CRITICAL SOCIAL RESEARCH
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PART 4 RACE

4.1 Introduction

The studies examined in this part of the book focus primarily on racial oppression. The terms 'race', 'racism', 'black', 'Afro-Caribbean', 'Asian' are all, of course, politically charged and dynamic concepts. The lack of any clearly non-repressive signifiers (Bulmer, 1986) means that the selection of terminology is both transitory and to some extent arbitrary. When referring to other commentators, and in the studies reviewed below, the terminology used by the authors will be adopted. Otherwise I shall refer to white and black (to include all non-Whites, sometimes split into Asian and Afro-Caribbean). This is not to imply any phenotypical characteristics or hierarchy. On the contrary, the terms used merely represent socially constructed notions of 'race' (discussed in section 4.2). Furthermore, although accepting the ideological nature of the term 'race' itself, I shall only use the inverted commas when referring to specific usage in this form by another author.

Traditionally, in both the United States and the UK, non-whites have been viewed as 'a problem'. American sociology, well into the 1970s, was characterised by the 'pathological model' of blacks. British analyses of race since World War Two have mainly focused on the 'problem of immigration' (Rose, 1969) without examining wider socio-economic structures (Zubaida, 1970; Lawrence, 1982b).

The four studies reviewed are critical of the pathological view. They agree that the notion that blacks comprise a problem is at the core of racist reasoning. They adopt a wider structural perspective but do not see race in isolation as a system of oppression. Rather they see the lives of non-whites in Western society as effected in the *first instance* by issues of race rather than class or gender. In *Tomorrow's Tomorrow*, Joyce Ladner (1971) argues that race is a much more powerful variable in American society than social class. She undertakes a detailed analysis of the growing into womanhood of black girls from a St. Louis ghetto. Her study is critical of dominant sociological perspectives that type blacks as deviant, and of approaches to data collection which reproduce forms of oppression. She explores the lives of black women in the broader structural context of institutionalised racism.

Lois Weis (1985), in *Between Two Worlds*, takes up directly some of the issues raised by Ladner in her ethnographic study of a predominantly black community college. As the title suggests, she examines the ways black ghetto students balance the world of the ghetto which supports them with the world of (white) academia that offers them a tenuous escape from the ghetto. She shows that such students (like Willis's, 1977, lads) are on the one hand able to penetrate the racism of the community college system while on the other are limited in their critique and engagement with the system because of their dependence on ghetto-based black culture.

Unlike Ladner who found herself torn between scientific 'objectivity' and active involvement, Ben-Tovim *et al*. (1985) in *The Local Politics of Race* are quite clear that social researchers should act to engage racial oppression. Their action research approach saw the research team becoming directly involved in local action to counter racism. Rather than see this as a hindrance to disciplined and detached scientific enquiry they see direct involvement as crucial to the understanding of the local political machinations that bear upon issues of racial equality in Britain.

Mark Duffield's (1988) study of Indian ironfoundry workers in the West Midlands, *Black Radicalism and the Politics of De-industrialisation*, is critical of piecemeal, institutionalised approaches to anti-racism seeing them as part of the cultural hegemony that sustains racist oppression. His critical study is a detailed historical analysis of the social, political and economic reasons that led to a concentration of Indian workers in the foundry industry in the West Midlands. He reveals how institutionalised racism provided the basis of an alliance between unions, employers and government to defeat the radical Indian shopfloor movement.

All four examples are concerned with colour prejudice rather than with anti-Semitism[1] or forms of ethnic oppression that have, for example, characterised the attitudes and actions of North Americans towards Latin Americans (Briggs *et al*., 1977), Russians towards national 'minorities' in the U.S.S.R (Karlkins, 1986), Japanese towards Koreans (Dower, 1986), and the English towards the Irish (Lebow, 1976). This is a methodology book and so no apology is made for failing to provide a definitive analysis of different forms of racism. The examples included illustrate forms of critical methodology used to analyse and engage racism.

4.2 Race, racism and ethnicity

Race, racism and ethnicity are complex phenomena that have been analysed extensively from a multitude of perspectives. There is no intention here to summarise the history of sociology of race nor the debates about the nature of race, racism and ethnicity. Instead some of the general features of these concepts and their interrelationships that characterise critical social thought will be outlined.

Race, racism and ethnicity are interrelated concepts, but it is important that they are not elided in critical research. In one sense race is a meaningless concept in critical social research because such research denies any inherent notion of biological characteristics and traits attributable to racial origin.[2] In this sense race and racism are intertwined because racial attribution is seen as fundamental to racism. Such attribution is social and not natural. The social construction of race and the development of racism are concrete historical processes. Racism is not natural or inevitable. It takes many forms, each with its own history and structure of meaning. Race is not an *empirical* social category but it is social in as much as it is an *ideological* construct signifying a 'set of imaginary properties of inheritance which fix and legitimate real positions of social domination or subordination in terms of genealogies of generic difference' (Cohen, 1988, p. 23). When 'race' is naturalised racism is viewed as an external problem not an integral part of capitalism.

Ethnicity, on the other hand, refers to the linguistic and cultural practices through which a dynamic sense of collective identity is produced and transmitted from generation to generation (Bulmer, 1986). Ethnicity does not necessarily connote innate

characteristics although race always implies ethnicity. It does so in two ways; either by reducing linguistic or cultural identity to biology, or by naturalising linguistic or cultural identity within a fixed hierarchy of 'social traits'. In other words, ethnicity is racialised in either social or cultural terms.

Critical social research in arguing for the social construction of race, rather than race as a biological category reflecting innate characteristics, denies that racism is just skin deep. 'Names and modes of address, states of mind and living conditions, clothes and customs, every kind of social behaviour and cultural practice have been pressed into service to signify this or that racial essence'. So a critical social research perspective does not simply see racism as rooted in natural biological differentiation. On the contrary, racism is an ideological code that seizes, opportunistically, on various ideological signifiers that work most effectively at any point in time to naturalise difference and legitimate domination. Racist imagery does not merely reflect, in a distorted form, observable ethnic attributes. To suggest it does is to provide racism with a common-sense rationale which serves to bracket out historical reality (Lawrence, 1982a; Cohen, 1988). On the contrary, racist constructs have an internal structure which cannot be deduced from, or reduced to, the empirical characteristics of the populations against which they are directed.

There are broadly speaking four critical approaches to the analysis of 'race' and racism.[3] The first supposes that economics has primacy in determining the character of race politics. It tends to project blacks as an 'underclass' (Glasgow, 1971; Rex & Tomlinson, 1979), 'sub-proletariat', 'class fraction' (Edwards, 1979) or 'reserve army of labour'. Racial structuration is imposed by capital which needs racism for the sake of capital (Sivanandan, 1982). Struggles against racism are thus struggles against capitalism. This view emerges in various ways in both Joyce Ladner (1971) and Lois Weis (1985).

The second is an anti-race relations position (Phizaclea & Miles, 1980; Miles, 1982) which not only denies biological races but critiques all uses of the concept 'race' as descriptive or analytic tool. 'Race' is regarded as an ideological effect that threatens class unity. The proponents of this approach want to see race dissolved into class.[4]

The third approach focuses on social policy issues. It sees race and class as fundamentally split with issues of racism having no contact with class politics. The policy approach supposes that radical theorists of race and racism should produce critiques of official race policy and formulation of alternatives (Gabriel & Ben-Tovim, 1979). The plausibility depends on two things: an idea of racism as 'popular democratic and divorced from class'; and a positive evaluation of the capacity of state institutions. Gilroy (1987, p. 26) suggests that the favoured vehicles of this approach involve 'black para-professionals' in the development of race relations legislation, multicultural education policies and racism awareness training, (Ben-Tovim *et al*., 1981, 1986).

A fourth approach is sceptical of the multiculturalism of social policy initiatives and suggests an alternative view of the relationship between class and race (Gilroy, 1987; Cohen, 1988; Duffield, 1988). Whatever the actual social and economic conditions faced, for example, by Black or Jewish people they do not constitute, for all time, an 'underclass'. The privations and abuse they suffer is a function of hegemonic racism and to analyse them as an 'underclass' both falsifies the historical process and reifies the negative stereotype (Cohen, 1988, p. 27). What is necessary is to see racism as a process that is neither detachable from issues of class nor subsumed under it. This view brings the

contemporary debate within Marxism about the nature of class struggle into the analysis of race. The former cannot be reduced to the latter. The processes of race and class formation are not identical. Class analysis can help to illuminate the historical development of racism provided it is not just applied in anachronistic ways. The potential of a unified working class must be addressed not assumed in simplistic applications of economic determinism to race. Class analysis must be modernised; the capital-labour distinction is inadequate. Class struggle cannot be reduced to productive relations but also involves gender, racial and generational divisions of labour.[5] The issue becomes one of how race materially relates to class in terms of social action at any given historical juncture. Race is potentially a feature of class consciousness and class formation and is likely to be 'a more potent means to organize and focus the grievances of certain inner-city populations than the languages of class politics' (Gilroy, 1987, p. 27).

In short, taking up the debate within Marxism about the nature of the revolutionary vanguard (Section 3.2, above) this approach suggests that revolutionary potential lies with those groups whose collective existence is threatened. 'Collective identities spoken through "race", community and locality are, for all their spontaneity, powerful means to co-ordinate action and create solidarity'. Because of this real radical[6] potential 'race' 'must be retained as an analytic category 'not because it corresponds to any biological or epistemological absolutes', but because it directs attention to collectivities which 'are the most volatile political forces in Britain today' (Gilroy, 1987, p. 247).

Much analysis of race and racism confuses race with ethnicity. This confusion leads to ethnicity being reified into a set of essentially defining traits and removed from concrete historical processes. Ethnicity becomes 'Jewishness', 'Irishness', 'Blackness', and so on, which are abstract expressions of an eternal transhistorical identity. Cultural identity has become naturalised. This is manifested in approaches which, in defining race as a cultural phenomenon, have turned it into a 'synonym for ethnicity' and a sign for the sense of separateness which endows groups with an exclusive, collective identity (Lawrence, 1982b). While these transhistorical traits can be used successfully in anti-racist work, for example, positive images of Blackness, there is a potential to slip into the very epistemological modes (of the New Right) that are being challenged. This is the very foundation of racist reification of ethnicity that is the basis of the New Right racism (Gilroy, 1987; Cohen, 1988; Duffield, 1988). This new racism asserts incompatible cultural differentiation. It is an argument used in the United States and now in South Africa to support separate development and in its Powellist version predicts that the (white) British people would not tolerate alternative cultures in their midst. Thatcherism embodies a trivial version of Powellist racism in its call for an end to immigration in 1978 in order to avoid being swamped by alien cultures (Barker, 1981).[7]

Ironically multiculturalism has taken on the same epistemological presuppositions. By defining 'race' and ethnicity as cultural absolutes, blacks themselves, and parts of the anti-racist movement risk endorsing the explanatory frameworks and political definitions of the New Right. For some multiculturalists, blacks do not live in the castle of their skin but behind the sturdy walls of discrete ethnic identities (Gilroy, 1987, p. 16).

Although still highly contentious, critical analyses of race must avoid replacing biological absolutism by ethnic absolutism. It must avoid the replacement of racism rooted in biological attribution to one rooted in intrinsic cultural traits.

4.3 Joyce Ladner—Tomorrow's Tomorrow

4.3.1 Introduction

In *Tomorrow's Tomorrow* Joyce Ladner (1971) analyses the growing into womanhood of low-income adolescent black[8] girls from the large metropolitan centres of the United States. Ladner collected most of her empirical data between 1964 and 1968 while working as a research assistant on a study, supported by the national Institute of Mental Health, of an all-black low-income housing project of over ten thousand residents in a slum area of St. Louis.

The majority of females in the study were drawn from the Pruitt-Igoe housing, the remainder were in 'substandard private housing'. The sample consisted of 'several peer groups which over the years changed in numbers and composition' (Ladner, 1971, p. xxv). Most of the data reported are based on systematic open-ended interviews that related to life histories and 'attitudes and behaviour that reflected approaching womanhood' (Ladner, 1971, p. xxv). This material is supported by direct observation as Ladner spent a considerable amount of time with the girls and their families in their homes, homes of friends and her own apartment, at church, parties, dances, out shopping, and so on. In this way she established a strong rapport with both the girls and their parents.[9]

Ladner regards the majority of her research as 'exploratory' and from it she drew some preliminary conclusions which she tested via the agency of taped (and transcribed) interviews with a randomly selected sample of thirty girls aged between 13 and 18. Ladner thus sees her results as generalisable to all low-income urban Black American girls.

This method, reflecting Ladner's concern to develop a multivariate analysis of black culture, might at first sight not appear to be particularly critical. However, it must be set in relation to a number of other considerations. First, the contextualisation of the data historically and structurally. Second, the inadequacies of dominant sociological approaches. Third, the requirements on her to conform to academic standards of objectivity and her own concerns about the possibility of value-freedom.

4.3.2 Structure—institutionalised racism

Ladner sees Black women as located historically and structurally in an oppressive, racist system. They are acting subjects who engage dialectically with the system that engulfs them. They are neither wholly determined by, nor do they act freely to structure, their environment. Poor black women, informed by a particularly oppressive heritage, adapt their social circumstances in order to survive in, transform, and confront the oppressive system. Through depicting the lives of black pre-adolescent and adolescent girls in a big-city slum, she shows how distinct socio-historical forces have shaped a very positive and practical way of dealing and coping with the oppressive system.

> It is difficult to capture the *essence* of this complex period of psychosocial development because of the peculiar historical backdrop against which this process occurs. Therefore I have endeavoured to analyze their present lives as they emerge out of these historical forces, for they have been involved in a strong reciprocal relationship in that they have been shaped by the forces of oppression

> but have also exerted their influence so as to alter certain of these patterns. (Ladner, 1971, p. 270)

The structural focus of her analysis is institutionalised racism, which 'has exerted the strongest impact upon all facets of the Black woman's life'. Ladner defines institutionalised racism in general terms as the policies, priorities and functions of a system 'of normative patterns' that subjugate, oppress and force dependence through the sanctioning of unequal goals, inequality in status and access to goods and services (Stafford & Ladner, 1969, p. 70).[10]

4.3.3 White social science—pathology and black culture

Sociology, reflecting the myths of institutionalised racism, has tended to see blacks in general as pathological terms. In particular, the black family continues to be seen as 'disorganised' (Frazier, 1931, 1939; Moynihan, 1965) and black women as an aberration of the white middle-class model.[11] Ladner is critical of this prevailing sociological tradition and turns the taken-for-granted on its head by arguing that it is 'malignant' institutionalised racism in both its overt and covert forms which has provided the structures and processes within which the apparent features of 'disorganisation' (matriarchy, illegitimacy, juvenile suicide, violence) have occurred. The institutionalised racism of the oppressing classes is legitimated by blaming racial minorities for their situation, labelling them as deviant and, furthermore, 'indoctrinating the oppressed to believe in their alleged inferiority'.

Dispensing with the pathological model, Ladner undertakes one of the first positive analyses of the black community and particularly of black women. This analysis is informed by a notion of black culture sustained by the functionally autonomous black (ghetto) community.

Ladner argues the existence of a distinct black culture comprised primarily of two elements: Africanisms which have survived slavery; and the adaptive responses blacks made to slavery and post-slavery racial discrimination. 'The "Black cultural" framework has its own autonomous system of values, attitudes, sentiments and beliefs' which cannot be assessed by the norms of white middle-class culture. What is necessary is 'rigorous multi-variate analysis' of Black culture (Ladner, 1971, p. xxiii) which is something that white middle-class social science has failed to do, preferring instead simplistic stereotypes.

The inherent bias of social science, which draws on the basic concepts and tools of white Western society, reproduces 'the conceptual framework of the oppressor' with the researcher defining the problem. This prevents most social researchers from being able to accurately observe black life and culture and the impact racism and oppression has on blacks.

Although Ladner argues that black women must be situated within black culture, she insists that their lives must be seen in a wider context of oppression. It is inadequate to view the subjects of her study in the isolated context of the slum area of St. Louis, Missouri, rather they must be located within 'the national and international context of neo-colonialism and its disastrous effects upon oppressed peoples. Their conditions and life chances are necessarily interwoven with the status of the oppressed all over the world. As this broader context changes so will their lives' (p. 287).

Ladner argues that dominant (white) social science has dealt woefully with black culture because it has failed to address the fundamental problem of neo-colonialism. To understand blacks it is necessary to develop a 'new frame of reference which transcends the limits of white concepts' (Bennett, 1970).

4.3.4 Objectivity and value-freedom

Ladner's training had been informed by the deviancy perspective on black women and she began the fieldwork with such preconceptions, initially intent on elaborating what was alleged to exist. However, her life experiences invalidated the deviant perspective and as she came to understand her subjects, Ladner moved her focus from trying to find out how 'harmful consequences' of the ghetto affected women's life chances and how a 'less destructive adaptation could be made to their impoverished environments' to one that saw the subject's lives as a healthy and successful adaptation to their circumstances.

As she became more involved with the subjects of the research she was unable to continue the expected role of dispassionate scientific data extractor. She became unhappy with a process that set out to simply 'describe and theorize' about the 'pathology-ridden' conditions of Black people.

> I began to perceive my role as a Black person, with empathy and attachment, and, to a great extent, their day-to-day lives and future destinies became intricately interwoven with my own. This did not occur without a considerable amount of agonizing self-evaluation and conflict over "whose side I was on." On the one hand, I wanted to conduct a study that would allow me to fulfill certain academic requirements, i.e. a doctoral dissertation. On the other hand, I was highly influenced by my *Blackness*—by the fact that I, on many levels, was one of them and had to deal with their problems on a personal level... I was unable to resolve the dilemmas I faced as a Black social scientist because they only symbolized the larger questions, issues and dilemmas of our times. (Ladner, 1971, p. xiv)

Ladner, drawing on Gouldner's (1962) denial of value-freedom and exhortations to be open and honest about ones values and on Clark's (1965) admissions about his role as 'involved observer' questioned the possibility of value-free research. Although attempting to maintain some degree of objectivity, she 'soon began to minimize and, very often, negate the importance of being "value-free,"' arguing that the selection of the topic itself reflected a bias. She researched Black women because of her 'strong interest in the subject' (Ladner, 1971, p. xviii).

The 'inability to be *objective* about analysing poverty, racism, disease' raised for her a further problem—a problem of conscience, morality and action. To what extent should involvement in subjects' lives lead the researcher, black or white, to direct action to ameliorate 'many of the destructive conditions he[12] studies?' (Ladner, 1971, pp. xix-xx) How can researchers remain dispassionate observers and not intervene? While giving no direct answer to the question Ladner admits that on many occasions she found herself acting as counsellor or 'big sister'.

Ladner's account retains elements of 'positivism' necessitated by the research context and the PhD, although mediated by her critical perspective. Her reference to testing exploratory conclusions, her agonising over objectivity and value-freedom, her references to multivariate analysis, her latent 'apology' for not providing answers and making causal

connections parallels the presentation in Oakley's (1974a) *Sociology of Housework* . She too was trapped by white male, academic constraints and had to balance her critique of dominant sociological methods and perspectives along with her involvement and sympathy for her respondents against her desire for academic credibility. Like Ladner, she was opposed to a dominant-subordinate researcher-subject relationship. They both wanted to make the activities of women visible as meaningful and resourceful activities located within a wider oppressive structure.

4.3.5 Myths

Given these concerns, Ladner deals with the broad question of the socialisation of Black women through the specification of a number of more specific questions.

> What is life like in the urban Black community for the 'average' girl? How does she define her roles, behaviors, and from whom does she acquire her models for fulfilling what is expected of her? Is there any significant disparity in the resources she has with which to accomplish her goals in life and the stated aspirations? Is the typical world of the teen-ager in American society shared by the Black girl or does she stand somewhat alone in much of her day-to-day existence? (Ladner, 1971, pp. xxiii–xxiv)

> What do the sociohistorical traditions of the Black community do to mold girls into women? How do contemporary circumstances and events play important roles in preparing them to fulfill the expectations of their community and the larger society? (Ladner, 1971, p. 43)

> What does 'becoming a woman' mean symbolically to the adolescent girl? (Ladner, 1971, p. 104)

In dealing with her material Ladner first provides an introductory historical context which documents the changing circumstances of black women from Africa through slavery to contemporary ghetto life. She then approaches her fieldwork material in terms of the ways it engages numerous myths about the black community which she draws out of her review of the relevant literature.

For example, the literature led Ladner to expect black girls to express feelings of inadequacy, worthlessness and self-disparagement because of their colour. She presents a large number of verbatim statements from respondents, ranging in age and political awareness which clearly show this presupposition to be false, for example:

> I'm proud of being a Negro. I mean it's not bad to be a Negro and that's why I'm proud.... (13 year old)

> I've always been proud of being Black because I think it is a superior colour.... (15 year old)

> We are not Negroes. We are "so-called" Negroes. That's the name they gave us. Our original name is Black.... (17 year old)

She concludes that the statements 'speak for themselves' and, while a 'very small number' of girls did 'not speak favourably of being black' none of them wanted to be white. She concludes by turning the analysis round and asking why the 'self-hatred' thesis has been consistently advanced when there has been so little empirical evidence to validate the thesis. (Ladner, 1971, p. 99)

Similarly, the myth of black promiscuity is also confronted by the testimony of the girls. An alternative moral code and less formalised family structure operates within the ghetto which provides statistical indicators interpreted by middle class whites as indicative of promiscuity. However, the ethnographic data on the reality of ghetto women's lives reveals this to be a misleading view.

In this way Ladner addresses the girls views and life experiences involving numerous facets including poverty, the ghetto environment, exploitative agencies, policing, theft, femininity, sexuality, marriage, and so on. The young women were generally very positive about themselves and contrary to the myths of black helplessness clearly revealed their creativity and resourcefulness. Further, the views expressed showed that the girls had a 'phenomenal' awareness of what the sources of oppression of blacks are.

The exploration of the myths, Ladner maintains, shows that they are propagated as part of the 'institutional subjugation that is designed to perpetuate an oppressive class'. The perceived 'institutionalized pathological character' of the ghetto provides the legitimation for its continued subordination and exploitation (Ladner, 1971, p. 100). Revealing the myths is the first step in developing a more fundamental critique of the oppressive forces which produce various forms of anti-social behaviour. When this has been done then the conceptualization of pathology can be reversed. '*The society, instead of its members, becomes pathological*' (Ladner, 1971, p. 101).

4.3.6 Praxis

Ladner as an anti-racist is committed to social change. The historical situation of black women in America convinces Ladner (1971, p. 282) that the 'most viable model of womanhood in the United States is the one which Black women symbolize'. This is reinforced by her ethnographic material which shows that black women are characterised by realism, resourcefulness, creativity, strength and determination to struggle against racism. However, she suggests, aspects of this model need re-evaluation and alteration.

Black women should be at the forefront of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM). However, the issues addressed by the WLM are mainly irrelevant to black[13] women. For example, the 'protection' afforded white women by white men from which the white WLM wants to extricate itself. Black men have never been allowed to protect their women and so 'Black women have always been "liberated"' (Ladner, 1971, p. 283). Further 'battles between the sexes' are a 'luxury which Black people as a race can ill afford'. 'Black women do not perceive their enemy to be Black men, but rather the enemy is considered to be the oppressive forces in the larger society which subjugate Black *men, women and children*.'

The advent of the civil rights movement led to an assertion of black masculinity. Black males demanded the right to provide for and protect their family, to compete equally in the job market, and so on: that is, to have equal rights to patriarchy. Ladner argues that this has required black women to redefine their roles in relation to black men.

Traditionally strong, black women are facing a dilemma of continuing to assert individuality or becoming a passive supporter of black men. This dilemma is reflected in the tensions within interpersonal relations experienced by the girls and women in the study.

Many blacks assert the passive role on the assumption that 'Black men cannot find their places at the top of the family hierarchy if women continue to maintain the[ir] aggressive roles'. The alternative denies patriarchal usurpation of power and argues that men must discover 'their assertiveness through their own inner resourcefulness, with the compassionate *support* of Black women' (Ladner, 1971, pp. 284–5). Ladner argues that black women while not necessarily embracing patriarchal dominance must adjust to allow for the 'full development of *male and female*', utilising their 'survival techniques in the larger struggle for the liberation of Black people'. In short, black women, both working- and middle-class, should take their struggle out of the confines of the family into a wider political struggle.

Ladner is not, however, claiming to chart a course of action for black women. Indeed in her book she is simply saying 'This is what the Black woman was, this is how she has been solving her problems, and these are the ways in which she is seeking to alter her roles.' The actions of black women, though, cannot be seen in isolation as they are 'dictated by, and interwoven with, the trends set in the vast Black American community' (Ladner, 1971, p. xxi). It is necessary, she argues for blacks to unite in an aggressive opposition to the growing racist repression, evidenced in the United States at the start of the 1970s, in the growing number of killings, attacks on black intellectuals, failure to enforce desegregation and general confiscation of fundamental rights.

The unified struggle, she argues, must be grounded in black culture. Ladner sees black culture 'as a non-material culture' and as 'emotive', 'spiritual' and 'aesthetic'. It is in this respect that it is humanistic and may counteract prevailing destructive forces in society. White culture is decadent and unworthy of emulation. Instead she argues that black people should work towards strengthening the values that have emerged out of the black experience. Furthermore, reflecting Black nationalist movements, she is sceptical of integration into a society whose terms are dictated by the oppressing group. However, she warns against romanticising Black culture and seeing it as an opiate and an end in itself. 'No matter how much we celebrate our culture and its heroes, we must still do the necessary *activist* work to eliminate oppression. Cultural nationalism can never be a total substitute for direct political involvement' (Ladner, 1971, pp. 278–9).

4.4 Lois Weiss—Between Two Worlds

4.4.1 Introduction

Lois Weis' (1985) *Between Two Worlds* is an ethnographic study of the black student culture at a community college 'on the edge of the urban ghetto' in a large north-eastern city in the United States. Seventy per cent of the students were black and eighty percent were under thirty years old. Weis builds on the work of McRobbie (1978), Everhart (1983) and, in particular, Willis (1977). Reflecting Willis' study of the 'lads', Weis situates the lived experiences of the black students in a wider socio-historic structure by focussing on the production and reproduction of culture. She focuses on contradictions, linking contradictions in student attitudes towards education and their practices within the

institution to wider social structural contradictions. The college culture is grounded in black ghetto culture and, like Willis' counter-school culture, in the long run renders impotent the avowed intention of most student returners to escape the ghetto streets.

Weis argues that despite legal and ethical changes the economic and social situation of the majority of blacks in the United States has not advanced as rapidly as the upheavals of the 1950s and 1960s might have suggested and substantial inequalities by race persist in the United States (Reich, 1981). Most blacks are trapped in the 'urban underclass' (Glasgow, 1971) which is characterised by heavy involvement in the predominantly casual secondary labour market which is closely linked to various illicit activities as a means to supplement a non-living wage. The working class is fractionalised and blacks are predominantly located in the economically lower fractions. In addition, racism operates in ways that disadvantage blacks in other working-class fractions (Edwards, 1979; Reich, 1981).

Weis argues that the self-formative process of cultural production is linked in contradictory ways to this unequal social structure and it is this that underpins her critical ethnographic analysis of the community college which she refers to as 'Urban College'.

4.4.2 Method

Weis wanted a method that would permit the analysis of the interplay of culture and economy. Like Willis (1977) she sees qualitative methods as sensitive to meanings and as allowing interpretations of symbolic articulations, practices and forms of cultural production. She thus undertook a direct ethnographic study which involved attending classes three days a week for the duration of the 1979–80 academic year, conducting in-depth interviews with both faculty and students, and in general 'immersed' herself in Urban College. She kept a daily record of interactions with students or staff, inside or outside the institution, which included experiences and comments of students and teachers 'in classrooms, corridors' stairwells, offices, cafeteria and local coffee shop and bar'. She recorded field notes as soon as practically possible after the interaction and argued that while data recollection seems difficult, in practice it is not. All that is required is 'extreme concentration on the researcher's part'. This participant observation approach, she argued, allowed a direct exploration of experiences of education and also of the cultural discourse that reworked these experiences (Weis, 1985, p. 171).

Gaining access to Urban College took six months and involved a considerable amount of bureaucracy. This was tied closely to educational politics and concerns over future funding. 'Since the press had been unfriendly to Urban College in the past, suspicions surrounding my initial presence were understandable' (Weis, 1985, p. 172). Weis constantly reassured all involved that her study was not in any way intended to prejudice the future development of the college and that, indeed, she was not interested in Urban College *per se* but in life in *an* urban institution. In the end she got co-operation from the college administration and all but two of the college academic staff. As a favour to the college Weis administered 'several survey questionnaires to present students, former students, and alumni' the data from which were incorporated into the Middle States Accreditation Report; and this also provided some demographic data for her study but in the main this material seems to have been little used by Weis.

Weis argued that, in general, participant observation work involves gaining and retaining the trust of subjects in order to facilitate a free exchange of information. Thus

the researcher should operate so as to become an unobtrusive, non-threatening, part of the scene, taken-for-granted by the participants. This was initially difficult for her given that she was white in a predominately black college and that she was interested, in the first instance, in black culture. However, she adopted the role of a student, taking classes and examinations and like other students 'suffered through the crowded elevator, limited number of telephones, cafeteria food and generally poor physical facilities'. Other students, she claimed, began to see her everywhere and increasingly black students interacted with her as she was not part of a white clique. Weis spent four months taking classes before conducting any in-depth interviews. Over time she became trusted, as the detailed information given her reveals, and once students became aware of her 'intentions as a researcher' they were 'more than happy to "tell their story"'. The systematic collection of in-depth interview material took six months. The interviews were openly tape-recorded, often in the local bar, and were structured around a set of 'open-ended probe questions' which encouraged the student to express their own views. The schedule of eleven probe questions included: 'If you could change anything at Urban College, what kinds of things would you like to see changed'; 'What kind of job would you like to obtain'; 'Do you think that you studies here will prepare you to get this job?'. The interviews lasted from forty-five minutes to three hours. Similar interviews were conducted with staff and alumni, although with different sets of probe questions.[14]

The analysis of her vast amount of data was clearly a problem and one she managed by 'systematically constructing themes' in the post-fieldwork stage. This was dependent on the extremely time-consuming transcription of taped material and the assembling of field notes. Following Bogdan & Taylor (1975) she duplicated and cross-coded chunks of transcripts and fieldnotes and 'placed them into manila folders according to topic', in a similar way to the 'pile-building' style described above in section 1.4.2. This process enabled her to 'systematically identify salient cultural categories for both students and faculty. The virtue of this form of analysis is that such categories were suggested by the data themselves'. This enabled the identification of core cultural elements in Urban College 'as well as to identify factors both within and outside the institution that contribute to the rise of located cultural form' (Weis, 1985, p. 174).

After reporting the ethnographic study in detail Weis, like Willis, develops a more theoretical analysis of the rationality and dynamic of the observed cultural processes which are thereby linked to the social structure. These lead on to a praxiological concern and consequent consideration of political action.

4.4.3 Black student culture

Weis (1985, p. 7) adopts a hegemonic view of culture which sees culture as semi-autonomous (Gramsci, 1971). Thus she sees educational establishments as sites 'where cultures and ideologies are produced in ongoing interactions rather than places where ideologies are imposed upon students'. Schools and colleges do not directly reproduce dominant ideology but embody a process characterised by contradictions. Weis concentrates on race in the production of culture and ideologies. Although people like Willis have noted race as important and others have undertaken studies of 'raced persons' in schools, there have been, she argues, no detailed analyses of race as a factor in the production of culture.

Urban College students, like their parents exhibit characteristics that destine them to become part of a permanently trapped population of poor people—the industrial underclass. The students are aware of this and see the college as between two worlds, the ghetto and the cultural mainstream. Urban College is designed to promote equal educational opportunity. Its main aims are to provide institutional programmes which parallel the first two years of a four-year programme, providing vocationally oriented teaching aimed at preparing students for employment as graduates with an associate degree. In many senses the college is seen as a 'second-chance' institution by both staff and students. Attendance at the college is, in part, a rejection of street life and an attempt to embrace 'legitimate society'.

Weis notes gender differences in her study, in particular that women tend to have primary responsibility for children and frequently see their escape from the ghetto in terms of giving their children enhanced opportunities. However, it is this black culture that concerns Weis rather than its gender tensions which she refers to only when the cultural process works differently by gender. She argues that both black men and women share the lived reality of urban poverty.

> They share entrapment in the urban ghetto and racist America. *These shared experiences lead students to forge* a collective culture within Urban College that is not strictly bound by gender. The culture produced in the college ensures that the vast majority of the students will return to the ghetto streets. It is these shared aspects of existence that give rise to this culture—a culture that helps to ensure the continued structural bases of their own "superexploitation" as blacks. (Weis, 1985, p. 26)

With the use of substantial testaments taken from the in-depth interviews, fieldnotes and student essays, Weis outlines the elements of black student culture that are created at Urban College.[15] Blacks drop in and out of class, arrive late, use drugs and generally engage in activities that slow the pace of learning. All of this results in low success rates in conventional academic terms. This is not, as with Willis' counter-school culture a function of the dismissal of the relevance of knowledge nor as a direct attack on teachers. Indeed, the college, in principle, is seen positively as providing a second chance. Elements of the students' lived culture are contradictory and 'students embrace and reject schooling at one and the same time' (Weis, 1985, p. 48). The economic pressures of day-to-day survival in a racist society and the impact of the non-college cultural milieu in which students daily engage are in conflict with the requirements of full academic involvement.

This is most clearly seen in the very different perceptions of black and white students at the college. The black Urban College culture is hard for the minority white students to grasp and they feel disadvantaged by it. Although there is no overt hostility, black and white students do not mix much and deeply rooted antagonisms, Weis claims, are re-created in the institution. In short, existing antagonisms in the wider society are reproduced in the college. The ethnographic study aims to explore the interrelationship between institutional structures, student culture and the wider social milieu.

A key example is the question of time. Students at Urban College are constantly reminded about the appropriate use of time and the institution has a fairly rigid attendance policy and an associated but less rigid policy on lateness (which Weis refers to

as part of the hidden curriculum). Students are 'bombarded with dominant time' (Weis, 1985, p. 78), that is, standard industrial chronological time. This differs radically from the 'street time' predominant in the urban ghetto. Clock time is seen as 'white man's time' (Horton, 1979) and as irrelevant to street values and activities. Street time is personal time, there is no synchronisation, and being 'on time' is meaningless. This use of time is not deficient but oppositional and a positive affirmation of black street culture.

> Street time is, without question, embedded within the broader class/race subculture from which students at urban College come. They are part and parcel of the community which created and re-created it since black Americans were first enslaved. (Weis, 1985, p. 78)

In the main students resent control over their time and the imposition of an attendance policy that has direct effect on their chances of graduation despite their positive affirmation of the content of school knowledge. They 'waste time' and contradict regulations which demand attendance and prompt arrival and departure. The college policy on time 'emerged dialectically in relation to both student culture and demands from the state, as well as the way in which these demands are mediated by institutional personnel' as a means of control of students. The contradiction between affirmation of knowledge and disregard for the dominant time structure in which it is located is partly accounted for by the view that college knowledge is 'white not black' and therefore 'not ours'. This is reinforced by the fact that 'faculty in the academic areas are overwhelmingly white' (Weis, 1985, p. 79). Thus student culture and the 'hidden curriculum' interact to constantly produce and reproduce one another. 'In the final analysis, student lived culture at Urban College strengthens the collectivity and reinforces aspects of black collective experience, ultimately reproducing and deepening class/race antagonisms that lie at the very heart of American society' (Weis, 1985, p. 82).

4.4.4 Penetration—unmasking the ideology of equal opportunity

The shape and form of student culture differs, Weis argues, by class race and gender. The basic cultural processes of penetration and limitation described by Willis (1977) operate in Urban College but the lived cultural forms differ from that of the 'lads'. This is not surprising 'given that race has its *own* dynamic in the United States' which results in different positions for white and black workers, with the latter forming a 'caste-like' minority (Ogbu, 1982).

Basically, the Urban College students have an understanding that although college knowledge is legitimate the community college system is not designed to help them as a class or group.

> *Gloria*: I figure that what they did was put the school right in our community—they said 'we'll give them this and this may satisfy them'. ...This was...convenient, but we were shortchanged as far as the education itself was concerned.
>
> I think they teach Optics out there at [the suburban campus].... We're definitely cheated. I think what they're doing is 'let's give the blacks a place in their own neighborhood, then we can give them as little as possible and maybe they'll be satisfied with it.... We'll give them as much as we can and they'll keep their mouths shut. (Student quoted in Weis, 1985, p. 139)

Not all students are as articulate or overtly aware of the nature and role of community colleges but all at least unconsciously understand that the type of education offered them is second best and thus penetrate the ideology of the community college. Student culture 'unmasks an ideology which offers everyone an opportunity to attain elite status while simultaneously justifying an unequal distribution of rewards' (Weis, 1985, p. 136). The college operates to deflect attention from 'questions of distributive justice' which are central to the black struggle in the United States. The students are aware of this and know the college does not herald the destruction of class society but, at best, offers a way out of the underclass for the individual.

This escape requires that students alter their own culture and adopt the dominant culture. Ghetto culture is of necessity a collective culture. Day-to-day survival in the urban ghetto is dependent on an obligation and exchange network of which kin relationships are a major part. Urban College students are part of the ghetto and are enmeshed within similar co-operative arrangements (notably in relation to child care). Such students do not enter college 'embodying a spirit of possessive individualism'. This is a characteristic of the staff and the white students. Teachers define good students as those who operate within faculty categories, that is, ones who operate outside the 'group logic'. Those who do not accept the 'teacher's definition of the situation' (Keddie, 1971) simply fail. Those who succeed make a break with the underclass collective community, but this means a break with the only form of security most students have.

Success is thus a function of the relationship of individual to the student culture and the risk run by an individual in breaking with the collective. This risk is not an intellectual or psychological one but is materially based. The exception is older women returners who have raised their families and who opt for traditional female occupations such as child care or secretarial. A woman who chooses one of these low-paid options can remain a part of the collective and succeed at Urban College, she is not confronted by the contradiction of trying to escape the ghetto.

Breaking out thus involves not only putting their security at risk but also engaging in the risky process of educational attainment. Given that most black ghetto-based students possess the wrong educational 'decoders' to begin with they are disadvantaged *vis-à-vis* the student who already possesses the 'correct' cultural capital. Thus legitimate (college) knowledge acts to maintain those who are already on top, rather than to 'push people up' as the official rhetoric suggests.

In the end, given the racist nature of American society and the segmented market process, the community college degree, if attained, will be of little benefit for black students. Student cultural forms recognise that education at this level does nothing for the group and even at the individual level is less advantageous for blacks than whites. The insights, communicated through the culture, thus clearly link the education system to American economic structures. The residual question is why, given that the collectivity is reaffirmed at the cultural level, is this awareness not manifested in overt political action?

4.4.5 Limitation—political inactivity

The answer is, for Weis, the partiality of the penetration and the limitations within student culture. Insights are prevented from going further by contradictions within the lived cultural form itself. Ironically, the partiality is linked to a collective faith in

education. Education is seen both as a potentially liberating force yet acknowledged as essentially individualistic in practice. On the other hand, the affirmation of education reproduces a group oppositional culture that goes back to the prohibition of education for slaves. Thus student culture which understands how individual and group logics are confounded in the educational process reproduces the wider structural contradiction of blacks in seeking education/knowledge in order to raise them above slavery while at the same time acknowledging the legitimacy of white/capitalist knowledge which reproduces the unequal and oppressive social structure.

The partiality of the insights leads students to blame themselves despite a raised consciousness among blacks of structural inequalities. Students hold their own circumstances responsible. Dominant ideology (Wright, 1975; Apple & Weis, 1983) reinforces this self-blame given that most formal barriers to equality have been removed. Dominant ideology takes for granted the intrinsic value of education and relentlessly and noisily proclaims education as the key to 'success' available to all. This contrasts sharply with the silence of the disorganised cultural form and thus student culture reaffirms the value of education. 'While the collective culture produced in the institution sees through ideology, ideology "confidently strides" (Willis, 1977, p. 166) into the space between the disorganized cultural level and political action'. It is this '*combination* of blocks and ideological effects that limits cultural insights and prevents the development of a collective consciousness geared towards transformative potential' (Weis, 1985, pp. 151–2).

In addition there is a feeling of despair in student culture given the economic recession in the north-east United States and the massive loss of jobs in the city in which Urban College is located. An estimated 50 per cent of black youth were unemployed and the problem was getting worse. Students want to escape but feel the situation is hopeless. Unlike the 1960s the hopelessness and frustration is not linked to a broader political movement. Rather, students inculcate a well developed sense of structural subordination which the dominant ideology relating to educational opportunity reinforces.

The existence of a distinct black culture has impeded rather than enabled blacks to engage their structural 'superexploitation' as part of an underclass (Omi & Winant, 1983). 'In spite of its richness and strength, the existence of a distinct black culture contributes to the fractionalized nature of the working class—a fractionalization which ultimately benefits the capitalist class.' Such fractionalisation is, of course, not simply attributable to culture—racism is fundamentally based on colour. However, it is furthered by class and cultural tensions within the black community and these are also reproduced within the Urban College setting (Weis, 1985, pp. 156–7).

Students enter Urban College with a desire to escape poverty but within the college they create a collective culture that ensures the majority will remain on the streets. The collective college culture reflects the necessary collectivity of the ghetto. However, Weis has shown that 'failure' at Urban College is not simply the importation of successful street practices into the college environment where they are inappropriate. The failure of students to make the leap from street culture to mainstream culture is much more complex and revolves round a number of contradictions within student culture which reflect wider structural contradictions.

In conclusion, Weis suggests possibilities for action for those who want students to 'succeed' and are opposed to the unequal and oppressive social structure. The

suggestions relate to policies on staffing, time, and standard English, as well as the development of a radical pedagogy and a critical appreciation of their own position by students. She admits that changing institutional policies and practices will not be adequate because of the structural factors. However, given the semi-autonomous nature of culture it is possible that student cultural forms might come to develop the transformative potential currently lacking.

4.5 Gideon Ben-Tovim, John Gabriel, Ian Law and Kathleen Stredder—*The Local Politics of Race*

4.5.1 Introduction

The Local Politics of Race is an action research study that examines the political processes which give rise to and maintain racial inequalities. Gideon Ben-Tovim, John Gabriel, Ian Law and Kathleen Stredder focus, as the title suggests, on local politics and the analysis is developed through their five-year involvement in local organisations in Wolverhampton and Liverpool. Local organisations rather than individual cases provide the opportunity to address institutionalised racism as they allow for 'discussion and action on important and specific race-related issues' (Ben-Tovim *et al*., 1986, p. 65).

The researchers developed their research against a background of mounting evidence of racial inequality. Despite legal constraints on racial discrimination and the increasing awareness and take-up of race issues black people are discriminated against and disadvantaged in a number of spheres including education, employment and immigration (Townsend 1972; Home Office, 1981; Tomlinson, 1983; Commission for Racial Equality, 1983, 1984; Brown, 1984; Swann, 1985; *Race and Immigration*). 'It was clear that the "politics" of racial equality weren't working.' Thus, 'underlying the whole project was a commitment to producing knowledge which would be "of use" in the struggle for racial equality' (Ben-Tovim *et al*., 1986, pp. 1–2).

The researchers, however, deny prioritising any one form of intervention, and are opposed to sectarian notions about the authenticity of any one form of anti-racist activity (e.g. activity on the streets by black people alone). They define three types of organisation committed to the elimination of racial inequalities: first, explicitly anti-racist organisations which grew up in response to the National Front in the 1970s; second, community and project groups for Afro-Caribbean, Asian and multi-racial groups; third, policy-related campaigning groups. The researchers concentrated on campaigning and pressure groups, especially the Labour Party and Community Relations Councils, which, they argue, have 'provided important political contexts for those committed to work actively for racial equality' (Ben-Tovim et al, 1986, p. 95).[16] In addition they contacted two local anti-racist groups: the Merseyside Anti-Racialist Alliance (MARA) and the Wolverhampton Anti-Racist Committee (WARC).

The book focuses on the politics of racial inequality and the role played by political forces in both reinforcing and reducing those inequalities. They do not address race relations in terms of culture or biological differences. Nor do they seek to explain race relations in terms of class inequalities or capital accumulation. What they are concerned with is the 'secondary' role of politics. Rather than treat the political as a residue of autonomous activity as the cultural, biological and class determinant approaches tend to, Ben-Tovim *et al*. are primarily interested in the machinations of politics and the wielding

of power as it effects local struggles for racial equality. This focus is not, however, blind to the structural limitations. They are not interested in, for example, minority culture *per se* but locate it within the discussion of minority rights and demand for institutional provision, and so on.

Their conception of politics is not restricted to formal governmental institutions 'but refers to a mode of analysing institutional structures and relations in general'. Within these institutional contexts, they focus 'on sites of struggle and conflict' where the outcome is not known in advance. In short they address power. They see power as something other than 'fixed quantities ascribed to individuals on the basis of some preconceived hierarchy of the state'. On the contrary, they needed to establish what the conditions are that make the exercise of power possible. Such conditions relate to the law, control over the administration of policy, access to material resources, the nature of prevalent ideologies, and the political struggles. They, therefore, 'conceive race policy initiatives not as necessarily tokenistic or correct solutions but rather as resources whose outcomes depend on the mobilisation of forces for and against racial equality' (Ben-Tovim *et al.*, 1986, p. 99).

4.5.2 Action research

The project, started in 1978, became a piece of action research not least because of the reluctance of both local and central government to provide information through the standardised structured interview research instruments. The original intention was to examine central government policies on race in terms of their impact on local communities. Part of this was to examine the scope for local differences in policy and organisational practices. The plan was to interview Whitehall officials and to examine policy documents and Hansard in order to determine central government policy. Interviews with Home Office and Department of Environment officials proved to be 'uninformative and inadequate for examining central government's relationship with local authorities or for building up a detailed knowledge of how race as an issue was "handled" in Whitehall' (Ben-Tovim *et al*., 1986, p. 3).

A survey of local officials and politicians in Wolverhampton and Liverpool was intended to find out the influence of central policy on local policy-making processes. However, the principal officers in Liverpool and Wolverhampton refused access to the administrators/local officers in the town halls and thus the researchers were deprived of a main source of information.

The third stage was to assess the impact of local political and community organisations through interviews and direct active participation. The involvement in these areas provided the researchers with 'a wealth of detail' about the operation of local government. Such involvement also allowed the researchers to study the relationship between central and local government on race issues and to look at 'the role of central legislation in promoting racial equality'. In the circumstances a revised plan was developed which involved assessing local and central policies in terms of the problems and possibilities created for local organisations and local struggles for racial equality.

> For example this mean that we did not rely on data from the Home Office or Liverpool's chief executive for an understanding of the 1976 Race relations Act. Rather we came to understand the Act through our active involvement in local

> anti-racist struggles. In this way our knowledge of central and local policies was linked to the research process through action. (Ben-Tovim *et al*., 1986, p. 4)

The researchers regarded their direct involvement in local organisations as not just a fortuitous means of gaining information. On the contrary, they regarded the 'action' aspect of their research as of key importance. 'We were able to use our energy and efforts (for the purpose of research) to support local struggles for racial equality' (Ben-Tovim *et al*., 1986, p. 3). The kind of action the researchers were involved in were

> attending meetings to engage in debates about strategies and objectives; writing policy papers and using them for discussion and lobbying; doing local research for the use of organisations and attending and organising conferences. (Ben-Tovim *et al*., 1986, p.3)

Ben-Tovim *et al*. argue that the relationship between local government and local organisations concerned with racial equality, such as the Community Relations Councils and the Labour Party, was 'consistently tested over a wide spectrum of issues' and with them 'acting in a variety of capacities'. They thus argue that their findings are 'valid and reliable' and 'furthermore that they are detailed and specific, as well as explanatory in their content' (Ben-Tovim *et al*., 1986, p. 4). The researchers argued that they were thus able to 'take research out of its ivory tower' and to develop academic research in the context of a committed fight for racial equality. Operating in a different social and academic context they are unequivocal in the face of the dilemmas that fifteen years earlier had plagued Ladner (1971).

4.5.3 Conventional and integrative action research

The researchers point out that there is a substantial 'if unfashionable' tradition of action research in the social sciences which includes the War on Poverty Programmes in the United States and the Education Priority Areas Project and the Community Development Project in the United Kingdom, during the 1960s and 1970s. More recently action research has been associated with initiatives 'designed to combat the effects of urban deprivation and disadvantage'. These initiatives, however, were all characterised by a distinction between action and research with a corresponding distinction between 'those who researched and those who acted' (Lees and Smith, 1975). The result is that action research has frequently failed to take account of its political context with corresponding implications for the programme of action.

Ben-Tovim *et al*. (1986, p. 6) argue that social science has always been surrounded by controversy about the relationship between the various social scientific disciplines on the one hand and political action on the other. At one level this is couched in terms of value freedom. In the area of race relations there has been, contrary to notions of value-freedom, a clear commitment by most authors to particular standpoints, such as the elimination of racial discrimination or the promotion of racial harmony. However, despite the intrusion of such values there has been little systematic attempt to develop the political implications of these positions.[17] Such depoliticisation of the issue within social science, the authors claim, is fatuous and unrealisable. Any research, let alone that related to racism, is political from beginning to end. Subjects are not selected and studied neutrally. More to the point, social scientists cannot expect their research to be taken up

by politicians or organisations. 'The tendency to divorce research from its would-be political context and to abstain from research based interventions in politics has only served to sanction the political status quo and in some instances no doubt to actually exacerbate inequalities themselves' (Ben-Tovim *et al*., 1986, p. 5). The depoliticisation of the research process, they argue, undermines any direct challenge to institutionalised racism.

They suggest that in the 1980s both 'mainstream social science' and Marxism have effected a consensus which divorces research from political practice. Mainstream social science they argue tends to disregard the political significance of its research activity through its commitment to objectivity. Much Marxism, they suggest disengages social science from politics 'by focusing debate on the ideological purity of Marxism's contemporary forms and their fidelity (or lack of it) to the classical Marxist tradition'. This is reinforced by an insistence on economic and class structures as the primary focus of analysis. The authors thus project a 'purist economistic' view of much Marxist analysis of race which is hostile to 'reformist' intervention in existing social structures.[18]

Rather than pursue 'objective' research the authors are concerned that the sociology of race should be overtly politicised and reflect the ethical commitment condemning racism. Ben-Tovim *et al*. explore 'political action in terms of viable strategic options' with the intention of providing 'a more complex explanation of the limits of reform without pre-empting it altogether'.

What Ben-Tovim *et al*. propose is a dissolution of the distinction between researchers and activists. They note three consequences of this approach. First, policy implications are an integral part of the research, not an appended afterthought. That is, the implications of the research on policy becomes an object of investigation in their own right. The implementation and use of the research is built into the analysis from the outset. Second, the analysis of the organisations (both statutory and campaigning) that are concerned with political change is not neutral but represents an evaluation of their effectiveness in realising their objectives. Third, the knowledge gained from the research is not the 'relatively superficial, external and ephemeral' knowledge of the social surveyor or in-depth interviewer but is knowledge which is 'constructed out of political practice, for which there is no substitute'. Such knowledge 'demands a continuous interplay of calculation and testing through struggle within a political context'. What this means is that

> Questions asked can be tested against past performance and if necessary asked again. Policy statements can be measured in terms of their impact over time, as well as influenced directly through collaborative political intervention. Organisations can be understood not just in terms of their constitutions or the basis of selective and guarded statements of their leaders but through direct and sustained involvement over relatively long periods of time. (Ben-Tovim et al, 1986, p. 9)

This they have attempted to do in their work in Liverpool and Wolverhampton.

4.5.4 Politics and policy

Ben- Tovim *et al*. use the term 'racism' to refer to 'a process the outcome of which is racial inequality'. Racism operates overtly by design, or indirectly by the effects, of laws,

polices and administrative practice. Thus racism operates positively through policies, rules and their interpretation or negatively through a failure to do anything about racism or even recognise it. Universalism, for example, which suggests everyone should be treated equally denies positive discrimination to correct imbalances as a result of prior racist practices.

They argue that institutionalised racism is deeply embedded and that an analysis of it should go beyond the analysis of the immigration policies of post-war governments. It is to 'racism's low profile' that they wish to draw attention, both to reveal further layers of institutional racism but because of the contribution it can make to the understanding of the politics of race and racism.

In broadening the notion of the state in relation to racism Ben- Tovim *et al*. see it in terms of three interrelated sets of political forms and processes. First, a set of public institutions (i.e. ultimately accountable to an electorate), including central, regional and local government and their administrations. Second, the relationship between these public institutions and those outside the formal apparatus as mediated by laws, policies and administrative practices (including marriage, taxation, social security, race relations, etc.) Third, the state is seen as 'a site of struggle where the object is to change the role of public institutions in terms of their status and/or their relationship to bodies outside their formal institutional boundaries' (Ben-Tovim *et al*., 1986, p. 23). They argue that understanding struggles requires this broader conception of the state. It is then possible, they suggest, 'to indicate how struggles themselves can serve to redefine the boundaries of the state and its internal/external relations'.[19]

Reviewing forms of discrimination in local policy they note four categories of policies and practices: those which fail to redress racial injustice, those which create and maintain racial inequalities, those which abuse the cultural differences of racial minorities, and those which assume negative racial stereotypes.

They draw on case study material from their own political experience to illustrate these various occurrences. For example, the abuse of cultural difference is illustrated in the absence of adequate provision of leisure and recreational facilities for Asian girls. They make virtually no use of statutory youth-service provision for various reasons including the absence of girls-only provision. Despite clear implications for policy, and the scope under the 1944 Education Act granted to local authorities, the youth service has continually failed to develop a positive policy to meet the needs of this group of young people.

Part of the action initiative was to refer to models of good practice in order to convince local authorities of the respectability and efficacy of policy initiatives. For example, two of the researchers undertook research of the Inner London Education Authority Youth Service (Gabriel & Stredder, 1982) which showed that, among other things, the London authority had an explicit commitment to combat racism, had introduced self-help project work outside its traditional youth club provision, involved young people in planning provision, and had substantial black representation within the youth service. These results were used in branch committee meetings to show officers and politicians that what they regarded as impractical had worked elsewhere and that what they regarded as extreme demands had been written into the philosophy of the London youth service. While the point was made, it is indicative of the nature of the local

politics of race that this did not result in any immediate fundamental shift in practice in Wolverhampton.

The authors conclude that their case material shows that there is a complex set of processes at work linking policy, administrative practice and various interested organisations. Racial equality is a political struggle marked by slow and unpredictable shifts. There is strong resistance to racial equality in local government bolstered by racial stereotypes and the refusal to acknowledge the existence of racism. This is mainly manifested in the persistence of colour-blind ideologies which draw for support on the ambiguity of central policy initiatives. Anti-racist organisations, through planned political initiatives, have engaged the forces of resistance through a re-definition of the problem. To avoid charges of extremism, the organisations with which the researchers were involved have built broad alliances and have attempted to break down resistance through the 'democratic' processes of negotiation and representation.

4.5.5 Conclusion

The research has focused on concrete struggles over racial inequalities. They have developed a research process that takes into account local conditions. Their action approach contributes to change in a direct way.

> Although this has not ruled out the possibility of producing objective research evidence, for example surveys and case studies of institutionalised racism, what we have done is to allow local conditions to dictate research priorities and to use findings to press for institutional change. Our intervention has served to facilitate and develop our political analysis. (Ben-Tovim *et al*., 1986, p. 97)

Their approach is clearly informed by Marxism (although sceptical of much Marxist commentary), but rather than rely on Marxist economic theory at the expense of a political analysis they have drawn on Marx's political framework. In their analysis of local struggles aimed to secure greater equality, justice and power for racial minority communities they integrate theory and practice 'through an analysis of a highly specific and complex set of historical conditions within the context of a broadly based set of socialist objectives' (Ben-Tovim *et al*., 1986, p. 97).

They conclude their analysis of the political context in which policies related to racial equality have been implemented by providing a straightforward framework for intervention. The action researcher should identify or construct a problem, analyse the political means by which the problem is reinforced or created, and then undertake a political challenge to the problem. This is not a detached analysis but an ongoing lived experience through action research which provides the basis for 'a constant reformulation, elaboration and development of research problems and analysis' with the political objective of the elimination of racial inequality. Research and political action become fully integrated. The efficacy of research material is linked directly to an understanding of policy constraints, administrative machinations and political processes.

4.6 Mark Duffield—Black radicalism and the Politics of De-industrialisation.

4.6.1 Introduction

Mark Duffield (1988) examines immigrant labour in Britain by focusing on foundry workers, particularly those from the Indian sub-continent who came to work in the West Midlands. He asks the question 'how and why did the West Midland ironfoundry industry become characterized by relatively large concentrations of Indian workers? (Duffield, 1988, p.1). To answer this he undertook an extensive and detailed historical analysis of the industry and the incorporation and role of Indian workers. His approach is to call in to question preconceptions about the nature of the immigrant workforce; their attitude to, and receptivity of, demanding manual labour; their role in the retardation of mechanisation of the foundry industry; and their 'docility' and involvement in collective action. The analysis of these myths is undertaken by locating them within a wider framework of myths about the nature of labour shortages, the demand from capital for low paid immigrant labour, and deskilling.

Duffield's history outlines the processes of the industrialisation of the ironfoundry industry in the immediate post war period through the industrial concentration of Indian workers and their self-representation, to the development of corporate management and rationalisation of the industry and its decline in the recession years of the 1980s. The rise and fall of the Indian shopfloor movement is charted and its fortunes linked to wider political processes.

Underpinning the Gramscian hegemonic analysis is the central notion of the political reality of racism. Rather than see racist practices as simply determined by capital's short-term economic imperatives, Duffield proposes that they represent a paradigmatic instance of the destruction of worker autonomy. A contradictory alliance between labour and capital served to undermine the radical potential engendered by the immigrant black workers and further the fractionalisation of the working class.

4.6.2 Sources

Duffield's historical analysis uncovers the hidden history of the black foundry workers both in terms of the practices and actions within the foundry industry and the wider context of racist immigration policies and hegemonic destruction of labour autonomy. This hidden history is revealed by his extensive use of archival material which provides the basis for his critical examination of taken-for-granted assumptions about migrant labour. He lists seven archive sources: those of the Amalgamated Union of Foundry Workers (AUFW);[20] the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU); the Engineering Employers Federation (EEF); the West Midlands Engineering and Employers Association (WMEEA); the Public Records Office (PRO); The Race Relations Board (RRB); and the Banner Theatre Tape Archive.

The AUFW archives, which includes material from its component unions, was consulted at the Machester and West Bromwich offices. The journal *Foundry Worker* and the reports of the Annual Delegates Meeting were extensively used. Duffield notes that this source was very detailed and useful up to 1960 but that since that time there is far less detail on the state of the industry, the composition of the workforce and the internal debates within the union. The same tendency occurred with the material located in the TGWU archives (consulted at the West Bromwich offices). The extremely useful Biennial Delegate Conferences reports and the Regional Secretary's Quarterly Reports (and their forerunners) of the 1950s were extremely informative unlike the virtually

useless contemporary records. The EEF archives, housed in its London headquarters, do not permit public inspection of recent files but material from the 1960s and earlier is accessible. Such files contain a lot of information on 'post-war labour policy, foreign and black worker agreements' and the 'effect of immigration and racial legislation'. Information on the local implementation of foreign labour agreements and racial legislation were available from the WMEEA archives housed in Birmingham. Details of disputes, union-employer meetings and correspondence were also found in this source. Case notes on investigations by the RRB in the area and lodged at the Birmingham offices of the Commission for racial Equality (CRE) provided 'an invaluable insight into attitudes and conditions within the industry during the late 1960s and early 1970s'. For reasons of space, Duffield notes, these files are currently being destroyed by the CRE. The Banner Theatre Tape Archive, lodged at the company's premises in Lozells, Birmingham, contained taped interviews with 'local political figures, trade unionists, pickets, striking workers, and so on, dating from the mid-1970s and covering many of the major industrial disputes in the area'. Finally, the thirty-year rule meant that files up to the mid-1950s were available for inspection in the Public Records Office. Duffield located some 'extremely interesting material on post-war labour policy, foreign workers and, especially, government responses to black immigration' (Duffield, 1988, pp. 208–9).

A large number of published books and articles on both the foundry industry and the issue of migrant labour in general, plus various newspaper reports, are used to supplement Duffield's primary data.

The following brief résumé of the history of the period up to 1965 gives an indication of the way Duffield develops a critical historical account, using these various sources to engage myths both in terms of the particular history of the industry and, more importantly, the industry as a case study of black migrant labour effected by wider social structural and political processes.

4.6.3 Historical case study

Mechanisation of the industry, that came to a head during the Second World War and took on a new impetus with the development of the automotive industry and its demand for standardised components, caused a crisis amongst skilled ironfoundry craftsmen.[21] Their response, through their union, was to create a new skill hierarchy for machine work. For example, the 'Report of Proceedings of Special Emergency Conference' of the AUFW in August 1946 clearly indicated the need for this hierarchy when it claimed that 'the skilled labour force would be adequate if the foundries were properly staffed with labour to serve the craftsman'. In the event, high-status, high-earning, machine workers on piece-rates were serviced by groups of specialised time-paid labourers. Although both types of worker were initially white, Duffield suggests that this hierarchy defined, in advance, the place that blacks would come to occupy in the industry.

A prevalent myth is that Asian workers took jobs that whites did not want. There is, Duffield asserts, no empirical evidence for this truism. The popularity of the myth arises from its naturalisation of the incorporation process. In particular, it naturalises skill distinctions rather than analyses 'skill' as a social construct. An equally convincing, and empirically sound, analysis of the incorporation of Asian workers in the labour force is that they concentrated in areas where union were weak. Trade unions in expanding

industries able to meet labour requirements could keep concentrations of black workers from forming. This was notable in the automotive industry in the West Midlands.

The incorporation of Indian workers into the foundry industry corresponds to a period of decolonisation (1940–60). This was a politically sensitive period and overt immigration policies were resisted. In addition, Britain suffered labour shortages and migrant labour from Europe and the old Empire was required in the short term. A clear government policy was, however, developed to avoid concentrations of black migrant labour. Documents in the Public Records Office show clearly that the government was developing a policy of dispersing black labour, through the agency of the Labour Exchanges, from the ports to the inland areas and to jobs in industries where there was no opposition from workers or employers and where no white women were employed. The TGWU seized the opportunity to increase its membership by recruiting black members but exploited the situation by imposing foreign-worker type restrictions (including exclusion from promotion to supervisory grades and from piece-rate paid jobs) in exchange for its consent to allow black migrants employment opportunities. This kind of collaborative practice between trade unions, employers and government, both formal and informal, continued to affect the distribution of black workers throughout the 1950s.

During the 1950's, the racial practice of the TGWU and other general unions could be summarised as one of acceptance providing it could control and restrict black employment. 'This not only enhanced their own interests, it also enabled employers to fill pressing vacancies and satisfied the government's desire to disperse and incorporate colonial immigrants' (Duffield, 1988, p. 29). The concentration of Indian workers in the West Midlands foundry industry was, then, not simply a result of labour shortages and unpleasant work. The industry was characterised by a low level of trade union organisation. But that alone is not the reason for an anomalous concentration of Indian workers. Rather, large concentrations in the industry were a managerial initiative enabled by lack of trade union power. Employers in the industry in the West Midlands had, for some time, been concerned about the attempts by government and trade unions to press for restrictive agreements covering the employment of foreign workers. Indian and West Indian workers, because of their citizenship status, were not subject to employment licensing regulations (unlike European migrants) and so became attractive to employers unhampered by strong trade union opposition. Thus the concentration of Indian workers, aided by self-recruitment which by-passed the Labour Exchange policy of dispersal, was a function of individual employers flouting the social democratic consensus.

This strategy also benefitted employers who paid the Indian workers low rates of pay for their labouring work and afforded the workers no security, knowing they were unable to improve their situation. By the end of the 1950s access to the industry was almost exclusively through intermediaries who usually demanded bribes for their services. The situation was thus one of a hard working, undemanding, and thoroughly exploited labour force in many of the foundries—a situation that fuelled the myth of the 'docile Asian' worker.

The 1960s saw a radical change. At the beginning of the decade the Midland ironfoundries were racially segregated on the basis of the division in the technical organisation of work. By the end of the decade, Indian workers had begun to take over machine work. The struggle of Indian workers against racial oppression gathered momentum during the first half of the 1960s. Central to this was the self-representation of

Indian workers through the election of their own shop stewards. The growth of an autonomous Indian shopfloor movement had a significant effect on the unions then competing for members in the ironfoundry industry.

A new racial hegemony, no longer based on 'skill' but on cultural differences, emerged. The Smethwick election result of 1964 clearly signalled that the informality that had characterised the anti-immigration sentiments within the labour movement was about to come to an end. The AUFW had a racist leadership locally who were out of line with the official liberal union line on immigration. The union made an unsuccessful attempt to gain control of the industry in the Midlands including recruiting black workers. However, the leadership hesitancy on migrant workers was reinforced by the Smethwick result and the union made no further serious attempt to recruit Asian workers in the West Midlands after 1964. Officially the AUFW was vehemently opposed to racial discrimination, which it equated with fascism and demanded legislation to outlaw the practice. None the less, the union began to explain its own failure to recruit Indian workers as indicative of cultural, rather than simply social, differences. These cultural differences meant that Indian workers would undermine existing work conditions.

The TGWU had, since 1955, accepted the need for some form of immigration control while simultaneously declaring itself against racial discrimination on humanitarian grounds. The TGWU saw the cultural difference of Indian workers not as inherently likely to undermine existing conditions but as a factor employers could exploit. It did not set out to recruit Indian workers but found that they self-recruited through the emerging shopfloor movement.[22] The TGWU provided a legitimate forum within which Indian workers could organise themselves and escape the domination of the AUFW and other oppressive practices, such as labour touts. The growing militancy of the Indian workers was seen by the TGWU as indicative of self-education and righting the wrongs imposed on them by the employers.

The notion of cultural difference was at the root of a new form of hegemonic discourse, from the-mid 1960s onwards, which depoliticised the race issue. The mid-1960s also saw an all-party consensus on the need to control immigration, which was 'an essential ingredient in the overt racial polarisation which developed in the ironfoundry industry towards the end of the 1960s'. The Indian shopfloor movement developed a radical critique of social democracy and was met by a corporate approach to the 'race issue' from both management and unions. The latter provided a 'concrete link between base and superstructure', translating the 'struggle of Indian workers into fragments of hegemonic knowledge, established links with other institutions and acted as a source and conduit for policies aimed at containing and defusing this struggle'. Unions and management came together in the definition of the race issue as a problem of cultural difference 'giving rise to industrial or technical difficulties'. The two sides fused into a dominant bloc aiming to neutralise the Asian workers' struggle against racial oppression. Plans were laid and attempts made to disperse Asian industrial concentrations, or at least to reduce the spheres of influence by splitting them into smaller units with a proliferation of shop stewards, and cross-cutting the Indian workforce, thus lessening the move to self-representation. Management also acted to undermine the shopfloor movement by taking more active roles in establishing procedure, wage structure and training programmes. The economic restructuring of the industry in the period of decline of the 1970s strengthened the employers' hand. In the event, the unions, 'in their lust after power', helped

management engineer the defeat of the Indian shopfloor movement. ‘Defeat was an essential precondition of the wholesale closure and contraction of the ironfoundry industry in the West Midlands during the late 1970s and early 1980s.’ The first major closure came in February 1979. Within two years all that remained of Birmid’s ‘once huge ironfoundry complex in Smethwick’ was a single crankshaft department employing just 185 men. By the early 1980s most of the ironfoundries in which the Indian shopfloor movement had developed were gone. ‘The break up of Indian concentrations and their physical dispersal through unemployment had been accomplished. This was the final act in the rise and fall of the Indian shop floor movement’ (Duffield, 1988, pp. 193–4).

4.6.4 Racism and the dominant bloc

Duffield documents these processes in detail. The concentration of Indian workers in the West Midlands ironfoundry industry represented an anomaly. To make sense of it, Duffield examined the case study material by locating it, as the brief résumé suggests, in a wider structural and political context. The research, as has been indicated, is underpinned by a hegemonic analysis. Duffield (1988, p. 202) is unequivocal that capitalism is an oppressive system that daily creates ‘poverty and misery’. Capitalism is controlled by a powerful dominant bloc. The bourgeoisie retain control but is supported, ‘as we know from Gramsci (1971)’ by ‘all manner of experts, teachers, professionals, social workers, elected representatives, academics’ as well as the major bureaucracies of the labour movement (Duffield, 1988, p. 3).

Although representing different camps, or interests, the dominant bloc is united by common ideas that enable it to maintain power. If conflict is to be avoided the dominant bloc must act collectively in ‘attempting to manage the crisis’. In so doing it forges a collective ‘minimal agreement’ on the ‘condition of society, human nature, public moralty, and so on’. These positions may have a ‘left’ and ‘right’ version but they do not transcend the essential bounds of capitalism. ‘Labour governments come and go’ but they ‘never once challenge the nature of oppression’. Hegemonic control, Duffield (1988, p. 202) asserts, allows the dominant bloc to ‘resolve the contradictions among the subordinate classes’ in such a way as to ensure that their own ‘incomes, careers and life-styles are maintained. In the last resort these shared assumptions legitimate coercive action whenever it is necessary. Furthermore, within late capitalism, the dominant bloc is synonymous with the extended apparatus of the state.

This is the background to Duffield’s case study analysis of migrant labour. It is not a position that prefigures the analysis but one that grows dialectically out of the case study. He was thus able, ever more clearly, to reveal the machinations of the hegemonic bloc. The hidden history of the industry exposes the shared strategies, informal understandings and political collusion which linked labour movement, employers and government agencies into a common, yet contradictory, bloc against black workers. The presence and nature of this bloc was instrumental in the forging and shaping the democratic resistance of the Indian workers to racist oppression.

Crucially, Duffield sees the experiences of Indian workers as fundamentally influenced by the ‘collapse and rebuilding’ of hegemony which took place in the latter part of the 1960s. This period, he argues, marks a ‘crucial transformation in the manner in which power in society was organised and directed. The changes which took place constitute a definite break with the more liberal capitalism of the earlier post-war years.’

The political and ideological shifts of this period preface the so-called 'radical' departures from the mid-1970s which simply reproduce tendencies already present in the earlier transformation (Duffield, 1988, p. 98).

Duffield, in outlining the historical case study, provides a good example of the interlinking of particular details and broader issues, within specific organisational frameworks. Prior to the mid-1960s, when the economy was characterised by welfare capitalism, both left and right viewed the immigration issue in terms of scarce resources. 'For the right, the scarcity of houses, hospital beds, school places, and so on, necessitated immigrant control.' The left did not challenge the scarcity assumption and were thus easily able to move from opposition to accceptance of the need for immigration control once its liberal interpretation (which involved a demand for more schools, houses, etc.) was undermined by the emergence in the late 1960s of the individualistic market economy. The emergence of the latter occurred at a time of a shift of focus from the Empire to the EEC., following the end of decolonisation, from full employment to mass unemployment; from politics of 'broad social estates to that of the special group'. All of this, coincided with 'a leap in the centralisation of state power that these transformations, engendered by the deepening crisis of capitalism, would make necessary' (Duffield, 1988, p. 203).

A new set of shared assumptions emerged in the late 1960s prompted by the Powellist version of the New Right racism. This new view privileged the notion of cultural difference. While the right saw cultural difference as heralding violence and the breakdown of the established order because the indigenous population would not tolerate alternative cultures, the left did not see violence as an inevitable outcome and welcomed diversity. The left conceded that remedial action was necessary but this could be of a legislative and educative nature. This 'left' version has remained the 'the basic framework within which the state's race relations industry has developed'.

The response of the Indian shopfloor movement was to actively engage the basic assumptions of the dominant bloc which were manifested in relation to notions about skill, experience, suitability, and so on. A major plank in this opposition was the establishment of all work to be open to anyone who wants to do it. 'Promotion' was then based on seniority not spurious notions about technical skill and ability, which had previously been used by unions and management to limit opportunities for Indian workers and enable management to hire and promote as it desired. In response to the anti-technicist seniority principle established by the shopfloor, employers and unions developed an apparently liberal equal opportunities policy. However, this policy reinforced, rather than denied, the socially constructed skill and eligibility criteria by taking them for granted and offering training to blacks to meet these socially created criteria.

> Thus, not only is the whole oppressive edifice accepted, but through the screening and assessment possible whilst 'training' is taking place, management once again is able to assert its interests in the guise of liberalism. In the interests of stability, equal opportunity, rather than representing a liberating force, would seem to have as its sole object that oppression within society is equally distributed. (Duffield, 1988, p. 205)

The potentially liberating democratic force of the Indian shopfloor movement was eradicated through the closures during the recession and authoritarian centralisation won out. Equal opportunities policies were central in the marginalisation of the black struggle. The liberal apparatus of equal opportunities, first tried out in the employment sphere, has spread since the 'riots' of 1981. Multiculturalism has become a growth industry, 'ethnic posts', local authority race relations units, racism awareness trainers, and so on are all involved in mystifying the 'nature of power and the essence of the black struggle'. Political power is reduced to issues of colour while the black struggle is reduced to access to resources mediated by 'sensitive' social workers and fair housing policies.

> Compared to the universalism of the black struggle, it is within the nature of the new racism that, in the name of equal opportunity, racial divisions are now taking on an institutional permanence which seems to become stronger by the day. (Duffield, 1988, p. 207)

4.6.5 The new racism

In order to undertake his research Duffield had to become thoroughly acquainted with the operation of the ironfoundry industry. He had to get to know both its organisational structure and to understand the various jobs that workers performed.[23] This was important in providing a basis for deconstructing the technicist assumptions and revealing the socially constructed nature of skill criteria.[24] Duffield's deconstruction of abstract constructs fits neatly with the development of a totalistic analysis. The practices within the industry are constantly related to broader initiatives of the dominant bloc. Contradictions within it are reflected in detailed accounts of contradictions within the industry, such as the conflict between the TGWU and the AUEF which repeated the 'left' and 'right' approaches to immigration control.

Duffield uses a historical case study to analyse the depoliticisation of the black struggle. While of interest in itself, the rise and fall of the Indian shopfloor movement is a vehicle for examining the nature and ideology of the hegemonic order and the operation of liberal equal opportunities strategies to shore up the 'new racism'. His critique is in sharp contrast to studies which, in highlighting discriminatory practices against migrant workers, such as *The Chicano Worker* (Briggs *et al*., 1977), propose policy initiatives to address education and training needs, and the unionisation of migrants in order to alleviate the more inhumane effects of discrimination and to assimilate migrants into the same sets of apparatuses as mainstream workers.

Duffield is unambiguous about his own position; he is clearly anti-racist and this informs his analysis. He would regard it as fatuous to adopt a 'neutral' position in order to analyse the struggle and any such attempt would inhibit a broader structural analysis. His political position is clear: capitalism is an oppressive system and the constituents of the organisational bloc that wields political power are all equally culpable. He unreservedly sees the union bureaucracies as being as much to blame as the employers and government in the racist treatment of Indian workers. The contempt in which Duffield holds the unions is summed up by his reaction to a spokesperson of the TGWU who bemoaned the successive closure of six plants. 'Given that the unions helped engineer the political defeat which was a precondition of the closures, the pathetic and whining tone of such statements is all the more obnoxious' (Duffield, 1988, p. 193).

He uses the analysis of prevailing myths as a way to start digging beneath the surface of the supposed relations within the industry and to unravel the hidden history of the racist hegemonic collusion. In so doing he draws some uncomfortable parallels between 'New Right racism' and left 'multi-culturalism'. Duffield's intention is praxiological, not just to reveal the machinations of the hegemonic state apparatus but to indicate the liberating potential of a democratic black movement as opposed to the legitimation of capitalism embodied in equal opportunities strategies operated by middle-class professionals.

4.7 Conclusion

Once again it is not method but methodological approach that characterises these studies as critical. The methods vary from directed interviewing, participant and non-participant observation and action research to historical archive study. It is not the data collection but the way the resulting material is handled that is crucial.

Each of these studies deals with racial oppression. They essentially examine race in terms of racism. They do not see 'race' as implying inherent characteristics but treat it as a socially constructed abstraction which becomes a concrete entity only as racist practices and structures are made explicit. Race as a social construct is thus not addressed in terms of any essential element, but instead the nature of specific forms of racism are analysed: Ladner addresses the myth of Black culture; Duffield deconstructs the myth of workplace skill as it encapsulates racist practices; Ben-Tovim *et al*. fill out the empty abstract notion of local politics and anti-racism; and Weis similarly explicates taken-for-granted cultural concepts, such as 'success' and 'time', that are at the interface of the conflict between students and college authorities.

All the examples linked racism to institutionalised structures of oppression and adopted an essentially hegemonic view of ideology in which racism served the interests of a dominant power elite. Ladner, who operates within the limited horizons of 1960s American sociological theorising does not address ideology directly but alludes to white middle-class hegemonic culture and defines institutionalised racism in terms of normative patterns. Despite this uncritical terminology her analysis reflects an embryonic critical analysis of dominant ideology. Weis develops this by adopting a Gramscian view of hegemony and links ideology directly to culture. Like Ladner she sees blacks as superexploited and black culture as dialectically linked to dominant culture. Duffield and Ben-Tovim *et al*. were less inclined than Ladner to see racism as determined simply by capitalist modes of production in which blacks are a superexploited underclass. They posit a much more complex process of hegemonic dominance, although not coming to radically different praxiological conclusions.

Praxis informs all these examples. Ladner wants to raise black consciousness against the norm of white-middle class culture and galvanise blacks into resistance in the face of further oppressive measures. Weis argues that by focusing on culture the ideology of the community college and the general attitude towards the education of blacks is exposed. She wants to do something about the community college system and suggests policy changes although admitting the limits of such intervention because of structural factors. Her hope is that with increased awareness to which her book contributes, the semi-autonomous nature of culture might make it possible for student cultural forms to develop

radical transformative potential. Ben-Tovim *et al*., rather than suggesting particular policy changes offered a basis for local political action to engage racism. Duffield, sceptical of the role of multi-cultural workers, intended his work as an example of the radical potential of Black and Asian workers.

All the examples approach race and racism from a totalistic perspective. Although asking what are the processes that are involved in the coming to womanhood of poor Black girls, Ladner addresses a much wider context than the socialising effect of the family. Indeed, she looks beyond the confines of the ghetto to assess the processes of institutionalised racism and forms of resistance that characterise American society. Weis, similarly, in asking why Black students have such little success in community colleges addresses not just the impact of college culture but, similarly to Willis (1977), its relationship to Black culture in general. Black (ghetto) culture is itself viewed in terms of its relationship to dominant (white) culture. Ben-Tovim *et al*. in assessing the local processes that give rise to and maintain racial inequality did not just focus on the internal workings of the Labour Party in Liverpool and Wolverhampton but assessed the ways the local process responded to and drew on wider forms of legitimation stemming from central government and populist consciousness. Duffield, in asking why there was a concentration of Indian workers in the West Midlands foundry industry was not content to look at the internal workings of the industry but related it to broader issues of immigration policy and national trade union initiatives on migrant workers. He ultimately assessed the way the interests of a dominant bloc including government, employers and trade unionists coalesced to inhibit the radicalism of Indian workers.

History informs all the studies. For Ladner, blacks have a history from Africa through slavery that impinges on their culture and thus the way in which they cope with and engage oppression. For Weis, history is a background resource. The history of the education system out of which community colleges grew, individual biographies, and the general history of racial oppression provide a context although the focus of her attention is structural. Ben-Tovim *et al*. similarly document the history of immigration legislation and associated racist policy in order to provide a context within which local battles against racial discrimination have been and continue to be fought. Duffield's study, on the other hand, is essentially an historical analysis of immigrant workers in which the West Midlands foundry workers are a case study.

Most of the studies were, in one way or another, critical of prevailing sociological approaches. The criticism was directed not just at particular theories but at the basic preconceptions (although, of course, they are not all in agreement). Ladner directly engaged the racism embodied in the 'pathological' model and the objectivism and hierarchy of the positivistic approach. Ben-Tovim *et al*. wanted on the one hand to assert, against 'positivistic objectivism', the validity of direct action to engage racism while on the other countering what they saw as the indifference of Marxists towards ameliorative action. Duffield reasserted the denial of the still prevalent 'problem' thesis of immigration but also attacked the whole sociological and political drift towards multiculturalism with its reification of cultural differences. Weis, alone, was less condemnatory of existing approaches and adopted an existing thesis (Willis, 1977) and applied it to a different set of circumstances.

All four reveal how, from very different traditions and using quite different methods, racial oppression can be engaged in an empirical critical manner. At the core of this is a

deconstructive–reconstructive process that, drawing on the critical elements, gets beneath the surface of appearances of oppressive social structures. In the concluding part of the book this dialectical process will be rehearsed.

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[1] Anti-Semitism and colour prejudice are distinctive modalities of racism. (Cohen, 1988, p. 15)

[2] The nineteenth century attempts at an objective classification of the human species into biological groupings, or 'races' have been 'progressively discredited' and critical social research takes as axiomatic that discernible differences in skin colour, type of hair, or even gene frequency in no way provides the basis for the classification of people into racial subtypes. In social research in general the tendency is to see 'race' as the 'way in which members of society *perceive* differences between groups in that society and define the boundaries of such groups taking into account physical characteristics such as skin colour' (Bulmer, 1986, pp. 54–5, italics added). Critical social research insists that 'race' is an ideological construction.

[3] This outline owes much to Gilroy (1987) and Cohen (1988). There are in addition idealist approaches which deal with race as an autonomous realm of scientific enquiry (Banton & Harwood, 1975) An alternative tendency has, in defining 'race' as a cultural phenomenon, turned it into a 'synonym for ethnicity and a sign for the sense of separateness which endows groups with an exclusive, collective identity' (Lawrence, 1982a). For these writers, blacks do not live in the castle of their skin but behind the sturdy walls of discrete ethnic identities (Gilroy, 1987, p. 16).

[4] Because this section sets out to provide examples of methodology which see race as the major form of oppression, no examples from within this tendency are included.

[5] This, of course, reflects more recent socialist/Marxist feminist approaches unhappy with the way gender has swamped race, for example, Westwood (1984).

[6] Radical in the sense of 'rootedness' that implies a return of power to 'grass roots' rather than the conservative usurpation of radical.

[7] The identification of Thatcherism with racism has been responsible for the demise and redirection of the National Front which no longer had a distinctive policy (Edgar, 1977). Thatcherism has reinforced new popular images of racism, notably those around mugging (Hall *et al*., 1978), and created a popular consensus that explained the 'riots' of 1980 and 1981 in terms of street crime, indiscipline in the home, declining moral values, and falling educational standards, all of which were associated with young black people in the popular racist mind.

[8] Ladner refers throughout to Black persons with an upper case B.

[9] Ladner also refers to the use of Thematic Apperception Tests.

[10] This definition fails to ground institutional racism in explicit material practices, reflecting the prevailing approach to American sociology of the late 1960s. None the less it does provide a structural context within which to locate the day-to-day struggles of black women.

[11] The disorganisation thesis derives from so-called 'Chicago School' studies of social disorganisation the 1920s and early 1930s. Along with its associated concepts of 'definition of the situation' and 'social becoming' it had a long lasting impact on American sociology. Social disorganisation was initially used to refer to the

disorganisation that occurs within societies as a result of social change (see Carey, 1975; Bulmer, 1984; Harvey, 1987). A parallel notion of individual disorganisation emerged in a number of guises, initially integrally linked to social disorganisation but later becoming a more autonomous notion linked to personal or group pathology. Disorganisation was first used in relation to the family by Mowrer (1924, 1927), and Frazier (1931, 1939) draws on this.

[12] Ladner uses the male pronoun throughout to refer to social researchers.

[13] 'Black women in this society are the only ethnic or racial group which has had the opportunity *to be women*. By this I simply mean that much of the current focus on being liberated from the constraints and protectiveness of the society which is proposed by Women's Liberation groups has never applied to Black women, and in that sense, we have always been "free", and able to develop as individuals even under the most harsh circumstances. This freedom, as well as the tremendous hardships from which Black women suffered, allowed for the development of a female personality that is rarely described in the scholarly journals for its obstinate strength and ability to survive. Neither is its peculiar humanistic character and quiet courage viewed as the epitome of what the American model of femininity should be.' (Ladner, 1971, p. 280)

[14] Weis makes reference, in a footnote, to her 'two research assistants' and in the acknowledgements lists five people who 'acted as my research assistants, spending countless hours collecting data without which this book could not have been written'. It is not clear, however, what role these people played nor exactly what they did. The only clue offered is that the interviews with graduates of the college appear to have been 'conducted by a person other than LW' according to Weis' system of extract annotation (although the interviewers' interjections are still labelled as 'LW').

[15] Weis' approach is to introduce approximately quarter page long blocks of verbatim material from four or five sources one after the other and then summarise it by reference to key phrases. This approach while contextualising comments does lead to repetition. However, this is a stylistic concern rather than a substantive concern about the nature of her critical ethnography.

[16] Reviewing the role of the Labour Party the researchers note that despite the broad ideological commitment the role of the party in both Liverpool and Wolverhampton has been limited. Liverpool, dominated by Militant has tended to confine anti-racism to slogans while in Wolverhampton positive, although superficial, initiatives have uncovered more profound problems.

[17] Ben-Tovim *et al*. argue that the analysis of race has been compartmentalised into studies of policy or class analyses of racism and that this has meant that policy issues have been divorced from their political context while political analysis has lacked a policy dimension. To overcome this, they argue, policy analysis must 'accommodate the notions of anti-racist and black struggles', that is, address the mechanism for achieving identified reforms and ensuring that overall objectives will be monitored and maintained. Further, policy must be evaluated in terms of its contribution towards reducing racial inequalities. Finally, the relationship between policy and the 'realities of the political system' must also be explored.

[18] The accounts of research practice in this book have been presented without specific critiques, because all of them represent useful case studies. However, these comments by

Ben-Tovim *et al*. are rather too generalised and misleading to pass without comment. 'Mainstream sociology', which presumably refers to the dominant modes of non-critical research highlighted in part one of this book, is not as naïve or confused about its political significance as the researchers suggest. Indeed, there are explicit accounts that explore political considerations (e.g. Denzin, 1970). What mainstream sociology tends to do, however, is, as the researchers suggest, disengage their analysis from any praxiological concerns. Equally, some Marxist research tends to be less explicit about praxiological concerns than one might expect given the revolutionary tradition. Not all Marxist analysis is, of course, economistic, as this book consistently reiterates. Nor is all Marxist analysis disdainful of direct action within prevailing social structures. Such action is not uniformly regarded as reformist by Marxists, as Ben-Tovim *et al*. suggest. Indeed, most Marxist analysis informed by Gramscian hegemonic notions tends to be concerned to get involved directly in social action, here and now, rather than await the revolution, as the examples in this book make clear. In the final analysis, whatever straw models Ben-Tovim *et al*. construct, there is, as this book shows, a critical tradition that is directly concerned with praxiological issues.

[19] Ben-Tovim *et al*. argue that focusing on legislative amelioration (i.e. on the various Race Relations Acts, local government grant aid, inner city policies) is too restrictive because it fails to differentiate positive and negative effects. Further, looking only at high-profile political opposition to racial inequality (e.g. the Anti-Nazi League; The Organisation of Women of Afro-Caribbean and Asian Descent, and other black groups) centres concern on overt discrimination rather than insidious aspects of racism. By addressing and identifying the modes of operation of policies on such things as housing, taxation, education, families, and so on, political action could be initiated to challenge them. This would also allow the critique of mainstream policies on, for example, housing (rather than marginalised inner city policies) to ensure that racial minorities are not excluded either by positive or negative discrimination (e.g. failure of councils to provide large houses for extended family groups).

[20] The AUFW later became the Foundry Section of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundry Workers (AUEF).

[21] Duffield refers to men throughout probably because the industry had no women workers.

[22] The Indian shop-floor movement was promoted by, among other groups, the Indian Workers Association. The IWA first appeared in Coventry in the 1930s. It was rooted in the Indian nationalist movement. In 1958, prompted by a new generation 'matured during the upheavals of independence' formed the IWA (GB) and successfully agitated to get the Indian government to ease the issue of passports and to provide Indians in Britain with valid documents. The Commonwealth Immigrants Bill of 1962 exacerbated the radical-conservative split in the IWA and provided the impetus for young Indian communists to consolidate their existing hold on the leadership of the IWA (GB). The final major split between the radical industrial-based group centred on Birmingham and the conservatives in Southall occurred in the mid-1960s. The Birmingham branch was highly active in campaigns against racial discrimination.

[23] In this respect he reflected the intensive study of work practices and organisational structures undertaken by Grimshaw and Jefferson (1987) in their study of policework, (Section 2.7)

[24] This demystification of skill reflects Cockburn's (1983) analysis of print compositors (Section 3.4, above).