Colliery. A middle-aged married man, he was involved in the Tower buy-out team, and has found the experience immensely liberating. Having struck in 1984/5, he became politicised and joined the Labour Party. He has lived in the same village all his life, where he plays a strong role in local community activities, and where his family continue to live.

Keri Nicholas

Keri is a middle-aged woman who was interviewed in February 1998. Married to a former striking miner who has since found alternative employment, Keri became active in the WSGs during the Strike, which sparked a period of re-training and subsequent re-evaluation of her work. She is currently looking for work of a social welfare nature. Since the Strike, she has become involved in a variety of political and community activities from which she draws a great deal of personal fulfilment.

Rob Owen

Rob is an open-cast miner in his 30s, who was interviewed in February 1998. Welsh-speaking, he lives in a village near to the open-cast site, and is married to a local girl who works part-time in the post-office. They have young children. Rob was strongly attached to the region, and concerned about his future when the open-cast site eventually closed.

Gary Peters

Gary is an ex-miner in his 30s, who was interviewed in July 1997. Having been made redundant from a Coal Board mine, he worked in local private pits for some time. Having tired of their insecurity and lack of camaraderie, he undertook a degree. Following this, he changed career direction, and set up his own business in the Valleys, a role which provides financial satisfactions and the opportunity to maintain close-knit communal relations, but which he nonetheless is dissatisfied in. A married man with young children, Gary leads an active social life through the local rugby club.

Jacky Powell

Jacky was interviewed in January 1997 during the piloting stage of the fieldwork. She is a retired, having formerly worked as a colliery canteen worker, and is thus one of the few women with insider knowledge of that male workplace. Jacky has a grown-up family and in her retirement, she has become active in the local Labour Party.

Richard Powell

Richard is a Tower shareholder in his 30s who was interviewed in February 1998. Having first become credentialised, Richard went into coalmining in his 20s, where he has experienced little difficulty in obtaining permanent employment. Married to a part-time civil servant, they have young children and strong communal ties, and despite their work entailing some degree of commuting, they attach a strong priority to being able to remain living in the region. Richard is extremely pleased that he took the opportunity to buy into the Tower venture, which has enabled him to secure good workplace relationships with colleagues and the desired quality of life for his family.

Jack Preston

Jack is a middle-aged private pit miner who was interviewed in February 1998. He had played an active part in the 1984/5 Strike, but having been transferred several times after the Strike, and finally being made redundant, he has been unable to find secure coalmining work. Unwilling to consider alternative occupations, he has reconciled himself to an insecure future in the private sector. He continues to socialise with former work colleagues, and devotes himself to ensuring that his children become more occupationally ambitious than he has been.

Hywel Rees

Hywel is a young Tower shareholder who was interviewed in January 1998. Having formerly been a striking miner, he was moved to Tower after the Strike, where he was pleased to become involved in buying the pit out. Hywel's wife currently cares for their first child full-time, and becoming a shareholder has allowed them to enjoy an enhanced quality of life. His father having been a miner too, and having lived in the same village all his life, Hywel enjoys close communal relationships there.

Joe Sawyer

Joe was interviewed in February 1998 at his home. Having been a miner for most of his life, he disagreed with the principles of the Strike, but nonetheless took part. He now works for an industrial company and is rather disillusioned with coalmining. Middle-aged, Joe has grown-up children and his wife is a full-time housewife. He moved to the Valleys upon marriage, and has witnessed a gradual erosion of communal relations in recent years.

Mark Sims

Mark was interviewed in July 1997 with a neighbour, Sheila Taylor. A single man in his mid 20s, Mark living in a former coalmining community and is the son of a miner. He has been unable to find permanent full-time employment, but leads an active life, engaged in a variety of community and political activities, and voluntary work. He has a strong sense of place which is lived out through his work, and he would not consider leaving the Valleys to find paid employment.

Glynis Smith

Glynis is a retired lady in her sixties who was interviewed in January 1997, the piloting stage of the fieldwork. Married to a former miner who had played an active part in the 1984/5 Strike, Glynis also became heavily involved in the activities of the Strike, travelling the country widely to take part in picketing and fund-raising. She has three grown up children

and currently spends a lot of her time baby-sitting her grandchildren. She is also active within a variety of community projects and performs periodic voluntary work.

Sheila Taylor

Sheila is a middle-aged married woman who was interviewed together with Mark Sims in July 1997. Coming from a mining family, her husband has now found alternative industrial work, albeit not in the Valleys. Sheila has seen a turnaround in her own working experience, having moved from working in local shops to undertaking a degree, and subsequently securing a part-time professional role in social welfare work, which is combined with voluntary and community activities. She is also politically motivated and extremely concerned about political regeneration in the region in relation to young people.

Sheila Thomas

Sheila, a middle-aged woman, was interviewed in June 1997. Married to a striking miner and the mother of two more striking miners, she became active in the WSGs, and supported by her husband, became increasingly active in the Strike effort. She is now engaged in voluntary work and caring for her young grandchildren. One of her sons continues to work as a miner, while the other has been unable to find alternative work, having been made redundant from the collieries.

Karen Troy

Karen is a middle-aged professional woman who was interviewed in February 1998. Born into a mining family, she married young and became a full-time housewife and mother, but when her marriage broke up, she went back to college and became professionally qualified. She now has a second family and is married to a man with a similar background to herself. While their careers have opened up a broader range of social contacts to them, equally important are their long-standing relationships with friends and neighbours.

Kat Trystan

Kat is a young woman in her 20s who was interviewed in February 1998. Coming from a mining family, her brother and father continuing to work as coalminers, Kat has recently left the Valleys to embark on a university degree. This being in a traditionally 'male' subject, and it being some distance removed from her home, she has experienced a degree of opposition or disparagement from her family. Her fiancé has moved with her and is supportive of her career, taking on an equal share of the domestic load in appreciation of its demands.

Kay Lyn & David Waters

A married couple in their late 30s, Kay and David were interviewed in February 1998. David is a former striking miner who now worked periodically in the private pits, while Kay's work in local factories has also become increasingly periodic. Both having grown up in the village, and now having young children, they maintain close communal ties which provide a necessary compensation against otherwise unpredictable futures.

David Watson

David is a middle-aged single man who lives with his elderly widowed father, and who was interviewed in June 1997. The son of a miner, David worked periodically in local factories, but has been unable to find permanent work in recent years, and so involves himself full-time in local political and community affairs.

Ellis West

Ellis is a now-retired former miner who was interviewed in February 1998. As a young man, he went straight from school into the mines, where he worked for several years, before entering a Coal Board apprenticeship. This took him all over the Welsh coalfield, and allowed him to develop an extensive knowledge of the character and conditions associated with various mines. After qualifying he went into management where he worked for the next twenty years. His local knowledge and previous experience as one of the workers enabled

him to develop good working relationships with his employees, a fact which is demonstrated that when the Tower miners brought out their own pit, they came to him for advice on the project.

Sian Weston

Sian, a middle-aged woman, was interviewed on her own during January 1997. While not currently living in the Valleys, her husband had at one time been a miner, and she was politically active and had been supportive in the 1984/5 Strike effort. Her own working history was one of periodic factory work, which complemented her husband moving in and out of the labour market. She currently takes on substantial caring responsibilities for her elderly parents and in-laws, and had three adult children, one of whom is himself a miner.

David Williams

David is an elderly widowed former miner, interviewed in July 1997. The 1984/5 Strike did not affect him personally, having already retired, but he was supportive of the men, despite being relatively apolitical. David worked his way up through the collieries, and was latterly employed in middle-management. He has an active social life, involved in various light sporting and cultural activities. His daughter and her young family live nearby, and she provides him with substantial domestic support.

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

The questions below provide a guide to the areas covered in the interviews. An important function of the methodology, however, was that the format of interviews be flexible in order to reflect informants' diverse experiences. Therefore sections of the interview guide could be swapped around in order to make the interviewing process feel more natural for informants, and correspondingly irrelevant questions dropped and relevant follow-up ones inserted depending on informants' experiences, perceptions and expressed interests.

Name:

Age:

Personal Details:

How long have you lived in [insert name of village]?

Are you married? How long have you been married to your partner?

How long did you/your partner/son work in the coalmining industry? What did you/they do? Which pits did you/they work in? Probe when/if that colliery closed and their/partner/son's subsequent work history.

Do you have children? How many and how old are they?

[If over 16] What are they currently doing? Where is that?

[If under 16] Do you think they'll stay in the village after they leave school? How does this sit with your own expectations for them?

How old were you when you left school? Did you sit any exams and what were they? What did you do then?

Are you working at the moment?

What are you doing and where is that?

What sort of hours do you work?

Do you enjoy your work? What is it that you particularly like or dislike about it?

Do you belong to a union?

Is your partner working at the moment? Where and what as?

What are your domestic and childcare arrangements? Who would you say takes the greatest responsibility for these in your household? Has this changed at all over the years?

Who looks after the money in your household?

[If unemployed] How did/are you/partner cope with being unemployed? How long was this for/has it been? Have/did your domestic arrangements change at all over this time? In what way?

How do you like to spend your free time? How much chance do you get to do this? What about your partner?

Community:

Would you describe [insert name of village] as having a good sense of community? In what ways do you experience this? Has this changed at all over the years?

How do you go about getting something done here? [list examples of local action which might be relevant to informant]

Are you involved in any organisations, e.g. voluntary organisations, the church, clubs, etc.?

How often do you meet? Probe for further details.

National Identity:

Where is your family from originally?

Do you consider yourself to be Welsh or British?

Is that something which you're proud or just something you happen to be?

Do you think that the Welsh are different to the English in any way? How is that?

Do you speak Welsh? If so, what language do you use at home?

Can you read and write Welsh?

Do you think that there's a specifically Valleys' identity? If so, how would you describe it?

The Strike:

Were you working when the 1984/5 Miners' Strike began? Where and what were you doing? [If relevant] How old were your children?

What were your initial reactions when you heard about the Strike?

Did you agree with the decision to strike?

Did you/your husband/son strike? If so, how did your relationships with working miners/the wives/families of working miners change?

What sort of pressures were there on you/your husband/son to return to work?

How did you cope with living on so little during the Strike?

Did your family support you?

Did you get into debt? If so, did you have any problems repaying these debts?

How understanding were creditors, e.g. mortgage lenders, electricity, HP firms?

How long did you initially think the Strike would last?

Did you get involved in any of the activities of the Strike, e.g. fund-raising, picketing, soup kitchens, WSGs, emotional and financial support? How did this happen? At what stage did you get involved? Tell me about these activities.

Did you experience any picket line violence? Where? If so, how did you cope with it? Has your attitude towards the police changed at all since the Strike?

Were your community experiences different in any way during the Strike? How was this?

How did you feel about the Labour Party's response to the Strike?

Did the Strike motivate you to become involved in any organisations which you hadn't previously considered? Examples?

Did you think about re-training or getting involved in further education after the Strike?

What have you done? What difference has it made to your life?

To those involved in WSGs:

How did you hear about the WSG activities?

Did you feel you learnt anything from your activity in the WSG? What? Did you become aware of any issues you hadn't thought about/heard about before? What were they?

How often did the support group meet?

What role did they perform, both generally & to you personally?

Do you think you've changed at all since your involvement in the Strike?

Do you do/have you done any new things which you wouldn't have done before?

Did your WSG have any links with outside organisations/people?

Who were these and what did you think of them?

What were your arrangements in terms of childcare & housework during the Strike?

What was your partner's response to your involvement? Did his attitude change over the course of the Strike/has it changed since?

How did your relationship stand up to the pressures of the Strike?

Did your partner get his job back at the end of the Strike? If no, why not? What did he do?

If yes, how long did the pit remain open? Did he say things were any different in the colliery? In what way?

How did you feel when the Strike came to an end?

How did your partner react/feel?

Tell me about the friends you made during the Strike. Were they with the sort of people you'd normally meet? Have they endured since the Strike?

Do you socialise with your partner any more now than you did before the Strike? What about without him?

What sorts of things do you do, both together and individually?

Politics:

What does the word 'politics' mean to you?

What issues do you get most concerned about? Why? Prompt if necessary.

Do you normally vote? Do you support any particular political party? Why is this?

Are you a member of this Party?

Have your political convictions changed at all in recent years? What do you think of 'New Labour'?

Which political figures, past or present, do you particularly admire? What is it you that you like about them?

Do you and your partner discuss politics? Probe.

Current:

Having considered the Strike in some detail, how would you say it has affected this community?

How do you see this area 10 years from now? What are your hopes and fears regarding change? What do you think would make the difference in these circumstances?

Do you hope to still be living here 10 years from now?

What is it that you particularly like about [insert name of village]?

If you had a win on the lottery, enough to enable you to live a comfortable lifestyle for the rest of your life, would you stay in this area, or move somewhere else? Probe on reasons.

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