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University of Durham

**'They've Took our Jobs, They've Took our Town':  
Changing Working Men's lives in a Solidaristic Community**

A thesis submitted to the University of Durham  
In accordance to the requirements of the degree of Ph.D in the Faculty of Social  
Sciences

School of Applied Social Sciences

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by  
Fred Parker

September 2005



15 MAR 2006

## **Abstract**

This study is focused on the relationship of a group of older working class men, both to the type of work they have performed and known through their lives, and the place they live, Thornaby in Teesside, North East England. The dominant relationship between work and place was fractured in the 1980s by the permanent closure of the town's major employer, though Thornaby and its people have always had close links to other neighbouring Teesside based heavy industries. Redevelopment has subsequently occurred, bringing mostly office and shop based employment - jobs that, according to these men, are not for them. This project examines how these men have adapted and redefined their lives, mostly without paid work, and explores how they view the now altered town in which they live.

The study employs ideas based around 'sense of place', and also Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus'. This is then positioned into the historical context in which these people's lives have been played out. They grew up with Keynesian macro-economic management, the welfare state, and council houses for working men and their families. Subsequently, the incoming Thatcher government of 1979, promoted a different economic ideology, resulting in mass unemployment, as major employers, such as Thornaby's Head Wrightson, shut down for ever.

A qualitative approach was employed, this backed up by secondary data, this helped to develop an image of the background and historical contexts of these peoples' lives. At the centre of this study was a series of formal interviews, these further backed up

through simple conversations and general observations of people and their circumstances.

The study concludes that people have adapted, often rationally, but not necessarily in a manner that government would want. For example, many use Incapacity Benefit as a viable alternative to low paid work. The issue of older workers without employment is not a new matter, but it has been aggravated as a consequence of the industrial policies of the Thatcher and Major governments, and the emergence into middle-age of the post-war 'baby boomers'. A shift to a supply-side approach to unemployment has enabled government to transfer the blame of unemployment onto the unemployed themselves. In the case of the North East, there is still a considerable shortage of jobs, though this appears not fully recognised by government. Until this is addressed, all policy can do is to 'plug holes and slow down leaks' as they occur.

For the older former workers, the absence of employment has meant that their old discourse - in the manner in which many of them have associated with each other since childhood - has remained mostly intact. However, redevelopments are bringing in new ways of working, along with 'up market' private housing estates. Many of these men feel under attack from different directions. Other people appear to be arriving and turning the place which these men have known since childhood into somewhere else - somewhere different from the town they recognise. For them, their own discourse is likely to continue in parallel to a changed community, until they have died out.



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I would also like to thank my wife Audrey and other members of my family for putting up with me over the period this project has taken, particularly coping with my wonderful range of moods, which were all tolerated. I would also specifically like to thank John Millican, without whom this project would never have got off the ground.

A special thank you also goes out to Fred Robinson for supervising this study. Even through the dark periods he stood by me. In Fred, I know I have not just met a great thinker, but also made a friend.

Finally, there are two constant companions who both passed away before this project was finished. Shandy, a mongrel dog, who we had since he was a pup, left us aged twelve. There was also Bono – usually simply referred to as Puss – who left us after seventeen years together. Both were often settled next to me as I worked on this study, Puss occasionally walking over the keyboard, probably in an effort to improve my spelling and punctuation. They are both missed.

**Dedicated to Desmond York**

**Died 24<sup>th</sup> June 2005**

**A true working man of Thornaby**

**'I shall never forget those despairing faces, as the men tramped up and down the High Street in Stockton or gathered round the Five Lamps in Thornaby. Nor can any tribute be too great to the loyal unflinching courage of the wives and mothers, who somehow continued, often on a bare pittance, to provide for husband and children and keep a decent home in being'. (Harold Macmillan 1966, p. 285, Member of Parliament for Stockton-on-Tees – then including Thornaby – 1924 to 1929, and 1931 to 1945)**

# **1 Chapter One Introduction: the aims and objectives, with some considerations of method and meaning**

## **1.1 Preface: why carry out this study?**

For much of my lifetime I have seen North East-based regional news bulletins preoccupied by the lack of employment opportunities and its effects on communities. That is still the case, although the nature of work has altered significantly. And now, the media appear to concentrate more on individual communities and the poverty of localities. The absolute lack of what many North Eastern males would consider meaningful work seems to be ignored, though some commentators may appreciate that work for its own sake is not necessarily the answer, given the wages, conditions, and temporary nature of much current employment.

For many men, a lifetime of physical work with, probably, occasional spells of unemployment, has always been expected. Even when the national unemployment rate has been supposedly low, the North East was desperate for new investment and jobs, with different governments introducing an assortment of programmes to attempt to deal with it. Even today, it is not hard to walk into a workingmen's club, or visit allotments, and find that the majority of men of employment age there are not working. A high proportion of unemployment today is simply hidden, though perhaps it always was.

Since early industrialisation in the North East, the core industries - based around





coal, iron and steel, later chemicals - appeared to be always present, employing more or less people as demand and output fluctuated. The vast majority of these jobs were male and blue collar. For many women, employment existed only in that transition period between leaving school, marriage and the birth of the first child. It also was mostly menial. The region's communities were built on an economic structure based around the uncertainties of often tedious manual work.

The North East of England's modern history is dominated by stories of unemployment, by communities blighted when key industries closed, and frequent relative, and occasional absolute poverty - experiences all shared by the working class communities that have dominated much of its social landscape. Communities traditionally adapted to changed circumstances. Sometimes new industries came in and helped, plugging a gap where a traditional employer had reduced the workforce. Many of the new firms, however, have stayed only a short time and moved on elsewhere.

The 1980s saw much of the traditional base of North Eastern economic activity destroyed. The old certainties and uncertainties disappeared, along with the factories. The only certainty, for a vast number of people laid off from these closures, was unemployment, with perhaps the occasional possibility of low-paid work. Whole communities were thrust into, in some cases, a deeper poverty from that already existing. Poverty became the new certainty, being the price of unemployment. Whole towns and villages changed in their social structure as a consequence of the economic changes imposed on them.

Since industrialisation the North East has been very masculinised in its economic, and to a large degree, social profile. Steel, coal, engineering and chemicals offered very little employment for women. Men, once married, were usually breadwinners, with women, if they were employed, often working part-time, or in limited skill roles. The events of the 1980s changed this significantly, with many men no longer able to find what they considered meaningful work, this being mostly manual in orientation.

With so many people unemployed, clearly the region's towns and communities were significantly affected. Government responded with various initiatives. For Thornaby, the study location, this included attracting mostly white-collar employment on to a site that once housed the town's main employer, Head Wrightson. That firm, along with a few others on that site, employed, at its peak, about 5,000 men, in mostly heavy engineering roles. The state seems to have written off the possibility of further manufacturing industry for the place. The new service sector developments have helped create employment for women and for young people of both sexes. The older men, however, have been left behind. Many of them are still unwaged today.

## 1.2 The Questions asked

Since the mass closures of the 1980s a different economic framework has emerged. The town of Thornaby has had an enforced change through new forms of economic development, and many of the men once critical for its economic well-being have effectively been discarded. This project attempts to explore the effects of these events on both the men affected by the changes, and the 'community' of Thornaby. A number of questions initially emerged, from which other related issues evolved. The core questions related to:

- *Issues of community and self, following economic restructuring and de-industrialisation, in the context of a male-dominated solidaristic locale.*

The reason for the masculine bias in this study is tied to the heavy nature of past North Eastern industry. Steel, engineering, shipbuilding, chemicals and coal mining are all male dominated industries, involving a high degree of physical labour. Questions can be asked about how people – particularly men - make sense of the recent economic and social changes.

Although modern Thornaby emerged during its industrialisation period as a place dominated by ironworks and heavy engineering, linked to that were associated services, which included a large freight railway depot, with many trains carrying coal from the nearby Durham coalfield both travelling

through, or discarding their load. Similarly, goods were once imported and exported by ship, Thornaby being a port town.

Given the nature of the heavy industries locally, men gained a lot of respect from each other through the physical work they did. In turn, the former industrial interdependencies in the North East between coal, steel, chemicals and engineering, helped create - to give a famous example - structures such as the Sydney Harbour Bridge, constructed by Dorman Long, on Teesside. This generated a collective pride. In turn, this placed working people firmly within a social hierarchy created out of the, often collective, circumstances they found themselves in. It was a working-class from which strength could be drawn, dominant within the place they lived.

Redevelopment has now changed Thornaby into a place with a more mixed economy of white-collar and light industry. It is also now a satellite of Stockton-on-Tees. As well as the loss of jobs in the 1980s there is also a sense, amongst a sizeable proportion of Thornaby people of the loss of the town. Thus ideas centred around sense of place and belonging also emerge for exploration.

- *Ideas of self in a supposed post-Thatcherite individualised and classless (?) non (?) society*

Despite past uncertainties, the rigid class structure gave people a sense of

where they belonged. Home and working life, for most people, were usually structured around contact with others of your own class. For many North Eastern working-class people, a further element was the communal life they created in the industrial towns and villages. The only contact with the so-called, 'upper classes' that most of these people had was often in instructional or subordinate circumstances, such as boss-worker relationships, or, away from work, situations such as teacher-pupil, doctor-patient, interactions where that other person supposedly 'knew better than you'.

Part of the legacy of the 1980s restructuring period included, within its ideology, a consumer-centred individuality. This seemingly discarded any sense of the group - even to the extent where the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, declared that there was 'no such thing as society'. This thinking operated in opposition to the ideals of the collective. Contained within it was a version of classlessness. This was not the shared classlessness such as that talked about by Marx and others, but an ideal that, somehow, everybody had the right to become materially wealthy by individual enterprise. Whatever its merits or demerits, it is very difficult to understand how an unemployed person, even if they *felt* equal to a millionaire, could have access to the same rights and services.

Many people from places such as Thornaby, for whom a more collective solidaristic approach was considered normal, found themselves having to

adapt, as a world of shared work, family life and play fractured.

Consequently questions can be asked around their interpretations of those events, and the subsequent effect on their lives.

- *Relationships of individuals and the demands of the state and capitalism, via benefit dependency, and adaptation to long term non-employment as a viable alternative to low paid work.*

Unemployment and poverty creates a need for many people to evolve strategies to minimise its impact. The state can make demands on unemployed people that, to them, put them into a worse situation, such as pressurising people into low paid work for punitive employers. These strategies can take a number of forms, such as negotiating daily life with little income, and also maximising benefit income where possible. For many older men with medical conditions this can mean using Incapacity Benefit, which, as well as paying marginally more than Income Support or Jobseekers Allowance, places less demands on the recipient, such as being seen to seek employment.

In turn, these new uncertainties have altered both economic and domestic relations as, progressively, more women become employed, sometimes becoming breadwinners. For men, sometimes the only career options can be jobs once considered women's work, such as on supermarket checkouts. This in turn can challenge what it means to be a man in such a place. How

do men respond to these changes in a place like Thornaby?

To gain understanding of these processes, interviews and conversations were carried out with Thornaby people, or people with strong knowledge of Thornaby. These interviews were analysed in the context of the town's history and community. This project is not concerned with policy solutions, rather it is about developing an understanding of economic and social change from the perspective of a mostly under-represented and ignored grouping.

### **1.3 A personal journey: perceptions of Teesside**

I came to the United Kingdom in 1952 from a Germany still flattened by the legacy of World War Two. My first school was in rural Northamptonshire. My early memories, through the 1950s and early 1960s, are based around a mix of rural and suburban environments, materially cocooned. When I was twelve years old we moved to Teesside. As a result, the latter part of my schooling was as a 'southerner' at Eston, an area then mostly populated by workers employed in steel, chemicals and shipbuilding. Subsequently, early working life was in London, living in bed-sit land. From this position I realised how close to destitution most people's lives appeared to operate. Like me, many were reliant on weekly wages, living in rented accommodation; the loss of one a tragedy, the loss of both a disaster. From this there emerged, in a non-academic manner, recognition of capital-based power relationships and legitimised workplace abuse. Alongside this, I felt the majority of people appeared to not be career driven, seeking simply manageable remuneration. It appeared that staying alive and keeping a roof over one's head were seen as more important than any 'fancy' ideas, though this was often, as now, hard to achieve, despite the then plentiful employment in that part of England.

Since childhood I had evolved a strong sense of the existence of rigid hierarchical structures based on combinations of class, gender and race. It was, nevertheless, through the people I met, friendships made, and those I worked with, whilst in London, people across a wide social and ethnic spectrum, that a self-realisation emerged that none of this hierarchical structuring made any sense. However, it was



on my return to Teesside in 1969 that I realised that however rigid social structures might have appeared to me in London, they were a lot more inflexible in Teesside, particularly amongst working class people. Teesside then was still dominated by its heavy industry and I saw its communities reflecting that aspect. Framed in this, there appeared to be a social structure from which deviation appeared to be unthinkable, often through fear of criticism by one's peers.

One visible and notable element of uniformity was the similarities in men's clothes in Teesside. They conformed to the rigid class lines of that era, similar to that frequently presented in old films, the suits or jacket and trousers worn by managers, clerks and others of that stratum. For younger, mostly working class men, generational factors were obvious. They tended to follow mainstream contemporary pop culture. Those whose formative years were the late 1950s to early 1960s tended to have thick Brylcreemed hair, back combed with a quiff, presenting a persona of 'coolness', modelled on singers like Elvis Presley and Billy Fury. Drainpipe trousers or jeans were popular, with some wearing Teddy-Boy style suits on their evenings out. Those a few years younger were mostly influenced by groups and artistes such as the Beatles and Rolling Stones, thus hair was longer, though clothes perhaps more varied, leaning a little towards the popular image of the hippy. The latter, incidentally, tended to be without any cultural considerations regarding love, sharing, spirituality and so on.

Teesside's older, pre-rock and roll era generation was the most uniform. Hair was short back and sides, usually side parting, though sometimes centre. This was also

often held down with thick Brylcreem. Trousers were wide with turn-ups. This was clearly a generation who saw clothes as functional. Clothing possessions often did not go much beyond working clothes, clothes for 'knocking about', which were probably older working clothes, and perhaps best clothes such as a suit for weddings, funerals, chapel or church. For the older members of this group, clothing would often include the famous cloth cap and muffler. These were people who had been through world wars and depression, for whom fashion was mostly a meaningless gesture. Although nearly all had passed through National Service I did not consider that the pristine presentation some ex-servicemen continue into civilian life was universal.

Whilst clothes perhaps 'maketh not the man', in the Teesside context they clearly appeared to make a statement of where an individual stood in what was considered to be the social hierarchy of their age group. Very evident was the perceived need to conform to whatever trends exist; the same is still happening now amongst young people. I have always found this high level of a locally evolved conformity a striking feature of the area.

The negative side to this conformist pattern is visible in the way in which those seen as different, in some sectors of working-class Teesside society, can become demonised. My own experiences when moving to Teesside as a child included finding myself under constant physical and verbal attack by other pupils at the school I attended from the first day I arrived. Much of this appeared to be tied more to my 'difference', than any other factor. It did ease off the longer I was there though I have

seen similar incidences occur to other pupils. Other similar occurrences witnessed later in a working environment suggested that 'difference' and a seeming failure to conform, to whatever it is one is supposed to conform to, is somehow seen as a threat. This perhaps indicates that the conformity visible within Teesside exists as something from which the group considers itself to acquire strength. It is also important to emphasise that, firstly this hostility is not just targeted at people from outside the area coming to Teesside, but also at local people who present 'difference' in a variety of ways. Secondly, there are obviously many people for whom 'difference' is not an issue. Whilst such behaviour may be more likely show itself in an isolated working-class village environment, it is perhaps strange that, given the population concentration across Teesside, it should occur there. Part of the reason may be that Teesside comprises of a series of small communities rather than any cohesive urban whole. This is discussed later in this piece.

Fritz Lang's 1926 silent film 'Metropolis' portrayed stooped workers, obeying in a zombie-like manner, eventually revolting against their exploitative management. Whilst the surreal imagery of this film is its most visual distinctive feature, the undertones of a dark, dismal world in which the drones of humanity function to provide for the luxury of others is a powerful core in its story line. It is from this imagery that it is perhaps not hard to visualise Teesside, a number of years back – dark, smoky and hard. In turn, travelling around Teesside, and the North East, in places where the industry and the mining once was, it is common to see stooped old men, many perhaps significantly younger than their appearance suggests. For these people it could be argued that two forms of obedience were essential for survival.

The obedience towards the employer to keep one's job, and the unwritten need for obedience between each other to maintain the little power and influence possible through collective power and solidarity. Neither of these stances offers much opportunity for individual development.

Whatever else this world supported, lives and distinctive societies were organised around specific economic forms. Types of extended families, with relatives through generations and across marriages (more recently, partnerships), lived within small geographic zones comprising of a few streets. The networks created appeared inward looking, limited mostly by the opportunities available. Perhaps it is unsurprising that conformist communities emerged, these being materially supported by a very narrow range of economic activities, many places reliant on a single firm - in Thornaby's case, Head Wrightson. There were, though, a lot of interdependencies between these localities. For example, the large pressure vessels used in the chemical plants of ICI at nearby Billingham and Wilton were often constructed by Head Wrightson.

Transported to their final destinations at less than walking pace for safety, distance surely becomes a critical factor in costing and proximity an advantage.

Consequently, as well as interdependencies of people on the local industries, the industries themselves were interdependent, reliant on each other. For Teesside, iron begat steel which begat the pressure vessels that firms like ICI needed, and it also built the ships that imported various raw materials and exported the final produce elsewhere; and they all needed Durham coal.

Rapid industrial expansion meant that many of these small towns and villages grew

up in a comparatively short time period. And, until recently, most appeared to be composed of black soot-stained brick-built Victorian terraces, frequently of dubious quality. Villages, by definition perhaps; but in every aspect they were a long way from the idealistic images of a Constable painting. These were places of functionality, aesthetic modifications an unconsidered luxury during their evolution.

Economic restructuring during the 1980s and 1990s resulted in large scale closure of the core industries these places had relied on. This removed most of the masculinised employment that had existed through generations, resulting in progressive economic and social disenfranchisement for these people. Men found themselves isolated through redundancy and long-term unemployment. Although some women perhaps gained during the latter part of that period, any sense of advance is debatable, given the quality of much of the work available. Teesside was very different from London with its large-scale office employment, service and light industries employing both sexes. The men of Teesside were entering uncharted territory with little support. Works were shut and pulled down. This was a wholesale destruction of the economic base from which its dependent societies operated. This meant that structures that had been a permanent feature, from which meaning evolved for these people, no longer existed.

Thus, the question that can be asked is: if the social is read from a particular discourse viewed as 'the normal', what are the processes and reactions should that be taken away? Social structures that had been reliant on those industries, and had therefore enabled a sense of history and tradition to emerge, were now threatened.

In certain contexts this has occurred elsewhere. War certainly alters people lives, as does illness and accident. However, the events of the 1980s that led to the wholesale redundancies of the North East were not Acts of God or malice from an outside source, nor chance misfortunes, but principally an outcome of Government policy, a calculated act. With no life support systems left, a sense of despair, even betrayal, was understandable. Nevertheless, places continue, and people adapt. How do they manage? Seeking the answer to that became a personal quest, as I found myself in a similar position to many other middle-aged men, though in my case through illness.

#### **1.4 The project explained**

The first chapter explains my own reflections regarding Teesside's past, this in the context of coming to terms with a dominant working class environment, one very different to the one I had once known growing up in Northamptonshire. It then moves into a discussion on interpretive research, how one's self can influence a project such as this. This leads to considerations around bias.

Following a short section relating to changes in Teesside and Thornaby in the early 1970s, the discussion then moves to the issue of turning thoughts and interviews into research. There is then an explanation of the methodology used, how it was structured and the sampling employed. Chapter One concludes by pointing out that this project is intended to give a voice to a group of people who are often not listened to.

The second chapter provides the main background context of this project. It discusses ideas around place and self, in the context of where people live. This leads to the creation of collective identities from which a sense of community can emerge. A section then explains Thornaby's history, its past economic base, and the changes that occurred during the 1980s.

The emergence of Thornaby's solidaristic community is explored, how many people there went through life with a sense of predetermined status, both in the education they received and the jobs they finished up doing. There is then a short section

explaining how communities can form through the creation of networks. A lot of people arriving in Thornaby, during its early industrialising period, came from Ireland, Scotland and Wales, bringing their own behaviours and customs with them. This led to a cultural fusing and hybridisation as industrial Thornaby formed itself. Thornaby's working class was also affected by its partial isolation. This is explained using the example of mining communities.

Teesside's past heavy industry resulted in a masculinised workforce. The redundancies of the 1980s effectively ended that. Careers based around serial unemployment became normal for a lot of men. The effects of this has led many men to evolve strategies such as shifting to Incapacity Benefit to minimise the problems faced when on Jobseekers Allowance, such as the pressure to find work – that as far as many are concerned is simply not there - and improve financial security.

The third chapter presents the findings. It begins by explaining the methodology and analysis employed. Three core themes based on 'work', 'benefit life', and 'community' emerged. The comments made about these issues are presented and discussed. What people said presents a strong sense of loss of Thornaby, in terms of livelihood, community, and identity of place.

The fourth chapter draws out conclusions from the study. By exploring the three questions listed at the front of chapter one, from the answers emerging to these questions, it appears that although Thornaby is a place that is 'moving on', many of its people feel that they are being left behind. And whilst policy initiatives targeted on



older non-employed people can perhaps patch up a little of the damage which capital has created, the underlying problem, as regards the North East is still the lack of jobs. This also needs to be considered in relation to what work older – particularly unskilled – people can do, and the wages they are likely to attract. In this context, the conclusions are quite pessimistic.

### **1.5 A personal journey: viewing and analysing Teesside, Thornaby and its people**

My own understandings of Teesside and its people started to develop from 1960, when I was twelve years old, and moved there. I already had a vague understanding of the area, courtesy of my then interest in railways. For me personally, this period was dominated by a harsh domestic disciplinary regime. In 1961 I developed ulcerative colitis which, as well as weakening my own physique, made it easy for others at school to verbally and physically attack me with little chance of retribution. However, prior to relocation to Teesside my piano playing abilities had given me an element of status in my previous school - a status that was taken away from me by moving. That early period in Teesside is not one I can look back on with any sense of affection.

Why should I make such a statement? Denzin writes:

*'Interpretive research begins and ends with the biography and self of the researcher' (Denzin 1989, p. 12).*

As Mehra has noted, one's self has an influence on one's research interests. That connection or relationship is is generally the beginning of discussion on the issue of bias in research; Mehra comments:

*'A researcher's personal beliefs and values are reflected not only in*

*the choice of methodology and interpretation of findings, but also in the choice of a research topic. In other words, what we believe in determines what we want to study. ... we have our personal beliefs and views about a topic - either in support of one side of the argument, or on the social, cultural, political sub-texts that seem to guide the development of the argument.'* (Mehra 2002)

Mehra's article, quoting Scheurich (1994), talks about how our own histories and prejudices affect the research: class, race, gender, and religious beliefs are all inputs to it. This matrix enables a consideration of the individual's interpretation of knowledge. Some of these factors can also function dynamically, as one's views alter through life.

Another version of that model could also incorporate collective thinking, particularly in the small enclosed group situation, such as that of the solidaristic community, and such as social interchange between relatives and close neighbours. From here, the values of the individual and the group can be closely similar. Meaning that, from this position, the researcher interacts via their own polarity with both individuals and members of the group being studied. Thus, the researcher needs to recognise that their own discourse is

*'....no less constructive, action oriented and rhetorical than the discourse being analysed' (Bauer and Gaskell 2000, p. 363).*

This obviously also applies to the reader. At minimum, a triple discursive interaction occurs between the three affected parties, though not necessarily simultaneously. Evolving from this point is a positioning close to one referred to elsewhere in Mehra's article, where she makes reference to multiple realities, subjective and constructed, as opposed to single, objective, given reality (Mehra, 2002). It could be argued that objective reality does not exist, particularly if one critically considers the positivist discourse. In any mathematical based approach every variable is composed from a series of subjective stances, whether of government, health authority, business or whatever, all presented in the context of a numerical based discourse. Hence, if objectivity is being sought, then perhaps the nearest possible version of that is simply through the examination of interacting subjective accounts of the phenomena being considered. This is what I have sought to do in this study.

My own interpretation, as regards this project, can thus be seen as having been modified through time as my own knowledge and experience base has expanded, but also still carrying the scars of the sense of alienation I experienced during that early period in Teesside. Whilst perhaps those experiences resulted in a sense of detachment from the maelstrom of cultural baggage composing the dominant discourse, proximity did - and still does - enable me to observe, analyse and comment. It is up to the reader to incorporate their own history of interpretation and cultural baggage, and so consider its validity.

The manner in which the world and those around becomes viewed is

*'...not just about individual attitudes and behaviour but is embedded within broader socio-cultural, political and economic structures (Brewer 1992; Logue 1993; McVeigh 1995). Thus, while we may, personally, hold no discriminatory or negative attitudes towards others, we may be located in specific social contexts, political organisations and/or economic structures that do tend to discriminate (.....). Simply by being a part of such contexts or organisations, therefore, our actions may well contribute to these broader discriminatory and divisive processes, however unintentionally.'* (Connolly and Maginn, 1999)

The building blocks from which we, as individuals, operate within the macro society in which we live, are constantly mediated by that version of the world which is individually ours, structured by those early building block views, whether religious, atheist, socialist, or simply just having accepted what is there without much consideration. This is equally true for the respondents, reader and writer of this piece. It is from this perspective that any methodology has to operate.

One can view the process of reading such accounts, not as a reader/writer relationship, being rather processes of absorption, this different from simply taking the information on board, as a computer would do. Thus, the researcher (say, red) considers the account of the respondent (say, blue), and the result is inevitably tinged purple, however detached the researcher may be. The reader then modifies that tint according to their interpretation and history. It is insufficient to say that intellect can

counteract any prejudicing aspect, as that same intellect can also be utilised to reinforce bias.

Collins, quoting Bourdieu, talks of the weakness of the interview, in the context of practical components of epistemological issues. Two points emerge. Firstly, that the interviewee is more likely to present the 'official account', rather than actualities, though Collins adds this need not be a significant problem as other aspects such as interview strategies and ploys, according to Bourdieu, can become visible.

The second point Collins mentions is how researchers overemphasise

*'the cognitive/intellectual over the emotional interpretation of the response'*  
(1998).

The latter point is potentially important regarding a project such as this. Considering now the binary-like nature applied to the lifestyles of many individuals in solidaristic communities: for example, work is boring, but it begets pleasure. Thus, in some cases at least, one works to justify pleasures (see Hoggart, 1957, p. 132). It does suggest a more emotional approach to life and living, than perhaps an individual who works, saves, and approaches life from a more serious thought-out perspective. Thus, the analytical of the research clashes with the emotional that determines the life patterns of a number of individuals. That emotional aspect is prone to spill into the interview, directly or indirectly. Consider: bad day - can't afford a pint; horse lost race; wasting time with some researcher from the university. Tell them what they

want to hear and go! Thus, in considering reflexivity and reactive aspects of the study, a small further explanation of my own background as it relates to the project is probably useful here.

At the age of twelve I moved from the comparative affluence of a Northamptonshire village to Marton, a village south of Middlesbrough, now part of the town's southern suburbs. Marton also benefited from relative affluence, having a number of prominent Teesside-based capitalists and influential individuals resident there. Housing developments then meant that people who perhaps aspired to a certain social positioning were attracted to the place. In some respects there were aspects of Marton which were comparable to the place we had just left. However, whilst Marton presented itself in such a manner, two or three miles away was another sphere, a different life paradigm. This was the industrial working class community of the late 1950s and early 1960s, living in the shadow of heavy manufacturing. These people formed the heart of Teesside, yet, by appearances, in a country which apparently had '..never had it so good' their reward was a poverty made visible by scenes such as children in well worn hand-me-down clothing and run-down housing - this in a period of low unemployment.

The popular image of 'Swinging England', in the 1960s is often one of optimism and a jollity-led popular culture. For many of the people of nearby Eston, where I found myself going to school, it was a world of sub-standard terraced houses, no bathroom, outside toilet, unmade roads and scruffy children playing in streets. Women went about their daily business often wearing turbans or curlers. Men, inevitably in dark

clothes, frequently wearing cloth caps, shuffled around. A frequent sound was that of smoker's cough, but then everybody appeared to use cigarettes.

This was a world which the now discredited concrete towers and council estates being constructed then were supposedly going to replace. Nevertheless, it was the children, to me at least, who were the most evident feature of that poverty.

Compared to my fellow schoolchildren in Northamptonshire, those of Eston and Teesside broadly were between one and three years later in reaching puberty.

It is the memory of these images, and the facing of a cultural paradigm significantly different from that I had witnessed in Northamptonshire - one also claiming to be English, British and working class - that confused me at that time. I found myself wondering why people chose to stay, or at least not 'better themselves', as had been drilled into me and appeared to operate at a number of levels such as school, chapel and family at the place I had just left. It also had me asking why I was seemingly a 'stuck up southerner' in the eyes of my new school associates, whilst at the same time it was frequently stated that the people of this place were friendly and those in the 'south' (and it can be noted that the 'south' can mean such places as Sheffield and Doncaster), were apparently not!

There certainly was poverty in Northamptonshire at the time. It was evident. The poverty of Eston and Teesside, however, operated at the core of the place. This poverty was not the exception but the norm. It may well be that poverty existed to a similar extent in Northamptonshire at the time, but they were better at covering it up



and 'keeping up appearances'. I do remember, nevertheless, being informed by people of (Christian) religious conviction, that the poverty of Teessiders was their own fault, apparently tied to their lifestyles. As a child, perhaps one is inclined to accept what one is told. Life itself, however, was significantly to alter that viewpoint, in my case.

After leaving school I lived and worked in London moving, in 1969, to Middlesbrough itself. During this latter period a lot of that time was spent in the company of students, as well as commuting to and from Tyneside. I then moved to Munich for a short time, returning to Teesside in the summer of 1973, moving to Thornaby. Again I made a journey into a small Teesside community. And, just as Marton and Eston appeared to inhabit totally different social spaces, Thornaby and Middlesbrough did also. In Thornaby itself, there was less visible poverty. New estates were opening up close to Thornaby's new town centre, whilst old two-up two-down dwellings were being demolished elsewhere in the older part of the town.

The new town centre then offered some element of optimism. The Munich I had left had a newness through post-war redevelopment and the construction of the Olympic Village for the games a year earlier. In Thornaby new town centre, the shops and The Pavilion, a leisure centre, appeared to offer a similar freshness. A respectable cross section of shops existed, meeting most needs. Woolworth's Woolco store, revolutionary as one of the first hypermarkets when built, had a wide range of produce; its food parlour offered an imported selection that some may well have considered exotic at the time. Certainly, given my own East European ancestry, I

found many imported food products that I wanted - products I now have to travel out of Teesside to purchase.

At that time, I felt Thornaby was moving forwards. The place was cleaner, with significantly less litter visible - certainly less than now. The people appeared to have lost that run-down sad look I had seen previously. The children were better dressed, mostly with newer clothes, very few wearing well-worn hand-me-downs.

What was also significant was the emergence and influence of the post-war baby boomers, many of whom had, by then, become young parents. This was a generation who grew up with the welfare state. Expectations were higher now, even if that didn't mean owner occupation but meant the prospect of a modern council house as opposed to privately renting a terraced property.

However, unemployment was relatively high against national trends. Signing-on and arguing with the 'Pancrack' (Department of Social Security) were normal events in one's life, events you just got on with when it came to your turn. Thus, despite initial appearances, the 'make-do and accept what you have' approach still dominated.

Although Thornaby perhaps appeared brighter and more optimistic in 1973, I often felt that underlying trends ran counter to that. Broad attitudes, I considered, appeared to be very inward-looking. That still is the case, even today. Very little conversation beyond popular issues, such as television, films and pop music, appeared to embrace the world beyond Teesside. From a male perspective it was

inevitably football, beer and sex. Elsewhere, in working class south London, and in casual meetings with people of my own age group whilst hitch-hiking across mainland Europe, I had enjoyed discussions relating to a wide range of topics. That was absent in Thornaby. This is the case today, even in Thornaby's more affluent parts.

Political conversations in Thornaby revolve around jobs, crime and clean streets, not economic theories. They frequently operate within a flawed view that makes assumptions of a 'normal' world of work, without consideration of the vagaries of the capitalist system. If, as Hoggart points out:

*'..the nature of working-class life puts a premium on the taking of pleasures now....' (1957, p. 132),*

then the effects of mass redundancy and pauperisation remove both today and tomorrow from the visible perspective of the victim.

*'.. but 'tomorrow will take care of itself' (Hoggart 1957, p. 133).*

In this manner, life appears to exist in the immediate present, for the moment only, without preparation for any future.

## 1.6 Turning interviews and thoughts into research

In the context of the interviews and conversations for this study, reflexive considerations become necessary and have to take into account both the perspective and the tint of the version given. For example, bad experiences with capitalism and the processing of benefits can lead to an anti-authoritarian view, though not necessarily one that expresses itself vocally or violently. This can be a non-rebellious dislike of authority steeped in fear, one akin to cowering, trying to avoid more hurt, simply keeping one's head down. Altheide and Johnson talk about,

*'...analytic realism, based on the view that the social world is an interpreted world, not a literal world.'* (1994, p. 486).

Individual interpretations which were presented to me during interviews, can present events and phenomena as the person sees them to be at that moment. Even where deception is deliberately applied consideration has to be given to why that version was presented, rather than simply discard it. It is harder to establish that deception might have occurred, though vigilance through rigour is essential anyway when considering responses. Given that challenging the respondent is not an effective option without generating further reactive aspects in the conversation, let alone damaging the respondent-researcher relationship, the main choice available is reliance simply on the basis of a hunch. Even so, some data in this study is based on 'factual events' and not perceptions; these at least are potentially usable in these circumstances. Denzin and Lincoln comment about complexities in which older

models of truth and meaning become challenged, and how this is tied to interpretative theories as opposed to grounded ones. What they suggest is that critical and feminist epistemologies, along with epistemologies of ethnicity and race now compete with more traditional approaches, based around social lives structured by fixed rituals and customs, so that in fact new models of truth and method are sought (1994, p. 10, Rosaldo 1989, pp. 44-45). One supposes, though, that is a continuous process.

Achieving a conclusion in an objective manner is problematic. With the exception of the quantifiable aspects, the only possibility may be a mean subjective version of all the accounts given, but is that really meaningful? In that context, in any case, all human accounts are subjective, being contextually driven. Unlike mathematics, however, where two negatives can make a positive and the sum of the total divided by the number of cases gives the mean, individual subjective accounts are simply that, regardless of the complexities behind them, and nothing else. Denzin and Lincoln refer to what they call

*'...the crisis of representation'* (1994, p. 10).

This is in reference to Stoller and Olkes' account about the Songhay of the Niger, in which data was sorted according to the conventions of their training (1987, p. 227).

On finding that

*'...everyone had lied to me ...and the data I had collected were worthless',*

Stoller talked about how he had written himself out of the text (ibid, p. 229). This led to a different approach, with the researcher becoming the central character in the story told. Clearly, if questions are being asked then the answers are being directed at the questioner, and not necessarily in response to any philosophical or other considerations behind any topic discussed. Anyway, different interviewers are likely to yield different responses, whilst the answers given are likely to be tinted by the respondents' own views, which in some cases may well include a feeling of indifference to authority in all its guises (including the researcher). Yet, whatever else, each response is part of a story to tell, each with its own level of applied purpose and meaning according to its teller.

What can never be forgotten is that for many of the people I talked to the circumstances of their lives are dictated totally by others, such as by representatives of the state and capital, those two perhaps viewed as being on the same side. Hence, in the guise of researcher from a university I am placed into a separate stratum, perhaps to be treated with suspicion. Therefore, for some of them at least, they may wonder whether I am on the side of capitalism, or of what? This interaction is critical in the responses given. Also, how important are the issues being discussed in the eyes of the respondent? Whilst unemployment and poverty are obviously important for their victims, there does appear to be an acceptance of certain inevitabilities around that by some people, who appear to accept material poverty and job insecurity as somehow normal, and perhaps inescapable. From that perspective, making sure one has enough for tea or a night out is perhaps more important than

whether it is funded by low paid work or benefits. Thus, even where people do consent to be interviewed, how seriously they take the situation may be questionable. Their agenda is very different from the researcher's, and a given consent may have its own motivations. It can be assumed that, for many of them, the expansion of the pool of human knowledge has a somewhat low priority in their lives.

Thus, what one is being told has to be considered closely regarding its validity. In the context of this study, whilst I am not aware of any direct attempt by interviewees to lie or deceive I do have an indefinable sense that I have, at least in one case, been fed answers the respondent has assumed that I want to hear. If that was so, could such behaviour not perhaps be interpreted and tied to that culture of perceived victimisation by state and capitalism, in which people give the 'correct' answers at Job Centres or Social Security offices? In that context, then, the answers given are appropriate, at least when contextually applied within their own discourse. It is then up to the researcher to be aware of any such biased response.

One other factor regarding myself and the legitimacy of this account is tied to the question of 'how does the researcher capture that lived experience even though they might actually live there themselves?' After all, once the conversations are over we separate into our own lives. Looking back at Hoggart's 1950s account, a clearer sense of perspective emerges in the context of '*them and us*' and what Hoggart refers to as a '*double eye*', in which a person has one eye for their duty as an individual and another as a citizen in a democracy. To which he adds

*'Working-class people, with their roots so strongly in the homely and personal and local, and with little training in more general thinking, are less likely to bring the two worlds into focus' (1957, p. 77).*

As a researcher in qualitative mode one is expected to develop an account in a manner that details the lived experience. The study, in turn, focuses on a few key points, probably bypassing a whole series of phenomena which are linked to the issues being discussed and seen as important to the respondent, but ignored by the researcher.

Denzin and Lincoln say that;

*'Any gaze is... filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, gender and ethnicity' (1994, p. 12),*

adding, also, that observations cannot be objective, being

*'...situated in the social world of the observer and the observed.'* (ibid, p. 12).

Proximity through living close to 'the observed' and being involved with them through daily actions is perhaps insufficient. After all, closeness is hardly a qualification for understanding one's neighbour. Poverty sits alongside wealth, with different cultures leading parallel, but separate lives. For example, consider: upstairs



and downstairs; apartheid; Northern Ireland; council estates adjacent to private housing. If one is referring to a particular place everyone there is part of it, each with very different stories.

Place becomes harder to consider as a unit, in a social sense, being composed of individuals with their own specific characteristics, albeit linked to their own position, as they see it - and others see them - in that location. Interaction does occur occasionally, in shops, doctors' surgeries, walking the dog, even in the dole queue. Therefore, a qualitative project like this necessarily deploys

*'...a wide range of interconnected interpretive methods, always seeking better ways to make more understandable the worlds of experience that have been studied' (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, p.12)*

## 1.7 The methodology used

A broadly qualitative approach was chosen. Qualitative research through its phenomenological position, does enable a deeper penetration into the realities and actualities of lived experiences that a quantitative methodology cannot touch, since the latter offers mostly comparative statistics as a result of its positivist stance.

Maykut and Morehouse state:

*'To reach their goals, researchers in the traditional [positivist - my addition] orientation look to reliable and valid non-human instruments of data collection and statistical analysis, while the qualitative inquirer looks to indwelling as a posture and to the human-as-instrument for the collection and analysis of data.'* (1994, p. 26, emphasis in original).

Qualitative research can go beyond simple statistics, in the manner in which it can be considered as being grounded in a philosophical position that is broadly 'interpretivist'. It is interested in the way the social world is read, understood, experienced or produced (Mason 1996, p. 4). Strauss and Corbin widen that perspective, by stating that, by qualitative analysis,

*'... we are referring not to the quantifying of qualitative data but rather to a non mathematical process of interpretation, carried out for the purpose of discovering concepts and relationships in raw data and then organizing these into a theoretical explanatory scheme. Data might consist of interviews and*

*observations but also might include documents, films or videotapes, and even data that have been quantified for other purposes such as census data.'*  
(1998, p. 11).

To which the authors later add that qualitative methods are usable in discovering essential facets of little-known aspects, perhaps of well explored topics, from which novel understanding can be reached through the perspective employed.

Boulton and Hammersley (1993) point out that qualitative research frequently operates with methodological and epistemological stances detached from those of quantitative researchers, adding that it is nevertheless unhelpful to view the two methods as somehow dissimilar, mismatched paradigms; both perspectives have advantages and disadvantages. They add that an element of disagreement exists across social science on the relationship and validity of the two perspectives (Boulton and Hammersley 1993, p. 7). Bauer *et al* take the view that

*'..in teaching social research methods, we are trying to find a way of bridging the fruitless polemic between two seemingly competing traditions of social research'. (2000, p. 8).*

This works on the assumption that the division exists, and for a few researchers this is the case. Mason (1996) notes that integration of methods across that apparent divide is not possible for some. She then adds that other researchers would consider no such divide exists, some rejecting the idea of being labelled with either discipline

(see Brannen 1992; Bryman and Burgess 1994; Fielding and Fielding 1986; and Hammersley 1992). Robson sees the distinction as being technical, each project having to be dealt with in different ways (1993, p. 303), this following the example of Bryman (1988a). This is quite close to the methodological direction taken in this study, arguably a pragmatic approach, utilising the tools and materials available in the best possible manner to achieve an appropriate result.

Whilst the latter statement may well be enough in itself to clarify the logic behind this project, one other external factor is the reluctance of some bodies to even accept the qualitative paradigm as 'scientific'. Silverman (2000), in the context of this debate, talks about the negative attitude of some towards qualitative research, since it is viewed as somehow inferior, possessing bias, being interpreted politically. He suggests that many see quantitative data as apparently 'value-free', particularly those in the government sector, such research mimicking the research of government agencies. This can be the case, even though there is public recognition of how statistics can be manipulated. Denzin and Lincoln also refer to some positivist resistance to qualitative research, some proponents of the positivist paradigm seeing the qualitative as somehow 'unscientific'. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) then suggest that this has had the effect of some qualitative researchers taking a critical stance towards positivism. What appear to emerge are disagreements over differing versions of what could be interpreted as 'truth'. Denzin and Lincoln point out that the positivist position, particularly in the context of 'hard' sciences such as chemistry and physics, is viewed as one of the

*'..crowning achievements of western civilization' (1994, p. 4).*

Nevertheless, 'truth' in this context is seen as transcending opinion and personal bias (Carey 1989; Denzin and Lincoln 1994). Defining 'truth' would probably fill many volumes greater than this, and still would not reach resolution. Nevertheless, we can seek it, and offer presentations of what we see it to be, although it would probably be easier to define a described phenomenon as non-truthful, should we consider that position applicable, than indicate any aspect of 'truthfulness'. Positivism may well suggest value-free facts, even though each one of those statistics represents an individual person with an individual story behind that piece of data. In that context, any positivist approach is unlikely to possess value neutrality simply by the way such criteria are structured and selected. Quantitative units have to be bounded to enable statistical analysis to occur, this limiting flexibility of interpretation. As Bauer, Gaskell, and Allum note

*'One needs to have a notion of qualitative distinctions between social categories before one can measure how many people belong to one or the other category'. (2000, p. 8)*

There is always the difficulty of categorising those who do not fit neatly into the slots created. Does one somehow 'squeeze' them in, thus distorting the data, or ignore them, consequently leaving out a potentially important grouping?

Thus someone, or a group of people, have to decide what events to slot into what

variable, and so on. This, in turn, can lead to situations - to give an example - where in the nosology of causes of disease, old age decrepitude is not included as part of the official classification of causes of death (Prior 1997, pp. 67/68; World Health Organisation 1977). Prior comments:

*'Was poverty ever regarded as a legitimate cause of death?' (1997, p. 68).*

Within the positivist paradigm, accounts of social occurrences can easily become limited to coding decisions and processes, with public policy linked to those concepts. Thus if - as it would appear - all quantitative data is created from a variety of subjective stances it can hardly be claimed to have any sense of universal validity when standing on its own. Other forms of data need to be given to support or disprove it.

What further emerges from such data is also quite interesting. If one considers the variety of documentation held on individuals, viewing that could perhaps yield a life story based on official responses to specific criteria. For example, within a work culture where compliance is dominant, a person unwilling to conform to such behaviour may find themselves categorised as uncooperative or uncommitted to the firm. There are two examples amongst the respondents in this project where individuals have been blacklisted because of past trade union activity. Thus, ascription of a label by opinion can serve to determine a biography through official documentation. One can therefore ask how accurate any of this data is, given the subjective nature of some contributions to that account?

Thus, an appropriate approach regarding this project is along the lines of thinking

*‘.....in terms of the **interplay between qualitative and quantitative methods.***

*(Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 31, emphasis in original)*

These authors later comment that quantitative procedures should not be viewed as the enemy, rather as an ally, potentially useful towards theory building. In this project such number flows - for example official unemployment figures - play longitudinally alongside an evolving social discourse. However, unemployment data itself is notoriously suspect, as a result of an assortment of alterations in its definitions over a long period, though this is bizarrely perhaps less important than one might initially consider it to be. In a project such as this, it is the effects of changes in the definition of unemployment that are more significant than the actual changes. Alterations in official definitions can be the catalyst to developing strategies, perhaps unintended, such as contributing to the shift into alternatives by some older men, for example, onto Incapacity Benefit. As a variable, 'unemployment' itself is affected not only by what defines it, but both by how it is used by those claiming it, and applied by those administering it. Thus, alterations in the definitions of unemployment can be considered as acting as a steering mechanism in contributing to changes in the social discourse. This appears to suggest that should one desire a positivist approach, in this context at least, there is a shortage of constants on which to base any data on.

## 1.8 Structuring

A semi-structured approach was taken to selecting individuals to be interviewed. Essentially this was based around a series of core themes considered pertinent to the study. The approach could be considered close to Stake's 'collective case approach' in which:

*'Researchers may study a number of cases..[...] in order to inquire into the phenomenon, population, or general condition.'*(1994, p. 237).

It is a position also close to what Herriott and Firestone call '*multisite qualitative research*' (1983, Stake 1994, p. 237). In this context, Stake advocates that what is being studied is not the collective but rather individual cases, whilst observing common features between them. Their selection is linked to the belief that comprehending their nature will enable conceptualisation of a wider population with similar characteristics. It is important to avoid seeking generalisations, at least in the mathematical context. Sayer refers to a school of social scientists who tend to seek mathematical laws out of statistical evidence, stating,

*'...there is scarcely a scrap of evidence to suggest they are succeeding'*  
(Sayer 1992, p. 100).

The very nature of the continuous evolution of societies suggests that the idea of any social phenomenon as being somehow mathematically static is improbable.



Thus, whilst at one level generalisation is ditched, strangely it can also be considered, but only if kept at arms length! There are undoubtedly factors that make Thornaby and its people different, to give an extreme example, from Kensington and its people. Whilst individual lives construct the place, their interaction in a specific way, tied to particular histories and discourses, leads to specific and individualised community forms. Certainly Kensington has certain characteristics in common with Chelsea, whilst Thornaby has certain characteristics in common with Eston. In that way perhaps, generalisations can be said to exist. What emerges in case studies is both the common and particular about each case. It would appear that, according to Stake,

*'Uniqueness, particularly diversity, is not universally loved' (1994, p. 238).*

Suggesting that the case study approach has sometimes been besmirched through presentation by those who have a lesser regard for the particular (See also, Denzin 1989; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Herriott and Firestone 1983; Yin 1984). Stake's own position is that damage is possible when the drive to create generalisations or theory diverts away from understanding the critical features of a case being considered (Stake 1994, p. 238). Nevertheless, case studies enable variables to be presented, both mathematically and in a variety of different abstract forms. Just as a graphical presentation can be offered on a chart, the pinpoints of reference enable a picture to emerge, one that perhaps indicates common threads, just as the pinpoints on the chart enable a graph to be drawn, whatever its shape. Stake suggests that case studies can help towards generalisations, but adds that generalisations should not be sought in all

research (Stake 1994, p. 238; See also Feagin, Oram and Sjoberg 1991; and Simons 1980). He then points out that the research can become impaired when the drive to produce theory or generalisations takes the attention of the researcher away from the important features being considered (Stake, 1994, p. 238). It can also be argued that by devoting too much attention to a powerful theme more important phenomena are left unreported.

Thus, what emerges is a series of single instances,

*'....of more universal social experiences and social processes (Sartre 1981, in Denzin and Lincoln 1994, p. 202)*

Sartre talks about the individual as

*'....summed up and universalized by his epoch, he in turn reproduces it himself in it as a singularity' (1981, p. ix).*

Uniqueness of individual life can therefore become summarised into a universal.

However, when considering the universal it is very easy to ignore the fact that it exists as the cumulative effect of individual lives. This study attempts to make that re-connection.

## 1.9 Sampling

Sampling is about selection, and selection needs to be justified. So what shape should the sampling take? Sampling as a process is often associated with the positivist paradigm and linked to statistics, probabilities and so on (Mason 1996, p. 83). In that context Mason also adds that sampling in alternative logics are less visible, commenting that they are also probably less understood, and there is little literature on the topic (See also Glaser and Strauss 1967; Patton 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990). However, she lays out a series of questions that can be asked, from the obvious initial *'Why should I sample?'* and *'What is the purpose of my sample?'* to questioning the wider universe being considered in the study (1996, pp. 83-84). This is a very reflexive approach, in which the researcher questions and justifies their own logic for approaching the task in a particular manner. In turn, if it is applied in an appropriate way, this reflexivity can become the major contributor to the creation of the various units, the classification units employed, from which analysis can evolve. Mason refers to available and conventional classification units and their usage, whether in fact they are usable or not (1996, p. 87). She talks about

*'..how effectively you believe each of these classifying labels encapsulates a uniform and meaningful category of experience, or set of relevant instances..'*  
(Mason 1996, p. 98)

Official data is usually bounded; for instance, unemployment is contained by definition. For a number of the respondents it is not so simple. To offer an example:

adaptation to involuntary non-employment may well include unemployment. Whilst parallel to that, the state may well consider a person on a training course as no longer being unemployed, whilst the person on the course does consider themselves as unemployed. It is worth also considering the circumstances of how they find themselves on the course. To take an example: I was informed by an unemployed person that they had been told the previous day (a Thursday) that they, in their opinion, were being press-ganged onto a course the following Monday. There was the threat of loss of benefit. That person had made a particular social arrangement that now had to be cancelled. Whilst that person had, to a degree, 'volunteered' to go on the course, the main incentive appeared to be an extra £20 a week which, as they said, is

*'...extremely useful when you don't have much'.*

For this person this particular course offers an extremely basic background on a topic they are doing on another course, independently of the Jobcentre, with the Open University.

In selecting variables, they inevitably overlap and cannot be bounded in a neat mathematical manner. Each related experience instantly spills into other possible classifications. Thus, in choosing the people appropriate for this study the only initially usable picture was that broad association with place, along with the experience or knowledge of mass redundancy, though this was not all.

To give another example, using the idea of a unit based on 'status', in a work based context. For some respondents, a university researcher is not engaged in a 'proper job'. This actually connects with Willis' model where practice is more important than theory (1979 p. 194). Consequently, status can fail as a working category in a project such as this, the definition being in turn linked to an assortment of variables charged historically, geographically, socially, and also gendered. For many of the past jobs that brought status to working class men, it is quite likely that other people - perhaps some university researchers - would find them tedious to the extreme. Yet some jobs of this kind were actually sought, such as at Hills Door Factory in Stockton, now closed, which I was informed was a 'good job'. This was based on bonuses and security:

*'Labourers can get mortgages if they work here' (Former Hills door factory worker).*

This had nothing to do with the task.

Whilst shifts in various social phenomena may be visible, they do not tell the full story. Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 27) refer to cliques and a range of other aspects loosely linked to the topic being considered. For the present study this can include the manner in which time acts through history, contributing to contextual meaning of place through its inhabitants. Events such as the economic restructuring of the 1980s and developments such as Teesdale impacted, not by evolution but rather like the squashing together of mismatched jigsaw pieces. It is from that point that Thornaby

people were expected to make sense of their altered social environment.

Therefore, defining an appropriate sample base becomes problematic at another level.

Whilst previous common experiences led up to the shared experiences of Thatcherite restructuring, what emerged was not necessarily a shared experience since people, often in isolation, went their own way.

Another component of the sample was a set of interviews with a number of 'gatekeepers'. Clergy, police, social workers and those in the medical profession were sought. In this context there was a very mixed response.

Refusals by people in key positions clearly occur for various reasons, many of which will never be known. Where the refusal has been instigated by a secretary or other person it is probable that other people are also being blocked access to the key individual being 'protected'. Kellaway makes the point, regarding recruitment consultants - 'head-hunters' - that if the person targeted is heavily protected by a secretary he writes them off as poor and unapproachable, lacking openness and readiness to communicate (Kellaway 2001). In this context the secretary can be seen functioning in a similar manner to a firewall on a computer, censoring and enabling what gets past and what does not. If that firewall is set too high, it is likely to block important information needed to make the machine and any task work efficiently. The same can apply to an over zealous gatekeeper. It may be that if core information through lack of contact is not enabled then the person being 'protected' will be unable to perform their task to its fullest potential. Assuming that the head-hunter

was known and respected in the business world, then his reasoning seems quite realistic. Similarly, as regards this project, where gatekeepers have blocked access it may well be that this has represented little loss to the study. It is likely that some critical information may well not be getting through to these key individuals. It is therefore probable that this limits their own ability to perform their tasks, since they are being fed only partial knowledge of the people they are dealing with. It suggests that they would only have a limited view of the nature of the place.

### **1.10 Phases of the study**

Putting threads together: first, any cultural form is dynamic in nature, particularly one linked to the vagaries of the behaviour of capital. Geertz suggests the concept of culture is basically a semiotic one (1993, p. 5). Taking this approach makes clear the differences between different working class cultural forms. It also enables visualising the symbols from which life meanings evolve, for example the drinking culture of young men in the past, often in workingmen's clubs, compared to the drinking culture of young men today, often in more (trendy) public houses and night clubs. Ironically, Geertz's ideas lean towards suggestions of generalisations, which he refers to as 'thick description' (1993, p. 10), though this also allows the subtleties of difference to be seen. In turn, Bruner suggests our approaches to the world are mediated through negotiations with others (1986, p.68). Certainly negotiation around our immediate associates is a continuous process. Consequently it can be argued that it seems quite reasonable to deduce that frequent negotiation around a narrow group of familiar people is quite likely to enable group distinctive characteristics to show.

Geertz appears to criticise the way in which cultures can be seen merely as symbols, without considering aspects of behaviour (1993, p. 17). Certainly, in any class analysis this is an extremely valid point. Aspects of working-class behaviour may be considered inappropriate by middle-class persons, just as working-class people sometimes laugh at the manners of some middle-class people. One of the features that always strikes me when I enter a popular public house or workingmen's club in Thornaby is the loudness of the interactions taking place, the manner in which, for



example, should someone require the attention of another person across the room attention is sought by simply shouting so they are heard. Such approaches may well not have the approval of those that champion manners, though there is absolutely no malice evident in this context. Nonetheless, even that is in flux. In the current aggressive approach to capitalism there are undoubtedly persons with a more abrasive approach to daily life who would consider themselves as being middle-class. One respondent (GM) has spoken to me of his horror at what he considers the foul-mouthed behaviour of managers in the establishment where he works. He has spoken of the manner in which employees have been driven to tears and the unreasonable demands being made, which in his opinion restricts the efficiency of the organisation. This is a version of middle-class a long way away from the past black-and-white film presentations of vicars, cups of tea and well mannered people. So perhaps behaviour is itself part of any consideration on culture and how discourses evolve within it.

Undoubtedly a place changes along with its circumstances, and people have to adapt. The form of that adaptation, though, surely is tied to the nature of the change, along with how well the people understand what is going on, and their consequential ability to acclimatise to the changes. As place alters, new dominances emerge, along with new generations with their own ideas and interpretations. Without significant reason to alter, people are not going to change overnight. Thus, in the absence of any justification to do so, the old paradigm continues. Following substantial economic change, some individuals will find new work, perhaps under new and previously unconsidered or unknown conditions, whilst a number of others move away. For

those that are left behind the old paradigm simply declines in influence over time through a series of factors, such as reduced income to participate in social interactions, and ultimately, death.

Therefore, to enable the study to evolve, the non-static nature of culture and society was a major consideration. Geertz talks about analysing people by peeling off 'layer after layer' (1993, p. 37). That seems reasonable, but surely when viewing people in the context of their social setting and the positioning of that environment we need the background of the canvass also.

Meaningful understandings thus emerge from accounts of personal experiences, close to Geertz's ideas around 'thick description' (1993). Geertz sees a concept of culture as being espoused in semiotics, taking a view close to Weber's, stating:

*'...that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he has himself spun, ...' (1993, p. 5)*

Geertz concludes from this position that appropriate analysis operates not from

*'experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning' (Geertz 1993, p. 5)*

Later, quoting Goodenough, he states that

*'A society's culture ... consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members' (in Geertz 1993, p. 11)*

For the actual interviews, initially a semi-structured schedule was created based on a process of reviewing closely related literature. The initial questions emerged by talking with people in various social contexts, such as church based meetings, public houses, and also speaking to individuals casually in one to one situations. This was by bringing up project themes in a non-forceful manner. Much of this was close to the framework proposed by Maykut and Morehouse in their suggestions for developing an interview schedule (1994, p.84). Their model commences with the inquiry focus, followed by brainstorming from which categories of inquiry can emerge. Following a selection process an interview schedule can be created.

The early interview structure functioned to identify and focus upon topic areas, As the project progressed new categories for analysis emerged - that was actually the intention when formulating the initial structure. Thus the study became progressively more open-ended as more information entered into the framework. Probably the only disappointment was not being able to go back to the early interviewees in a number of cases to discuss the newer issues.

Local libraries and the Middlesbrough Archives, as well as other sources, proved invaluable also. In reality they broadly offer mostly official or 'authorised' accounts. By that I refer to the glossy veneer frequently put onto past experiences. These

records do, though, make clear that issues relating to poverty, employment and sub-standard housing have been dominant in Thornaby since it began to form itself as a town. Thus what is being discussed in this project is simply a newer variant of an ongoing capital-led relationship.

The Archives enabled a greater detailing of the historical context of events and peoples' reaction to them. This was also backed up with other secondary data, such as unemployment figures. Such data does enable a crude visualisation of flows of activity. This was later placed alongside other official documentation and accounts relating to development issues, such as the Teesside Development Corporation.

Thus, with the background on the canvass the people at the centre of this study could be placed in position.

### **1.11 The sample used**

To make this study work, any sample would need to have individuals possessing, not so much a range of distinctive qualifications, such as living in Thornaby, experiences of manual work, unemployment and so on, but being people who have gone through such a mix of experiences, of which the above, and more, are part. At a practical level this initially meant asking people with the appropriate characteristics, people whom I at least vaguely knew. In a small town like Thornaby it is easy to know a significant proportion of its population at this level. Also, because a characteristic of the town is that it has many large established family and network groupings, further respondents were recommended.

My early explorations of the lives and views of former working men' indicated that the stories were going to be pessimistically similar. Accounts of redundancies and experiences with benefit agencies were gathered in various informal contexts. Many people clearly felt they had been badly treated, and perhaps had bottled much of this up over a period of time. In such places as public houses I often found myself talking to an individual and other people around would butt into the conversation, often presenting their own account of what was being discussed. It was frequently in these situations that the real stories emerged. Nevertheless it was important to bring greater detail in to these accounts, and a series of more formal interviews were carried out which form the core of the study.

In terms of the people formally interviewed, as opposed to those spoken to in more

informal contexts, a reasonable cross section was sought. This also included a number of gatekeepers, though a high number refused to be interviewed. A number of them saw the topic as unimportant, this perhaps giving some justification for the sense of isolation some working men feel - that they are ignored when compared to other groups.

The main bulk of those sought for interview were people whose views were not normally considered, people who in many cases had no qualifications, and did menial jobs - when employed. It was mostly this group who, whilst they might shun formal interviews, would often be most vocal in places like public houses. They are also people who are Thornaby-centred, in as much as it is Thornaby - not Stockton, Middlesbrough or Teesside - from which they gain their sense of identity.

Altogether, forty interviews were carried out. Twenty-eight of those were people living either at the time in Thornaby, or who had left but considered themselves native to Thornaby having spent a substantial period of their lives there. Nine could be considered 'gatekeepers'. They included a representative from a local regeneration organisation, a clerk working for the local town council, three police officers, a representative from the local credit union, two Roman Catholic priests, an Anglican priest and the local MP. There were some individuals interviewed who also have significant roles in the area. These include councillors, past and present, as well as a shopkeeper. To gather some external views from people who know the place, interviews were carried out by mail with two people who have long-term knowledge of the place and area and are both now resident elsewhere. In addition to these

interviews, there was also a large number of casual conversations with people in a variety of circumstances, such as meeting in the street, shops and public houses, and this helped to yield significant additional information and insights.

The majority of the respondents were male. Given that this study is centred on the theme of change and the working class male no apologies for that are felt to be needed. A number of female respondents were also included, these being mostly spouses/partners of males, the local MP, gatekeepers, and one instance where the male partner refused to be interviewed at the last minute. The age range was from the early thirties to the newly retired - broadly people of working age with experience in work and/or unemployment.

There were a number of refusals. Six males approached directly refused to be interviewed, though they appeared happy to talk informally. Amongst the gatekeepers, two priests refused to be interviewed, and one church failed to respond to my enquiry. There were also refusals from Social Services and a Thornaby medical practitioner group.

Recording was by a variety of methods. This included the use of a tape recorder, where appropriate. Consent, background noise and acoustics all affected the viability and practicality of that option. Where tape recording was not possible, note taking was carried out, the majority of interviews were carried out using the latter method. In some cases, such as EC's, or AL-1's interviews, these were in a public place where other people became involved. I never attempted to hinder this occurring, though I

was sometimes less obvious in note taking, should it put somebody off speaking. The interviews were then transcribed and the themes matched and marked for analysis.

So what can this particular study offer beyond what is already known? Much of the story told here has been told in other forms, about other localities facing similar situations. In a UK northern context, this has frequently meant mining communities (e.g. Bulmer 1970; 1975; Wadleigh, Wykes, Critcher and Hebron 1991). This study consequently offers an insight into a non-mining yet single industry based community, suggesting some transferable patterns. It reveals how capital can dictate the circumstances which cause a place to change its character. The main thing it offers is probably that it gives a voice to those who often appear not to say much, and are not listened to anyway.



## **1.12 Aims and Objectives Summary**

This chapter began by stating that unemployment has been an issue in the North East for a very long time, and is still so. Old, often heavy, industries have mostly gone and new forms of economic activity have emerged. The men who once worked in the former heavy industries feel that they have mostly been ignored by recent developments. The loss of those former industries have also led to some major changes in the communities which they brought into existence. Using the Teesside town of Thornaby as an example, three broad questions are being considered. These are based around sense of community and self following de-industrialisation; ideas of self in what some politicians consider a classless society within a capitalist framework; and the relationship of people to the state and capitalism, including dependency on benefits, and adaptation to no employment as an alternative to low paid work.

The chapter discussed the methodology used in the study, by initially relating to reflection on my own observations when I first came to Teesside some years ago from the Midlands. This opened up questions regarding the processes and reactions that occur when 'normality', a tradition, becomes threatened – in this case by the economic policies leading to the mass redundancies of the 1980s.

Discussion of methodology continued with consideration of interpretative research and the person carrying it out. Ideas based around the collective were then discussed; here the concept of the solidaristic community emerged – the close, interlinked

community, such as traditionally found in mining villages.

We then moved to explorations of subjective multiple reality, arguing that 'objective reality' cannot exist, particularly in the positivist approach, given that every variable is composed of a series of subjectively derived stances. To reach towards 'objectivity' this section concluded that the nearest possibility is through the exploration of the subjective accounts given.

Versions presented by the interviewees were considered, noting how people may present a subjective version linked to their own experiences. In turn there is the danger that the researcher might over emphasise their own intellectual interpretation on what may be an emotionally charged account given by the respondent.

The chapter then moved on to some further reflexive considerations, linked to the period I came to know Thornaby more closely in 1973, and felt a sense of optimism following the construction of a new Thornaby town centre. The optimism revealed itself through a new generation who had always known a welfare state and never experienced the high levels of poverty experienced by many of their parents. In fact unemployment was high by national standards then, and was expected by many people at least at one point in their lives.

The discussion then considered the process of turning the interviews and thoughts into research, pointing out that any 'reality' emerges from interpretations, and that the daily agenda of the respondent is very different from that of the researcher. It is also

probably the case that from the respondents' perspective increasing human knowledge is not that important.

The validity of what the researcher is told was explored, noting how many of these people have learnt to present the 'correct' answer at Job Centres and Social Security offices to minimise problems to themselves. It could be that the researcher is viewed in a similar manner, treated perhaps with politeness, but told no more than they need know.

A broadly qualitative approach has been adopted, and the merits and demerits of the qualitative and positivist approaches have been considered. Qualitative methods can discover important facets from which a novel understanding emerges. A pragmatic approach has been taken, using the tools and materials available to enable the best result. This could vary from using a tape recorder and microphone to sitting quietly in the background in a pub or club with the 'lads', with a pint in my hand.

Although positivism may suggest 'value-free' facts, it can never be so because of how it is constructed, particularly how it has to be bounded to enable analysis to occur. For example, one of the main areas limiting its value is the way in which government has historically altered definitions of unemployment.

Structuring was then explained: how the research commenced with a semi-structured approach based on an initial package of core themes. What is being studied is not the collective but individual cases, whilst noting common features between them. Thus,

generalisations in the mathematical sense are not sought, and anyway, the very nature of the continuous evolution of societies suggests that the idea of any social phenomenon as being mathematically static is improbable.

Sampling was considered, initially the logic in how it was applied and the problem in how to define the units used into an appropriate cultural context noting, for example, that according to many working class people a researcher is not engaged in a 'proper job', this perhaps affecting how they view 'status' in the occupational context. Also, it was pointed out that lives once lived closely shared with others, before the mass unemployment of the 1980s, have frequently become more isolated as people have gone in different directions.

A number of 'gatekeepers' were also interviewed. There were a few refusals. Where that refusal was instigated by a secretary, for example, it was suggested that important information may well also be blocked to that key person, potentially limiting their ability to perform their task through being fed only partial knowledge.

The discussion then moved to the phases of the study. Cultural forms are dynamic in nature and how these forms are read is important, for example, how some middle class people interpret some forms of working class behaviour as somehow 'rough', even though there is no malice intended in that behaviour.

As a place changes people usually have to adapt and change with it. But, if for some individuals no significant reason occurs to justify that adaptation and change, the old

paradigm is likely to continue alongside those who have changed. For example, redundant factory workers living in street houses alongside their former workmates, who have not found employment, are likely to carry on and socialise with each other much as they have always done. For these people the old paradigm continues, progressively weakening as some individuals find work, others move out, and the rest die.

Other secondary material has been used including local library resources and archives relating to Thornaby. This material mostly represented 'authorised' accounts, but it did enable a sense of Thornaby life in the past to emerge.

All the above information, along with closely related literature helped to form the initial interview schedule. Further themes emerged by simply talking with people. From the initial range of topics discussed in the first interviews the project became progressively open-ended as more information was collected. Apart from the gatekeepers, such as the local MP, priests and others, the interviewees were mostly people who had lived all, or most, of their lives in Thornaby. They were often individuals who would not be consulted, often manual workers – when employed – many without qualifications. Many would not, in fact, talk in a formal interview situation but appeared happy to discuss the issues in clubs and pubs. There were also many casual conversations, such as in streets, or shops, yielding information. It was from this mix that understanding of the place and its people has been developed.



**2.1 Introduction**

This second chapter lays out the background context of the study, exploring peoples' sense of place and the impact of economic change. It begins with a discussion of the nature of 'place' and sense of place. Following that, the chapter looks specifically at the town of Thornaby and its economic and social history leading to a distinct set of community relationships, solidaristic in nature.

Mass unemployment and poverty before the Second World War led to a broad political consensus, at national level, which was concerned to avoid that ever happening again. These policies came to fruition during the immediate post Second World War period and for quite a long while much of Thornaby and Teesside's industry was buoyant. Jobs - by North Eastern standards - were more available, and efforts were made to keep it so, and also improve on that.

The election of the Thatcher government in 1979 saw a change in economic thinking to a more market-led approach. For Thornaby and Teesside this meant that whole industries shut down, or rationalised their operations, and this consequently brought a return of mass unemployment. Many of the people who lost their jobs during this period have never fully reconnected to the labour market – a 'vaporised workforce'. This chapter explains how that happened. The next chapter reports what they have to say.

## 2.2 Considering place

A place is not static; it is composed of continually evolving human interactions.

When we consider a place, we often have a sense of place, this being inevitably an individual interpretation. This becomes modified with each new piece of knowledge regarding that place, however subjective that information might be. Attachment to place, though, usually reflects attachment to people (Hudson and Johnson 1975, p. 2).

Cook states:

*'[there] ... is **place** in the more usual meaning of the sights and sounds, smells and tastes, the textures of place, the sensing of its natural landscape, its streets and buildings, its inhabitants. The second is **place** as category of cultural identity, of the various filters through which we see and read actual, palpable place' (1988 p. 217-emphasis in original).*

Different interests view place differently. Capital usually views it in terms of potential profit, with few other considerations. Thus place can become a disposable resource, the relationship simply predatory. Firms can pass through place, extract, satisfy their needs and move on (see Williams, 1989, p. 124 and 'nomad capitalism'). The North East of England has continually experienced the nomadic behaviour of its 'branch plant' economy, and the departure of firms through processes of deindustrialisation.

By contrast, residents view places as 'real', being:



*'...places of affection and security, places that cannot and will not be moved because they are, after all, home.'* (Orum 1998, p. 4).

'Real' is tied to associations with friends and family, where,

*'.... they have learned about life and acquired a cultural frame of reference through which to interpret the social world around them; their place is where they are socialised as people rather than simply reproduced as bearers of commodity labour power'* (Beynon et al 1994, p. 5)

Beynon et al add that, in addition, elements of sense of belonging emerge; characteristics of common significance tied to place become imposed, extracting linkages of individual identity to that place:

*'...helping shape who they are by virtue of where they are. Often they are places to which people see themselves belonging and where they have created political and social institutions to which they are attached.'* (Beynon et al 1994, p. 5).

A place has permanent 'use value' for its residents, beyond economic factors. The individual's emerging sense of place, from childhood, also becomes structurally modified; it is mediated by experiences of school, then work, family, friends, good times and bad times.

*'Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, [cultural identities] are subject to the continual play of history, culture and power'*  
(Hall 1989, p. 70)

Pred, quoting Lebebrve, states that these processes are mediated by.

*'...the colonization of everyday life by the commodity form as a defining characteristic of contemporary life' (1997, p125).*

In the context of global capitalism, currently dominant, place takes a secondary role. Capital, via the continual evolution of firms closing and opening, can alter the economic base of a locality. Past economic behaviour thus bestows a footprint onto the social fabric of a place. A steelworks can close, but its social legacy can continue. If no jobs come along to replace those lost, then that social structure plods on, becoming gradually depleted, as people die, and a new hierarchy and social structure emerges; this via those, mostly younger people, involved in the newer, or different types of jobs there now. Nevertheless, all of these people relate to the same place, even if in different ways.

Lindstrum considers local interactions, and territorialities and primary relations, along with the ties between community and the larger society. The concern here is how people '*construct strategies of action*' within the context of their local needs (1997, p20). Lindstrum talks of the interdisciplinary perspective on place identity,

how cultural capital tied to place of residence is extracted in the context of established '*culturally constructed meaning systems*'. It can be seen how there are linkages between housing type, neighbourhood and community showing group identity. Lindstrum then considers the stratification qualities of these relationships, how location can affect access to many services. Clement refers to Cook, who in a similar context, states that employment prospects for council tenants can be restricted by '*residential segregation*', adding that talented people living on council estates are often excluded, forced to work below their abilities, whilst working class home owners invariably fared better (in Clement 1999). However, for the home owner, the need to maintain mortgage payments probably overrides other considerations, thus promotion and 'betterment' within the limited context of the work environment may become more purposeful.

Bourdieu refers to the concept of what he calls 'habitus'. In this concept the individual is seen as a product of their world's history and circumstance, along with their relationship with and within it. As Jenkins states:

*'...inside the heads of actors [the habitus exists as] the practices of action and their interaction with each other and with the rest of their environment; ways of taking, ways of moving.....In this respect...habitus...is an integral part of [behaviour]'. (1992, p75).*

Habitus can be seen as

*'...the mediating link between individuals, subjective worlds and the cultural world into which they are born and which they share with others' (ibid, p75).*

It emerges as an unconscious formulation that can translate as the unconsidered aspects of everyday life. Even those who investigate it are not exempt. This becomes critical when considering reflexive aspects of any study such as this one, particularly in the interpretation of meanings from the facts presented.

The sociological foundations of habitus can be considered as deep set through time, a time long before industrialisation, deep set before the Enlightenment and Kantian ideas that reason would create conflict with established authority and control. Habitus functions by its unquestioning unconscious nature.

*'The habitus, as the system of dispositions to a certain practice, is an objective basis for regular modes of behaviour, and thus for the regularity of modes of practice, and if practices can be predicted, this is because the effect of the habitus is that agencies who are equipped with it will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances.'* (Bourdieu 1990, p77)

The only movement away from it is via a conscious act to detach oneself from it. Even then, for that individual, habitus remains compressed in a dark corner awaiting the opportunity to spring open. It can therefore be argued that one cannot change one's habitus. Cultural capital can be added, perhaps suppressing that habitus. Habitus therefore becomes the cultural baggage that creates identity. An identity is

focused in a geographical location, tied to a particular history. It is a social and cultural genetic-fingerprinting; distinctly identifiable when extracted. For example, in a Teesside context, when going to the grocers a person might state they are 'running messages'. This expression is still heard in Central Scotland and is indicative of the Scottish background of many individuals who settled in Teesside during its growth period.

However the dynamic aspects of habitus have to be considered. Jenkins considers the relationship between the subjective aspects of habitus and the objective world of other people and things (1992, p79). In terms of objective thought, it may well be worth considering Willis's notion that the world of the working man is a world where the practical always wins over theory (1979, p194). Thus what exists for many such individuals is a world of actualities and what are assumed facts, this because others, such as government, the press, as well as those carrying political, religious or ideological baggage, may well present their interpretation as fact, and it becomes accepted. This presentation can then become part of that framework of cultural capital composing the habitus; it being received at an unconscious level. The concept of habitus, in this context, thus needs to be viewed more closely. Thus if the habitus of individuals or a group of individuals contains aspects of social interpretation in common with others detached from them in terms of many other aspects, and the common aspects were submitted as fact, then surely those shared aspects must be considered as a mutual characteristic, from whatever direction they have arrived. One way of viewing this is to consider a shape, say a box, as representing all the aspects composing the social habitus of the target group. This

box, however, is not a solid object, it is a hologram. Consider now another similar hologram, this representing hegemonic forces, perhaps state or capitalism, conceivably aspects of both. This hologram partly covers the box, just sufficiently for component parts of that habitus to be transferred via the shared space occupied. These components now become part of the first habitus, this unconsciously accepted. The transfer might well be compared to transferring sections of a computer programme to another computer, perhaps even the transfer of a virus. The transfer process need only function sufficiently to instil the change. This may well be over a number of years as a new generation emerges accepting these new circumstances as 'normal'.

Beyond consideration of habitus, we need to think about different sense of place, as regards locality; that of viewing the same locality from different habitus. Sense of place tends to be described in terms appropriate to the case presented. Thus developers allied to the Teesside Development Corporation saw potential prospects from a different habitus, seeing a different sense of place, this sense of place linked more to white collar service industries, which probably was often in conflict with the sense of place of those working there previously. Although the existing unemployed workers would have probably preferred alternative manufacturing industry, what actually occurred was a difference in the '*relations to place, and to the power relations which construct social space*' (Jess and Massey 1995, p150). Such relationships tend to operate on an unequal basis, tied to methods of locational exploitation. Thus one form of capital ceases, another moves in and takes over, but those working there previously were 'kicked into touch', though the market logic is

that they could always adapt. Although earlier industries have now effectively gone, much of the former collective life still functions. People still socialise as they did, though some of that socialising is now productive in some cases, growing and sharing vegetables and fruit, to prop up meagre and non-existent benefits. They also occasionally drink together, but paid work is now frequently of a different nature, performed by others. But because they still live and socialise in the locality there appears to be a failure to register the changing nature of that locality, a kind of déjà vu; a feeling it is how it always has been. This can be seen as tied to a sense of belonging to place.

As Bourdieu put it,

*'...construction of social reality is not only an individual enterprise, but may also become a collective enterprise... ...the habitus produces practices and representations which are available for classification... [implying] a sense of one's place [as well as] a sense of the other's place. (Bourdieu 1990, p131).*

Bourdieu suggests categorisation is self imposed by agents who:

*'...expose themselves to classification, by choosing, in conformity with their tastes, different attributes, clothes, types of food, drinks, sports, friends, which go well together and which they also find agreeable or, more exactly, which they find suitable for their position. More exactly: they classify themselves by choosing, in the space of available goods and services, goods*

*which occupy a position in this space homogeneous to the position they occupy in social space.' (ibid, p131/132).*

During the post-war boom period, much of the industrial West appeared to be experiencing continual growth. Whatever unemployment existed was considered manageable and 'frictional'. Optimism prevailed regarding meeting the material needs of working people. Jobs appeared plentiful, wages seemingly relatively high. During this period many places were still associated with long established industries. For Teesside it was iron and steel, engineering, shipbuilding and chemicals.

Dominant industries may influence and characterise a place, though others exist and can also affect perceptions of place. Thornaby had Pumphreys confectioneries, a once prestigious firm. Someone I know from the Midlands, commented that their awareness of Thornaby was of Pumphreys, but were unaware of Thornaby's heavy industry; thus, their version of Thornaby was linked to that connection. Thus, place characterisation, is not just linked to dominant industries, but becomes mediated by other activities and structures. Place characterisation and versions of place are inevitably subjective, being opinionated reflection of versions of that place as considered at that moment, thus a reflection of a past, whether recent or distant. Consequently, it is probable that change of purpose of place is unlikely to alter the existing versions and perceptions of place as rapidly as the changes occur. Cook (1985) talks of how the '*symbolic significance*' of a locality,

*'...which people identify with [and] attach certain cultural and political*



*significance [is retained following industrial change]’ (in Allen, 1988 p. 188).*

Thus, people laid-off from core industries, who have not found alternative work since their redundancy, continue to have the class characteristics bestowed by those industries. They become unemployed foundry workers or unemployed engineering workers. Characteristics of place can reflect its history, like a comet’s tail, the visible part, with new and future attributes being produced in a hidden core.

### **2.2.1 Considering changing nature of place and collective identities**

Major economic or administrative change obviously contributes to changes in the characteristics of place. However, when central government imposes a set of circumstances on the local, particularly when there is limited consultation, legitimacy of that imposition may well be questioned. In turn, the local may well reject that imposition, considering itself to be a better judge of what the place is, what its nature is, and who its people are.

Components of ‘collective identities’ need not be encased within a specific geography. It is the internal adhesions tied to assumed inferences, within the collective, that mould the unit into an identifiable form. Cultural features can be dominant at one level, suggesting a different form of collective identity. In the case of Thornaby, many individuals consider themselves as working class, but this is mediated by the place’s own, and each individual’s, history. Thornaby’s working

class would undoubtedly view themselves as distinctly different from the working class of, say, Luton, and its post-war background, that includes the motor industry and a different kind of engineering. Place, in this context, simply becomes a carrier of identity.

Historical similarity between localities does not necessarily lead to similar outcomes. Different histories, despite similar locations, and different economic circumstances, different attitudes, all have their part to play. Yet fundamentally the relationship to capital is the same. A well-paid worker is only one job, one redundancy away from poverty. Continuance of that flow of income is dependent at one level on the relationship between the worker and employer, as well as market conditions.

Plentiful employment for specific skills means management might need to pander to them. If there are few jobs around, management can dictate terms. Currently, once pay and standards go below certain levels, men with families no longer find employment worthwhile, with benefit rates becoming viable. A community where this situation often occurs is going to carry different characteristics to a place where a critical number of jobs pay well. Thus, in low wage areas, more jobs tend to be taken up by single and younger people, mostly without family commitments, or families with both partners employed, these being the only people able to afford to take them (Morris 1994, p. 125).

All places have distinct historically-led characteristics. For Teesside, gender relations took a particular form, as a result of the lack of employment opportunities for women, many marrying young (Bell 1969, p. 178). This still appeared common

into the 1970s. The growing trend to cohabitation has blurred any further shifts. However, the position of women inevitably meant an under qualified, and under experienced group. Thus when feminised employment did occur, it tended to be of a menial nature, thus making them also vulnerable to job loss.

To explore ideas around 'collective identities': different relationships to capital, geographic and historic, interplay in how similarities can evolve into differences. Yet fundamentally the nature of the relationship between worker and employer is the same. At this point collective identities are capable of possessing both....

*"primordial" elements and be "socially constructed" (as are all social phenomena, in some sense)' (Peters 1998, p. 4, brackets and emphasis in original).*

So, to consider the 'collective identity', Peters then suggests:

*' "collective identity" should be understood as an area of culture, as a special class of cultural elements. In any given social unit we find stocks of symbols and meanings which makes up the cultural repertoire of that unit.*

*Among these symbols and meanings there are some which pertain in a special way to an understanding of the social unit itself – to its current state, its character, its problems, its achievements, its history, its future. The totality of these cultural elements makes up a collective identity.'* (1998, p. 4-

Pre-modern communities mostly operated as small local groupings, with decision making and social responsibility, such as sanctions and rewards, mostly taken within the village, despite the presence of kings, feudal nobility and so on ruling over them (Armstrong 1998). In terms of North Eastern industrial history, this relationship continued during its development period, with new ruling dominances, in some cases almost like feudal ones, emerging based on the ownership of industrial production. Relationships between workers and factory owners were not greatly different from earlier agrarian ones. The industrial serfdom that emerged was probably possible because of existing assumptions of workers and owners about how such relationships should be. Owners sometimes employed thousands, with many employees not tied to them once outside the workplace. The workers operated in what was becoming a market situation. Certain skills attracted higher rates. Also, workers' organisations emerged, such as the trades unions, enabling a more powerful structured reaction to adverse workplace situations as they arose. Then, as now this ability to challenge employers was not universally available to all workers. Thus, although the fundamental relationship between the ownership of capital and labour had not altered, the ability of the workers to react and challenge owners, and, in turn, capital, had changed.

Thus nature of place also altered. Past feudal ideas of 'respecting your betters', being a subject to a lord (although in the United Kingdom people are still subjects of the Crown), receded as individuals progressively saw themselves as equals, even though

the distribution of wealth, power and influence did not support this. The rate of these changes was dependent on a variety of factors. A harsh employment regime may well have developed an appropriate response from an organised workforce, whilst a benevolent employer may have sought to benefit employees in terms of improved conditions and rights; possibly even encouraging them to move forwards through learning. However, a harsh employer may well have been tied to a competitive situation. Also important is workers' ability to pressurise employers, and whether the employer recognises this and reacts before conflict. All the different firms and factories, with their different relationships, led to different collective attitudes between groups of workers, and thus localities. Even where a union existed, it might function to represent the workers and speak on their behalf in open discussion, or it might function on behalf of the workers to stand up to a dominating dictatorial management.

In Teesside, as each employment unit developed its own form, its locality developed an identity in which that workplace had an input and influence. It was the nature of the footprint of that identity that distinguished each place, although an outsider might possibly see similarity more than difference. Identities can only be defined in relative terms. For myself, I can see Thornaby in terms of the academic criteria within this study, but that does not stand alone. It is interpreted through my own history and associations with it, as well as other places from which comparisons become possible. Thus a place can only be friendly if somewhere else is not friendly, it can only be dirty if somewhere else is clean. Even then the 'friendly' place may not seem so friendly if, for example, one is gay and the locality has a homophobic nature.

Communal friendliness is liable to exist only beyond a qualifying process. For the working class male in Thornaby, this inevitably appears to be around themes such as football and alcohol-based leisure activities. Obviously not all adhere to this model, but it is easy to gain the impression that a main core does.

Despite appearance of conformity, variation does exist, and it is there that individual lives achieve their own identities. Identity based on each individual's persona is linked to the history and social structure of the locality. However, connections and involvements with the external world may yield a collective character, which when viewed from outside bears no resemblance to lives experienced by those within. Thus the popular assumption of the North, from the South, may well be chimneys, mills and men in flat caps, whilst the predominant view of the South from the North, may well be London and little else. It is the manner in which perceptions of others are tainted that we tint the view we have of ourselves, and the place we live, along with our attachment to it:

*'...differences as otherness conceives social groups as mutually exclusive, categorically opposed. This conception means that each group has its own nature and shares no attributes with those defined as the other. The ideology of group difference in this logic attempts to make clear borders between groups, and to identify the characteristics that mark the purity of one group off from the characteristics of the others' (Young 1997, p. 334).*

From this position we view others, similar, for example, to Said's interpretation of

how Western Europe viewed the Orient, a position from which strength is drawn (Said 1985, p. 3). At a very basic level, for many Teesside working men I have spoken to, Teesside's own 'superiority' is ensured by the 'South's' *'weak expensive flat beer and unfriendly people'*. At the same time I have heard London working men talk about Teesside as drinking beer with *'half a pint of shaving foam'*, and the people as being *'loud, with a chip on their shoulder'*. Thus, difference from others enables identity of self and associations to emerge and function.

This discussion has not considered the world women inhabit, within a solidaristic community; how:

*'...via their own internal structures, the spaces through which they move, the meeting places, the connections outside – are different from a man's. Their 'senses of place' will be different' (Massey 1994, p. 154)*

All individuals of the place, via their personal characteristics, become part of a dynamic mosaic from which representative versions of identity can evolve. Massey says that social interactions from which place can become conceptualised,

*'are not motionless things frozen in time'*. (1994, p. 155)

As a notion, 'community' can become tied to anticipated responsibilities, *'a morally charged concept'*, as Revill puts it (1993, p. 128), being linked to those closest around you, those involved in the context of daily living (Newby and Bell 1972, p.

218-49; Williams 1976; p. 75-6, Eyles 1985). This is through enforced connections and bonds, that intertwine the person and community, creating responsibility, commitment, and identification with others (Revill 1993, p. 128). Despite a global 'mass society', the local will always exist.

The word *community* can have many interpretations, and thus become politically charged. For example, recent state-led initiatives have had names such as 'Community Regeneration', 'Care in the Community', even 'Community Charge'. Revill suggests that community in this context has been,

*'...championed as a source of moral and social stability, of shared meaning and mutual co-operation. Yet, the concept of community has forceful negative connotations.'* (1993, p.119)

In this context he suggests reactionary thought can threaten identity, in that authority morally charges it as a tool of control to excuse state intervention in daily life. Revill adds that the appeal of past-romanticised nostalgic history, linked to ideas of community, has enabled state institutions to warrant autocratic processes.

Community always adapts to changed circumstances. It functions solely as the collective result of its people through the linkages and networks bonding it. It is from here a distinctive continuation of 'tradition' emerges. These processes are not contained within a leak-proof structure. Dynamics of communal continuity involve inputs of external influences, whilst some established ideas could wither. As a result,



cultural configurations are not static. Places have '*multiple meanings*' (Massey 1991, p. 275), these evolving continuously.

The global influences of capital perhaps suggest identity will even out, but to what extent? For North East England, it is suggested that working class hegemony no longer exists (see Robins 1997, p. 254). But it is alive and well, even if 'meaningful' and 'traditional' work is no longer there. Whether some individuals are in the position of stretching transfer (benefit) payments into what they consider pleasurable pursuits, deliberately or by circumstance, it suggests that for some, globalisation is something unconsciously considered, with a 'take it or leave it attitude'. Bottled French beer, cigarettes smuggled in and sold cheap, films and pornography via Internet and satellite television are all tied to the global economy, but for these people these commodities are simply another source of pleasure materials to enjoy. They are only used because they are there, which sounds obvious, but not everybody uses those materials. No sense of consumerism exists, simply an endless continuum of adapting, survival and avoiding losing benefits. In fact, on some estates the return of the 'fag person' from France is treated much as the arrival of the ice cream van for children! Some might argue these people are enforcing a double burden on society by receiving transfer payments (benefits) and not paying back their due via taxation, in what might be perceived as wasting money on cigarettes and alcohol.

Here the assumption, for the individuals, is that in the absence of worthwhile employment one might as well make the best of what there is. Such purchases would have been made legally anyway, had that alternative source not been there, so

arguably it reduces their poverty. The critics may comment with ideals of deserving and undeserving poor. Whilst such attitudes can result in a derogatory reputation for a place, it is nevertheless tied to the need for people to simply get by. Thus, how identity becomes ascribed may well be linked to how the individual, group, and community adapt in terms of their survival techniques.

Shared identities, within common maps of meaning, enable cultural belongingness that enables a sense of 'who we are', that sense of identity of self (Hall 1995, p. 176). It can also be tied to feeling that one belongs, a place where one is comfortable, and at home (Rose 1995, p.89), even though for some people comfort and security may well appear to not exist, for example where violence dominates in the household. To seek the strands of identity, an understanding is needed of the collective rules tying a culture with its identity. Here one seeks

*'collective self images' (Peters 1998, p. 5).*

These are those foibles, mannerisms and characteristics distinctive to that grouping, collective or locale. This feeds into communal typicalities, tied to a mix of idiosyncrasies and attributes. These allows perceptions of responsibility containing threads of

*'solidarity, commitment and trust towards other members' (Peters 1998, p. 5).*

Elements of communal self-respect are often visible here. Created self images can then become contrasted with other groups, these perhaps viewed in a derogatory manner, as somehow not meeting the assumed standards of one's own community. Finally, Peters notes historical dimensions tied to both the past and future of the collective. Reference is made to collective memories, interpretations of the past, commitments to certain traditions, also collective responsibilities derived from the past, these feeding into future hopes and aspirations.

Community is not a self-contained unit. It cannot be in the current global capital-led paradigm. Each individual relationship with someone outside imports aspects of the other into the community. This operates both ways. Identity of self, and community, thus become linked to the identity of others, with the strength of relationships dictated by power factors. The latter point is significant:

*'Social identities exist and are acquired, claimed and allocated within power relations. Identity is something over which struggles take place and with which strategies are advanced; it is a means and end in politics. Not only is the classification of individuals at issue but also the classification of populations' (Jenkins 1996, p. 25)*

Thus 'who am I?', 'what kind of person am I?', becomes tied to membership affiliations (Peters 1998, p. 13). These operate both officially and unofficially. Thus labels ascribed are not just membership of organisations, political parties, churches, sports clubs, hobbies and so on, but also incorporate where one lives, the street, the

form of the household, the nature of employment or non employment; and all the data on databases which officials have access to. Thus, identity can become politicised, ascribed by others, perhaps in an unrecognisable form. Consequently, for example, someone standing up for what is considered workplace rights can become classified a political agitator. There is workplace friction in a locality, and the place becomes labelled. One only has to consider the 1980s Miner's Strike for an example of that.

To bring these considerations together into the study context, an exploration into the background of Thornaby, its history, its social structure, along with its relationships with its Teesside neighbours, as well as the North East, and the wider global sphere, are now presented.

## 2.3 Thornaby the place: an overview



*Fig: 1 Thornaby's location in relation to Middlesbrough and Stockton-on-Tees. (2003 Crown Copyright, Ordnance Survey, Automobile Association Developments Limited 2003)*

### 2.3.1 Identity of Thornaby

Thornaby is situated on the south bank of the river Tees between Stockton-on-Tees and Middlesbrough. It was once a municipal borough, founded in 1892, and

previously called South Stockton. Over time, Thornaby's political and administrative autonomy has been eroded, beginning with the formation of Teesside County Borough in 1968, then by becoming part of Cleveland County in 1974. In 1997 Thornaby became part of the unitary local authority of Stockton-on-Tees. However, Thornaby has always had a powerful sense of place and this appears not to have faded. That was confirmed, for example, in a study by Puddifoot (1997) regarding social identity in Thornaby, which found a still clear alliance to Thornaby, rather than Stockton, Teesside, or Cleveland.

This identity aspect is important for Teessiders. The variety of industries which led to the emerging collection of localities known as Teesside were diffuse, leading to the formation of a variety of different and distinctive urban areas. Close relationships between them, because of that dispersion, tended not to occur, each locality tending to be linked to a particular firm, or industry (Beynon *et al* 1994, p. 22). These distinctions have remained, still shaping perception of locality.

The name Thornaby belonged to an adjacent village, established long before industrialisation. Its transition to a town commenced with the birth of the railways. Three historical periods and places can be identified and considered. First, the pre-conquest village of Thornaby; second, the area opposite Stockton which became the industrial town of Thornaby; finally, an area just east of Thornaby village, which was developed as the new town centre in the 1960s. Over time, its centre of gravity has moved in the course of its development and evolution.

### **2.3.2 Economic background and development**

Thornaby's industrial history is tightly linked into the wider Teesside story. Harrison and Almond (1978, p. 2) consider two major stages regarding industrial growth of the lower Tees valley during the nineteenth century. The first stage was tied to the development of the river primarily for exports of agricultural produce, and after 1825, for coal from south-west County Durham. The second relates to the growth of iron and steel production following discovery of iron ore in the east Cleveland area in 1848 and 1850. Critical was the introduction of railways, specifically the construction of a rail bridge across the Tees, extending the Stockton to Darlington railway onto Middlesbrough, via Thornaby, in 1830. There was also some straightening of the Tees to speed up sailing time to the open sea (Harrison and Almond 1978, p. 6).

What was eventually to evolve into Thornaby's main employer, Head Wrightson & Co., was an iron foundry built in 1830. Nearby, Thornaby ironworks, with three blast furnaces, was started in 1861, two of the furnaces being blown in a year later (Harrison and Almond 1978, p. 6). A variety of enterprises emerged in South Stockton, following the extension of the railway - primarily iron works, foundries and shipbuilding (Minskip 1991, p. 8)

Small 'other' industries have always sat alongside the steel and engineering firms. It has only been since the demise of those core metal-based organisations that Thornaby has emerged as a mixed industry locality, this further enhanced with the development

of service-based firms in the Teesdale area of Thornaby and the area's redevelopment, led by the Teesside Development Corporation (TDC).

Although Head Wrightson was the main employer in Thornaby a lot of people were denied any chance of ever working for it. Access to jobs tended to be via family, or close friends already there 'putting in a word'. As respondent P1, who comes from a well established Thornaby family, said

*'I didn't have a lot of knowledge of Head Wrightsons ..... you didn't get in unless you knew somebody. You just couldn't go and walk in there, like ICI, basically. So we didn't have much to do with Head Wrightsons.'* (P1)

This was not just with boys seeking apprenticeships, as with Roberts account of Sunderland shipbuilding (1993, p. 3), but also included labourers. It was, though, in one of the little firms adjacent Head Wrightson where someone without 'connections' could probably find employment. And these jobs often entailed working in or for Head Wrightson in a sub-contract capacity.

The population of South Stockton grew to 16,000 by the end of the nineteenth century, with the population of the old Thornaby Village remaining static. Much of this migration came from the Celtic parts of the British Isles, many Thornaby people having Scottish, Welsh and Irish ancestry. Some also migrated from Tyneside and elsewhere in the North East, mostly from places where shipbuilding existed already. A sizeable minority came from elsewhere in England. These migratory flows were



typical of the Teesside area overall. Many of the new people lived in an area approximately resembling a rectangle  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile (1.2 kilometres) long by  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile (0.8 kilometres wide). The bulk of industry was to the west and north, hugging the river. This rapid growth is indicated by the images presented below (Figs 2, 3 and 4), and by data on population change (Fig.5).



*Fig: 2 South Stockton/Thornaby 1889. (Stockton Extension and Improvement Plan 1889)*

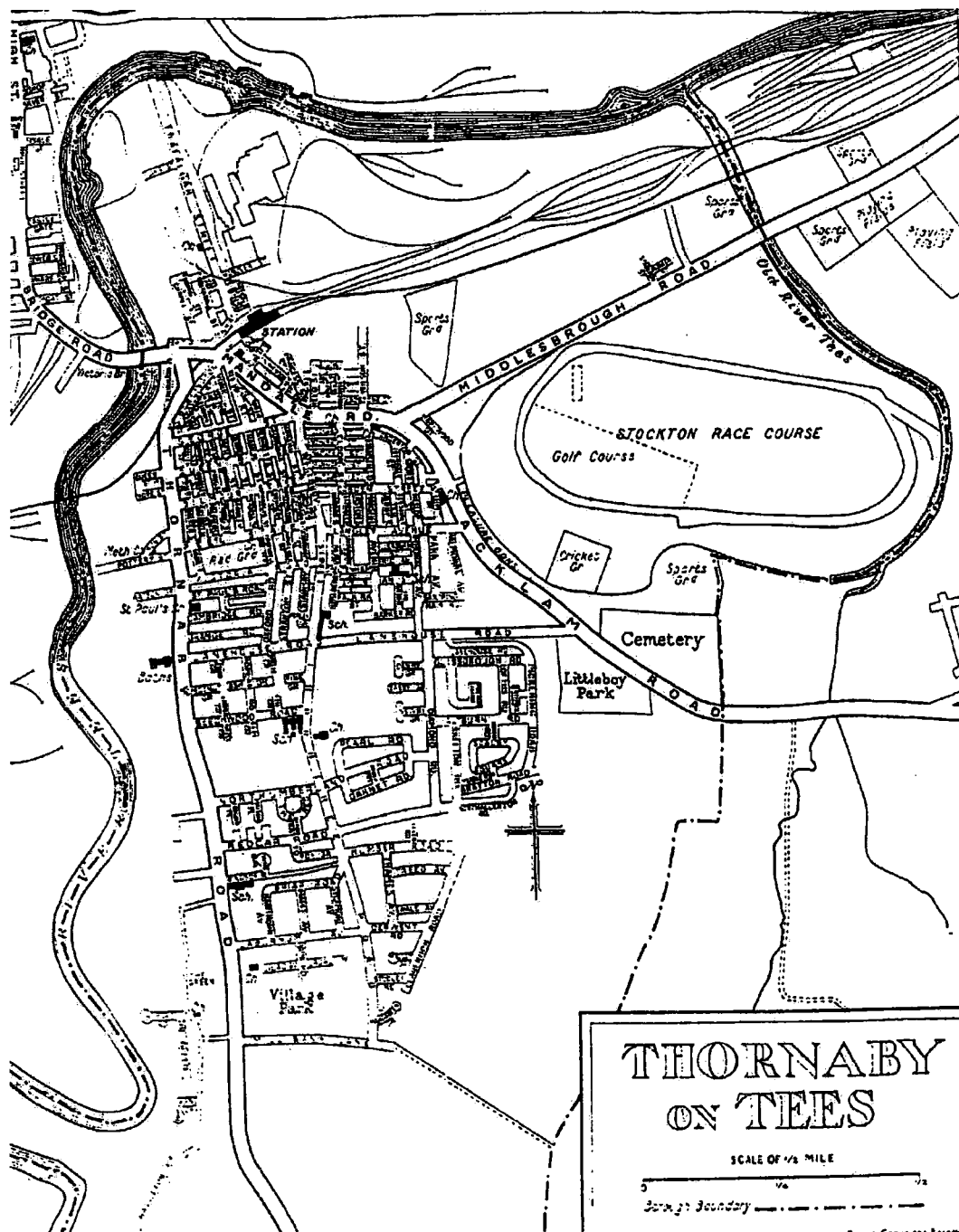
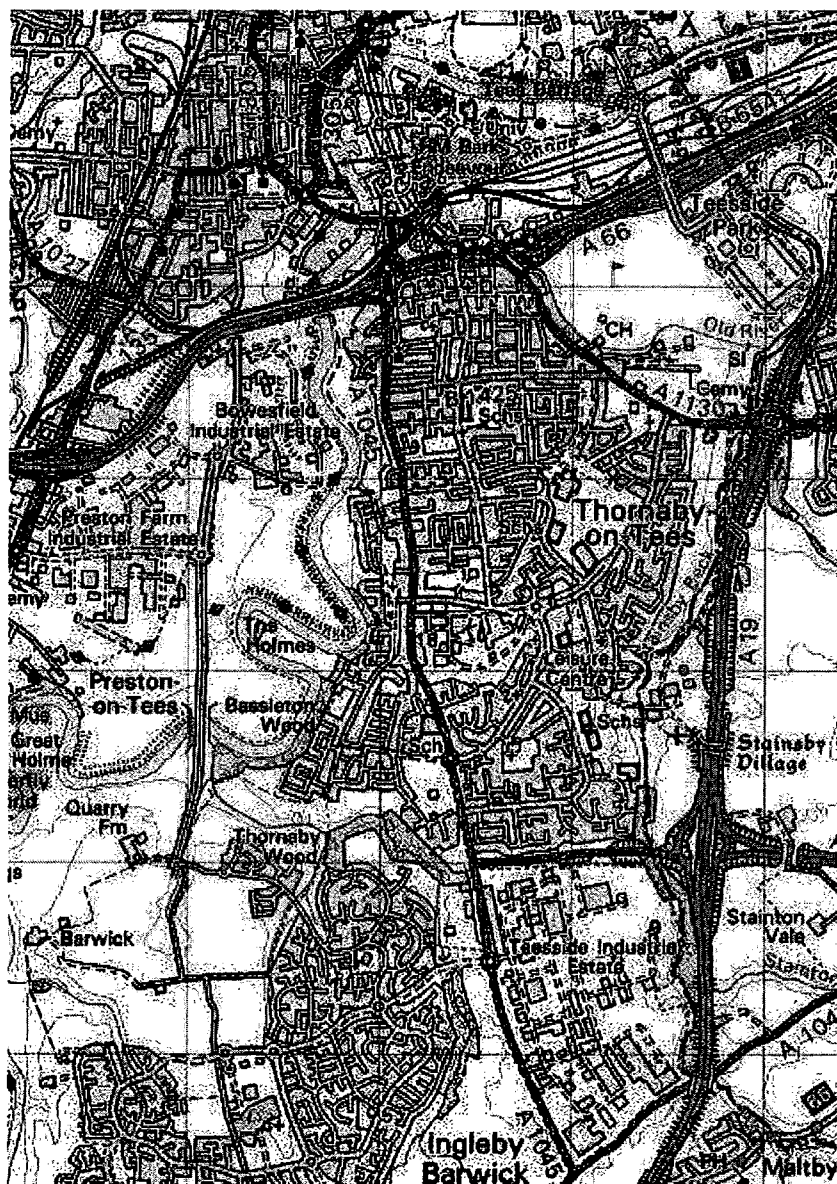
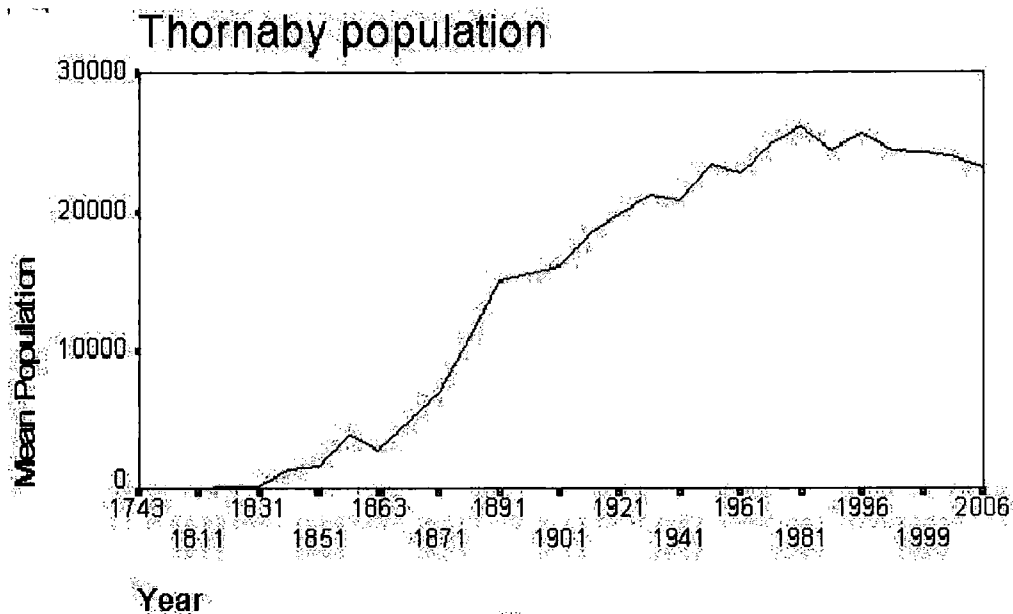


Fig: 3 Thornaby on Tees Approximately Early to mid 1950s. (Thornaby on Tees Official Guide – undated).



*Fig: 4 Thornaby 2003. (2003 Crown Copyright, Ordnance Survey)*



[Fig: 5, Thornaby's population growth over time, Sources: 1. Ottoway 1968; 2. General Registry Office, Census 1961; 3. Social and Economic Statistics of North East England (1966); 4. Cleveland County Research and Intelligence, Census 1981; 5. Sample Census 1966 (1967); 6. Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit (1998) N4134STN, N4134MAN, N4134VIC, N4134VIL – from Census 1991; 7. Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit (2000) N11134, Present and Future Population Trends for Borough Wards in Stockton on Tees

Early housing was commonly basic: a two up two down, yard at back, terrace, and frequently of dubious quality. These were built adjacent to both the industrial area, and also the town centre, making both work and shopping easily accessible. Much of that housing was cleared in the 1960s and 1970s. Many residents were not sad to see the houses go; *'they needed knocking down'* was a familiar sentiment. Also, proximity to metal-based industries led to a coating of carbonised ash, soot and other industrial substances. The majority of these houses were rented from an assortment of landlords.

During the pre-war period Thornaby Town Council carried out ambitious social

programmes, constructing parks (1930, 1938), a trunk sewer (1931), a health and welfare centre (1932), old people's homes and rest gardens (1933), swimming baths (1938), and notably, the building of large numbers of council houses and flats (Thornaby Town Council, not dated, approximately 1950). Post-war, council house building became a priority. Census data reveals the past importance of private renting (Fig. 6). Given the poor state of much housing in that sector, there was much political capital to be made from council house construction. Social housing also extended to provision for single persons, as today, and thus went beyond statutory requirements.

Mandale Road was the main shopping and commercial area. It contained all anticipated material needs regarding foodstuffs and goods expected to be demanded, given the social nature of the locality. It was also an administrative focal point.

In the 1960s and 1970s, much of old Thornaby, including nearly all of Mandale Road, was demolished to make way for construction of the A66. A new town centre, approximately a mile and a half south, was built. Preparation for this had been going on for some time. In 1925 the Air Ministry had purchased 400 acres of land adjacent the east and south of Thornaby Village for construction of an airfield (Ottoway 1968), and in 1962, Thornaby Council purchased most of this land, for construction of a new town. In 1968 Woolco department store opened at what was to become Thornaby's new town centre. At 110,000 square feet it was then the largest single storey department store in the country. Other shops rapidly established themselves, offering a reasonably comprehensive range of goods for the time.

Directly north of the new town, private housing of uniform semi-detached, detached, and dormi-bungalows style was built. However, the bulk of housing construction was council housing on the Holmes Estate, south east of the new town centre, and a smaller estate west of the town centre. Many people moving to these houses were those whose homes had been compulsorily purchased in old Thornaby. Established commercial activity in old Thornaby slowly decayed before being mostly demolished.

The nature of Thornaby's industries, relying heavily on manual labour, and the people working in them, has meant that there has always been a significant proportion of its population living in forms of rented accommodation, being mostly excluded from house purchase because of low and unstable incomes. Over time there has been a shift from private rented to socialised rented, and now to privatised provision, as council houses began to be sold. However, it is clear that between 1981 and 1991 owner occupation increased, mostly through council house purchase (Fig. 6). Today, though no new council houses have been built for a number of years, and administration is from Stockton Council, council housing is easily accessed by those on its waiting lists, with some dwellings boarded up, reflecting low demand.

	1961	1966	1981	1991	2001
Owned	45.1%	42%	47.3%	55.2%	55.1%
Other Rented	25.5%	19.8%	3.2%	3.5%	6.3%
Housing Ass.			3.27%	5.4%	36.8%
Council	29.3%	38.0%	46.2%	38.0%	LA and HA*

*Fig: 6 Housing tenure changes Thornaby, as a percentage. Wilson 1966, Census 1981, Joint Strategy Unit 1991, Ward Data (2001 Census) Joint Strategy Unit, <http://www.teesvalley-jsu.gov.uk/reports/i&f/censuswarddata.xls> (Data based on 1971 Census findings becomes weak due to Thornaby being combined with Stockton, as part of the County Borough of Teesside)*

*\*LA = local authority, HA = housing association. 2001 data combines local authority and housing association data.*

### 2.3.3 Everyday Life

Household gendered relationships were mediated by male dominated manufacturing employment, similar to Middlesbrough (see Beynon *et al* 1994, p. 21). A catalytic effect of that, as a result of the proximity and reliance of men to each other, sometimes in potentially lethal situations, helped contribute to a powerful social culture, often alcohol-based. This is still evident. By 1971, prior to demolition for the construction of the A66, Thornaby had fourteen public houses and seven workingmen's clubs. Women, until the legislation of the 1970s, had limited access to

both types of establishments. Most bars were men only, and many clubs had no open facilities for women, such as a lounge bar, during off-peak periods, when entertainment was not organised. Also, women visiting such places on their own were often viewed in a derogatory manner, because of their failure to conform to well established social protocols.

Daily life in Thornaby once functioned adjacent to the Head Wrightson Engineering works, where Teesdale is now, and its community was of a solidaristic nature (see Goldthorpe *et al* 1968). Works associations often continued outside the factory, though these were not necessarily work related. Works' Social Clubs or trades unions and leisure, religious, political and sports societies, provided for social life. For most, the works could not be 'escaped' from. They dominated the town, and its activities, there being an adjacent presence of large physical structures and a constant generation of noise and smoke.

In the Teesdale area at that time, as well as Head Wrightson, there were many other smaller firms. The majority of these organisations were reliant on Head Wrightson, as well as other Teesside firms such as Dorman Long Steelworks, the majority operating in a service, supply, or sub-contract context. This had the effect of many members of many families in Thornaby's streets being employed at Teesdale, working either directly for Head Wrightson or one of these other firms. Family members would often work different shifts, as well as overtime. This frequently created a domestic and social continuum, as shifts changed and different family members took over in the workplace, with related changes happening at home, and in



pubs and clubs, as people came off shift.

In many ways, when Head Wrightson was the dominant employer, Thornaby was very close to being like a company town. Nevertheless, though somewhat paternalistic in nature, large local firms did not go to the point of the creation of the 'Betriebsgemeinschaft' (plant community) as in Germany, though nearby Billingham (ICI) and Dormanstown (Dorman Long steelworks) did build houses for some of their workforce.

For many in Thornaby, life existed in passive mode. Work was a collective experience being ordered by others. Where one lived was often rented, again organised by others. Decision-making, beyond daily needs, was not a major requirement, these decisions again made by others. This process of having others make decisions may have led to limitations in the outlook of many people. A Thornaby priest, who had previously worked in a similarly deprived part of Teesside, suggested this to me. He stated that initiatives to deal with the malaise created through unemployment and poverty had to be developed by others, since many of those needing help had no sense of worth, dignity or self-respect, they were seemingly unable or disinclined to develop those initiatives themselves. However, it could be argued that they do not know how to affect their destinies.

#### 2.3.4 Unemployment and policy

Thornaby, like much of the rest of the North East of England, has a history of higher than national average rates of unemployment, which may have contributed to much of this passiveness. For older people, now in their 80s or older, the memories of mass unemployment in the 1920s and 1930s are still strong. This was a time when, according to Ottoway's account of Thornaby's history, much work effectively ceased (1968). The depression was of a depth that is perhaps difficult for many to comprehend now. Harold Macmillan, who was the Member of Parliament for Stockton-on-Tees (the constituency then including Thornaby) from 1924 to 1929, and 1931 to 1945, spoke of the effects of unemployment both at national level and particularly at the local level of Thornaby, which he had witnessed first hand:

*'By June 1931 unemployment had reached a total of 2,707,000 or 21 per cent of the working population. It was destined to rise still further and reach 3 million before the tide began to turn. In the 'special areas', as the 'distressed areas' were soon to be renamed by one of those euphemisms which so appeal to the official mind, the long period of depression had certainly brought with it special problems. Many men, and indeed whole families, had been without work and wages for long periods, with corresponding difficulties and hardships. Their clothes were worn out; their furniture in disrepair; their savings gone; their homes dilapidated. Weekly sums of money drawn from whatever source, which might have been adequate for a man out of work for a few weeks, were cruelly insufficient for*

*men involved in what had become almost permanent unemployment. This, of course, especially affected the older men, who found it more difficult to move to more hopeful areas or adapt themselves to new skills.*

*I shall never forget those despairing faces, as the men tramped up and down the High Street in Stockton or gathered round the Five Lamps in Thornaby. Nor can any tribute be too great to the loyal unflinching courage of the wives and mothers, who somehow continued, often on a bare pittance, to provide for husband and children and keep a decent home in being'. (Macmillan 1966, p. 285)*

It was out of this North East situation that Macmillan considered forms of state intervention:

*'..., I... began to feel that something more was needed; a more radical and a more imaginative approach was necessary. We must examine again the structure of British industry, and its place in the world....' (Macmillan 1966, p. 284/5)*

So at a political level, ideas relating to intervention in the running of industry emerged, ideas which, when linked to Keynesian economics, would dominate economic thinking and policies until the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979. This, in turn, was critical in sustaining communities like Thornaby's in their industrial form, though in reality, it was the experiences of a centrally controlled

economy during the Second World War that led to the belief that policy could deliver full employment.

For Thornaby, although iron, steel shipbuilding and engineering still had priority, policy intervention, within a planning framework, led to the creation of a large industrial estate – Teesside Industrial Estate - in an attempt to create a greater diversification in employment opportunities in the area (North 1975, pp. 111-114, Napper *et al* 1964). This estate has never been utilised fully, though its presence, particularly since the loss of core industries, has probably been critical for Thornaby's economic well-being.

Much of the current physical layout of Thornaby can be considered a by-product of planning and development initiatives. The most significant of these initiatives is probably the Teesside Survey and Plan of 1968, known as Teesplan (Wilson and Womersley with Scott, Wilson, Kirkpatrick and Partners, 1968). Emerging out of what was known as the Hailsham White Paper (1963), this attempted to set out a blueprint for what Teesside would become. Assumptions were made on industrial expansion tied to findings by organisations, such as the Northern Economic Planning Council, who anticipated continuation of the dominance of blue collar employment. They suggested upgrading much of the workforce to improve the skill base (see Northern Economic Planning Council 1966). Alongside this were policies to attract light industries, particularly to help women find, what was considered then, appropriate employment. There was recognition of the swing away from established industries, and a limited growth towards services. Nevertheless, there was a



perceived need to attract more manufacturing, rather than change the nature of the workforce.

Clearly, no perception existed that information technology would have quite the impact it has. Also, it was assumed the consensus evolved during the Keynesian post war growth period would continue. In fact many of Teesplan's prescriptions, such as part of the road network, have come into being. However, the purposes for which much urban construction was started, the support of a blue-collar community did not materialise, and Teesplan, along with its related developments, did not achieve as much employment and wealth creation as hoped for.

The election of Thatcher as Prime Minister in 1979 resulted in the introduction of a new ideological approach to economics and planning. This period of economic restructuring took a lot of Thornaby men engaged in blue collar employment out of the labour market. Many of these people have never fully re-engaged with it. In fact, Head Wrightson closed in 1985, though, in fact, the processes leading to the eventual ending of manufacturing at Head Wrightson started in 1977 when Head Wrightson merged with the Davy Corporation following a takeover (Competition Commission 1981, p. 25). This had consequences for Head Wrightson as Davy had been withdrawing from manufacturing since the 1960s, it being more concerned with design and contract management (Beynon *et al* 1994, pp. 82-83).

On the 3rd July 1984 Davy Corporation plc sold the fixed assets of its subsidiary, Head Wrightson Teesdale Ltd., to ITM Offshore Ltd. A new company was formed

known as ITM Head Wrightson Teesdale Ltd. (Duffield v Pensions Ombudsman, *The Times Law Report* , 1996). A few days later, on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 1984 the Companies Register changed the registered name of Head Wrightson Teesdale Limited to Davy Thornaby Limited (European Patent Office, Case T 0219/86 – 3.2.2, 1987). Even so, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 1986 ITM Offshore Ltd., incorporating ITM Head Wrightson Teesdale Ltd., went into receivership.

However, there was also a general shift by UK based firms towards the internationalisation of manufacturing, with many closing operations in the UK and moving manufacturing bases abroad to places where costs were lower. This occurred in much of the western industrialised world, not just the UK. It also fractured long established interconnections and relationships between firms, regions and localities. For the UK it was enabled by the removal of exchange controls in 1979 allowing money to be moved around freely. It was probably this trend towards internationalisation that contributed to the end of Head Wrightson's production base at Thornaby. In fact in Teesside it was not just Head Wrightson that went but other well established names, including Smith's Docks and Cleveland Bridge and Engineering (Beynon *et al* 1994, p. 82).

A group of former Head Wrightson personnel later formed a company known as Head Wrightson Technical Services Limited. It purchased, from the receiver, all the engineering drawings, technical calculations, documents and files of the complete history of Head Wrightson Teesdale Limited up to 1987, thus permitting continuity and innovation on all the products. Based at Hurworth, near Darlington, this

company is no longer a direct manufacturing firm, but now uses sub-contractors when needed (Head Wrightson Technical Services Limited, undated, <http://www.headwrightson.co.uk/hw.html>).

The policies pursued by the Thatcher government at that time sliced through the heart of places like Thornaby, severing the connection between its inhabitants, their employment, and the economic base justifying the place's existence. This was not an evolving process, such as occurred during industrialisation, when people left agrarian societies to work in the new factories being built in the expanding urban areas of that period.

New institutions emerged, market led, tied to the ideals of minimal state intervention along with privatisation and a shift to an entrepreneurial approach in urban governance (Oatley 1998 p. 27). One of the core tenets of this thinking was property-led regeneration, creating the conditions to promote economic change. Subsidies, grants and relaxed planning regimes became available, helping drive money into the property sector, away from industry (Oatley 1998 p.28). This made the collapse of the social structures and relationships that functioned in the shadow of established industries inevitable, as those firms closed down and people were dispersed into different employment, or for many, long term unemployment.

The later replacement of heavy industry, that once supported Thornaby, through the developments by the Teesside Development Corporation (TDC), particularly their Teesdale site, occurred via a variety of processes. It attempted to alter the nature and

character of the place. What occurred was an imposition by an external force, even seen by some as akin to a military invasion. The TDC and its subsequent promotion of white collar dominated developments represented the resultant occupation. The TDC was one of a number of Urban Development Corporations created during the Thatcher/Major period. They were, according to Rydin, the 'flagship' of the Thatcher administration's urban policy (1993, p.201). Established via the Local Planning and Land Act of 1980, Urban Development Corporations had a wide range of powers including the possession of all development control powers for their areas. As Rydin puts it:

*'..their development schemes are effectively de facto local plans'. (Rydin 1993, p. 170)*

The argument behind the creation of Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) was that land was being left derelict because of inaction by local authorities, which were said to be hostile to the development processes (Rydin 1993, p. 201). At the core of the UDC concept was private sector driven property led regeneration (Atkinson and Moon, p. 144). It was a business-led approach to urban development comparable to developments in America over the two previous decades, one in which developers increased the utilisation of land and property within a specific area, to enhance profitability (Shaw 1994, p. 50).

The TDC was one of the second generation of UDCs, created in 1987. It took charge of an area of 12,000 acres, principally old industrial areas alongside the river



Tees, and Hartlepool.

Teesside was seen as a place with a poor image, one based around pollution, low quality lifestyles and a working class culture. The TDC aimed to change all that and to create a new economy. They developed two schemes within the boundaries of Thornaby. One was a retail park, with the major national multiples, on the former Stockton Racecourse known as Teesside Park. The site also contains an entertainment cluster, with bowling and a multiplex cinema along with well-known global branded hamburger and pizza type outlets.

The other project was Teesdale, on the site of the old Head Wrightson works. Here, a barrage was built across the river Tees, creating a fresh water environment, the tidal flow being deemed to create a backwash of pollutants, as well as revealing mud banks at low tide (Robinson *et al* 1993, p. 26). Ornamental canals were also built around sites allocated for office construction. Closer to the barrage, a water sports centre, hotel and camp site have been built. The first major building on the Teesdale site was University College, then a joint operation between the University of Durham and the University of Teesside, now Queens Campus of the University of Durham. Some housing has been built, including a small number of housing association flats.

The site has slowly been filling up. One of the main criticisms has been how a number of firms have moved in from elsewhere in the Teesside area, attracted by lower costs. Barclays and Abbey National, with their call centres, moved onto the site, vacating buildings elsewhere in Teesside. It would be difficult to determine

what meaningful gain has been made by such movements.

Call centres, providing mostly repetitive jobs and limited opportunities for advancement, function in a very similar way to the past branch plant manufacturing that was established on the trading estates of the North East - plants that have now mostly gone. And call centres, like branch plant manufacturing, are very footloose. Nationally there has been a shift to outsourcing call centres to India, where wage costs are significantly lower (Treanor 2005; Gow 2005). This is a trend that has been continuing for a few years, and is, in fact, noted in a paper about the current level of employment at Teesdale (Tully and Townsend 2003, p. 92). Tully and Townsend claim that the site now provides 4,500 jobs, more than were employed on the site in 1965. It is also added that a large number of these jobs are performed by females, and many of these are part-time.

There appears to be some contention regarding the number of people employed on the Teesdale site during its industrial period. According to Tully and Townsend 2,693 were employed there in 1965, while Ottoway says that nearly 6,000 people worked there in 1968. The Teesside Survey and Plan of 1968 states that 4,000 people were employed in heavy industry in Thornaby in 1966 (Wilson and Womersley, 1968). Heavy industry in Thornaby was exclusively on the Teesdale site at that time. With reference to the Davy Corporation takeover of Head Wrightson in 1977, Beynon et al (1994) quotes employment at that time of 4,000; however, that figure relates to all of Head Wrightson's operations then.

Defining employment rates at Teesdale at that time is evidently difficult. During Head Wrightson's Teesdale period, a lot of small firms, also based at Teesdale, relied heavily on it, as well as on the other main Teesside employers, such as steel, shipbuilding and chemicals. These organisations provided a range of services from cleaning to specialist technical services. Rates of employment in these firms could vary widely, depending on demand. Many jobs in them often lasted only for short periods. It is also quite probable that a number of these short-term jobs would have been 'off the books', for example, using unemployed individuals for a few hours, or perhaps a day or two of casual labouring. This was confirmed in conversations I have had with individuals in clubs and pubs. Demand was also often centred on plant shut downs, where extra maintenance support was needed, whether the shut down was planned, or performed in an emergency. Thus any 'snapshot' of employment rates at Teesdale during that period is simply that.

From a Thornaby perspective, the TDC's contribution to the regeneration of Thornaby, is often seen as limited. Thornaby's, particularly male, unemployment and poverty-related problems were not considered to have been directly addressed. Duncan Hall, the TDC Chief Executive spelt the latter point out quite clearly during an edition of the Money Programme (BBC2 33rd February 1998), when he said

*'...my job is to create job opportunities. It's for employers to determine where they employ the people from.'* (in Robinson et al 1999, p. 158)

The TDC operated independently, appearing to ignore criticism, and was also

unconcerned with local public opinion and needs (Robinson et al 1999, p. 159). This seeming indifference in dealing with the problems that Thornaby and its people faced at that time was also perceived by most of the respondents who, whilst recognising the aesthetic improvements initiated by the TDC, still felt that the main issue, from their perspective, was the lack of full-time male jobs, which had never been seriously addressed. As respondent K said,

*'It is very nice along the river and everything else, of course it is. Course there's summat' some people would possibly like to see, the grime there and the 4½ thousand jobs.'* (K)

The election of Labour in 1997 meant the end of the TDC. For Teesdale and Teesside Park the change was probably superficial. The TDC in one sense did not plan. They created a nucleus from which, they hoped, others would move in and build on. Thus, whilst any future development will mean imposing policy onto any incomplete remains of a previous discourse, it is quite probable that much of what has occurred at Teesdale and Teesside Park since the demise of the TDC would have happened anyway, had that organisation continued.

In turn, people and firms thus adapt, innovating their lives and social structures around the dynamics of these changing processes. The effect is that character of place subtly alters with each change, however that shift is imposed. Place can thus be seen to become the sum total of disorganised events, seemingly regardless of the level of organisation that may well have gone into components of that.

However, regarding Thornaby's history, although Macmillan was clearly moved by what he saw then, it was the Conservative party and their policies that many older people in Thornaby associate with unemployment, poverty, and means testing. This view was considered justified by many of these people following Thatcher's victory, when mass unemployment returned in the wake of the policies of that regime. This was a consequence of an ideology that saw the market as the only legitimate economic driver, thus allowing long established industries to disappear, not simply mothballed until an upturn occurred, as had happened previously.

The effect of Thatcher's policies in much of the North East, including Thornaby, led to devastation for many. Families found themselves with little or no earned income entering the household. By 1985 22.9% of households, which had known unemployment in the United Kingdom, had two or more members unemployed (Gaffikin and Morrissey 1992, p. 43). For the North East that figure was significantly higher, and in those places close to former major employers, unemployment and its associated poverty became normal. Adult members of families signed on at the Job Centre together; it was almost a family social occasion. Many households found themselves progressively slipping deeper into debt, as the benefit system was not structured for the long-term sustenance of unemployed people. Occasionally a job might be found, but it was often low paid, temporary or insecure, with the employee subject to the whims of the supervisor. Such jobs often paid less than benefits. High unemployment, although national, was also seen as an urban problem, as almost entire communities found themselves detached from earned income. The long-term

effects through the 1980s and 1990s were to evolve into processes of ghettoisation in many areas, as jobs never came, and new generations were born, never experiencing meaningful employment. For Thornaby, particularly its men, any available work was often away, elsewhere in the United Kingdom, on oil rigs, or abroad. At the micro level of streets and sub-sectors of housing estates, the impact was felt to a lesser or greater degree, depending on the skill profile of the inhabitants. It is probably true to say that no sector of Thornaby was untouched at this time.

During that period, not only did many workers find themselves out of a job, but those remaining in employment, as well as those commencing new employment, often found the terms and conditions of their employment changed significantly (see Sadler 1992, pp 223-226; Beynon *et al* 1994, pp. 143-152). There was also a growth of casualisation. Many tasks by major employers were farmed out to contractors, with employees finding themselves being interviewed for their own jobs, which were frequently to be carried out at lower pay and with worse conditions (Sadler 1992, p. 229; Hudson 1988, p. 154). Retraining and learning new skills, return to or entry into work itself, was bedevilled with problems for many. This is significant for both male breadwinner, and single parent situations. Benefit Agency regulations mean both partners, usually, need to be earning to provide an income significantly above basic state benefit level. Absence of realistically affordable childcare often makes that option impossible.

Clearly not everybody in Thornaby is poor or unemployed. There have always been pockets of affluence. Similarly, there currently appears to be more available

employment, though this mostly targets younger people. However, what is noticeable for the visitor to Thornaby are the obvious signs of poverty, revealed by how people dress and present themselves, as well as run-down residential areas. The legacy of the decimation of the 1980s still lingers, as does the depression of the 1920s, for those still here to remember it. Movement away from the poverty created by those events has been only marginal for many people. Superficially the presence of Teesdale, as well as a proposed regeneration of Thornaby Town Centre suggests a more attractive environment from the days of foundries and smoke. However, even though there may be more available employment, many of these jobs are on or close to minimum wage, with a sizeable proportion part-time. This perhaps imposes limits on any optimism for the future.

## **2.4 The formation and functioning of the solidaristic community**

In the past, visual markers between classes have often been evident in forms of dress, behaviour and so on (though these are generalisations). If one watches an old British film, the relationship between the man in the bowler hat and the man in the cloth cap appears as straightforward. Whilst this might represent an extreme, it does indicate how some individuals of earlier generations perceived themselves in the context of social structures. That interpretation works very close to Stacey's 1960 classic study of Banbury, then a town of 'traditional' relationships, though there was growing recognition of work relationships based on meritocracy. In Stacey's Banbury, reference is made to traditional workers in the context of a small country town, people who voted Conservative and accepted the right of the local bourgeoisie to rule (in Butterworth and Weir 1970, p 80).

Banbury is a small town with a high proportion of small and proprietor run businesses. Relationships between workers and those in charge, tended to be more individualised, though lives were mostly led separately. Owners and managers also often lived in the town. In such personalised relationships, dissent by workers becomes less likely as retaliatory action is likely to be more pronounced. Opportunities for a blacklisted worker to find work within a geographical area where both that person and the word of a previous employer are probably already known is restricted. For that worker, such a locale can be considered as operating along the lines of a one party state. Stacey notes how those who would not accept patronage from 'bosses', rejecting that those in charge are their 'betters', and quite likely voting



Labour and viewing workers as a class, had to form a union in an aluminium factory discreetly for fear of victimisation (in Butterworth and Weir 1970, pp 83-84).

Thornaby, during its emerging period, did not have established wealthy families capable of influencing the many people arriving, at least as regards its new working class. Also, the proportion of working class people compared with other groups was significantly skewed in their favour, unlike Banbury, whose population was, and still is, more socially mixed. Thus for Thornaby, what became shared experiences of hard work and degradation, enabled a collective mind set to emerge, with some bonds stretching to other similar working class localities. In this context many working class people presented a distinctive class-based front, through mannerisms, speech and attitudes, all evident beyond poor clothing through poverty.

Many entered education and work carrying the yoke of predetermined status from birth. For many older people, this is the world frequently characterised by the cloth cap and Woodbine cigarettes. Even today, the younger generation have frequently been indoctrinated into referring to '*us and them*'. Some of these people can see those moving up the social ladder in a derogatory manner, as somehow deserting their class.

*'The manual working class in Britain has long been characterised by a marked cultural separation from the rest of society and strong defensive trade union organisations on one hand, and acceptance of key elements of ruling-class ideology on the other. The expression of this combination has*

*been the hegemony of right wing Labourism, challenged on the left by a small minority of socialist activists, and on the right by a substantially larger, although less active, minority of workers committed to 'Alf Garnett' Tory type views (Nordinger 1967). By and large that pattern continues today' (Harman 1987)*

I have felt it necessary to shift slightly backwards in time to this seemingly more class defined world of the past, whilst simultaneously considering modifications in recent years as being mostly superficial, regarding changed industries and fashions. Class differences appear less defined than they once were, as new technologies and more information have impacted, whilst processes of capital exploitation adapt and exploit in different ways. Callinicos states,

*'The working class has never had any fixed structure of occupations. Rather, this structure has changed as the needs of capital accumulation have altered. Periods of crisis can be seen as times of reorganisation and restructuring, as inefficient sectors are run down, bankrupt capitals taken over, and new sectors and more efficient capitals take their place (1987, p. 8)*

In this way it becomes clear how capital has the initiative, and workers have no choice but to respond to it.

Individuals may well consider themselves as being working class, even though many have been denied access to meaningful employment. Therborn refers to the two

thirds, one-third society (1989); the one third representing those left behind in low paid work, unemployment or forms of exclusion. Similarly, Hutton (1994) talks about a 30:30:40 society, a similar proportion of people at the 'bottom'. Both authors suggest that for this group there has been a shift away from a work-based working class identity. However, sometimes exclusion in a solidaristic context is possibly contradictory, given that it can be a shared experience. During the 1980s period of mass redundancies, this detached group actually made up the majority in many neighbourhoods, including much of Thornaby.

Thornaby is becoming progressively 'socially privatised', with threads of the solidaristic still lingering. Clearly the solidaristic community did not form overnight; people's circumstances led to the need for neighbourly support and interdependence. People were thrown together into mostly crowded, badly built, terraced houses. Wages were mostly poor and inadequate. This appeared, to many, as permanent, perhaps the only option away from the rural poverty they had left behind.

Whilst family and neighbourhood support arrangements probably developed at a micro level, it was not until the children of the original settlers were born and began socialising that the neighbourhood would begin to be composed of a wider network of friends, aunties, uncles and so on (see Morris and Moge 1965). This concentration increased with each generation, enabling the core of solidarism to become part of the community. These children belonged to this place, having been born there. Institutions that emerged a short time earlier were now established as part of the place they grew up in. They knew no other.

Most written accounts regarding such places tend to be about mining areas. Bulmer, in his analysis of the typical mining community, considers the difficulties of using the term 'community'. It can refer to a characteristic people have in common, a collective body and those sharing a common land or territory (Bulmer 1970, p. 17). There can be no agreement over which version is 'correct', and they are often confused, yet as a word '*community*' tends to be associated with what is considered as valued, with Bulmer stating that,

*'..invariably there is a failure to specify what is meant, either empirically or in terms of values.'* (1970, p. 17)

In a later work he suggests solidaristic social relations function in multiplex form:

*'The social ties of work, leisure, neighbourhood and friendship overlap to form close-knit and interlocking locally based collectivities of actors. The solidarity of the community is strengthened not only by these features of themselves but by a shared history of living and working in one place over a long period of time. From this pattern derives the mutual aid characteristic in adversity and through this pattern is reinforced the inward-looking focus on the locality, derived from occupational homogeneity and social and geographical isolation from the rest of society'* (Bulmer 1975, pp. 88-9)

Wadleigh *et al* (1991), in their research in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire mining

communities following the 1984-5 strike, felt that their findings confirmed Bulmer's view. Such communities are seen as insular, inward looking and self-supportive. There is little geographical and social mobility.

Given the characteristics of places like Thornaby, a description such as Bulmer's appears not unique to mining locales, carrying transferable qualities elsewhere wherever a single or narrow range of industries exists. Thorpe also suggests this, arguing:

*'...that if a high degree of coincidence between work and residence is meaningful, then social relationships and institutional forms along with what it means for people to live in this type of community would be very similar... irrespective of the fact that they have a completely different industrial base and history.'* (1970, p. 10)

However, proximity and closeness within a defined space do not necessarily produce community (Dennis 1968, p.75).

For example, if one considers London suburbs, rather than there being a homogeneous community, many social links spread across the area. Localities become nodal points for many different groupings, communities that may not even have a focal point. One contemporary extension of this concept is global Internet communities. But having earlier suggested that the solidaristic community may be formed out of economic necessity, spatial forms can emerge where individuals seek

particular company. It is possible to conclude that the solidaristic community develops out of mutual help systems, being founded on the networks created. Similarity of experience allows understanding of what others there have encountered. Also, prior to the domestic technological revolution, many tasks were often shared within the family, across generations, and between neighbours. This enabled more efficient labour use. Clearly everybody knew (almost) everybody else's business, from which processes of collective protection also emerged, such as when poverty meant confronting capital's representatives. This still continues. I came across an incident in Thornaby where two families swapped hi-fi units. Money was owing on one, and lack of income meant inadequate payments were made. By swapping hi-fi's with someone else, repossession was not possible: the model, make and serial number were not the ones asked for. Whilst such behaviour may lead to amusing situations for Mike Leigh films, it clearly suggests a 'them and us' syndrome.

*'Them' and 'us' is not a defining characteristic of an occupational work-residence community, it is an action of a class oriented kind that is taken when the conditions for action are present. The basis for this is the 'feeling of togetherness' which is a persistent characteristic of action in an occupational work residence community. It is this characteristic which is given an interpretation of 'community'. 'Community' is not an entity which can be pre-defined in terms of a number of characteristics of a place or population. Community is an interpretive concept of a type of action. Action that is oriented in the 'feeling that we belong together' (Thorpe 1970, p. 257).*

Whilst the hi-fi incident might be considered extreme, similar strategies do occur in other situations, though obviously not everyone would behave that way.

Although the solidaristic community can emerge from shared experiences, it does not necessarily hold that experiences of similarity lead to a solidaristic community.

Harrison (1992, p. 23) observed the breakdown of what was once a London working class community, noting the loss of industry, poor quality housing and concentrations of low skilled, unskilled and de-skilled workers. Also, other disadvantaged groups moved in because of cheap housing. The concentration of this mix leads to other consequences, including low educational attainment. Alongside this may be high levels of crime, and family breakdown. Harrison blames the unplanned nature of British capitalism that enables firms to shut down plants regardless of social consequences. In the context of disenfranchised youth, Campbell (1993) similarly notes what she considers the negative aspects of laissez faire capitalism following job losses resulting from restructuring of industries. In turn, for Thornaby, imposed joblessness for many means that council estates, built in a planned manner to house manual workers, in fact have few such residents.

Like Thornaby, Cardiff's Ely and Tyneside's Meadowell estates, as discussed by Campbell (1993) are fragmenting communities, with some solidaristic characteristics. The sudden detachment of younger men from the workplace, starting in the 1970s, began the severing of the relationship of the solidaristic community to its inhabitants. Older members were still tied to it via their then existing

employment, history and associations. Thus, the situation found by Harrison, in Hackney, began to emerge parallel to the solidaristic continuations of the older generations. For the younger people, no work meant school day mischief-making sometimes continued into adulthood, occasionally becoming serious. Willis's study, of how young working class kids get working class jobs, suggests the reasons for much of this crime were more complex than simply lack of money:

*'... a source of excitement...like fighting. It puts you at risk, and breaks up the parochialism of the self. "The rule", the daily domination of trivia and the entrapment of the formal are broken for a time. In some way a successful theft challenges and beats authority' (Willis 1993, p. 40)*

Given the lack of economic opportunities offered to many young men, it is easy to understand how these processes continue, becoming a way of life, particularly when one needs to acquire that deemed as essential. In turn, the Jobcentre replaces school as a focal point for authority. Life becomes dominated by rules and lack of income, with some becoming conditioned to patterns of crime, thus affecting the community. Consequently, where there was once openness, people progressively secure themselves into their homes, fear of crime ever evident, though not necessarily present, and another veneer of the solidaristic becomes sliced.

People of a place are often assumed to be components of its community, regardless of the associations they might have there. However, changing common usage of words and terminology can alter legitimate meaning. Consider Northern Ireland;



politicians on either side of the divide often refer to '*the people*' or '*the community*' whilst discussing only the side of the religious divide they represent. Thus ideas of 'community' as 'good' become problematic if observed from the opposite side. 'Community' becomes ideologically charged. Boundaries exist, not geographical but social; even racist. Cohen (1982) suggests 'community' can indicate both exclusion and inclusion, with Dennis adding:

*'Urban localities... have been progressively deprived of their social system characteristics. Particular activities have been transferred to special areas. The typical city presents a picture of geographical specialisation' (Dennis 1968, p. 80).*

Thornaby's population was once able to deal with nearly all administrative matters within its borders. State and commercial issues such as welfare and banking could be dealt with in Thornaby, and people could purchase everything they might be expected to require from the town's shops. This is not possible now. Thornaby is now part of a series of wider processes linked to the broader area of Stockton and Teesside. Thus sectors of Teesside develop direct significance to Thornaby, as do certain functions carried out in Thornaby to Teesside. Light industry exists in north Thornaby and on the Teesside Industrial Estate. Service industries serving beyond Teesside – sometimes far beyond Teesside – exist at Teesdale. Heavy industry remains in some parts, with some Thornaby people working there. Shopping is concentrated in Middlesbrough, Stockton town centre, and also Teesside Park, a TDC initiated retail

development, which although technically in Thornaby, has very limited access for those Thornaby residents without a car. Redevelopment of retail outlets often results in increased outlets for standardised products, and individualised proprietor-run establishments become marginalised. Teesside currently has approximately twelve large hypermarkets, as well as branches of smaller supermarket chains. Whilst such stores undoubtedly offer a larger product range than corner shops, choice is limited overall, given that proprietors, when aware of individual tastes, often tried to cater for them. Such shops, like the factories, closed, and Thornaby, like other marginalised localities, has become more of a suburb to its wider urban sphere, rather than a town in its own right.

It is not simply unemployment that affects community, but other capital-led relationships. These all feed into the mixing bowl, changing the community. Thus, despite the appearance of permanency in people's lives, the state of solidarism within a locality represents a reflection of a particular capital-led relationship. The industrial base is responsible for feeding the formation and reproduction of a solidaristic community. A unique triangular relationship between industry, location and people lock together. In fact, whilst solidaristic communities can often be viewed as having similar characteristics, each one is unique, tied to a particular industry, location, and also history.

Industry and commerce, especially the corporate variety, tends to view the locale and its people in purely economic terms. For the people, locality has personal significance, whilst the firm also has significance as a source of survival. Once the

industry goes, purpose goes, the key element is removed. Certain structures can withstand the change initially, sometimes slowly fragmenting. A firm's workingmen's club often continues, but it is no longer used in the original context of men both working and socialising together. Shared aspects of life become less significant, collective strengths diminish. In all of this the relationship of the worker to capital has not changed.

Thorpe, quoting Rex (1968), notes how solidaristic communities appear to give what their inhabitants consider to be a satisfactory life:

*'Amongst other reasons which have been given for this is the fact that workmates are also neighbours and social relations at work and those at home are mutually reinforcing: that the community is a one-class one, united by a strong democratic and anti-authoritarian sentiment, that the community is one of many, all of which share a distinctive and highly developed culture, capable of ritual and symbolic expression, and that such communities have come to play a strategic role in the political life of the country' (Thorpe 1970, p. 7)*

Thorpe adds that for residents, community is often held to be a '*good thing*', with '*spirit*' attached (1970, p. 14). Stacey (1965) and Pahl (1970) prefer to talk of '*locality social systems*'. Whilst such latter concepts may be preferable, respondents will still talk of '*community spirit*'. Thorpe (1970, p.15) later quotes Ross (1962), Reimer (1951) and Foley (1962) who state that community becomes further

compromised when one considers socially defined boundaries that may not coincide with officially defined ones. Different groups have their own boundaries, sharing the official space defined as the locale with others. Contact points exist where shared zones of interchange occur, some officially mediated, such as state demands, others more informal. Childhood friendships and bringing of friends into contact with each other's groups becomes a communicating point. The importance of children cannot be underestimated in this context. Morris and Mogeey studied the creation of bonds following new housing development:

*'The role of the children in determining the nature of the contacts between neighbours was... important. Their behaviour and needs may well produce either cooperation or conflict: much will depend on the adjustment which the parents have made to each other. The age of the children is important in determining the radius of their influence as a common bond. When they are young, it tends to operate within the neighbourhood. As they grow older, it tends to move to the residential community, and then farther afield.'* (Morris and Mogeey 1970, p. 68)

This appears equally valid today. Children make friends, bringing parents in contact with each other. For solidaristic communities childhood friendships often continue into adulthood, with many not leaving the place.

Once contacts have been made, depending on their strength, there is a cultural bond linked to the place. This can be multiplied, depending on the various relationships

formed. Frankenburg states that community implies having something 'in common' (1969, p. 238). Arguably, 'in common' is a distinctive subscription to a version of cultural capital aligned only to that place. An individual may carry trappings of class and other identities, those they ascribe to themselves, as well as how others view them. However, one cultural marker is the one that ascribes identity to place. For the solidaristic resident this appears straightforward. For others it becomes more complex. It is difficult to ascribe identifying characteristics to a career conscious individual moving around with each promotion. Yet that is also a component. There are different strengths of the social and place competing with each other. Some individuals, particularly those that might move around a lot, perhaps being career driven, may see networks and associations as more important than place. Thus, those who see place as important, such as those in solidaristic communities, may view those who do not see place, particularly their place, as important and meaningful to a similar intensity, as opposing that place.

One frequently hears community referred to in past tense terms: how it was considered to have been, perhaps reflecting the distrusts and antagonisms of modernisation and industrialisation (Jenkins 1996, p. 105). These are highly personalised, selective versions which include mostly the 'best bits' of what was before. Jenkins suggests this is a representation of

*'a past when the meaning of life was relatively secure and consensual, in which co-operation rather than conflict prevailed, in which people "knew their place"' (Jenkins 1996, p. 105)*

For the solidaristic community, one question is: what is 'knowing one's place?' If 'knowing your place' refers to what I, as a child, was frequently referred to as 'respecting your betters', whoever they are, then it has no place in the solidaristic community where all are deemed broadly equal. However, 'knowing your place', in a solidaristic context, may well mean behaving as expected and not stepping out of line. For example, someone gaining a university degree may well leave the place, changing their social status. Cohen points out that 'community' encompasses aspects of similarity and difference, and Jenkins (1996) suggests this brings attention to the boundaries, because it is here that the sense of belonging becomes most apparent

*'The sense of difference...lies at the heart of people's awareness of their culture..[that]..people become aware of their culture when they stand at its boundaries' (Cohen 1982, pp. 2-3)*

Consequently, it is the awareness that things are done differently by others, and perhaps a sense of threat, that enables recognition of the community and its culture.

The dominance of one social stratum and a limited industrial range restricting employment opportunities, has enabled a place like Thornaby to emerge in a solidaristic manner. Removal of that industry, and parallel growth of a non-solidaristic grouping, have diluted that. Now, blue-collar jobs are often in different industries, with different conditions from before. Simultaneously, other groups have continued, perhaps even strengthened their influence, as working practices change

and the shift to white-collar service employment continues. As well as more female employment, some males who would have gone into traditional industrial employment are now employed in white collar, or different blue-collar, jobs. It therefore is inevitable that work and home experiences will differ. Thus, shared common experiences enabling solidarism to exist become less important. Thornaby is a place in social transition, much less coherent than ever before.

## **2.5 The nature of place and the relationship of the worker to changing place**

This section considers 'hybridisation' occurring when diverse groups amalgamate, and also the nature and strengths of social structures. The discussion then moves to 'cultural fusion'. Thornaby, as most of Teesside, was populated, during its early period, through migration from Ireland, Scotland and Wales, as well as from elsewhere in the North East and the rest of England. Given that, at the time, towns mostly grew via a large influx of people from rural areas, rural cultural practices came with them. In the case of a place like Thornaby, it can be supposed that threads of that social would carry visible strands of that pre-migration past, revealing geographically identifiable characteristics of behaviour accepted as normal in rural areas. Three examples are discussed here, based on earlier rural studies. From this, it is suggested that the traditional ideas of what town and village community supposedly are have almost swapped around, at least in the context of the solidaristic community.

To the visitor coming to Thornaby today, the established population, those born there, often appear to present a front, suggesting that the various people that originally made up the town's population have blended together into an identifiable form, across time. More recently, there has been an inflow of mostly Asian people into the town, though, as yet, no frictions have emerged as in some other places. Regarding the existing population, as well as changing work patterns, shifts towards privatisation in housing have helped contribute to a reduction in the numbers of Thornaby people engaged in collectivised activities. Many people, including



outsiders moving in, have made a deliberate choice not to engage in such activities. This is certainly not a form of exclusion; for some it represents an assertion of individualism, whilst for others it indicates different social priorities.

The concept of 'habitus' suggests a normality of daily interchange within a geography. In this containment one can see ritualistic-like practices and behaviours, '*the incorporated principles of a generative habitus*' (Bourdieu 1990, p. 9).

Wacquant debates this in terms of agency and structure (1992, p. 12-13). The paradigm suggests that social structures determine what people do. This is possibly a 'chicken and egg' situation, as the structures were themselves human creations. Thus, whilst a particular paradigm exists and is accepted, the structure survives.

Progressive non-acceptance reduces its dominance. Some might suggest there is no such thing as social structure, even society. One perspective might be to consider place as constituted of both. Just as humans are composed of male and female characteristics, to differing degrees regardless of gender, place can be both individualistic or solidaristic, being usually somewhere between. A strongly structured society functions through mass inclusion, individualistic persons possibly persuaded into compromising themselves, with some people excluded, although resident there. Sometimes individuality may be construed as deviant. The opposite can also apply, such as when mining communities have faced legal sanction during strikes. Here, the community could see deviance in, for example, strike breaking.

Wacquant discusses the need to ask where the schemata of normality,

*'....(definitions of the situation, typifications, interpretive procedures)  
come from, and how do they relate to the external structures of society? ...  
[.....] Symbolic systems are not simply instruments of knowledge, they are  
also instruments of domination' (1992, p. 12/13, the brackets at the  
beginning of the quotation in original)*

It is people and association in the context of a locality that ascribe meaning. Their relationship with each other determines the strength of solidarity in a place. A web-like networking suggests a strong solidaristic nature, one that is also internalised. Such networking probably evolved through a nucleus based on necessity and the need for mutual support. However, other factors also intervened, such as Morris and Mogeys' suggestions of children's friendship networks acting as catalyst to community growth (1970). Within an enclosed community, these childhood networks often continue into adulthood, with marriage (or partnerships), often between people known to each other through life. Nevertheless, mutual communal support does not necessarily enable the formation of community. Willmott and Young (1967), studying London suburbs, found friendship networks emerging through simple neighbourliness, particularly by couples who saw little of relatives; this effectively creates groups functioning like the East End family.

The dynamics of capital created Thornaby. People responded to the type of capitalism emerging, creating structures of meaning. Whilst firms like Head Wrightson initially attracted workers, other businesses also came, performing different tasks, often with a less charitable approach. As a port, Thornaby had ships

carrying a cross section of merchandise. and this resulted in the emergence of an extensive range of manufacturing and service industries. Thornaby's main road then had shops with a wide range of goods, and many pubs and clubs. There were also branches of major banks, and churches of all major denominations. This suggests variety!

Thornaby also had the penultimate railway station, following an extension on the Stockton and Darlington Railway, to Middlesbrough. Just as in the Bethnal Green study of Young and Wilmott (1990), many people who arrived stayed near where they disembarked. Many of these people arrived from the Celtic parts of the British Isles, importing varied forms of cultural capital.

This leads us to a discussion relating to the historical and geographical backgrounds of many of the migrants coming to Thornaby, and the cultural practices they fetched with them. Three examples are given. These are: reciprocated debt, as practised in rural Ireland; large kinship networks such as in rural mid-Wales that, enable inclusion; and the masculine drinking culture of working class Central Scotland.

Regarding Irish migration, whilst undoubtedly the famine of 1845-7 contributed significantly to numbers leaving (Frankenberg 1969, p. 29), out-migration was a process commenced some years before (see Arensberg and Kimball 1940). Within Ireland, social structures and norms operational then, created a situation of reciprocated debt, where favours are given and received in kind, this mostly between relatives and neighbours (Frankenberg 1969, p.36-37). Regarding this system,

Arensburg, studying Lough, talks of how, despite reciprocity, two bachelors who were unable to reciprocate themselves, and two 'strangers' without family 'on this side', received no help (Arensburg 1939, p. 66). This was a structured social arrangement, all but officially sanctioned. A person who refused help, or to help, was considered as opting out of society and pushed into social isolation. Frankenberg adds that the burden of such debt to one's equals carried no shame; it is an indication of one's

*'ability to support that network of social obligation which gives one's self and one's family a place in social life', (Arensburg 1939, p. 175, in Frankenberg 1969)*

This system of reciprocated debt can still be seen in places like Thornaby. For example, in the course of this study I found myself in discussion on the topic of home made wine after an interview with one respondent, later giving him some of my own. The day after I was presented with an assortment of vegetables from his allotment.

When viewed externally, mutual help and reciprocity can be interpreted as similar, especially if the reciprocity is performed unconsciously. It does, nevertheless, become understandable how a stranger, or an individual bearing a different social identity, can become isolated and ignored.

Now shifting the discussion to kinship linkages in mid-Wales; Frankenberg,

exploring Rees's 1950 study of that area, points out that different societies select different groups of kin, such as the mother's line, or the father's line, as the most important. But in rural mid-Wales, at least in the 1950s, all kin through both mother and father were considered as 'belonging' (Frankenberg 1969, p. 49). This means that, usually, people had plenty of kin to choose from, with a significant number also in neighbouring parishes. In this context, kin can move beyond second cousins. Within this framework a man's reputation is based not on his occupation, but 'who he belongs to', his family background. However, strangers remain strangers and cannot be integrated until their children and grandchildren have married, into the core, thus earning themselves by that act the right to be part of it.

In a Thornaby context, similarities can sometimes be seen in how the lineage of a third party can be discussed quite freely and openly. This can often be in the context of: *'Oh, he/she married so and so, who is distant cousin of mine, his/her mother being married to so and so'*. These are accounts of versions of family histories commonplace in Thornaby. Respondent DK, who married a Thornaby girl, mentioned this point:

*'I see there's very strong family links in Thornaby, very much extended families. They seem to retain the idea of a big family. Er, I know this from my wife, the way my wife talks, she seems to know lots and lots of people in Thornaby and all their family connections. And I found that unique, you don't come across that in many places.'* (DK)

It interlocks family networks into locality networks; you are never far from somebody who is related to you.

In turn, strangers moving into the town remain so. Respondent K talked about an Evening Gazette reporter commenting on how, after living in Thornaby for over twenty years, he had still not been accepted. Similarly, I spoke to an 80 year old man, originally from Leicestershire, who remained in Thornaby after being demobbed from Thornaby airfield at the end of the Second World War. He stated that he had never been accepted, and was always the outsider, even though he married into a local family. His children, who had gone on to marry Thornaby people themselves, were accepted.

One distinctive characteristic of Thornaby, as in fact much of the working-class dominated parts of the industrial North East, is that masculinity and alcohol has historically had a distinctive nature, compared to much of the rest of working-class England. Wight's study of a Scottish working class community in a former coal-mining village, offers many transferable attributes between Cauldmoss (not its real name) and Thornaby. Differences included the presence of an Orange Lodge, and consequently some anti Roman Catholic antagonisms. For Wight, assertion of masculinity and male unity occurred by drinking in pubs and clubs. Such establishments operated at the centre of the male spatial domain (Wight 1993). Home was considered the women's sphere. What Wight notes is how most employed men in council houses went drinking two or three times a week, some daily, whilst most male employed private householders rarely visited pubs or clubs.

As with Cauldmoss, Thornaby pubs and clubs are often focal points for jobs, particularly for small proprietor-run firms. In this context, drinking is seen, similar to Wight's group, as:

*'....the principal feature of a spending ethic which encouraged gregarious leisure within the village and inhibited upward social mobility. Using up 'surplus' income on drink, which was generally regarded as legitimate, prevented workers acquiring goods that would assert higher social status.'*  
(Wight 1993, p. 154)

Given the importance of association here, one could suggest the objective of work and income was socialisation and pleasure, not acquisition of goods or money for its own sake. The form and structure, described by Wight, functions closely to that visible in Thornaby's recent past, whilst accepting that socialised drinking is common amongst working class men elsewhere.

How do these characteristics relate to Thornaby? Blending the discussed characteristics into the emerging place, resulted in a hybridised culture. This was effectively a blend of rural cultures applied to new circumstances. Frankenberg refers to Dennis *et al's* *'Coal is our Life'*, with a chapter headed 'The Town that is a village: Ashton' (1969, p. 113). Many such examples have been studied, mining communities particularly tending to fall into this classification, though such characteristics are not exclusive to that industry. One only has to consider works like Bulmer (1970), Thorpe (1976), and Wadleigh *et al* (1991), and Dennis *et al* (1969).

Yet, if we have a town that is a village, what are the critical characteristics?

Wadleigh *et al* (1991), considering typicalities of mining communities, quote

Bulmer's discussion of the multiplex nature of social relations:

*The social ties of work, leisure, neighbourhood and friendship overlap to form close-knit and interlocking locally based collectivities of actors. The solidarity of the community is strengthened not only by these features of themselves but by a shared history of living and working in one place over a long period of time. From this pattern derives the mutual aid characteristic in adversity, and through this pattern is reinforced the inward-looking focus on the locality, derived from occupational homogeneity and social and geographical isolation from the rest of society (Bulmer 1975, pp. 88-9)*

Bulmer (1970) also considers the traditional mining community as having a list of characteristics:

- 'Physical isolation'
- 'Economic predominance of coal mining'
- 'The nature of pit work'
- 'Social consequences of occupational homogeneity'
- 'Political activity' (strong union ties and a strong Labour Party)
- 'Leisure activity (in institutionalised forms, such as by the dominance of workingmen's clubs)
- 'Religion' (mostly tied to recent past, with Methodism having had a strong



following as does Roman Catholicism)

- 'The family' (segregated roles, as well as extended networks of kinfolk in and around the locality)
- What Bulmer refers to as 'The Whole' (the overlapping ties of work, leisure, family and neighbourhood, reinforced by a sense of shared past, effectively in an exclusive form tied to that locality).

Such forms of relationship surely operate outside mining also. Arguably, a number of different economic activities can be substituted for mining in Bulmer's model.

Any single industry locality would fit there. For Teesside, communities built on steel, shipbuilding, foundries, engineering all qualify, as also would agriculture for traditional rural localities. Thornaby is close to other towns and industrial based villages, most of these places having developed with a similar mix of industries.

There is also isolation: the North East of England has always stood in isolation from the country's mainstream, while Teesside, in turn, is away from the main road and rail arteries between England and Scotland.

Arguably, because of the form of migration and geographic location solidaristic communities in places like Thornaby are hybridised versions of a mix of rural communities. It could be further argued, that because of isolation, hybridisation has not been modified significantly, by other, external influences, through time. Thus one possible conclusion is that solidaristic communities probably represent a closer model than now seen in the modern countryside of what a working, peasant society was perhaps like. Many rural localities have become suburbanised extensions of

neighbouring towns, with property becoming taken up by wealthy people, often lacking traditional, or local economic commitments. Farming, in turn, has become an occupation for a minority in most of these places. Thus, just as Frankenberg talks of the '*The Town that is a Village..*', one can also see how the town has moved into the village, this perhaps blurring traditionally accepted definitions.

## 2.6 The Changing World of Work and a 'vaporised' masculine workforce

Thornaby's proximity to places with similar histories has contributed to the development of similar and transferable social and cultural forms, functioning equally well in those places. Multiplied, these contribute to a regional sense of identity. Workingmen's clubs in Ashington, Northumberland can appear the same as those in Thornaby to an outsider, though both arrived from different, nevertheless frequently linked, specific histories. Place carries identity in its social language. For this study, Thornaby is the core reference point from which its people view their version of the world; not Stockton, Middlesbrough, or the North East (see Puddifoot 1997).

In the early industrialising Teesside, places were often dominated by one industry, with the larger towns becoming centres of administration. One travelled to or from Newport, St Hilda's, Linthorpe, North Ormesby, Thornaby, and many others. Many of these place names originated from pre-industrial parishes (Beynon and Austrin 1993a). During Teesside's initial growth period, the incoming labour force to the newly emerging shipyards, engineering works and steelworks became acquainted with methods of employment originally developed under the bonded system operational in the Durham coalfield (Beynon and Austrin 1993a, Beynon *et al* 1994). Labour became regulated to meet the needs of the employers.

Communities were formed in the shadows of 'the works', but also close to other works, near enough for 'other' people to work there. Thus, Thornaby's Head

Wrightson engineering works dominated the place, but people also worked in a variety of firms elsewhere, with many Head Wrightson employees coming in from surrounding places. However, the idea of the Teesside area, not as a cohesive whole, but rather as a series of separate communities is suggested by a number of writers, such as Beynon *et al* (1994), who agree with Glass (1948), and Gladstone (1976), all talking of the scattered and disconnected nature of Teesside working class communities, and how they are unable to have close meaningful associations between them.

Each of the works became associated with their localities, as did their workforce. A contract system of employment initially operated, skilled workers being the only ones directly dealing with owners and their representatives (Beynon *et al* 1994). It was these skilled workers who employed most of the labour; wages were flexible, enabling reduction in times of reduced demand. This manual labour force had a hierarchy based on experience, rather than skill.

After the end of World War Two, core workers were employed under agreements negotiated nationally between management and relevant trade unions. Nevertheless, the manner in which the managerial-worker relationship operated had a history tied to the paternalistic background of industrial Teesside (see Beynon *et al* 1994). Consequently, Teesside workers, during the 1960s and 1970s, a period often associated with strong trades union activities in the UK, appeared to be less prone to take industrial action than many elsewhere, though industrial action certainly occurred.

The social consequences of this acceptance of authority's demands is still apparent in the docile manner in which many Teesside people appear to accept their lot unquestioningly. I experienced this myself when employed in a fish processing plant that was run in a dictatorial manner. When I asked workers why they put up with it, responses were always similar: ' *Well it's a job*'; ' *What can you do?*'; ' *What else is there?*' This firm's workforce was mostly made up of single people, or people with a working partner, as these were the only ones who could afford to work for such low pay.

Gregg (1996) shows how the wages of jobless people re-entering employment have fallen, many of these jobs poorly paid, or temporary (see also Sinfield 1981, pp. 49-51; Gaffikin and Morrissey 1992, p. 40). This easily leads to a career structured around serial unemployment. The shift towards part-time working also makes employment uneconomical for many older men. This helps make low benefit rates appear preferable (Gregg and Wadsworth 1994). This has led to the labour market becoming polarised into work-rich and work-poor households. Morris (1994) notes the tendency for the married population to divide into two worker or no worker homes, because of social security legislation restricting '*too much*' extra income, and the predominance of low wages, close to, or worse than benefit rates (see also Harris 1987). From a New Right perspective, Minford (1983, 1990) blames benefit rates for being too high. Nevertheless, employers who want to hold out against low wage trends are forced to conform. In a global free-flow market system if they allow their wages to rise above the industry average, without matching productivity gains, they

face loss of market share.

In the past there was a significant part of the Teesside workforce, mostly unskilled, moving from job to job, often with periods of unemployment in between. These people functioned for capital similarly to the 'flexible' labour force. Once in employment a lot of overtime tended to be worked, paid at premium rates, this being almost standard practice. It was this that made work financially worthwhile for many, lifting wages from a base rate close to means tested benefit rates. The benefit and tax system, as it existed, cushioned unemployment further via earnings-related unemployment pay, for the first six months, and unemployment pay was untaxed. Any long period of unemployment could therefore attract a sizeable tax rebate, either whilst unemployed, or after a return to work. Both these factors tended to make seasonal and insecure work more tolerable. This large 'floating' workforce was evident even before deindustrialisation because of a shortage of quality employment, and has long been a permanent feature of the Teesside area.

Apart from those in the construction industry, there were a number of firms, such as specialised contract cleaners, who sub-contracted to the main core firms. Demand for these services was erratic, usually during plant shut downs, though there were emergency periods when their services were requested. The impact of these firms on Thornaby employment in the past should not be underrated. Unemployed people could thus find work in financially rewarding jobs, although they were highly insecure, perhaps using them as a stepping-stone to 'better' things.

For example, at one cleaning firm, if one enquired about employment, one was told to turn up at a specified date and time at the firm's depot. This was a lock up garage in old Thornaby. Once there, a selection of the day's labour needs was made from the people present. Arrival did not guarantee work. Having once got on site, in the 1960s and 1970s, it was common for the workforce to 'stretch' the job, creating overtime. Effective control was by senior members of the workforce, not foremen; it appeared to be a structure based on seniority and friendship networks. These individuals allocated the best jobs to a core privileged group, these usually being friends and family members. Other jobs went to the rest. Any new employee who was 'in' went straight to that core group.

Many workers used such short-term employment as a route into organisations like ICI, which then offered job security and a relatively good income. Employment by such a core firm could also mark where an individual might shift away from solidarism, moving closer to the ideals pursued by 'privatised workers' (Goldthorpe *et al* 1968, 1969). It is, however, in firms such as the contract cleaners where the residual population becomes visible, living in a nether world, shifting between unemployment and low paid insecure work, perhaps on the edge of exclusion: they are the serial unemployed. For places like Thornaby, such career structures operate within the realms of normal expectation. Little effort is made by individuals to break the cycle. Many of the once serial unemployed are now the permanently unemployed. They have given up.

As mentioned, many men had ambitions to get into firms like ICI. Job security was

perceived as good at all Teesside's chemical firms. Until the 1990s, ICI offered a 'job for life' with a class-based promotion structure, as in many British firms. Blue-collar workers were discriminated against, regarding wage structures and conditions of employment, though earnings could often be higher than for some white-collar grades. A blue-collar worker might achieve foreman status but was unlikely to go much higher. The foreign-owned chemical firms in Teesside did not, and do not, have this limitation.

Chemical Process Operator is a respected job within Teesside. It is also a multi meaning expression. The lower grades of operators do carry out menial tasks, and foremen are also limited in actual decision-making processes. In one firm, a large book containing most expected situations and how to deal with them is available, enabling authorised responses to situations. Any intellectual or judgemental ability is therefore bypassed, the foreman moulded in an image pre-determined by the firm. A receptive sensitivity to indoctrination programmes and the ability to carry out the packaged whims of the firm must be a major consideration when choosing candidates for these tasks. As a former chemical works foreman from one of the Teesside firms said to me:

*"They mould you and shape you until you finish up like Blackpool rock. If you sliced one of [name of firm] 's foremen you 'd see [name of firm] written all the way through them."*

Nichols and Beynon offer a very accurate account of working in a chemical plant,



one I recognise. They note the actual difference in skills employed when referring to the mobile operator grade (1977, p46). These operators, some of whom held ONCs, with management looking for O-levels at a minimum, did tasks that spanned

*'...donkey work and scientific work'* (Nichols and Beynon 1977, p66).

The development of these high-grade workers is viewed by foremen as threatening their autonomy, since only past demarcation lines restricted the further enhancement of this grade. Craft grades would not allow operators to carry out basic maintenance tasks, though this is now changing. This restriction is a purely British phenomenon.

Demarcation itself is controversial. Whilst some workers saw it as protecting jobs, it led to major inefficiencies in productivity (see Donaldson 1985, Witz 1986).

Ottoway commented on how industry ceased in Thornaby during the Great Depression (1968). It thus becomes feasible to understand that people working years later would have a memory of those events, passing that on to their children. In this way capital has been unable to develop a faith with many working people, who simply distrust it. This is more a reflection of its nature, that it was seen as incapable of overcoming its own history, unable in many cases to create relationships based on mutual trust.

Despite the paternalistic nature of a number of employers, lack of cross-class communications has meant there has always been a mistrust of management motivations. Participation in consultations has been limited. In turn, experiences of

the 1920s and 1930s depression made many unionised workers appearing to be protective towards maintaining existing jobs rather than improving efficiencies yielding higher pay for the individual worker. Productivity deals can result in more work being performed by less people. For example, in the late 1960s ICI management proposed what was called the Weekly Staff Agreement (WSA). It wanted process operators to carry out basic maintenance tasks. This was effectively rejected as workers saw it as a threat to jobs. What is also significant is that ICI proposed that blue collar hourly paid workers should become 'staff', but a lesser form of staff than existing white collar workers, this due to rejection by the white collar workforce that blue collar workers should be equal to them in status. This falls closely into Weberian concepts that market created splits produce divisions within the working class (see Bradley 1992), with social closure used here as a means to enhance perceived status.

The more recent TDC-inspired developments at Thornaby (Teesdale), along with a variety of retail and business park developments across the wider Teesside area during the 1990s, have had little impact as regards job creation for the once working men of Thornaby. Today it is mostly different people who are employed in the area. Employment is predominantly office based and jobs are largely for a younger age group. There are some jobs at the other end of the labour market spectrum, frequently at minimum wage, occasionally slightly above, nearly all highly insecure. Many of these tend to be in non-industrial cleaning and care homes, often part-time. Very few men are visible in any of these occupations. For the blokes of Thornaby the days of high wages through overtime and bonuses have clearly gone for the majority.

These developments have failed to connect to the older people of Thornaby. The younger generation may think differently, and for many of them the offices at Teesdale are assumed to have always been there.

A reflection of these changes can be seen in the streets of Thornaby. Where once one saw large groups of men, many in overalls, perhaps dirty after the shift, it is often now women who are seen in identifiable working clothes; in the uniform of one of the care homes, or perhaps sporting the logo of Asda or Morrison's supermarkets. Many, particularly older, men in Thornaby are not employed. The job market may appear vibrant, by local standards, but this particular grouping of workers has been sidelined, dispersed, even vaporised off employment data, though there is certainly nothing new about this phenomenon; Marx observed that

*'...labour power is so quickly used up by capital, that the middle aged worker is apt to be worn out. Such a man falls down from a higher-grade occupation to a lower grade one'. (Marx 1968, p. 709)*

Marx then referred to the short life expectations of the worker within large industries. For Teesside, workers from heavy core industries whose main relief outside work tended to be centred around activities including drink and cigarettes, this process of early death continues. A Thornaby priest whose previous parish was also in a run down area of Teesside told me he found it rather despairing to meet

*'...once again, another widow, victim from the effects of cigarettes or alcohol,*

*or possibly both on their husband. There are an enormous number of women around here who should have been able to look forward to a retirement with their partners, but because of those men's lifestyles they find themselves on their own'. (Thornaby priest)*

There are many, mostly lower skilled men, using Incapacity Benefit, early pensions where possible, or perhaps living off working wives and partners, in some cases not entitled to any financial assistance, who consider themselves excluded from the workplace (see Beatty, Fothergill, Gore and Green 2002). Teesside's limited skill culture arguably aggravated this situation.

Beatty and Fothergill discuss the detachment of older men from the labour market, stating that, in their study in

*'.. no less than 45% of cases, this [the respondent's last] job had lasted at least twenty years (1999, p. 24).'*

Some of these people undoubtedly are in receipt of a pension, probably at a reduced rate, though in fact many blue-collar jobs operate without any pension provision. In fact the largest group in that study were those considering themselves as 'long-term sick', most of these on Incapacity Benefit (IB) For that study the figure was 49% in Barnsley, the study location with the closest transferable attributes to Thornaby (Beatty and Fothergill 1999, P. 12).

Whilst clearly some medical conditions have been acquired by these individuals, in the past they would have mostly been carried by the firm they were employed by. Traditionally, many firms allocated older people to lighter, though equally essential, tasks. Thus, their medical status does not make them able to perform the physical type of work they were used to doing, though most of them can do lighter work.

Motivations towards the usage of IB can come from various directions. At a political level it clearly helps keep the official unemployment rate down. Beatty, Fothergill, Gore and Green (2003), in search of what they term 'real unemployment', concluded that hidden unemployment, particularly where claimant unemployment is relatively high, adds 10-15 percent points. What also emerges from this data is that, what they refer to as 'excess sickness claimants', are numerically greater than the official unemployment claimant count.

Viewing Thornaby ward data indicates that Job Demand, those people defined as wanting work, is significantly greater than the official unemployment rate (see figs 7-10). All the older established Thornaby wards indicate a much higher than national average number of individuals defined as disabled. Unfortunately, as regards older people of working age, the data available does not offer profiles based on a suitable age range, making verification of the percentage of that group difficult. Also, a major variation from the trends is visible in Ingleby Barwick which, as a new development, is populated by a higher proportion of younger people. The remaining wards represent areas in which firms such as Head Wrightson would have drawn the bulk of their labour force.

## Examples of unemployment and joblessness in Thornaby August 2004

	Male		Female		Total	
	Num	Rate	Num	Rate	Num	Rate
Ingleby Barwick	83	1.5%	43	0.8%	126	1.1%
Mandale	153	7.9%	37	1.9%	190	4.9%
Stainsby	122	7.1%	53	3.1%	175	5.1%
Victoria	126	7.3%	44	2.6%	170	5.0%
Village	116	7.6%	27	2.0%	143	4.9%

*Fig. 7 Unemployment Benefit Claimants as % of Working Age population (August 2004),*

*Thornaby wards, Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit, N221134*

	Male		Female		Total	
	Num	Rate	Num	Rate	Num	Rate
Ingleby Barwick	368	6.4%	436	8.1%	803	7.2%
Mandale	369	19.1%	262	13.4%	631	16.2%
Stainsby	306	17.8%	250	14.5%	556	16.2%
Victoria	334	19.3%	260	15.5%	595	17.4%
Village	266	17.4%	183	13.3%	449	15.5%

*Fig. 8 Job Demand - Estimates of People who want work (August 2004), Thornaby wards,*

*Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit, N22325*

	Male		Female		Total	
	Num	Rate	Num	Rate	Num	Rate
Ingleby Barwick	704	12.3%	1190	22.0%	1894	17.1%
Mandale	627	32.5%	729	37.3%	1356	34.9%
Stainsby	536	31.2%	683	39.8%	1219	35.5%
Victoria	622	35.9%	807	48.0%	1429	41.8%
Village	464	30.2%	518	37.8%	982	33.8%

*Fig: 9 Joblessness - People of working age not in employment (August 2004),  
Thornaby wards, Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit, N2231*

% of working age					
	In employment	Reg. Unemployed	Inactive – want work	Inactive - disabled	Other inactive
Ingleby Barwick	81.3	1.2	4.5	2.6	10.4
Mandale	64.4	5.9	7.6	8.3	13.7
Stainsby	64.0	6.2	7.6	8.7	13.5
Victoria	68.9	5.6	6.5	7.8	11.2
Village	70.6	4.8	6.2	9.7	8.6
UK National	76.0	2.9	6.7	6.1	8.3

*Fig: 10 Economic activity, Thornaby wards compared to national data based on  
2001 Census data, adapted from [http://www.teesvalley-  
jsu.gov.uk/private/jsuwarddataweb2004.xls](http://www.teesvalley-jsu.gov.uk/private/jsuwarddataweb2004.xls), Joint Strategy Unit*

At an individual level, the motivation to become 'permanently sick', on IB, relates closely to Social Security rules and eligibility to work. Also, IB itself is not means-tested, at least not until one starts to use pension income also. There may also be a recent historical element in the creation of an incentive to go onto IB, linked to the period of mass redundancies witnessed in areas such as the North East during the 1980s. The absence of any minimum wage during that period meant that many of the alternative jobs created were often extremely poorly paid. This meant that if the individual had a medical condition that limited work ability, the eventual verification by a Benefits Agency medical practitioner, as demanded as part of the conditions of receiving continuing IB, offered a financially more secure option than meeting the demands of the JSA. In the context of that period, and perhaps to a lesser degree today, IB has been used as a strategy to avoid poverty.

Thus there is a difficulty when talking of work, past and present. Today, there are different jobs performed by, mostly, different people from those employed in the tasks carried out prior to the 1980s restructuring period. Many of those detached from these processes via the cumulative effect of redundancy and enforced 'retirement' may well find it difficult to view them in a positive manner. Thornaby now is a continuation of the place they knew, and for the older people of working age a place seen as being mostly without work, whilst those engaged in the newer jobs perhaps see Thornaby in a different context. This discussion relates to processes that are still very much in flux.

It is the experiences of the working-class men of Thornaby that is the focus of this



study. These are men who have, by and large, mostly done as they were told, albeit in an unconscious manner. They have gone to school, gone to the jobs they were expected to go to, gone and signed on when work was absent, to go back to work when the jobs returned. This pattern ended in the 1980s when the jobs and factories went. These men were discarded, a vaporised workforce. This study looks at how they have negotiated these events, how they have affected their lives, along with the place they live in. It attempts to listen to what they have to say.

## 2.7 Summary of chapter two

The second chapter has been a discussion on place and sense of place, stating that whilst people may see place as home and having meaning, capital sees it as a resource. Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' was used to help explain the unquestioning, unconscious manner in which people relate to the ordinary everyday events that are central to their lives. This section concluded by noting how the nature of an industry within a place can affect how people view that location.

Discussion then moved to the theme of collective identities, particularly those formed as a result of a dominant industry, and how they, through time, can change, altering the social nature of a place. It was also noted how the dominance of heavy industry in Teesside has traditionally limited opportunities for women.

There was then an exploration of the term 'community', and how, in recent years, it has become politically charged. For many people in places like Thornaby, community is based around collective self-images that incorporate a level of commitment to others around them. From this point a solidarity can emerge, helping fuse the people and place together. Community offered a further contribution to ideas based around sense of self and who we are. Others, from outside of that place, may perhaps not view it in the same manner as residents, even to the extent that those living there do not recognise the version of their place being presented by people from outside.

The discussion then moved to the history of Thornaby, particularly its rapid economic and population growth during industrialisation. Everyday life in Thornaby was explored, as well as the historical importance that unemployment has had on peoples' lives, and the nature of the place. Thornaby's industry, during the Great Depression, simply ceased operating. There was then a post war consensus to never return to that, based on Keynesian economics. Post war, there was also the creation of the welfare state. This resulted in a period of modest growth and stability until the mid 1970s.

A period of high inflation occurred, contributing to the election of the Thatcher government in 1979. Mass unemployment returned to Thornaby as major employers such as Head Wrightson, which had once dominated the town, shut for ever. The Thatcher government had introduced a different ideology in its approach to economics, centred around minimal state intervention, shifts to privatisation, and a supposed entrepreneurial approach. An emphasis on property-led regeneration brought initiatives such as the developments instigated by the Teesside Development Corporation, a large redevelopment occurred on the Teesdale site, where Head Wrightson had once stood.

The majority of jobs created on the site have been office based, and many Thornaby people do not relate to them. Much of the legacy of the job losses during the Thatcher, later Major, years still lingers, especially amongst older people.

The chapter then discussed the formation and functioning of the solidaristic

community – how, for Thornaby, shared experiences of hard work and degradation enabled a collective mind-set to emerge.

Thornaby's population explosion during industrialisation was largely fed by people arriving from Ireland, Scotland and Wales, bringing their own cultural practices and traditions with them. Over time, they have all blended to form a distinct Thornaby variant, a hybrid, of Teesside and North Eastern working class.

The chapter concluded by noting how not only the types of jobs have changed in Thornaby, and affected its economy, but also looks at past working practices, how people sometimes gained temporary work with a sub-contractor as part of a strategy linked to gaining employment with a mainstream firm such as ICI. It was then explained how being a process operator at ICI was often seen as a job with status. Many men who would have remained with firms such as ICI or Head Wrightson, despite any acquired medical condition, and performed lighter tasks, are now instead on Incapacity Benefit.

The chapter ended by noting how different people are doing different jobs in Thornaby now. Many, mostly older people, who have been disconnected from the job market, tend to view the changes negatively. For them, Thornaby is a continuation of the same place they have always known, but now a place seen as mostly without paid work, with them as a vaporised workforce. The next chapter reports what they have to say.



### **3 Chapter three The findings**

#### **3.1 Introduction: a chapter overview**

This account now moves on to report what people have said. The chapter commences with an explanation of the methodology used, followed by an account of the respondent base, along with the themes applied. The chapter closes by noting how the Thornaby that the majority of respondents recognise as home, has been largely taken away. New developments within its borders, such as at Teesdale, are largely seen as being 'somewhere else', though to a certain degree this has always been the case with that area. Other developments, such as the shops and entertainments complex at Teesside Park, have been more widely accepted. However, mostly due to the administrative changes that have placed Thornaby as part of a larger Stockton-on-Tees, many of the long-established residents of Thornaby see the place now as one with very little in the way of a voice, as well as a place with very little in the way of paid work.

### **3.2 Methodology overview**

Initial literature searches were undertaken and relevant secondary data was gathered which provided both qualitative and quantitative information. This concentrated on a number of key elements. These were, firstly, working class issues, histories and lifestyles, particularly in the context of single industry communities. Although the majority of appropriate UK-based material relates to mining communities, much of the material was considered valid, given that Thornaby was also essentially a solidaristic community.

Statistical data from official sources was also explored. This provided a historical profile of demographic factors. This data does offer a rough canvas to help build up the overall picture. Some of this data, such as population changes and housing types, has been incorporated into parts of the study. Other, more recent data, such as unemployment figures has proven problematic, since there are many people who are neither employed nor officially unemployed, but who might take work if something suitable was available.

Local archives in Middlesbrough were consulted and some material held in various Stockton libraries was examined. The records of local authorities and other organisations were consulted, along with historical maps and occasional brochures. These sources helped to paint a picture of what could be considered a hitherto ignored history of a mostly ignored town.

These records revealed that, during its early industrialisation period, Thornaby was like a frontier town of muddy unmade streets and absolute poverty. These accounts showed that poor relief tended to operate within the judgemental Christian discourse of the time. In fact, direct accounts of working class experiences appear to be non-existent. What the Archives material did indicate, though, was the form that the power base of Thornaby took at that time. Through references to housing construction and health issues, as well as various poverty relief programmes operating in different periods, this material showed what working class life must have been like for many people.

During the modern period, accounts of planning processes provided visions for the development of Thornaby and the wider Teesside area, though much of this never came to fruition. These involved major road developments, which arguably would have meant a significant difference in the form, and nature, of what Thornaby was eventually to become. The Second World War meant that proposals for a major trunk road just south of old Thornaby town centre, along with major council housing and commercial developments, never happened. Likewise the 1960s Teesplan had similar ambitions. Both of these proposals were created around the assumption that Teesside's heavy industry would both continue and expand.

The core of the project comprised interviews with individuals, focusing on the main themes of the study. These interviews placed into context the place/industry relationship and how identity and life meaning emerged. The core group of people spoken to knew Thornaby and had expectations which had been affected by the



events of the 1980s and 1990s. Others interviewed, such as gatekeepers and outsiders, also knew the place and the events, but perhaps viewed and read place from a different perspective.

Respondents were initially people I knew. From these, a network approach became possible. Different routes included church and religious based groups, also clubs and pubs. Other individuals were approached more opportunistically, either via networks or simply through chance meeting of people I vaguely knew. A number of these individuals were more privatised in their social lives and thus would most likely be bypassed whilst trawling the more public visible realm for respondents.

There were 40 formal interviews. All the interviewees had links with Thornaby, in a variety of contexts. Twenty-eight were people living either at the time in Thornaby, or were people who had left but considered themselves native to Thornaby. Their ages ranged from the mid thirties to the recently retired. Nearly all were male, though in two cases both partners were present, and contributed. Also, in one case, I spoke to the female partner when the male partner refused at the last minute.

Nine could be considered 'gatekeepers'. They included a representative from a local regeneration organisation, a clerk working for the local town council, three police officers, a representative from the local credit union, two Roman Catholic priests, one currently with a parish in Thornaby, the other previously in Thornaby, an Anglican priest and the local MP. There were also casual conversations with two General Practitioners from one of the two Thornaby Town Centre practices. An

approach to the other one met with a refusal.

Some of the individuals interviewed also have significant roles in the area. These include councillors, past and present, as well as a shopkeeper. At a wider level this also included members of the 'Remembering Thornaby' group, an organisation aiming to keep alive memories of Thornaby as it was, prior to the large scale demolitions of the 1960s and 1970s. Whilst this group was mostly made up of older retired people, there were a number of other, younger persons, also determined to celebrate the memory of Thornaby's past.

To gather some external views from people who know the place, interviews were carried out by mail with two people who have long-term knowledge of the place and area and are both now resident elsewhere.

In addition to these formally arranged interviews, there was also a large number of casual conversations conducted with people in various settings, such as meeting in the street, shops and public houses, and this helped to yield significant additional information and insights.

The interviews were based around seven main themes from which other emerging relevant points could be discussed and developed. Initially these were: community; crime; politics; education; redevelopment; unemployment; and work. A number of the themes are based not so much on accepted academic literature but my own experiences living and associating in Thornaby and similar places over many years.

Thus aspects of the questioning were framed around what was considered the common perspective and discourse of the core group.

Analysis of the interview material was mostly carried out using a word processor as a tool. I devised a tailor-made mix of software to analyse the material. My access to qualitative analysis software was limited, not least because it was too costly, but I attended a three day training course on NVIVO which enabled me to devise my own package based on a mix of what was on my PC and downloaded free software.

For analytical purposes a series of categories considered appropriate were created during the early period of the project. These were added to and modified as the investigation progressed. Labels ascribed to a category represented a powerful core theme and did not reflect the phenomena in a bounded and contained manner.

Thoughts and perspectives of respondents can sometimes offer apparently clear perspectives and definable threads, but these nevertheless sit floating on top of a chain of complex mostly externally derived events, these consistently evolving. Thus aspects of a defined phenomenon can sometimes sit in more than one category, depending on the context employed and the perspective they are viewed from.

Question schedules offered opening points for discussions and then the emerging comments were streamlined into relevant categories. The categories were then allocated into three core themes based on place, the social, the political and economic. From this, the presented package was based on these themes modified into:

(1) 'Work' – incorporating aspects of unemployment, and work-related politics, such as trade unionism. 'Education' also featured heavily in this section.

(2) 'Benefit life' – because this is a central feature of many people's lives in Thornaby

(3) 'Community' – which, as well as considering Thornaby's social structure, refers to its politics, includes 'crime', how Thornaby people look at neighbouring communities, and 'regeneration'.

### **3.3 The key themes summarised**

#### **3.3.1 Work**

Many resident in solidaristic locales frequently appear to possess a narrow perspective on the world of work. The interviews discussed family employment background, and connections between work and social life. This included finding what a 'good' or 'proper' job was, and how they saw prospects for themselves, their children and grandchildren. Tied to this was the level of education achieved in the past, also what was offered and expected at that time. This was then compared to what they hoped and expected for younger people today.

As well as a greater role for women in the workplace, the loss of masculinised, heavy industry-based employment has undoubtedly resulted in a severe squeezing out of male manual labour. Reactions to these shifts at both the work and social level were explored. Within this framework the interviews also looked at issues of discrimination.

Mobility and perceptions of class were discussed along with attitudes towards management and promotion, including questions concerned with changes in status.

The interviews also examined perceptions of the minimum wage and the often parallel presence of punitive employers in low wage sections of the local economy.

The topic of job mobility was also brought up, this tied to the idea of a permanent move out of Thornaby and Teesside, rather than just short term contract work.

People were asked to consider whether they would leave the area, and what they would miss about Thornaby and Teesside if they left.

The interviews explored voting habits and trade union affiliation. Similar to mining communities, Thornaby has a powerful Labour Party support base. This appears to have an assumed majority, though at parliamentary level Labour has, from time to time, been defeated. Interestingly, a small group of respondents, tied to the 'Remembering Thornaby' group, putting themselves up as Independents for council elections on a broad 'pro-Thornaby' platform were apparently assumed by a number of voters to be Conservatives on the basis they were not Labour! This unconditional support for Labour of many interviewees was considered worthy of some exploration.

There appeared to be a non-militant - though certainly not unanimous - support base for trade unions. Similar to support for Labour, this appeared to be blind, unconditional without consideration, again worth investigating.

### **3.3.2 Benefit Life**

Unemployment has been a dominant feature of many individual lives, even through the supposedly 'good times'. For many, employment has been an occasional break from the dole queue, to the extent that some people give up seeking work altogether. Thus, survival strategies have to embrace unemployment, particularly sudden job

loss, as an occasional and expected situation. Both in the recent past, and now, the dominant reliance on council or privately rented accommodation, along with the presence of Social Security benefits has helped to underwrite the worst aspects, short-term at least, at a financial level (bearing in mind that most of these people were already poorly paid and reliant on overtime when employed). From this basis I explored the experiences of unemployment, dealing with officialdom and survival strategies. The attitudes of others were also considered, particularly those who have not known unemployment directly, and also the impact on the community.

### **3.3.3 Community**

'Community' related to individual ties to Thornaby and sense of community and what that meant for the individual. It covered also shifts in that sense of community, notably the creation of Thornaby new town centre and the loss of most of the terraced housing areas and old town centre.

A number of other aspects of community were investigated, including:

Crime and perception of crime.

Conformity to accepted norms.

Optimism or pessimism regarding the future.

Within the context of identity and place the perceived relationship between Thornaby and other locations was examined. This explored the known antipathy between

Thornaby and Stockton-on-Tees, which has spilt into the political arena, and also other relationships with Teesside, the North East and the country as a whole. Questions were also asked, at the time, regarding the possibility of an elected regional assembly.

Some consideration of regeneration issues was made within the community theme, but a separate theme, tied to the loss of past core industrial jobs and the developments initiated by the TDC, was also explored. What is examined here is the imposition of a replacement economic base and its meaning for the people of Thornaby. Lives were clearly structured in a manner from which sense of place, identity and worth were created. Thus, if the old town centre was considered the heart of Thornaby, Teesdale with Head Wrightson and all the other firms was the pump driving the heartbeat. It was this that delivered the flow justifying the existence of Thornaby as it was, from which people were able to develop that sense of pride and identity based on the hard work, hard play environment that then existed. The TDC regeneration replaced Head Wrightson with the Teesdale development, comprising mostly office-based employment. Men used to heavy work may consider the prospects of office-based employment somewhat demeaning, what they consider women's jobs, something that has no logic or meaning for them, regardless of the reality. So has that heartbeat that justified Thornaby, now been taken away? Is Teesdale meaningful to Thornaby, even part of it, now?



### **3.4 Work**

#### **3.4.1 Work histories of interviewees**

- All respondents had a history of some employment.
- Eleven respondents had worked previously in one or more of the core industries of Teesside (steel, chemicals, iron and steel, engineering and shipbuilding). Nine had direct experience of other manufacturing in the Teesside area.
- Of the remaining eight respondents without manufacturing experience, two had worked exclusively in the retail sector. The rest had experience in a variety of services.
- At the time of interview seven were employed, three working part-time, one self employed. None were working in manufacturing. Four had retired, one of those formerly self-employed.
- Thirteen of the respondents were reliant on state support. Nine of these were in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance, three were recipients of Incapacity Benefit. Two had no income from work or benefits, one reliant on his wife's income and the other on allowances received as a town councillor.

- Two of the respondents said they had criminal records resulting in at least one period of imprisonment.

### 3.4.2 Working lives: expectations - 'factory fodder' and changing aspirations

The interviews usually started by discussing the individual's work history, producing an account of their lives, and, consequently, an understanding of their own expectations, from leaving school to the present time. Past dominance of manual work was evident. Whilst going into whatever industries were available locally may appear logical, it does suggest elements of control and compliance.

*'...I realised that even at school level someone somewhere else had decided what (I) was going to be. Not necessarily a welder but (I) was certainly going to be working class. .... (I) was going to do what other members of (my) family have done and that was go into a factory somewhere. That was (my) lot in life.'* (D – middle aged former welder with Head Wrightson)

+++++

*' (at school) ..... we were just cannon fodder. ' (AL 1 – mid fifties, former bus driver, though he has had other jobs previously. He now lives on Incapacity Benefit).*

+++++

*'You were just never encouraged (to do exams).'* (PK – mid fifties, he has had a variety of jobs from working on construction sites to undertaker.)

+++++

*'We didn't even have exams in our school.' (K – late fifties, has had a variety of jobs, mostly contracting on sites in an unskilled capacity. Now on Incapacity Benefit. Former Cleveland County Councillor. He was on Incapacity Benefit the last time I spoke to him. Has lived in Thornaby all of his life, though has spent periods working away.)*

Whether this can be interpreted as control is debatable, but there does appear a blind acceptance by many of this situation.

A few respondents had similar employment backgrounds to their parents. For many respondents, career possibilities beyond the known world of their parents' own experiences were never considered. This limited career horizon was still evident at middle age, sometimes up to the point of redundancy.

*'I mean if you had said to me in 1987 you can do this till 1999 or you can risk going to college and er, see what happens, because you don't know where you're going to be, I'd have probably took the job at Head Wrightsons until 1999.' (D, who gained a degree following redundancy.)*

+++++

*'.... in the past nobody helped you [with careers advice], in fact I wouldn't have known what I wanted to do, you only knew what others did.' CR*

For some, the limited opportunities were seen as evidence that they were viewed as nothing more than 'factory fodder', and felt they were being controlled.

*'As I've got more experience I begin to think that it is a conscious, streamlining, er, not just as streamlining kids, conditioning kids, also preventing kids from families like mine from actually getting up into the middle classes because if, if you look at it in purely economic terms, the more that get up into the middle classes then the less there is for the ones at the top. And they're not going to give up and give help easily.'* (D)

GM, in turn, takes a different attitude.

*'I think you have to learn something different because the usual jobs have gone. It also stimulates development and broadening of skills.'*

Whilst appearing valid from the perspective of someone highly qualified, GM's response nevertheless neglects the point that once forced to shift away from the known, people within the solidaristic realm are being asked to 'walk the plank' into an unknown. However some people are moving into once unconsidered areas, though perhaps not in an orthodox manner. P1 left school in 1976 with expectations of factory or building site work. None of it materialised.

*'.. I think .... my generation, ....when I left school .... was basically the start of the decline [....]. Because previous .... you could wrap one job in, go down the road and get another job. [....] There was ....[eldest brother], ... who used to go and start a job on a Monday morning, get a sub, leave, and*

*go and get another job, on a Monday afternoon! They used to do it. There was that many jobs about then. I just missed it by about 2 year.' (P1)*

He went through school with expectations of roughly what his working life would be like. Though still unemployed, at the time of interview he purchased cars to repair and sell. One vehicle was made roadworthy, the previous vehicle being used for himself and family. As soon as a vehicle is repaired the other is sold. He also does sea fishing, the white fish going to his friend who runs a fish and chip shop. Although neither of these activities produce anything close to a weekly wage, they do demonstrate an element of business enterprise.

### **3.4.3 Wages and overtime**

Low wages have been – and continue to be - a central feature of working men's lives. The majority of Teesside hourly-paid working environments built overtime into the their system.

*'They used overtime as means to keep the wages down. The wages were definitely too low, so you had to do overtime. ' (AL1)*

+++++

*'Overtime was something that was chased after and looked for, ..... any suggestion that overtime would be reduced would be greeted with howls of protest.' (DK)*

+++++

*'If you wanted, as regards food and clothing and holidays, if you wanted those things on that basis you wouldn't have been able to do it just on flat (rate of pay).'* (Howard)

The strength of the acceptance of overtime as routine cannot be overstated. Whilst management may well try to reduce, or remove it in many workplaces, a variety of strategies operated to ensure its survival.

*'The gaffers didn't want us doing overtime but we needed the overtime. .... so we just don't work too hard! (small laugh), so we have to do the overtime! So they (management) made us sign a form saying we'd do so much overtime.'* (BC)

For many, overtime took a wage packet from below subsistence to a more manageable level, and in some cases it lifted a wage packet into what was viewed as a good wage.

*'[.....] ... we were working 40 weekends a year, overtime you know, 12 hour shifts all the time during the week [.....].'* (K)

+++++

*'.... it was the end of the 70s, early 80s, and the money then was very good. ... I went out to work maybe 60 hours, 70 hours a week, but you still come home with about 200 odd pound, after tax and insurance are taken off. So you weren't too bad off and then there's the holiday time, you didn't have time*

*off, so you was working over with treble the shifts and it was alright. Yes, it was good.'* (KC)

Teesside has attracted lower paying employers, mostly branch plants. In some cases, often linked to shift working systems, these incoming firms found they had to pay more to attract workers. It is when overtime disappears that problems can begin for those reliant on it. This is particularly true for those with families, who on the loss of that income find themselves qualifying for state help when on basic pay. As well as potentially damaging their sense of worth, the rigid structures of the benefit system also destroy incentives to earn more, specifically during a benefit qualifying period. This can also cause other difficulties, especially if the individual is asked to work overtime and feels they have to refuse it at that time.

The economic restructuring period of the Thatcher years, as well as stripping the North East of many core jobs did encourage new investment. Many of the incoming or newly created firms brought with them different ways of working. In many cases this meant the removal of past accepted practices, such as overtime, except when deemed absolutely necessary. For most of these firms old demarcation barriers were absent; if one could do the task one did it. Many of these firms paid low wages, particularly before the introduction of the minimum wage.

*'.....security jobs, have been paid a pound an hour, and ... there was a clear case of one young man ... about 25 or 26, where he was getting a pound a hour for working on a plant that galvanised metal, with all those particular*

*chemicals[.....] That was the only kind of work that he could get. And he took that work hoping it would be the threshold to further work.' (Nigel)*

+++++

*'We said [building site targets] were unrealistic [in the 1980s]. We never found, if you wanted to make anything you had to work, where we got half an hour for lunch you had to work through that and tea breaks really. Just to meet the targets. Like bricklaying squads would stay behind two hours on a night just to get a start, because they don't pay overtime, just the bonus all the time. Obviously you just stopped back the half hour just to get the extra thousand bricks [.....] ..and if you complained about it they'd say there's 4 million, well 3½million officially. But there was always those that weren't counted, so 5½million. And there was always somebody who could get somebody ...' (SW)*

+++++

*'They just want cheap labour. All them people out of work, they can get away with it. Nobody I know is earning a good wage these days.' (ST)*

The combined effects of policies such as the abolition of wages councils, along with the creation of mass unemployment via the application of monetarist policies, enabled capital to openly exploit a vulnerable labour force, driving down wages and conditions. In some cases this also meant scrapping agreements, whether by union recognition or not. Trades unions were often excluded, using threats and intimidation against sympathetic employees, including threats of dismissal.



Ideologically, monetarism saw nothing wrong in driving down wages, backed by the belief this would create more jobs, regardless of the poverty created. It ignored factors such as pride and self respect. Consequently, many men were not going to take such work.

Traditionally many jobs, mostly in the unionised sector, had a series of add-on factors that took a – usually low – basic rate substantially higher. For example, a shift worker at ICI received a shift allowance valued at one third of the basic wage. There was also 'condition money'. This was linked to the immediate working environment of the recipient. Those working in dusty and/or dangerous environments received more than those who did not. Added to that were extra monies for working Bank Holidays, and of course overtime. Most firms had similar structures. These add-ons gradually disappeared through the 1980s and now for most workers no longer exist. Their removal also functioned as a disincentive for many, especially those with young families who had a non-working partner. Even if overtime were available, this is now often only at basic rate, so significantly longer hours have to be worked to produce a viable wage.

*'...when I was at the university, I worked in the summer periods ,and one of those jobs I took was security. Now I worked, I used to work 12 hour, sometimes 16 hour shifts [...] for £1.55 an hour. [...] No, [overtime] that was it, straight flat rate.*

*...I wouldn't do it again. With that experience I certainly wouldn't like to be pushed into work, you know.'* (RL)

+++++

*'I didn't and I still don't think there's any virtue in working for poverty wages. So I wouldn't do that either. ...I'd rather go without than let somebody exploit me' (D)*

+++++

*'...the wages on the Job Centre (jobs available) wasn't for the responsibility that you have. The wages is not worth it. Better off staying at home.' (A1)*

+++++

*'A lot of places don't pay holiday pay, overtime or anything like that. I could have worked at Cresstaes, but it's not worth it just for minimum all the time, I won't do it. I mean I'm not buying my house but I might some day, but you can't when you work in places like that.' (M1)*

+++++

*'Wages haven't really increased with inflation, so we seem to have took .... two steps forward maybe, and half a dozen back.' (Mark)*

+++++

*'Cresstaes actually one of the few half decent jobs, when you think what I have been offered. Taxi driving. I know quite a few people that work at Cresstaes. They're not too badly off. Shift work, but, but it's not too bad, it's not bad at all. But like the taxi driving, and the pizza delivery and everything, these have been in for months, they mustn't fill em. Cos I get offered them every so often. I don't want to know.' (P1)*

+++++

*'Must be seven years ago now, did me HGV, went after this job. Said what*

*the wages were. I said 'I get more on the dole'.' (S)*

+++++

*'.. even with legislation, the new minimum wage, it's widespread round here.*

*Every little dodge, wangle, wheeze some employers can use to get out of paying the minimum wage. It's absolutely widespread. I mean, anything, you know, cut holidays and all sorts. Every sort of wangle. She's [Member of Parliament] inundated with letters. All anonymous because there's still that fear there. It's still the greedy bosses, which I suppose it always was. It always used to be the greedy bosses and it's still alive.*

*[...]*

*It was surprising that at the time ....., Maggie and her cronies were cowing the trade unions, the workforce and everything like. Sheer hypocrisy. She was talking about a free trade union in Poland, the Solidarity thing, you know. She wanted rights for the trades unions in Poland but she was denying the people of this country [.....] all the freedoms, the freedom to work [.....] and she was taking everything away in this country. You couldn't do a thing. You had no right to question an employer.' (SW)*

But the perspective from an older retired person, who had never been unemployed, was quite different:

*The work's there for them. Perhaps they are tuppence-halfpenny jobs, but then they always were. All the jobs at Head Wrightsons. Even parts of ICI. We just had to take it or leave it. There was no benefits like now then. You*

*just did the best you could. Had to, I had a family to feed. (AJ)*

The Blair government has introduced a minimum wage and that is regarded broadly as an improvement, although frequently seen as insufficient.

*'Well I suppose it's a start. It should be a lot more though, especially kids like in here, give them a start in life.' (CR)*

+++++

*'I'm pleased that it's there now, but it should have went up a bit more..' (EC)*

+++++

*'... it's not nearly enough. It should be higher, yeah definitely higher.' (M1)*

+++++

*'Well it is a price worth paying, but a lot of the firms won't pay it, ...' (KC)*

+++++

*'I have done it actually (worked for minimum wage). I don't know that I'd do it on a permanent basis though, it was only for a short while.... [...] If I was younger I think I probably would, not having both the experience and a family to support.' (S)*

*'I'd do it for a friend maybe, or perhaps a good cause where you're helping people and not giving it away for somebody's profits.' (A)*

+++++

*'I think it should be set higher (minimum wage), but overall it's a good thing.'*

F        *'Would you work for the minimum wage?'*

*'You have to, don't you? You have to get up and do something.'* (PL)

+++++

*'I don't see how the minimum wage at £3.60 or whatever is good enough or can be. I suppose it's enough to start with, but if you paid another £10 a week more people would say it's not enough. When I started work I got £3 10 shillings a week, and that was not enough.'*

[.....]

F        *'Would you work for the minimum wage?'*

*'Well I imagine I would have to. '* (AL1)

#### **3.4.4 The changing nature of employment**

The shifting away from a 'mixed economy' to a market-led one, during the Thatcher/Major period denied many, in particularly those with out of date skills, or unskilled, the ability to earn what most of them considered a living wage. This was the result of the wholesale closures of the core manufacturing bases, and their suppliers. It also denied many, particularly men, culturally meaningful work - employment from which self worth could be acquired, a worth linked to the nature of the community in which they lived, and the people they associated with.

*'There's no jobs now. There might be, not lots of jobs, a few jobs. But they're not getting the pay. They're better off on the dole, half of them, than going to work. And that's why I won't go to work.'* (EC)

+++++

*'... the way they just wrecked the North East, just pulling buildings down and throwing people out of work for no apparent reason. Well, what's the point?'*  
(KC)

+++++

*'I think it's been a great loss to the community, you know, cos kids now, I mean, going way back then when I was at school, you'd go to school with lads that father's worked at Head Wrightsons, or ICI, and their grandfathers before them had worked there, so and so on, and all that's just gone.'* (Mark)

+++++

*'.... there's nowt for a bloke to use his muscle, like labouring, not like there used to be. There's a bit here and there maybe, but nothing like a bloke could have to keep him going all his working life.'* (M1)

+++++

*'The air is a lot cleaner, but no work. [.....] It happens all the time in here (shop), you get, 'oh, me dad's in Germany', 'in so and so', waiting for a contract', 'back for a fortnight then up to Scotland'. The only alternative is factories like Cresstaes, no good. And you have to be 18 to get in there. There's a regular in here, been to South Africa, Palestine, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, all over.'* (PW)

Some respondents blamed the actions of some trades unions, particularly through the 1960s and 1970s, a period often associated with trades union strength.

*'Demarcation had a lot to do with it. It made a job twice as expensive. I mean you had to wait for a rigger, then a fitter, then a joiner. It was the fault of the unions. (AL1)*

+++++

*'The working man is his own worst enemy in that he didn't turn out the stuff like he used to do, turned into a bit of a dodo.' (ST)*

+++++

*'They were no doubt suffering from lack of investment. No doubt the same plant for years and years. Blinkered management and trade union negative attitudes no doubt contributed to their obsolescence.' (GM)*

Yet, despite this past, together with the dirtiness of the local environment as a result of all the heavy industry, and the nature of the jobs themselves, the loss of these jobs was still mourned.

C     *... for all they were terrible jobs really, ... what they were doing to your health. .... the fact that you had a job there meant that as far as you could see, ...you would be in employment, ....so you had that sense of continuity as welding, you earned enough for your needs and you would for as long as that was there. You know, and I think when Head Wrightsons*

*closed and they flattened it, you know, and sold everything off and flattened the factory, you realised that would never ever be a workplace in the manner that it had for the numbers of people that had worked there ever again...*

*D      When that happened there, that to me, that to me was a particularly frightening thing of the, like, 80s...they weren't just closing places and moth balling them....*

*C      Flattening them.*

*D      ....And it meant there was a finality about it, in a sense that was really frightening, and ..., if you ask me now, I don't particularly have any regrets about Head Wrightsons going. ... at the time I did because I was, ..... left with no form of living. ....I also know why I say it like that is because I know that if Head Wrightsons had remained open I would probably still be welding now, .... I'm not trying to create a golden era because it wasn't. It was awful. (D and C)*

This was the Lowry-like picture of the world many respondents grew up in, one of closeness to others, most of them in similar circumstances. Sometimes children might go and see their dads at work, seeing the world they expected to enter when they left school.

*'I remember going down, and seeing [father] a couple of times when he was*



*finishing work, and I remember the rats (laughs). [...] I mean it does look a lot, a lot better what it is, what it was with all the factories but, as I say, it's the kids nowadays, they've got no future, you know.'* (Mark)

When the works' hooter went at the end of the working day a flood of men in dark clothes, often dirty and unwashed, flowed out, escaping. A boy, like Mark, then, could observe and conclude 'This is my life to be'. It provided food, rent, sometimes even paid for a mortgage. It provided a certainty of what life would be, against the uncertainty of the world beyond. If people were going to need things made then they could be made here.

### **3.4.5 Discrimination**

Linked to the employment changes is a far greater number of females participating in the local workforce. This change, what could perhaps be considered as 'de-masculinisation' of labour, was discussed in the interviews. Whilst varying opinions emerged, in some cases linked to other aspects of people's lives, there was still a perception of the traditional male-female roles. As far as many of these people were concerned, work for women happened out of financial necessity, to add to an already inadequate income. For example, AL-1, a man in his early sixties, stated,

*'They [women] didn't have to work, but then it was different....'* (AL-1)

I asked a number of respondents if they felt it was right that women had stayed at

home in the past.

*'Yes, I think it was, because most families had large families. Depending on ages, kids are still better catered for by women. Me daughter's never had a job since her first was born. [.....] Still it's old fashioned now, but in the past they had to spend a lot of the time baking and washing, things which is easier now.'* (PK)

+++++

*'A woman's place should be at home. Now they've got to go out just to keep up with the housekeeping.'* (EC)

Younger respondents also thought in similar ways.

*'(Women in the past) had to stay at home, look after the kids.'* (M1)

+++++

*'I mean fellas'll take a night job now so the woman can go out to work in the day.'* (PL)

+++++

*'.... you go up to the supermarket now and you see more and more male check out people. You see more and more male people, like, doing cleaning jobs. [...] he's going to be in a job which has traditionally been for women, and has traditionally been low paid. Now I've no qualms in his picking that job, if he wants to [.....], but I can't see him staying in it because he's going to want to get a higher wage to look after his family, because it doesn't matter*

*what you say about these politically correct and that, when a man gets himself a family he feels he's got to be the breadwinner [...]. I mean more and more women are moving into engineering, and jobs like that, and some of them are very good at it. I think that's a bit quite scary.'* (RL)

It may be that, regardless of traditional views, some young men are taking such jobs because that is all they can find, this indicating a practical response to a situation. Bills still have to be paid – and if it means, for example, that it is the female partner who is the breadwinner – so be it. However, past gender segregated lives do appear to have left their mark in other ways.

*'There was no need for any discrimination. One thing I didn't like though, workingmen's clubs; I mean men got together, they put a few bob together and got a place started. There was an opportunity for women to do it if they wanted. But now they have equal rights. The men have to let them in.'* (PK)

Clearly some ingrained attitudes continue. For example one elderly man, whose middle aged daughter started work after her husband took early retirement, said to me:

*'Why does she need to? They have more than enough coming in with his [supposedly generous] pension and their mortgage is paid off'* (DY)

Another incident relates to a man in his twenties. During a discussion on house

purchase and mortgages he indicated the difficulty of meeting mortgage payments. I asked him if his wife was working, to which his reply was:

*'No wife of mine should ever have to work.'* (CA)

For many, their feelings about the growth of women working are complicated by the nature of the gender change in the Teesside workforce. In addition, one must consider the nature of many of the jobs themselves. Just as with the 'men's jobs', much new 'female employment' is often at the lower skill end, also insecure. On that basis, some might be inclined to say that, apart from the type of work and gender shift, nothing has fundamentally changed as regards Teesside and employment.

Within the discussions on gender discrimination, I asked whether men felt they were being discriminated against. A range of highly varied replies emerged. For example, during an interview with AL1 another man butted in, giving his views.

*'Men don't count for bloody nowt now. They just let themselves get knocked about. Men have let the women undercut them in the jobs. Why do you think they wanted women bus drivers? It just drives wages down and men on the dole.'* (Person2 in allotment hut, cutting in - approximately late 60s, early 70s)

+++++

*'... we all fall over ourselves to provide for women in the workforce. Even Dari Taylor (Member of Parliament for Stockton South) came from an all*

*women selection list. You do sense you're being eased out'. (PK)*

+++++

*'... a few years ago you went out with a girl and built up to a kiss and thought it was great when it happened. Then you worked from there. But now, it's the other way round, women don't mess about, straight up to a lad and feeling them. I've heard them meself go up to a lad and say 'Have you got a big one, cos if you haven't you're no good to me'. That's progress for women I suppose, the freedom of the pill.' (ST)*

Many men felt discriminated against in a variety of ways, far beyond work and daily Thornaby life.

*'Oh yes. (referred to his own experiences via relationship break up and custody of children being awarded to the mother) Magistrates seem to somehow assume that it's natural for a child to be with its mother, and as a father you have no rights. Why is it natural?' (CR)*

Several respondents spoke also of discrimination based on age. This is a typical view:

*'Me dad last worked, I can't remember when. He sort of just gave up. There's a few blokes like him. There's nowt, they just don't bother anymore. I mean I'm starting to get on meself. If this job goes, say in a few years, I'll be out like the rest of them the way it is.' (M1)*

In an uncertain jobs market, age becomes something to fear.

### 3.4.6 Trade unions and the politics of the workplace

Questions exploring political aspects of work received mixed responses. A small group were pro trade unions, with three of that group having been trade union officials at least once. The majority tended to be more neutral. Age also appeared important, with some referring to past demarcation.

*'I said 'oh there's a screw come out I'll put it back', 'Oh you can't do that you'll have to get a fitter in' (RL)*

Whilst a number of respondents found themselves working in a closed shop at least once in their working lives, the alternative available for those not desiring to join the union was usually to pay the financial equivalent of union dues to charity, the logic being that this takes into account that they would also gain from any benefits negotiated by the union. However, reasons for not supporting trade unions sometimes appeared to be linked to personality issues.

*'I had too many punch ups with them you see. One or two knew what they were talking about. The rest were in a popularity contest.' (A1)*

+++++

*'.... their sole purpose, for being in the unions to start with and getting up to be .. secretaries and shop stewards was to avoid work. I mean .... some of the ones I knew at British Steel .... more meetings than enough, you know'.*

*(Howard)*

Both these individuals did not consider trade union officials trustworthy. However, whilst some appeared to be anti trade union, it would be simplistic to argue these views were just tied to the demonisation of trade unions by the media in the past.

Amongst those who were pro trade union, K referred to agreements between management and trades unions, perhaps indicating the lack of trust in management from the worker perspective. Nevertheless, agreements could hold a firm together, sometimes enabling trust to evolve and generating mutual respect, allowing cooperation to happen. For K, this structured relationship was fractured during the Thatcher period.

*'[....] ...management ...suddenly got the green light to do what they like, to knock us back. [...] I think it was planned.'* (K)

In fact both K and PK found themselves blacklisted for past trade union activities.

*'I was going to work in the steel stockyard (at the Channel Tunnel) with two Irish fellows, and I was stopped for 'security' reasons. The guy went in and pleaded my case wanting me, and they just said 'No way, he's not getting a*

*job, he's a security risk'. ' (K)*

The majority of respondents appeared neutral, even indifferent, regarding trades unions. Some seemed slightly unsure.

*'I've never been in one so I don't know how they work, so I really don't have any views on them.' (PL)*

+++++

*'I don't think I understand what they do [trade unions] and all that but I don't think they're as effective as they were, especially the miners, like that.' (P1)*

ST, who had worked in a self employed capacity, saw traditional trade unionism in a negative light, but recognised the value of unions.

*'Thatcher did a lot of good that way, the unions they were destroying things, but you really need them. They're starting to work for the working man again now. But in the past it was more what you could get away with.' (ST)*

There does seem a clear acceptance and legitimisation of the capitalist system, with trade unions and the Labour Party viewed as being there to limit the effects of capital rather than being part of a broader oppositional working class movement. When tied to a low skill culture in a capitalist context this surely is a critical point regarding the ease with which people are hired and fired, and face low wages when employed. In



turn, this seeming lack of political awareness, whether via trade unions or any other involvement for that matter, severely limits their ability to influence both power and capital.

### **3.4.7 Aspirations: Getting a job**

In the context of the relationship between working people and capital, it is worth considering changes in recent years in how people are expected to approach job seeking. For the majority of older men, a lot of jobs were accessed either through knowledge from within the community, such as relatives or friends, or perhaps through chance. The CV was mostly unknown until recently by many middle aged and older people. The introduction of it into mainstream job seeking has changed the rules and consequently the relationship between those seeking work and potential employers. Even big firms such as ICI once had simple application forms which did not ask much, just being a list of past work and any qualifications. It was mostly only council or civil service application forms that asked a lot of (superfluous) questions about the person filling it in. Most jobs were gained simply by verbal contact and minimum form filling, and forms were mostly linked to various requirements of state institutions and insurance bodies.

It was also often probable, that even if the 'gaffer' was not known, people working in that organisation would tell you about him. These people could be found in pubs and clubs. From that it was possible to have an understanding of the nature of the job, the

'gaffer' and his quirks. The 'gaffer' was often the only gatekeeper into that job, and was only interested in whether you could do the job.

Currently, unemployed people are expected to send CVs 'blind' to firms. This means individuals are giving details about themselves to total strangers. In fact, for many, filling in application forms, and sending CVs for a specific job is not a problem. When directly applying for an advertised job the recipient, although a stranger, is assumed to be qualified, given the mutual interest existing between the person seeking the job and the person trying to find someone to do it. This relationship can often not apply to the unemployed. Those on JSA are expected to apply for a defined number of jobs weekly, which in practice for many means 'blind' applications, sending CVs to firms. When in a Job Club, this activity becomes even more intensive. Personal details thus become presented to a variety of people. In my last employment, these CVs were placed in an unlocked draw where anybody in the factory could view them, and did. At intervals they were thrown out, with just the most recent kept, in case any short term recruitment was needed. Thus, it could be argued that once a person is in receipt of JSA a dignity stripping process occurs. That is shown by how JH spoke about her son's prospects,

*'I hope he goes to university. Even if he doesn't do anything with whatever he gets, at least he doesn't have to go and fight for a job, and have to be humiliated, because that's all it is isn't it, 'You will do this', 'You will do that'. You know when there's ten more in the dole queue they'll come and take the job over.'* (JH).

Many claimants have a cynical attitude regarding training and job search. This is perhaps not without justification.

*'....the good thing about the Job Club, was that you got your free papers, your free phone calls, free paper, free envelopes and stamps [] You had.... a quota ...and you get them sent off and wait for replies. But .... a lot of the letters that I sent in was very disheartening because .... so many of them were returned because the places no longer existed.' (Mark)*

Whilst qualifications can enhance job prospects, many see them only as a route to better earnings. Beyond that, they often appear as unimportant.

*'... if you were going to do an apprenticeship you knew what qualifications you wanted. You got your qualifications for a particular job. Now there's no jobs so it's pointless getting the qualifications.' (PL)*

+++++

*'There used to be a lot of skilled lads in Thornaby, now they find they're short of skilled people 'cos they got rid of apprenticeships. Modern day apprenticeships are no use, you can't learn much in that time.' (CR)*

SW commented on how underachievement passes through generations

*'Most of the kids I speak to now, they've got no ambition whatsoever. [.....]*

*some of that's passed down by their parents [...] they go through life like their parents, 'Oh, what's the point of going to school?' To a certain extent, I'd say the majority of people, they know that it's competitive out there. They've got to have qualifications as long as their arms to get in anywhere.'*  
(SW)

Change does appear to be happening, though it is not universal. Where it does occur – even though encouragement may come from parents – the lack of any historical precedent in the family often means that appropriate conditions, conducive for the child to learn, are absent. In the case of one respondent, for example, his children are expected to do their homework on a computer in the living room of the house, which is often lively with people, and also contains the – permanently on – television.

Whilst some may talk of a continuation of underachievement, in the past for many men the main 'qualification' was simply a muscular physique to perform physically demanding tasks. Thus, there is a cultural chasm to bridge between the almost indistinguishable controlling discourse of state and capital, with current ideals of careers, CVs and so on, against the world viewed historically, held by many of these men. In the past, one simply adapted to one's circumstances. That particular discourse can be interpreted cross-culturally via many circumstances. The men of Thornaby laboured in Head Wrightson because it was there. And in that respect they were really no different to previous generations labouring in fields or even hunting. Thus, for them, talk of CVs and careers could be seen to represent merely a temporary and perhaps a currently fashionable blip.

### 3.4.8 Aspirations and getting on : education and qualifications

In the past most Thornaby people, particularly boys, on leaving school tended to be streamed straight into the manual sector, some learning a trade and thus having some contact with further education, the majority remaining unskilled. Both at school and family level there was no drive to encourage young people to gain qualifications at any level. Today, younger people often see things differently, given that the only opportunities are the newer ones, the traditional jobs now mostly gone. That is unsurprising. In fact some parents do now encourage their children to 'do well', though that term in itself is open to interpretation. However, a lot of families do not.

PW, a shopkeeper, was proud that all her children had gone into further education.

*'You need that sort of thing to back you up. If you don't you'll finish up on the dole or at Cresstaes.'* (PW – sixties, an 'open all hours' shopkeeper.)

RL, whose mother ran a hairdressing business in old Thornaby, was also career driven. At the time of interview he had a child entering a local comprehensive school,

*'It's as if they (some parents) don't want to push. I mean when we took our eldest one to the Dene school [...] for the open evening, there was some of the year eleven's there showing them round, and we asked one of them 'what*

*do you want to do when you leave school', 'Oh I'm going on the dole, me dad's been on the dole 20 years' ' (RL – forties, currently working as an engineering representative. His earlier career was in the forces. He also has a university degree.)*

This was a reflection he further expanded on. Having become a governor of a school he became aware of poor reading skills amongst children, as well as households without newspapers or books, where television is the only stimulation. He considered this a cultural factor, citing an incident at a bring and buy sale.

*'A little 5 year old kid was looking through the books.. he picked one up .... looking at it, and he quite liked it. [.....]. And his mother came along ..... 'Put that rubbish down Johnny. There's a lovely car over here. Do you want an Action Man dolly?'. (RL)*

A1, a West Indian, who once found himself unable to teach in London in the late 1950s because of racism, has encouraged all his children in their education, and they are all now employed.

*'(children) Community was no use to them. Where are they? Top of the class. What can they do round here, the [racial] stereotype is ditched! [.....]. Got degrees, teach, in marketing. One son he got no degree but builder ..... They (children) not stop here (Thornaby).' (A1)*

P1 has difficulty with reading, writing and numeracy, mostly a consequence of not attending school when he was younger. Part of that period was spent in various young persons' institutions, which destroyed his original intention to join the army. He has no qualifications, neither was he encouraged to get any.

*'.. there's mates, [.....].they're not in brilliant jobs, ..... And they've got qualifications up to the eyes. When they left school they got 'brilliant' and all this [.....]. They're working in the council as a joiner or something, now, you know - [.....] I haven't done that bad, I'm not rich or anything, but haven't done that bad, to say that those who have got qualifications aren't really any better off than me. They might have a flashier car, but I've got no debt, they might have. (P1)*

However, both children of P1 and his partner have shown ability in Information Technology related subjects and have been encouraged in them. His son has recently been accepted into Middlesbrough's Macmillan College, one of the first City Technology Colleges.

*'I really think [qualifications are more important now]. The way they're going, I reckon, each [generation] there's less and less jobs. They say like they'll retrain you and all this total dollop, [.....]' (P1)*

Although not directly interviewed, P1's brother stated how he was pushing his own son towards further education,

*'Cos I don't want him finishing up in Asda like me.'* (E1)

Both these people represent a significant cultural change, given that education and qualifications were never previously considered in their family.

Similarly, M1 left school with no qualifications. He now works for his brother in a public house, a job he enjoys. When asked what he would call 'a good job' he made reference to his daughter:

*'I'd say one with prospects for the future, one that's going to last. It's no good if you keep getting laid off, it's pointless bothering. I also reckon it's important that you like what you're doing. Me daughter knows what she wants to do. She's just finished her GCSEs. She wants to be a fashion buyer. She's hoping to get into college and do Business Studies.*

*[later]*

*'I reckon qualifications are more important now. You come out of school with no qualifications and you've had it, you'll be on the dole for life.'* (M1)

Other individuals who saw value in qualifications included D and C. D's welding skills were put to good use at a small back street firm during the summer vacation period whilst at Teesside University. The first time he did that was something of a revelation about the world he had left behind.



*'I met a lot of guys that I used to work with at Head Wrightsons. [...].. and they were working six days a week, twelve hours for six days and four on the seventh. [.....] all the overtime payments had gone. All they were getting was a flat rate of £5 an hour[.....]*

*And I felt like going round talking to these guys, 'Listen, this is not living'. I had other things to do, better things to do..... And the only thing that got me through those 12 week periods was knowing that I was never going to have to do this for the rest of my life because I've seen something, I've seen a life outside. I've seen the other side of life. I didn't have any money, but things could be good.' (D)*

In a different manner, G and J also suggested that qualifications were not simply for monetary gain. G spends much of his time writing, whilst J, who dropped out of university, has a powerful artistic streak. They enjoy music and have a variety of instruments. However, quality of life for them is not measured in financial terms. The idea of performing paid work simply to function as a member of the consumer society is not of interest. Hence G's comments regarding signing on:

*'...the woman who used to interview me, she was the most depressed looking person you could ever see. She hated her job, she was bored with her life, and yet she looked down on me as a no hoper.' (G)*

G's parents are both retired teachers. He and J know what qualifications there are

and what they stand for, along with what can be done with them. For the majority of respondents this was not the case.

The word 'qualification' itself is arguably contentious in this context. For many respondents, it appears somewhat meaningless. Just as Willis (1979) found, that in the working class context the practical always wins over the theoretical, the value of many qualifications is questioned. GM, himself highly qualified, mentioned a new boss where he worked, in the water industry. Apparently she had once been a musician. When I asked what qualifications she had to do the job, the reply was dismissive.

*'She has one of those BAM's [in a derogatory manner].*

*F      Do you mean MBA?*

*GM    Whatever it's called, one of those modern worthless pieces of paper that means you can't do anything useful.*

*F      Why do you say that?*

*GM    It's impossible to explain anything to her, she has no idea of the practical issues involved. She has no experience of the industry. And then when of course the job isn't done on time and cost, like I and others predicted, she blames everybody but herself.'*

The only person he would recognise as having true authority in that context would be someone with similar qualifications to himself. Such attitudes may well also hold across other industries and commerce also. Certainly, I have seen when a young person has been appointed in charge of a department, how the older workers, in particular, question almost every decision once the manager's back is turned. This is justified on the basis of '*What do they know about it?*', or more commonly along the lines of '*they come here straight out of university and think they know everything*'. Perhaps there is some justification regarding the latter point, given the cultural divide that exists between workers and management.

Many of the respondents lack an understanding of what qualifications are, and how they can be used.

*'... I understand if you want shop work now you've got to have so many NVQs or whatever.'* (JM)

+++++

*'.....My daughter, she's 15 now, she's hoping to work with children, she needs to get the NVQs or whatever.'* (BC)

+++++

*'Two of them (children) went to college, got qualifications or whatever (he does not know what qualifications).'* (EC)

+++++

*'Those (call centre) jobs are white collar. You have to have been to*

*university to work there.' (PW)*

### 3.4.9 Promotion

There was an apparent indifference towards promotion and consequential versions of status.

*'I told them to stuff it (promotion).' (AL1)*

+++++

*'I just want to do what I have to do, I don't fancy all the worry.' (M1 – Early forties, for the last few years he has been working as a barman in his brother's public house. Most of his early career was spent officially unemployed, or on various schemes.)*

+++++

*'I wouldn't want to be enlisted.' (P1 – mid forties, he has spent most of his life unemployed, though apart from schemes, has worked offshore on contracts in an unskilled capacity.)*

Obviously a number of individuals do shift career and status, but many choose not to.

Some respondents were from time to time employed in supervisory roles. However, promotion beyond there was usually not considered. The role of foreman was viewed as somehow between the workforce and management.

*'... some of the foremen were pretty good, you could trust them, talk to them...' (Mark – mid forties; he was, at the time of interview, working for a charity from which he has now been made redundant. He had been employed in various heavy and metal based industries most of his working life, until those jobs dried up in the 1980s.)*

+++++

*'The foremen are in the same boat as I am.. They aren't treat much better. They get a few bob a week more than I did like ....' PK*

Whilst the foreman was usually recruited from 'us', management was usually viewed by the respondents as alien, remote, and clearly, in that binary context, 'them'.

*'..., there was no trust, they kept you in the dark all the time [...]. You found anything out by your mates or the union.' (AL1)*

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*'I think what you get when you get a new factory manager, want to try and lay down the law, or get away with what they can, and reduce conditions, wages and what have you. [.....] All they want is to make money ...' (K)*

+++++

*'Well, the managerial culture, unfortunately is based on .. on the Thatcher years, which was intense competition, and ... profitability. And.. politically it's... lower the wages, more people can be employed, and therefore help workers. (N – Retired though active on Thornaby Town Council, spent his entire working life involved in railways. Part of that period was as a full*

*time trade union official based in London.)*

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*'You get all the flannel, like, then, and it works all the way down from the top to the bottom. And that's the way management work... They just won't commit themselves to telling you the truth, what is actually going on.'* PK

+++++

*'Depends what you do, where you are, what job you did. Them like Cresstale treat you like dirt.'* (PL - Early forties, currently unemployed, he has had a variety of jobs which, due to a disability limiting mobility, have been of a light, though unskilled nature.)

It was not only those reliant on wages that mistrusted management. ST, who was a self employed window cleaner, pointed out how he was supposed to tender for an existing job 'via the back door', having not been informed directly. Similarly, GM, a professional engineer, found management poor, and somewhat distant from the task, at a number of levels.

*'Macho-management occurs more often. Management's knowledge of work processes has always been poor. It is clear now they have no idea how to manage people.'* (GM – mid fifties, came to Teesside in 1970, now works in Scotland.)

Regarding trust, he added

*'Any information is used against you for personal ends.'* (GM)

The tone of his conversation suggests that he has greater empathy with various workers, particularly craftsmen, than the apparent vagaries of management and its own perceived culture.

For the majority of the respondents, moving towards management may entail elements of betrayal in the opinions of some, particularly within the individual's inner social circle. This could also be interpreted as betraying one's class. For those with strong social links there is the danger of losing those contacts, following any major promotion. This does appear to work both ways. I have witnessed conversations where people have talked of others around topics such as promotion, and sometimes, moving to a 'better' suburb, with comments along the lines of

*'(Name, sarcastically spoken) ... isn't good enough for the likes of us now!'*

Certainly in the past, supervisors or foremen might be seen drinking in the lounge, rather than the men-only bar of a public house. The above quotation is very much a composite of an often heard sentiment. It does imply perceived elements of treachery. Given that many of these individuals have very limited formal qualifications, it is behaviour within the workplace that catches the eye of management, regarding promotion contenders. Part of this relates to the level of trust between that individual and management, though trust is perhaps the wrong word in this context. In many workplaces, gaining management's attention may well involve

an element of informing on others. In the past, progress upwards frequently occurred in a single firm across a working life, perhaps viewed by those individuals as a combination of achievement through hard work, with an element of luck thrown in.

There are many people who do not seek promotion at work. They clearly find the behaviour of those who do want advancement annoying. One hears comments like:

*'Watch him, he's a spragger (informer)'*

*'He'd sell his Aunt (or other close relative) to get management's attention'*

The most frequent reference regarding such persons was 'arsehole'. Obviously, this does not suggest someone to be trusted or respected. In the close knit network it can mean losing the confidence of those around you. It may also suggest that these individuals are less reliant on the group. Given that in the past there was an inclination for Teesside men to present themselves as hard - hard working, hard drinking, not frightened to fight to get their own way - it does indicate the need for a certain coldness to be able to detach oneself from that core. But not all foremen distanced themselves from the workforce. CR was a foreman once in scaffolding, and socialised with his men, stating

*'other foremen, the men were well, not like mates to them.'* (CR – Forties, worked in his early career mostly in scaffolding. He is now employed helping combat drug addiction.)



### 3.4.10 Getting out

The solidaristic nature of community in places like Thornaby does go some way towards explaining why people do not move away for work, and there is an inward looking conformity. Al, originating from the West Indies, moved into Thornaby a number of years ago. He talked of these social pressures.

*'Your fellow peers round here, 'You dare do something else'. Because if you better, better as an outsider, there is a problem, they make you deviant, you being an outsider. There's something wrong with you, you shouldn't be here! (laughs).*

*[adding later]*

*You can always tell a successful person from Thornaby, they move away!'*  
*(AL – Early sixties, he has had a mixed career, teacher, musician, laboratory worker, and on the railways. He currently works with young people.)*

When discussing moving away to work, as opposed to short term contracts away, it is evident that for many, leaving 'home' would really be hard to do.

*'It'd have to be somewhere special to get me to go away from here. [...] It's only a council house, and it's on the main road .... You look over these allotments, across the river, there's fields over there. The neighbours are*

*good as well.'* (AL1)

+++++

*'I could have done a year or two back. I was offered a manager's job. I didn't really fancy it like. It would have meant moving away. I'm happy where I am. To be honest I like to think that I'm a little bit loyal to Thornaby. It'd take a lot to get me to leave, I've never really been out of the place,.'* (M1)

D and C , a couple, once considered emigrating, but were very concerned about being away from family and friends. Cultural capital of human association appeared more important than material gain.

D     *'We like the area live in. We like living here...*

C     *We're here when things go wrong (for the family).*

D     *... you're talking about two people who have never left Teesside before. [...] So it was never really an option for us. Maybe we were afraid to move or something.'*

Later in the conversation, D made a very valid point:

*'.. work was so unpredictable that I thought what's the point, say, moving to Manchester for six months work, you could be out of work after six months there. I might as well be out of work here as there.... than an isolated feeling*

*like an outsider somewhere else.'*

The need to be close to where family and friends are was also mentioned by JW, who at the time of interview was working for his brother-in-law in Bradford, returning home at weekends. In that arrangement he appears to have found a working compromise to a difficult situation. What he also makes clear is that he has no intention of any permanent move to Bradford.

D's reflections on why he would not take a job elsewhere suggest that amongst the growing abundance of uncertainties thrown up by deindustrialisation, the victims are less mobile than politicians perhaps would like. Following job losses, you hang on to what you have, what is left.

However, there were some who had no problem with the idea of moving away. S, an experienced camera person, who had few family connections in the area, saw no difficulty with the idea of working and moving elsewhere. In his career he saw the value of being based in London, having already been there. But his wife, with strong local family connections, saw no reason to leave at all. She appeared to view paid work as purely functional, and qualitatively unimportant, financial gain being the main target; this was seemingly a common view. From this perspective, the idea that one might choose an occupation because the work is actually interesting is absent. One works simply to produce income.

### 3.5 Benefit Life

Many localities in the North East have always been reliant on a narrow range of industries for their economic well being. Inevitably any downturn in these has affected whole communities over the years. In many cases, as in Head Wrightson, the jobs available, even during 'good times', were not well paid. Hence, following a downturn, unemployment often meant deepening poverty. Consequently, when discussing benefit claimants in a North East context, one is able to talk in the context of a continuity of events linked to an uninterrupted relative poverty for many people, a poverty that has only varied in its intensity through time.

Living on benefits takes on a contextually different meaning when it becomes permanent. There is a dual effect on place through large-scale permanent deprivation, represented by the poor appearance of people, particularly in how they dress and present themselves. Nevertheless, even in Thornaby, where few families have not been affected by unemployment at some time over the last twenty years or so, some respondents noted how others in work assumed jobs were freely available and there for the taking.

*'People find themselves in and out of work, in and out and on and off the dole, though there's them that won't have work of course, but I'm sure you've met some of them.'* (Credit Union official)

+++++

*'When they're on Jobseekers they can get training for £10 or more, whatever.'*

*It's a waste of money. Ask what they've learnt and they'll say 'bugger all'. A lad, a regular in here, told me he doesn't want a job, the rent's paid, poll tax and all that. He needs £200 to get by. Half the people round here don't want work. A family near here, one goes out for £135, the other won't get out of bed. He won't go to Jobseekers, he's gone to the doctor's, he's bad. They say there's no work. My six all work. Even Cresstale; you've got to take what's there.'* (PW a small 'open all hours' shopkeeper)

What is meant by work in this context? It would appear that acquisition of 'work' at any cost is expected of unemployed people. Job Centre regulations regarding job seekers seem to promote this view. Also, those employed are considered to be working to keep the unemployed, or others, on benefit, with apparently scant consideration that unemployment could happen to anybody. One of the Thornaby police officers interviewed stated that there was no need for poverty now as 'they' get Social Security (PC2).

At the same time little criticism is directed at those living off shares or inheritance, where non-beneficiaries of that prosperity work to keep others. An exception was G, who stated, albeit rather tongue in cheek,

*'I see the royal family benefited very well from state benefits, and I want to aspire to their level (laughs)'* (G)

Frequently people refer to Benefit Agency staff as being impolite, unreasonable, and

speaking to recipients in a derogatory manner. This needs to be placed in the context of a world in which benefit recipients find themselves balancing on a razor sharp legal minefield, wrapped in red tape, seemingly designed to trip them at every hurdle. Being on benefits strips the right of privacy away. One's life becomes open to the prying eyes of the civil service.

*'Oh there's been nowt but trouble, nothing went right at all when my wife went in hospital, they said 'well you can't claim dole, go over Social security'. ...and this woman was quite bitchy with me, 'You can't sign dole, you're not looking for a job''. (BC)*

+++++

*'Well they said that I shouldn't tell employers that I'd been ill. So I told them not to tell me things like that, why should I lie?' (AL1)*

Unemployment triggers a chain reaction that, over time, functions as a gradual process towards deprivation. Continuous unemployment requires cut backs on all things deemed non-essentials. The person losing a well-paid job is likely to have more possessions than the low paid. However, as unemployment continues they, like low paid people, will find that supposed essentials, such as household insurance, are no longer affordable.

The poorer person though, having less, may not be worried about newness or the possible source of an item should it need to be replaced.

*'Once you've been burgled you don't mind going to a second hand shop and wondering where it came from. So we're all benefiting in some way, all getting things cheap. Good quality things. (G)*

For a solidaristic community, living always close to mass deprivation, these circumstances function slightly differently. People often live out their lives very close to others in similar circumstances. Aspects of one's neighbours are known, that in a more privatised place might be considered as being noseey. Children's clothes are often handed down through generations and between neighbours. Consumer goods are often purchased on 'tick', or second hand. The frequent absence of essentials often means reliance on neighbours and/or family. Even though lives are more open to each other, when forms of welfare are sought the experience is just as undignified as for a privatised person. Claiming benefits is an experience that for many is expected more than once in a lifetime, an experience one has to go through, and know how to respond to. Given that many people one lives close to have also had to go through these experiences, it is at least a known factor, one that can be prepared and choreographed for, in order to present correct answers, and provide the right impression. This also means knowledge of what to hide, what not to say, and what information not to volunteer.

Many people of pension age still refer with horror to the dole before the Second World War. Likewise even more recently,

*'I remember in 1966 when I got married I went in for something, he*

*[National Assistance official] walked in and said 'You've got a record player, sell it'. I grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and threw him out of the house.'* (K)

Thus the knowledge to say or write the 'correct' thing becomes paramount

*'...you become very skilled at telling them what they want to hear. They don't want, .... to change anything. They want their job to be done as easily as possible. I help them do that. When I'm interviewed I just tell them what they want to hear. It makes everything simple for them and for me'.* (G)

Some of those individuals less attached to community lack much of the cultural capital needed to negotiate benefits. This is more significant for those categorised as Jobseekers, when, after six months, official pressure becomes applied to 'encourage' the individual to gain employment - any employment. For those who had been in secure employment this can function as a double whammy. GM, a professional civil engineer, found the experience of redundancy somewhat surreal:

*'I was angry that I was put into that situation'.*

He felt humiliated, though has not directly said so. He managed to find alternative employment quite rapidly, albeit a long way from home, a job to which he no longer applies the same level of commitment as he did to his previous occupation.

However, part of his response is a greater shift towards savings, particularly share-



based schemes, thus embracing a further shift to a privatised world that many from solidaristic places have no opportunity to engage in. Being on benefits brings cultural impotence.

*'.....the constant struggle on benefits..., the constant assault from the benefits agencies, meaning go and look for work which wasn't there. (.....) When you're out of work there's nothing you can do.'* (D)

+++++

*J* *'.... they treat you like you're a thicko, ....*

*G* *Tar you.*

*J* *...with the same brush, tar you all with the same brush.*

*G* *They talk down to you. Em, they, they think that you're lazy'. (G and J)*

+++++

*'They pull you in and ..., you have to say what job you've been for... and they look at you as though you were just a .. scrounger, seemed to, seemed to me that you not treat very well, had the impression that everyone's on the dole just wants to stay at home and...., they prefer to be on the dole, so they treat everyone the same. You'd feel a bit annoyed going in and ...being questioned when you knew you were doing every effort....*

*[later]*

*...it's always the ones that are trying, that are the ones on the kicking list. The people that's you know, of the 'on the dole and never worked in their lives syndrome' seemed to be left alone. It's always the ones that are say, maybe, just been made redundant, looking for other jobs, 'Ah you need moulding!'*  
(Mark)

++++  
*'It's the endless threats, living under their power day by day. Living in poverty[.....]. Nobody chooses it and if you're on the dole they don't leave you alone.'* (PK)

++++  
*'They're really at you all the time now. I'm sure they know there's nothing out there, but it doesn't seem to stop them.'* (S)

++++  
*'..... their attitude just made me resentful. Just go along with them.'* (CR)

++++  
*'I'm currently on the sick. Administratively, well - go on a fortnight and when you come off you lose money. I've had problems with books, they send two out. So I took them in but they wanted to take both back and leave me with nothing. So what do they do, they send two out again, then three. So I just cash the one and give the others back after. Overall, though, when you're on the sick they don't treat you too bad.'* (K)

An individual such as GM, who up to that point had led a structured life based around a career and certainties, was suddenly adrift. Whilst his qualifications meant

he was more able to find alternative work, he has accepted cuts in pay and conditions. For him and one or two others, no pressure has been applied by the authorities as regards job search.

If the individual has developed a strategy for dealing with the benefit system, that strategy aims to maximise both income and security. These strategies are individually created, according to circumstances, but can form distinct patterns, given the limited range of benefit options. For two of the respondents their strategy was to avoid marriage for financial reasons. One of them said:

*'We're in a no win sort of situation where because of work, the lack of it, because he can't get a full time job to support me and J (son) that we can't live permanently together, get married, or anything. I need to stay on state benefits just to keep me son going, to get a better education that we never got. What are you supposed to do for your family?' (JH)*

The other person employing a specific strategy to maximise benefits was P1. He has two children with his partner, in a stable relationship. However, he officially resides with his father, a widower. The reason P1 and his partner have organised their official circumstances in this manner is linked to child maintenance. Should P1 start work he would immediately attract demands for payment that, as far as he is concerned, would not go to his partner in full.

Other strategies, often applied to older men, involve the use of Incapacity Benefit

(formerly Sickness and Invalidity Benefit). In Thornaby, and in the North East, the unemployment rate is higher than the national average and a larger proportion of people of working age are in receipt of Incapacity Benefit.

One respondent, DK, worked part time whilst receiving a pension from his previous employment. The luxury of part time income, beyond a specified minimum, does not exist for those reliant on benefits. Part time work results in loss of income, possibly leaving an individual worse off. This can impact on the entire family, not just an individual member such as C, of C and D, who gave up her part time job in school kitchens when they were on benefits. Others may still work because they enjoy what they do.

Mark, who at the time of the interview worked for a mental health charity and received Family Credit said

*'I get a lot of satisfaction out of it so I suppose that's a bonus.'*

During a later casual conversation I discovered he has since become a single parent and the inflexible demands of the charity's management have resulted in him giving up his job.

For those prepared to do part time work and risk potential financial loss other, administrative, difficulties arise.

*'It's also true that if you work part time you're looked down on a bit by those in there (Job Centre), those jobs they don't have much of an opinion on them. He (Job Centre Clerk) seemed to take the attitude 'You're going along alright, I don't want to hassle you, cause you more trouble than you need'. I'm not sure how to take that! He was the exception mind you. Most of them seem to try to make you feel uncomfortable'. (S)*

There is also a fundamental mistrust of the Benefits Agency, borne out from experiences and from handed down knowledge.

*'I was bad ..., the doctor said I had angina, so I had to pack it in. So I went on the sick .... they (the DSS) sent me down Woodlands Road (DSS medical examination centre) and they said I was all right. So that's it, I'm all right!'*  
(BC)

+++++

*'... when you're in the dole office, you have to be careful what you say, very careful! Every question they ask you is designed to trap you. I've been around too long. I know all their games and tricks to catch you out. The pressure was starting to go on me a little while back, you know a course or something. It wouldn't matter if you got something out of it, but most are not worth the time and money. Felt I had to get a sick note. The doctor wouldn't put me on, me diabetes and me various ailments weren't enough. He knew that if I had a medical they'd just say I was fine to work. Then he saw my cut finger what I'd done gardening. I couldn't close me hand. He said 'that'll*

*do!'. (K)*

For some people, though, there are still too many pitfalls.

*'If I was to sign off and get a job your dole stops that same day, [...]. You then phone up straight away and send off for your Family Credit. And then everything stops. To be honest you can't pay.. thirteen weeks, thirteen weeks it takes to process Family Credit. No good if that job's only one or two weeks.'* (BC)

Even when in work and in receipt of Family Credit, potential pitfalls exist.

Fluctuating demands within the hourly paid workplace might increase the number of hours one is asked to work. Although a single such incident can be a blip in an otherwise static situation the extra pay can penalise the low paid worker during a reapplication period.

*'I'd sit down with the wife and work out what is what, which is the best way. We do that now. Work out what benefits we get if I take this job, or if she works. I could get a part time job but I get stopped in two ways. It's not just losing the benefit, but when you start work. If they want you to work overtime you might not be able to refuse cos if it's too near the end [ of the Family Credit period, the period from which wage slips are checked for calculation purposes] you can lose benefit.'* (BC)

Of course, once employment ceases, and one needs to sign on again, a whole new set of administrative issues commence. Thus individuals have developed strategies centred on minimising problems caused by the combination of benefit rules and employer behaviour.

Many of the jobs taken by people leaving benefit are poorly paid, so do not necessarily take them out of poverty. Given that work creates new demands, such as transport, feeding oneself away from home and a new routine, taking a job in this context merely alters individual priorities in how they spend what money they do have. Thus work may not lift people out of poverty but merely move them into alternative forms of hardship.

### 3.6 Community

A sense of place is inevitably a personal perception and attachment to place mostly reflects attachment to people. Many, possibly most, Thornaby people consider the town to have a 'good sense of community'. But people who are not from Thornaby can view this 'good sense of community' from a different angle and may see it differently. Both views are considered, starting with that of the outsider.

#### 3.6.1 Looking at community from an outsider perspective

Three priests were interviewed, two Roman Catholic, one Anglican. They felt that Thornaby had a 'strong sense of community', one finding it the strongest he had witnessed in the UK since leaving his native Eire. GD, who had once had a parish in Thornaby, noted that,

*'.. linkages exist via large families and association with dominant firms'.*

He commented on how bonds become further strengthened through intermarriage,

*'That goes back to roots and leaves a trail. I noticed that in (a North Yorkshire rural parish). It was very closely bonded. This idea of closeness, a lot depends on your personality though it's generally linked to working roots, Head Wrightsons, ICI and the rest. All lived round the Bon Lea and Five Lamps. They could go back through their in laws, grandfathers, relatives. It*



*all provides bonds. When I lived in Thornaby, people who came from outside, like from Billingham etc., not Thornaby born, they were never any part of this. [...] Whether or not they felt any part of the community was inevitably linked to any desire to be involved' (GD)*

He then stated that,

*'They don't move out unless they have to. They become cocooned. I've seen the same elsewhere, mainly on farms, where they haven't embraced city life. [...] They've only a range of experiences tied to the rural way their parents live, the farms and that. How do they cope? They become disadvantaged because they had a different social education.'* (GD)

DK worked in Thornaby, came from Middlesbrough, and was married to a Thornaby born person. He saw things in a similar way.

*'I see there's very strong family links in Thornaby, very much extended families. They seem to retain the idea of a big family. ... I know this from my wife, the way my wife talks, she seems to know lots and lots of people in Thornaby and all their family connections. And I found that unique, you don't come across that in many places. ... I don't know why it should be, how this has happened, I know from a church point of view the Catholic side of it is very strong in Thornaby, and always has been. Whether it's still as strong I'm not quite as sure, it's perhaps slightly lower now, but ... families*

*tended to, well for instance, if you go back, maybe 50, 50, 60 years, you get cases where a family would take in another family because they were on hard times. But it seemed to cement the community together. And I think it's lasted a long time. As I say, I find it rather unique, I've never come across it anywhere else.'* (DK)

A similar observation was made by RL, who moved into Thornaby during his schooldays. He talked about

*'...everybody seeming to know each other. There was a lot more cousins in the school and things like that, where you didn't see that in Fairfield [previous school] so much, relatives going to the same school.'* (RL)

S and A both come from Middlesbrough, A from an affluent business family background, and S a working class one. They lived in Thornaby for eight years, though have recently moved to Ingleby Barwick, a middle-class suburb to the south of Thornaby.

*'It was a little bit like that [strong sense of community], though we didn't have much to do with it. They tended to do things as a street, organise things. There was like parties, if you can call them that, in back gardens, in the summer. We went out with them twice, though we didn't bother that much with them. Mind you round here (Ingleby Barwick), we don't know anybody round here.'* (S)

K, a Thornaby person with strong links at a many levels, pointed to factors he saw contributing to the nature of Thornaby as a community:

*'Thornaby being an insular type of town, being a town where most of the people actually worked in the town, you didn't have to leave Thornaby at one stage to get a job' (K)*

PC1 similarly stated how he saw Thornaby as a little insular, with a lot of people who had hardly stepped outside its boundaries. In fact, for many people, there was no need to, everything they felt they needed was inside Thornaby's borders. The solidaristic nature of the place meant that support from others, who knew and understood through their own experiences, would be there when needed. This support is seen as being absent elsewhere.

Of course, if Thornaby's community is shaped by historical linkages of intermarriage and association, then, given the subjective nature of what community is, other outsiders might be best placed to offer an interpretation. Even here there are alternative views. Two respondents had opposite views regarding various state initiatives linked to community regeneration. KC, who came from South Wales in the 1980s, was involved in a neighbourhood association in the Mandale area, a part of Thornaby often associated with inner city type poverty, vandalism, crime levels and so on. He was optimistic about the area's development.

*'Well it's quite a lot better than it used to be. The houses are starting to get modernised, brought up to standard, and there is quite a lot of residents associations setting up. ' (KC)*

A1, a West Indian, took a different view regarding state involvement in community.

*'I know what community is. It not what here. Back home we all one big family, ..... Sunday all get together, go to church, family all eat together. [.....] You ill you get help. You do wrong you still part of that community, that place. Nobody steal from their own people like here. Community is natural, it's part of what you are. It happens through birth, marriage, friendships. Here community is selective. You are supposed to be of this community but not that one. [.....] This called community here too narrowly defined. [.....] Look how South Thornaby has to fight for cash. Real community does not need cash. They been trying to make community since the eighties. In Trinidad no community centres, halls. Here little groups, like pensioners or little interest groups. This not real community. [.....] There is nowhere to be collective, just do things, identify with each other by belonging. Not just old people, young people, ethnic, white, but everybody together. I've been here a long time now but am not accepted. My wife should have been accepted because she is white, not accepted. Kids not have school friends. ' (A1)*

These opinions are based on his earlier experiences of living in Skelton, a small

former ironstone mining village south of Saltburn, some fifteen miles from  
Thornaby.

*'I think the older people perhaps here had more community but they have not passed it on. No sense of togetherness. Community is helping each other. When we went to live in Skelton it was not much more than six streets, shop club and pub. Now that was community. Everybody met in the pub or club. The club allowed children in. You go and see someone. They are out, the neighbour say they are at the shop, to go in make yourself at home till they come back. The door is not locked. Family and community very close together. At first they don't know what to make of me. I'm black but not on the dole. I have a job, not women on the game and all the rest like they think it is with blacks. I have a job in ICI in the labs. They do not know where to place me. I have high status but black. They cannot stereotype. They only have one image of black people! But they get to know us and they accept us. We become part of that place. Now that was a community but Thornaby no, no community here. When we live down the bottom [in Thornaby] when I on the railways. The shopkeeper next door always friendly even though we don't shop there. I think it's because most business people have traveled, have outside knowledge. The locals didn't know about me so therefore I'm a threat. For a long time we have no friends from Thornaby. Most friends come via ICI, come for a drink, play dominoes. You know I've played dominoes since small, played all different ways. When I play in the pubs in Thornaby at first they think I cheat because I'm always winning!'* (A1)

GM, although not resident in Thornaby, has visited and stayed there frequently since 1971. He says:

*'There is no sense of community. There is a collective enthusiasm for some well known recreations or possibly acceptance of limited choices. There is discussion about ordinary life and matters associated with these recreations. There is apparently no community discussion or discussion of matters of a wider interest. There is, however, a definite bond within extended families. There appears to be a great deal of caring for family members' (GM)*

His own observations simply reflect his interpretation of what he has seen and witnessed as well as what he knows about Thornaby. For him, and in relation to his own associations with the place, the various state backed regeneration interventions become simply a fringe activity, detached from the Thornaby he refers to. To him, Thornaby is centred around pubs, clubs, football, family links, and very little else.

As an outsider, with an English public school accent, GM often finds himself sidelined by others in Thornaby. If he is not with someone else he can easily find himself totally ignored. This latter point was similarly put to me by a retired person at a presentation ceremony for the Five Lamps Centre. He had lived in the town since being demobbed from the RAF at Thornaby in 1946. Originally from Leicestershire, he spoke with a strong Midlands accent. This individual was by chance the person I sat next to at the presentation ceremony. In casual conversation I

told him what I was doing. He said that he had never been accepted and would always be the stranger or outsider in Thornaby. He also spoke of how, as a perceived outsider, one can frequently be ignored by others. For the outsider Thornaby can become a very lonely place.

*'...well a lot of it is 'Er, you're not from Thornaby', 'Oh well, I've only lived here 15 year', 'Oh Christ, you aren't even considered for your passport yet!'. And I think that's true. I know people's that's been here, one of the Gazette guys, he's been in Thornaby nearly 30 year, and he says to me, 'I just feel I'm a stranger still. I'm accepted, but frankly I still feel like a stranger'.'*

*(K)*

Similarly, I was told of a Councillor who chided an opposition member as not knowing Thornaby as he had only lived in the place for about twenty years! Thus, when viewed from an outsider perspective, someone like GM, who visits the place frequently but is socially isolated from its mainstream, can easily conclude that there is no sense of community in Thornaby, whilst still noting that there are strong family bonds.

EG, also from the Midlands, moved to Teesside in 1960. He worked for the North East Electricity Board, based at Thornaby in an office complex behind the Town Hall.

*'Coming more specifically to the questions you ask- did I notice a difference*

*in community attitudes, skills, sense of identity etc.? Short answer - yes, definitely. But not in regard to Teesside v Wearside v Tyneside but more in regard to the rest of the UK. The NE is clearly isolated topographically from the rest of the country, probably more so than any other region except Scotland and NI, and this engendered a sort of bunker mentality, us versus the rest, but usually focussed on Westminster. Thus there was a strong NE community spirit but underlying that a strong local community spirit. I suppose it is a hierarchical thing, local-town-region-national wherever you live but I do not see it as a deficiency but as a fact of life and is summed up really in 'Resistance to Change'. You may recall the Thornaby v Stockton, Stokesley RDC v M'bro, Teesside v the six authorities and [.....] all the protest marches, lobbying, petitions and letters to the press. Trying to make sense of all this: I was conscious of a stronger community identity in the NE than the Midlands.' (EG by email)*

Two police officers noted the nature of community in Thornaby as qualitatively different from many places. PC2 spoke about how a lot of families all seem to live together, or at least close to each other, often in the same street, compared with a lot of places where people have moved to wherever is best for their career. He then said that whilst some want 'to get on', most want to stay at home.

*'A lot hardly ever leave Thornaby. I suppose that the other side is that families do stay together a bit' (PC2)*



### 3.6.2 Looking at community from the insider perspective

So how do Thornaby people view their own community?

Whilst many implied that Thornaby had a 'good sense of community', much of that was retrospective, looking back to a past when this community was felt to have existed. However, continuity through friends and associates over a long period of time, interpreted as 'knowing people', also appeared to be significant. The following were typical comments across a wide spectrum of conversations.

*'Everybody I know lives here, all me mates.'* (P1)

+++++

*'Everyone knows each other. Can't explain past that, just people know people, to talk to people.'* (PL)

+++++

*'I know everybody and have contacts here.'* (ST)

+++++

*'Everything I've done almost has been here. I can't walk down the road ten yards without saying hi to someone.'* (M1)

+++++

*'Well, all the lads stick together, everybody gets on with everybody else.'*  
(EC)

+++++

*'...I think there was street houses that brought the community closer. [.....]*

*They gathered anywhere in Thornaby. I mean they gathered round Five Lamps, have a chat, all the fellas, go into the library. But the recreation ground's always had places for them to play; chess and things like that. Obviously the vandals destroyed that. But Thornaby was that people will help. You go into somebody's house, your tea would be laid out with theirs. So we'd always watch you while your mam went somewhere. There was always that type of thing' (K)*

+++++

*'We have a lot of friends as well, and ..... when we were unemployed, you know, they were good to us, they were good friends, and they remained friends while we were unemployed you know. And that's important.' (D)*

+++++

*'It's because we all lived there and nobody seemed to move.' (PK)*

Many considered old Thornaby as once having a stronger sense of community than the new, to the extent that demolishing much of that part was blamed for the seeming loss of sense of community now.

*'You know time changes, people change. Yes, they all grew up together, they go to the old school and hang about on street corners, then go into pubs. Stay in the pubs in their little groups, then get married and all split up. Community is splitting, no further coming up to the pub. Old men 10:30, pubs closed. Half eleven, still outside my window talking. All that's gone. Used to be like John Boy 'good night', 'good night', 'good night' all over!*

*Don't get that now. There's no community. Seven o'clock used to go to the pub, the club. Now it's 9:30, maybe just have two pints. The pub culture has changed. Sing songs gone. Now Sky Sports. Pubs were for families.*

*Everybody get on the last bus going home, going this way that way. All came in, met at the boundaries. Meet maybe in one place have a drink then separate go to other places meet other people, but they all know each other. Never that spirit when I move here (After compulsory purchase of house for demolition, moving to a council house halfway between old and new Thornaby). (A1, who although experiencing difficulties in being accepted, observed how Thornaby people related to each other)*

+++++

*'It was a good place that. Plenty of pubs, plenty of shops, two or three picture houses, a billiard hall. Nothing at all for the kids nowadays.*

*[...]*

*It's missed now that the new town centre's took over.' (EC)*

+++++

*'It was close knit, Thornaby, everything, whether you lived down the top end or the bottom end everybody knew everybody. I'd have a good idea, they'd say 'oh, so and so's out looking for you'. [...] Whichever pub. You can go and sit and have a conversation, not just with one or two, the majority. Like you say, there'd be somebody in that you didn't know, but it'd be like, 'oh, that's so and so's uncle', [...] He's been working away, he's come back, or whatever .... You just knew everybody. (P1)*

+++++

*'People moved up there [new town centre], they still knew each other but others come in, it seemed to lose something.'* (PK)

+++++

*'It's got rougher though, has Thornaby. Up the centre anyway. Very rough up the top [new Thornaby]'. (PL)*

+++++

*'(Comparing old and new Thornaby)            It's definitely gone down round here. Garnet and Pearl Road used to be lovely streets (part of old Thornaby made up of pre-war council housing stock). Now any Tom, Dick or Harry can get in. We bought the house up near the Griffin (a more affluent privatised area) to bring the kids up in. They wouldn't go up. It was too nice for them down here then. We brought the house hoping the kids would have a better environment.'* (PW)

For many, there was clearly an air of optimism when the new town centre was built.

*'The new town centre was definitely an improvement on what was there before.'* (PW)

+++++

*'I think a lot of it was for the better, because obviously it was more modern, the housing and moving into the age of central heating and stuff like that, ...'*  
(Mark)

+++++

*'There's six of us, all five sisters [and him]. [.....] ...we got offered a five*

*bedroomed house, this one, and we all got a bedroom each. The other [last] place was a 3 bedroomed place, and I got me own bedroom to me self.'* (JW)

The optimism was initially further enhanced by neighbours moving into the new estates together.

*'...we were one of the first people in, so was our next door neighbour, and so was the other person the other side. And so, eventually we had, there was three of us, we were almost all brought up together ..'* (JW)

Other people around them were also known, having been resident in adjacent streets previously. According to JW this situation was not to last.

*'.., nearly all round about, these ones over here, these other houses there, they've had commuting people, people that just come in for a couple of weeks, and go out and on. They know how to abuse the system, abuse the place. There's no sense of community, ... you have to lock the doors now. ... we're plagued because we've got a white door, plastic door on, and they have to play knocky nine doors all the time. So we basically keep that door locked.'* (JW)

As the frequent visiting outsider, GM sees things differently.

*'There is no difference in the old and new Thornaby people. Obviously the*

*'new' people may be marginally more affluent than the 'old'. There might be a slight change in outward behaviour. Unemployment is higher now but does not appear to have changed people.'* (GM)

### **3.6.3 Crime and its impact on community**

Like anywhere else, Thornaby's community is affected by crime in its various guises. Crime is not as great a problem in Thornaby as in many other places. But nuisance crime, such as anti-social behaviour, sometimes alcohol or drug fuelled, and also car crime, have a high profile in Thornaby. Such behaviour can impact deeply upon its victims. A lot of Thornaby people blame crime on incomers, and that often connects with a particular version of Thornaby presented by those with strong ties to the place, one that embeds a sense of permanence, continuity and tradition around 'true Thornaby' people. In this context, perceptions of crime and its perpetrators thus help to define and reveal the idea of community in Thornaby.

The 'incomers' that people blame for crime were often transferred into Thornaby's former council houses from estates elsewhere in Stockton, estates, such as Blue Hall, Ragworth and Tilery. These places are often associated, in common Thornaby folklore, as being full of 'trouble makers'. Other incomers into Thornaby, as identifiable groups, also include travellers, notably Irish, who have moved into a number of council houses. Although there is a visible Asian population, mostly from Pakistan and Bangladesh, this rarely appeared to feature in conversations, particularly in the context of blaming others.

*'It, it's not like it used to be, Thornaby, there's a lot of outsiders in. You know you have their Stockton areas, trouble areas, where they put all their rubbish. And they said 'right, let's clear this up.' So basically they moved them out and Thornaby seemed to get them all.'* (P1)

+++++

*'.... Thornaby's gone downhill mind you with the people that's being let in up there (new town centre).'* (PL)

+++++

*'They've moved families from Ragworth to Thornaby fetching their problems with them.'* (CR)

Such allocation of blame is not universal, but appears to create a barrier that enables discrimination against others by creating a core 'pure' group, enabling comparison to the 'other'. The importance of the topic was made clear by a former councillor who, again, brought the issue up though not derogatively, attempting to understand, recognising it as a popular opinion. The issue came up during a discussion on religious tolerance, in a Christian context, and relations between Catholics and Protestants. Migration into Thornaby included a lot of Irish and Scots. Yet unlike both in their home countries, and in places such as Liverpool and Glasgow, Teesside has never apparently suffered from sectarianism. It was out of this that K noted how frustrations appeared to be vented at the 'others' coming into Thornaby from these Stockton estates.

*'I don't know, we are a bit insular but we are only into that way. ....  
especially with this new influx of Stockton people from Ragworth and Blue  
Hall, I find it more biased against them that, that anyone's of them's a  
trouble maker, which isn't true. But because of the..... other issues there, cos,  
'They've come in and took our houses haven't they', and 'They've took our  
jobs', 'My daughter can't get a house cos them bastards from over there are  
coming here'. And there's three people down the road, and there's not an  
ounce of trouble in here. Cos, it's the old scapegoat thing isn't it. Is it...part  
of this depressive thing, this 'out of work' and 'pressures on people'? (K)*

For some, anybody different is viewed with mistrust. As A1 put it:

*'People round here, anything they don't know they fear.' (A1)*

The visible face of defined crime is perhaps mostly anti-social behaviour by young people. Several referred to this.

*'Kids over the back start bonfires, take drugs, nobody cares.*

*[.....]*

*(Later) A lot of crime now. Unemployment with teenagers. It is serious in  
Thornaby, unemployment related. Up here now big, left with needles and  
things. Police send a car. Not much they can really do. Some 13 or 14 or  
12, just get a caution. Wait till they're 16 then charge them. Still have silly  
burglaries. Steal from neighbour and walk down the street wearing his*



*shirt!' (A1)*

+++++

*'I had a lot of problems when I had an allotment. That was always getting broke into and things pinched.' (He used to sleep on the allotment in an effort to protect it to the extent it became his permanent residence for a number of years.) (EC)*

+++++

*'Had me car pinched (laughs). What goes around! Couple of year ago, what for joy riding, this was interesting, like a track round here, used to come screeching, right about 5, 6 o' clock in the morning, baiting the coppers, getting the coppers to come, you know. There's a lot of thefts now, yeah without a doubt....' (P1, a former joyrider)*

+++++

*'We did have our garage broken into once, but nothing was taken. And there was the time when I had my car stolen from the Asda car park in Thornaby. I got it back three days later, in bits.' (S)*

+++++

*'.... there's been over forty allotments broke into over the last year, three of them burnt out.' (K)*

Anyone visiting Thornaby town centre at lunchtime, during school term time, will observe staff at almost all the entrances to commercial premises acting as bouncers, limiting or banning school children from entering, this reflecting a view that otherwise pilfering will inevitably increase.

It is the nuisance aspect that is probably the front line of perceived criminal activity, the point at which police assistance is most likely sought. At the extreme level, nuisance crime can become very destructive - such as in the manner in which a church was vandalised to the point it had to be demolished.

*'There were still people looking after the building. People were just, ... destroying it down, you know, full of drugs and, you know, every night, sitting on the roof.'* (JW – a regular user of that church)

Reaction to defined crime relates to both location and experience. G and J both previously lived in Stockton, where a series of burglaries and an apparent indifference by police, led them to flee. J, originally from Thornaby, pressurised Stockton Borough Housing Department who gave them the tenancy of a hard-to-let flat on the Holmes Estate in Thornaby. Although this estate suffers from many of the problems mentioned elsewhere - it is the estate adjacent to the demolished church - this seemed a paradise compared to where they had just left. There, G had unsuccessfully attempted to negotiate a cash deal for the return of a trumpet from the - obviously known - burglars. Although it was accepted that drug taking existed in their new neighbourhood, it was Stockton, not Thornaby that was a

*'...centre of hard drugs, it's a serious problem, and we could never live anywhere like that again.'* (G of G and J)

I attended the funeral of an elderly lady who died shortly after opening the door to people claiming to be 'Water Officials', and then found her home had been ransacked by a second person. So far no one has been arrested for this. The incident, according to her family, put her into a shock that led to her death. Such incidents lead people to adopt a more protectionist approach, which has the effect of altering social structures. This can include an unwillingness to go out after dark, or leave one's home for any significant period. Networks therefore become affected and fragmented. Communal social activities can also suffer if transport or a form of escort is not available.

The family of the elderly lady is large and extended, with relatives all in Thornaby. Talking to them revealed a vigilante attitude; should they find the people responsible, or others carrying out similar acts, they would deal with it 'in their own way'. This has obvious dangers, where innocent people might be accused. A familiar comment is that the police are almost impotent. This attitude, multiplied, creates an even more privatised mind set.

Violent behaviour is quite common, mostly drink-fuelled. There are difficulties in determining an overall profile of violence when one considers the domestic level. In turn, a number of respondents talked about physical discipline from parents and teachers in the past, considering it useful in controlling behaviour. These discussions made no reference to over-zealous use of violence by either a parent, a spouse, partner or schoolteacher.

Alcohol-based incidents appear to have qualitatively shifted. Whilst not all such

occurrences become recorded crime, they have always had a high profile in Thornaby. The proximity of many public houses and workingmen's clubs close to Head Wrightson, and the once main residential area, was a major 'selling point' as far as the male working class population was concerned. Older people frequently moaned about the loss of these establishments. Growing reliance on benefits or meagre pensions for many older men has meant alcohol consumption is no longer as financially feasible as it once was. The main drink related problems, currently, from a police perspective, tend to be under age drinking, especially on Friday nights. This is something I have witnessed myself, on Thornaby Green, with a patrol car arriving to deal with it. The Green is a popular residential area, so the police get a lot of phone calls when such events happen.

Some other defined forms of criminal activity are not necessarily considered in the same manner by many people in Thornaby as they are by the judiciary. Whilst condemnation of drug based crime appears universal, other activities such as tobacco and alcohol smuggling appear to be tolerated, almost accepted as a social service, providing goods at a reduced rate. I have been in a public house myself when the publican, along with others, received their own private order from the 'fag man'.

Cigarette smuggling can be lucrative for those who do it, more so than importing alcohol, which is bulky. The potential financial gains can be quite substantial; I was told of one individual who apparently has purchased and modernised her council house with the proceeds. This person was employed in a chip shop until the owner sold the business leaving her reliant on benefits with no new employment coming.

Another form of 'social service' crime, that delivers counterfeit or legally questionable goods, is CD and DVD production. These can be sold at a fraction of their retail price. The process is straightforward, downloading material from the internet. The quality of the final product is often only slightly inferior to the official version.

To understand the motivations leading to someone performing this task, one CD manufacturer, now in his forties, has had a number of jobs since leaving school, none of which he has been able to sustain for any period, each job 'drying up'. His present 'career', CD manufacturing along with some basic car repair work, helps subsidise benefits. He has two children who receive support and help in their schooling which would be impossible should he comply to the demands of JSA. This entrepreneurial role enables him an element of choice, and some self respect – compared with the basic existence of a JSA claimant. One final point: neither the tobacco smuggler nor the CD manufacturer appear to have links to any organised crime, as is often suggested in the popular press when discussing such matters.

Whilst violence clearly worries people, the legal system treats those - that in the view of others are performing a useful service - as equally deserving punishment. Thus, whilst the law may well state its version of what is acceptable behaviour, this might not be universally accepted, especially where it involves survival tactics.

### 3.6.4 Identity: Thornaby and its community in context

#### 3.6.4.1 Thornaby, Stockton and Yorkshire

Whilst Thornaby, as everywhere else, is affected by crime, it is the blaming of outsiders that suggests some hostility to others – those not of Thornaby. In this context Thornaby appears to define itself as being different, even to the extent that these places – notably Stockton and Ingleby Barwick – are seen as hostile to them. This may well be part of a defensive mechanism, linked to lost jobs, lost industries, also a lost town centre where community was seen as having been stronger, and what is possibly viewed as an attack on Thornaby's identity through the various changes in Thornaby's administration over recent years.

In fact a majority of respondents see Thornaby as a place on equal footing with Stockton and Middlesbrough. Historically, before the formation of Teesside County Borough in 1968, Thornaby was officially recognised as a town, with its own town hall and administrative base in what was then the North Riding of Yorkshire. It had a high sense of municipal pride.

*'(K) .... a lot of people obviously...realise that what we have lost,...we had everything sort of contained, our own cinemas, our own public baths. [...] Thornaby...had one of the best housing provisions, put elderly in flats, for single people. We had one of the best provisions for community care for the elderly, and things like that. It was a...very forward looking town...council.*

*You know we stood out on our own. We had our own little services...People used to say the streets were cleaned properly and that sort of thing. ' (K)*

Subsequently, Thornaby became part of Stockton Borough, and many see that incorporation as a reason for Thornaby's neglect and decline.

*'Er, there's no doubt about it, we've suffered under Stockton. ' (K)*

Certainly, Thornaby people frequently show disdain directed at Stockton, a disdain which seems to operate at a deeper level than simple place rivalry.

*'Thornaby's now only a suburb of Stockton. You can see that by the lack of investment over the last 30 year. Once Thornaby had packed up running its council Stockton took over, which meant nothing invested, just little makeovers, make the outside look a little nicer. ' (PK)*

+++++

*'Well it's always been governed from a distance hasn't it [.....]*

*Consultation's meaningless a lot of the times, they really want to consult, ask people. You'd find, at least now, Thornaby would have been linked with Middlesbrough, not Stockton. It seems there's been a bit of a sell out. ' (SW)*

+++++

*'There is this song they used to sing in the pubs, 'Dear old Thornaby', or something. But to them it represents the power of identity. Only old people know it now. ' (A1)*

Speaking to Thornaby people regarding adjacent places, one can easily gain an impression of Stockton looked on in a manner like the 'auld enemy', with forms of scorn and contempt not directed at other nearby places. For example, Middlesbrough never seems to be referred to with such disdain.

And not only has Thornaby been incorporated into Stockton, it has also lost its position as part of Yorkshire. Yet many still cling to that identity.

*'I still see myself as a Yorkshire man. Me dad, he addresses things as Yorkshire, always has done and all my life my dealings have been closer to Middlesbrough than Stockton and Durham.'* (CR)

+++++

*'Most of Thornaby people do take pride in being thought of as Yorkshire men, and I mean, we are in Yorkshire for ceremonial reasons.'* (JM)

+++++

*'You can actually play cricket for Yorkshire if you're from Thornaby.'* (PK)

+++++

*'I'm not sure. If you look at the old boundaries, I mean, before it became Teesside, it was Teesside before it became Cleveland, if you look at the old boundaries it was the river. North of the river was Durham, south of the river was Stockton, ... er, south of the river was Yorkshire! My goodness I'll be killed if that goes on! So er, I mean, it's Yorkshire isn't it!'* (RL)

+++++



*'[M]e Dad was born in Leeds, the family travelled north, looking for work, and they settled in Stockton. [.....]. When he got married, me mother was a Thornaby woman. She didn't like the idea of moving out of Thornaby. Well he thought, 'We're going to get married, we hope to have kids, I want my kids born in Yorkshire'. So he moved this side of the river. [.....] And people were like that.'* (SW)

++++  
*'Thornaby is North Yorkshire, Stockton is Durham, and there is distinct differences. Thornaby was a borough in its own right. They bitterly regret the loss of that.'* (Dari Taylor Member of Parliament for Stockton South 1997- )

Some took a more neutral line regarding identity, particularly when placed into the broader Teesside context. When asked if Thornaby had any characteristics that made it different from Stockton or Middlesbrough, many gave answers related to the above mentioned topics, being linked to place, families, growing up and continued associations in the contained geographical area of Thornaby. This was not universal though.

*'I've never got to grips on this Thornaby alone mentality. Its industry has mostly been associated with that of Stockton. It [Thornaby] always was swallowed up. It quite fascinated me that group, Remembering Thornaby, and this separate from Stockton business. It's wedged between Middlesbrough and Stockton, nearer Stockton. Until Teesside County*

*Borough its buses were run by Stockton. Most things in Thornaby were run by or from Stockton, many still do. Stockton's always overshadowed Thornaby. As for this in Yorkshire nonsense. Middlesbrough's in Yorkshire, it's a county borough.'*

*F      Thornaby is on the south side of the river.*

*GD    Does that really count for anything? To me it's part of Stockton and always has been. People just seem to want to hold on.'* (GD, a Roman Catholic Priest once based in Thornaby)

Others felt the place was losing distinctive aspects of identity.

*'.....a strong sense of identity still does exist as a, it's the fact it was a town and its identity went. It became a satellite of Stockton. A lot of people resent this, you can see it by the letters that go into the local paper. Councillors who are standing in the local elections this time have found, it come over loud and clear from some of the ones who put themselves up for election, they want some identity given back to the town, instead of it just being regarded as part of Stockton.'* (DK)

This has in fact led to the creation of a breakaway group of former Thornaby Labour Party members and Councillors who have formed the 'Thornaby Independent Association'. Council elections in May 2003 saw all the Thornaby Independent

Association candidates elected into office for their respective wards, reducing though not removing Labour's overall majority on Stockton Council.

#### **3.6.4.2 Is Ingleby Barwick in – or of – Thornaby?**

The creation of Ingleby Barwick, often boasted, by its residents, as being Europe's largest housing estate, is one made up of private housing situated just to the south of Thornaby. It also appears to have created tensions centred on identity. It was built on a greenfield site that was once part of the urban fringe playground of Thornaby children. In fact most Thornaby residents, particularly those born and brought up in the place, consider Ingleby Barwick to be part of Thornaby. Ingleby Barwick residents tend to disagree.

Ingleby Barwick has gently expanded over a number of years, its northern flanks moving slowly towards Thornaby, from where it is now very visible from a number of Thornaby locations. There is currently a small greenbelt gap between the two built up areas. Although Thornaby does have its more affluent areas of private developments, Ingleby Barwick is completely so, there being no public sector or housing association properties there.

The views of a number of Thornaby people suggest that the construction of Ingleby Barwick has created another version of threat to Thornaby's identity. The land on which Ingleby Barwick sits is often interpreted as being part of Thornaby, in the view of these Thornaby people, one that has been taken away – perhaps even stolen – to

create a new suburb, a suburb that is different and separate, one seen as being without a community, therefore 'not us'. It may also be that resentments exist because of home ownership at Ingleby Barwick. Owning one's own house in such a place is often seen as impossible to achieve by many people in Thornaby.

In fact a large proportion of Ingleby Barwick residents have moved there from Thornaby and elsewhere in the Teesside area. In some cases the incentive to moving was to escape what they considered crime and anti-social behaviour where they then lived.

Nevertheless, the majority of Thornaby people I spoke to dislike Ingleby Barwick.

*'Perhaps a certain amount of resentment from the Thornaby side. From the other side it's the opposite, they tend to look down on, on Thornaby. Again, I don't know why that should be because you, I think you find a large, a largish section of people who live in Ingleby Barwick who lived in Thornaby around there. Perhaps they're the worst! (laughs). (DK)*

+++++

*'I know they won't integrate with us because they don't like their children going to our schools' (JH)*

+++++

*'We have a town councillor that's recently moved to Ingleby and some people think 'Thornaby isn't good enough for him', implying that he isn't good enough for Thornaby, moving out to Ingleby.' (JM)*

+++++

*'Oh yes, well my definition of Ingleby Barwick is it's 'Free range houses for battery people'. There's such a mentality it's unbelievable. I've been to meetings over such things as schools and as they would have it Thornaby is down market, they want to be linked with Yarm ... Just an example, my niece moved up to Ingleby Barwick, and she had a lot of trouble with the next door neighbour, the next door was going 'You're from Thornaby, riff raff', and all that. And I recognised the neighbour, it was er, the granddaughter of this well known Thornaby fella, and he used to push the old barrows collecting pig feed and things like that. So it's 'Oh yes you're so and so's granddaughter aren't you'. Well she's had no problem since then (laughs). But it's the part of, the pompous and the preposterous because, some of these meetings up there, 'We pay our taxes, not like you people in Thornaby'. They put on, I suggested to one person in a packed meeting 'Why don't you just build a brick wall round Ingleby?' ....'Spam city' would describe it ....because nearly all of them live off the credit cards. You know, they're right up the edge.'* (SW1)

+++++

*'Spam Valley! Oh they think they're better than us. Mind you some have been known to work for it.'* (ST)

+++++

*'Hamburger Hill, isn't it! (laughs).....because it's all they eat. That's all they can afford with the big mortgages they're paying off (laughs)..... I've been up a few times but it's snobby for me. There is, like the working class that've moved into there, then suddenly they get a bit toffee nosed [.....] They get*

*above themselves and... and say 'I've got a mortgage' 'Oh, I've got one up!' Ingleby Barwick you know. So what? (laughs). Then they live on hamburgers for the rest of their lives..... You never see them again, you know, as if it's the Stepford wives or summat like that, er – awful!' (P1)*

Other less complimentary statements included a casual conversation where I was told how one supposed drug dealer had purchased property at Ingleby Barwick out of the proceeds.

*'There's no drug dealers here now [the Mandale estate area]. They all move to Ingleby Barwick',*

No overly complimentary statements regarding Ingleby Barwick emerged from any of the Thornaby residents - though not all were uncomplimentary.

*'People wouldn't move there if it wasn't neighbourly ..... some of the estates round here were a bit exclusive at one time. You know you practically had to pass exams before they let you .. get a house in Cornfield Road estate at one time!' (AL-1)*

S and A moved to Ingleby Barwick, from Thornaby, seeking a more privatised neighbourhood. Both appeared to enjoy living there.

*'Actually it's alright. I don't mind living here at all. You tend not to know your neighbours in the same way we did in Thornaby, but that's not a problem.'* (S, of S and A).

#### **3.6.4.3 Regeneration and change at Teesside Park and Teesdale: One bit of Thornaby given and another bit taken away**

The two main schemes of the former Teesside Development Corporation were constructed within Thornaby's borders, these being Teesside Park and Teesdale. Teesside Park is a retail and entertainments complex built on what was formerly Stockton Racecourse. As such it was an area where children might play occasionally, but otherwise it was not used by most Thornaby people, being geographically isolated by virtue of the road network. The site itself, apart from races, was used little, though did have car boot sales in its later years. The present development, although well used, is limited in access for those without their own transport. Buses do call, but schedules, along with the need to change buses – and consequently the cost – makes that option impractical for many Thornaby people reliant on them.

The respondents spoken to have otherwise given no complaint regarding this development. Its mix of shops, cinema, entertainments and American style burger and pizza outlets appear to have met with some approval. The shops are leased mostly to major chains, placing these organisations a lot closer to Thornaby's population than they once were. The reason for this is probably that historically in Teesside, although a few national retailers had outlets in Stockton, it was

Middlesbrough one had to visit when seeking a wider, or more specialist choice.

The other former TDC site in Thornaby is Teesdale. This is where Head Wrightson, and many other firms, once stood. Until the redevelopment programmes of the 1960s and 1970s there was also some residential property there, nearly all of it of the traditional terraced variety. Although the firms in the area once employed many people, nearly all men, it was a geographically isolated place. Thus, unless one had reason to visit it, it tended to be mostly ignored by Thornaby people without connection to it.

Teesdale is now occupied mostly by office-based and educational institutions. It also has two residential homes. A barrage, creating a fresh water environment in what was once a tidal part of the river, has enabled the creation of a water sports based complex. This frequently holds events at international standard, attracting television coverage. Some housing has also been constructed on the Teesdale site. This is composed of a small area of private houses and a number of apartment blocks. The latter have dwellings for rent from a mix of private and housing association ownership.

Teesdale, for administrative and political purposes, was originally in the Victoria Ward of Thornaby, though in 2005 the Victoria and Mandale wards were amalgamated and this is now known as the Mandale and Victoria ward. Much of the ward is in old Thornaby being made up of street houses, many of which are currently private rental properties, with a smaller number of former council properties. Thus,



given the past economic importance Teesdale had for Thornaby, discussions with respondents regarding the changes initiated by the TDC tended to relate mostly to Teesdale rather than Teesside Park, which is effectively a new area.

In the context of that pattern of relationships between people, place and capital, one issue explored was whether the developments by the TDC were meaningful to the people of Thornaby. Also, given the imposed change of use for Teesdale, the question was asked whether it was still considered as part of Thornaby.

*'Most people once lived down there. Six at least (pointing at houses in the street) from round here. They never go there now. It's not part of Thornaby.'*  
(AI)

++++  
*'I think it's important that [the point that Teesdale is in Thornaby] is made, because it counterbalances a lot of the run down area and gives Thornaby, perhaps, a little better image than perhaps people have got of it.'* (DK)

++++  
*'The people who work there don't seem to think so (that Teesdale is part of Thornaby). It's not part of Stockton either, just something separate.'* (PK)  
++++  
*'(Teesdale) is totally different. [...] The people most likely would not identify with it.'* (GM)

Interestingly, a few respondents, appeared not to relate to, or possibly understand, the

nature of the developments at Teesdale, along with the structure of the TDC.

*'Yes it is Thornaby. I don't mind what they've done down there. There's no works anymore. There's very little in this area job wise. I don't mind what they've built down there. They've got the university which is very handy, and the railway station could be improved a lot.'* (JH)

+++++

*'Well I wasn't really familiar with what was happening. Well you pay rates, you bought your house if you could pay the rates. Then all of a sudden the council's had no money, and then TDC come in like they were Santa Claus and they were giving you something ..... To my mind all these came out of the council, the local council provided all this.'* (JM)

Overall reactions to the changes on that site, since the closure of Head Wrightson and other firms, seem to be varied, not all wholly positive or negative. Factors such as the environmental improvements tended to be counterbalanced against the loss of past jobs. For the interviewees these past jobs were often seen as more meaningful than the present service sector employment on the site. A number of respondents also saw these newer jobs as merely temporary, given the global movement of capital.

*'It was just waste land before, nothing there. They've made something of it.'*  
(EC)

+++++

*'I'd have to say the whole thing is an improvement in the environment[...] it's been a long time since I seen dragonflies in the numbers there's on the river.'*

*(K)*

+++++

*'It was a sub area years ago and now it's somewhere where people actually want to live.'* (Person 2 cutting in during AL-1's interview)

+++++

*'.. you haven't got the jobs there was then, but a lot more pleasant to go to. I mean, we took the kids down, over the Barrage and just sat. Spot on, it's a nice place.'* (P1)

+++++

*'It's great, I like it (Barrage). It's a lot nicer than it was, trees and walkways, take the dog with you and that.'* (PL)

Some people, although positive overall, offered a number of reservations.

*'Stockton's trying to take it over for itself, that's because the university has took Stockton for its name although it's in Thornaby.'* (Person 2 cutting in during AL-1's interview)

+++++

*'It is very nice along the river and everything else, of course it is. Course there's summat' some people would possibly like to see, the grime there and the 4½ thousand jobs.'* (K)

+++++

*'They might tell you how many are going to work there when they start something but as far as I'm concerned they're not new jobs. Regeneration of that site has not helped anybody in Thornaby ..... it hasn't advantaged anybody in Thornaby, or Stockton.'* (PK)

The majority of respondents, however, were critical of the Teesdale development, a number being of the opinion that it should have been traditional manufacturing employment there, not offices.

*'They've taken the working class jobs away. People who often in families worked in the same places once. What they want is a different type of job to what's there on Teesdale.'* (CR)

The former director of the Five Lamps Centre, a local regeneration partnership, felt that Teesdale offered nothing for Thornaby. His main concerns were that Thornaby's community spirit and identity were under threat, and had always felt that it had missed out.

*'The two biggest developments for Teesside are both in Thornaby, Teesdale and Teesside Park. How many have benefited from it in the area?'* (Former director, Five Lamps Centre)

+++++

*'I feel that I have no, at this time I have no particular interest in it. Er, I don't feel I have any real knowledge of the area, like I used to, working down*

*it.' (D who had spent most of his working life at Head Wrightson)*

+++++

*'The name is different, like Ingleby Barwick. [...] Down there now is*

*Teesdale not Thornaby. Thornaby is council houses.' (A1)*

+++++

*'...it seems just like poxy businesses ..... It's not like there's any real jobs*

*down there.... nowt for the average bloke in Thornaby is there.' (J of G and*

*J)*

+++++

*'So the TDC, who have left Thornaby [.....]. They had no feel for it. All it*

*was to them, 'We've been put in here, we're gonna bang this up, you're*

*gonna like it'. .... Billions down the drain that could have been better spent*

*on er, social health, attracting long term sort of investments instead of some*

*of the fly by night companies that have come in [.....].' (SW1)*

I asked EG to offer comparisons via his own perceptions over the time period he knew Thornaby. He now lives in New Zealand, but came from the Midlands to work in Thornaby in 1960, eventually emigrating in 1973. He has since returned a number of times on visits.

*'This [question] is a difficult one as subsequent visits are somewhat different*

*to living and working in a community. Nevertheless there was a noticeable*

*difference between when we left in 1973 and 1987. What had been thriving*

*industries were downsized or disappeared. The NE from Tyne to Tees had a*

*jaded look about it. The injection of capital for urban renewal, Tees Bridge, Teesside Parkway, A19 and A66 works were noticeable.*

*In 1998 the area did not look materially different but again urban renewal schemes such as the old Head Wrightsons site, Tees Barrage, Stockton Riverside, Middlesbrough Riverside and Hartlepool Docks helped to improve the visual aspects of the area but I was unable to judge the state of industry and unemployment. The role of many of these 'make work' schemes and their cost to the nation is no doubt a subject for discussion. I was aware of similar problems of unemployment and factory closures in Germany.' (EG, via e mail)*

Perhaps one of the best summing ups regarding how the people of Thornaby relate to Teesdale is by PW, who at the time of interview ran a shop, and had been selling there since the 1960s. She was very much a Thornaby institution, in as much as everybody in the town knew her, as she knew them. Similar to earlier comments by others, the change of use of the Teesdale site has led to an apparent detachment in how she views the area. As a shopkeeper, a lot of past trade was with men going to and from work, often on foot, purchasing cigarettes and so on. This trade obviously has now been lost.

*'Never been down (to Teesdale). I've seen it on TV. There's a kid that comes in this shop, she canoes for England (and trains at the Barrage water sports complex).'* (PW)

For many Thornaby people it would seem that Teesdale is considered 'somewhere else', yet seemingly they are able to connect to Teesside Park, given that they are more likely to have reason to visit it. Capital clearly dictates, through its investment behaviour, the economic form a place takes. In turn, people react to that in various ways. The responses from the people spoken to appear to suggest, as regards Teesdale, a negativity to recent investments. The place many refer to as Thornaby, one lost in time, is being taken over by others. But that has always been the case. Head Wrightson provided the main employment, and a variety of private landlords, the homes. The main difference, when compared to today, is that these firms and individual landlords were mostly local.

Thornaby was once a fairly independent town, one where many people found little reason ever to go outside it. All needs were met within the place, this helping to create an isolationism. This may partly explain the disdain shown towards 'outsiders', and some other places, such as Stockton and Ingleby Barwick. In turn, Thornaby now openly appears vulnerable to more external decision-making processes, given the global economic culture of today. In reality, that has always been the case; decisions made elsewhere created the demand for steel and the various final products built at Head Wrightson. The main difference appears to be that, then, these processes seemed to be almost hidden. People were only aware of the end result, such as the contract - or lost order. Closure of Head Wrightson, and other firms, brought the macro economic world to the front doors of Thornaby's population, as people lost the protection of the big firms. Just as there appears to

have always been a resistance of 'outsiders' coming into Thornaby, the outside economic world itself came directly into people's homes and lives, and there was nothing to stop it.



### **3.7 Findings chapter: Conclusions**

The chapter started with an overview on the methodology employed, information sources and the respondent base used. Analysis of this led to three main themes, centred on the broad threads of 'work', 'benefit life', and 'community'.

The findings themselves were then discussed. Discussions on the theme of 'work' revealed how people saw themselves as 'factory fodder', often having to work long hours to make wages up to a level considered as meaningful. There was also a consensus that few jobs are now available.

Discussion then shifted to discrimination. There was a strong sense of the continuation of the traditional male-female roles. Women were viewed as going to work because of financial necessity, to add to an already low household income. Regarding the progressive growth and presence of women in the workplace, and in positions of authority, a number of respondents felt that somehow men were being squeezed out.

There was then some exploration of the topic of trade unions, conversations particularly referring to the past and matters such as demarcation. Although Thornaby and Teesside have a high percentage of working class people within their populations, trade union membership does not appear to have been at all universal. In fact, some younger respondents were unsure of what trade unions do.

It was noted how there had been some cultural changes in the way many people find work. There was also some discussion based around qualifications, which indicated a mixed response as to their value. Different qualifications are seen very differently by individuals; for example, if they are skill based – such as an apprenticeship, or knowledge based – such as a degree.

The matter of promotion was explored, with many people seemingly unwilling to leave the 'shop-floor'. The culture of management, and the behaviour of those seeking advancement within work were often questioned.

A lot of people unwilling to move away from Thornaby. Interestingly, it was factors linked to the need to be close to people that one knew that was usually seen as an important reason not to move.

The chapter then moved on to the topic of living on benefits. There was some evidence of a critical attitude towards those reliant on benefits under the assumption that employment was easy to find, and benefit rates provided a comfortable lifestyle. In fact, many of those on benefits find life difficult through lack of cash, and also because of the attitude and behaviour of some of the staff employed administering those benefits. Many people have developed strategies to minimise these problems; a couple may remain unmarried to maximise benefits, and one respondent deliberately avoiding employment because child maintenance would more than cancel out any financial gains he might make working. There was also a recognised problem by those on benefits tied to loss of income over critical periods when one

starts or ends a period of employment. Many of the jobs that are available are poorly paid and would probably shift people into other forms of poverty should they be taken up.

The chapter then shifted to issues based around the theme of community. Whilst most of those people 'of Thornaby' considered the place to have a good sense of community, this sentiment was not universally accepted by those people who came from elsewhere. For a lot of Thornaby people, crime is often blamed on so-called incomers, though there is scant evidence to support that. In fact, although crime overall in Thornaby is not a great problem, nuisance crime is perceived as a real problem; it can be visible – such as vandalism – and can impact directly on peoples' lives.

Thornaby's relationships with its neighbours were explored. The transfer of Thornaby's administration to Stockton-on-Tees appears to be intensely disliked by the majority of Thornaby people. Most of these people still consider Thornaby as part of Yorkshire. Dislike was also directed at the large private development project at Ingleby Barwick. Ingleby Barwick is seen as more privatised and consumerist than Thornaby, and many of Thornaby's people feel that Ingleby Barwick's population looks down on them.

The developments initiated by the Teesside Development Corporation within Thornaby's borders, Teesside Park and Teesdale, were both viewed differently. The shopping and entertainments complex at Teesside Park was viewed in a mostly

positive way – at least by those with transport and access. It was seen as an improvement on what had been previously available close by. Teesdale, in turn, was mostly disliked. Although aesthetically the site has improved considerably, a number of people said they would rather see the 'works' and the jobs back. There is little connection to Teesdale, particularly in the type of commercial activities – and hence jobs - available there now.

All three places, to a degree, contributed to a sense of loss of Thornaby, according to a lot of established Thornaby residents. Both Ingleby Barwick and Teesdale are seen as being on – what many consider – a part of Thornaby that has been taken for 'other' purposes. In turn, Stockton-on-Tees has taken control of Thornaby's affairs. This is disliked, as Thornaby, until the creation of Teesside County Borough in 1968, was in charge of its own business. The antipathy created by not returning these powers to Thornaby have been translated into the voting behaviour of a high proportion of Thornaby's residents; most of Thornaby's wards are currently represented by councillors whose affiliation is the Thornaby Independent Association. As well as the lost jobs through the closure of Head Wrightson and other firms, much of Thornaby is seen as lost – having gone, with little of value to replace it. It is the cumulative effect of these losses that appears to be mourned.



#### **4 Chapter four Conclusions and speculations about future prospects**

This project set out to give voice to a group of people who are mostly ignored, and tend not to say much - a group I have referred to as a mostly discarded and vaporised workforce. Their perception of the world they inhabit paints a depressing picture of make do and adapt to adverse circumstance. They appear to passively accept what is thrown at them, and few take risks to improve their lot.

On leaving school - usually without qualifications as no exams were offered, and also because many would not know their value and what to do with them - most expected factory work or site work, all of a manual and often menial nature. Low wages, made up by working long hours were the norm, with most people experiencing spells of unemployment at various times in their working lives.

This 'traditional' work has now largely gone, and for the majority of these people their world is now one without jobs for them. It is unsurprising that many of these people are now on benefits, and have structured their lives around the assumed continuation of that situation.

The community of Thornaby, in turn, has perhaps not changed as much as many Thornaby people seem to think. Across the estates of Thornaby, family networks that have existed since industrialisation have mostly remained intact, continuing to bond together a Thornaby community. But this is not necessarily a positive feature. Community in Thornaby looks inwards, to itself. Many people rarely leave

Thornaby; as GD said, '*they become cocooned*'. This helps to create disadvantage in relation to the wider world because their world is an enclosed one, one that treats the 'other' with suspicion, whether it be a person moving in, or a neighbouring community. Consequently there appears a reluctance to take on new ideas that could improve individual job prospects and prosperity.

We can now consider, again, the three questions and issues identified at the start.

1      *Issues of community and self, following economic restructuring and de-industrialisation, in the context of a male-dominated solidaristic locale.*

Thornaby was once centred around steel, engineering, ships and railways. Through the heavy, often dangerous, manual work they did, the men gave and received respect from each other. They worked together and often played together, in the pubs and clubs after work. Many of these friendship networks were initiated during boyhood, and were carried on into working lives. And many of these networks still remain solid, though some individuals have left, and a number died. What continues are social structures where people tend to know the history of others and much of what might be considered their 'private business'. There is still strength and support to be gained through these loose and unofficial relationships.

There was also a pride in the work they did. This pride functioned as a duality.

There was what Willis refers to as

*'crude pride ... for the mythology of masculine representation - to be strong and to be known for it.'* (1979, p. 189)

There is also the pride of a job well done. In fact it would be hard not to be proud when a finished product left the works for its final destination - components of a bridge, perhaps a large pressure vessel for a chemical plant, or a major component of a steelworks. These often left the works on special containers, travelling at less than walking pace, stopping traffic wherever they went. Then, once in place, many of these structures would be visible for miles around, a landmark.

Working men have often gained pride from their efforts. To some extent that continues today - visible, for example at the recently revamped Thornaby Show and the presentation of vegetables grown on local allotments. It is also visible in the work of a respondent's brother, who now makes his own furniture, after having completed a course at the Five Lamps Centre. He has never been able to find paid work performing these skills, and the course itself is no longer operational. But it is evident that pride in these achievements still continues, albeit a much softer, subtle pride.

Regarding gender relations, it was evident that many respondents still had the traditional view of the male as the breadwinner. This was seen at a couple of levels. Some talked about women having to work because there were no jobs for the men, or because men's wages were too low. Another perspective was linked to men working in what was viewed as traditionally 'women's work', such as at the check out at



supermarkets. This was seen as financially unsustainable once the young man decided to have a family. Both perspectives see women's work in a secondary role, and regardless of what progress women might feel they have made, these attitudes still place the man at the head of the household in a breadwinner role.

There was, though, also a sense that men were under attack, though where from was not clear. This ran deeper than simple domestic economic arrangements. Some respondents saw men as victims, such as in relation to custody arrangements when marriages and partnerships fail, whilst others felt that men were '*slowly being squeezed out*' (PK).

Redevelopment and various initiatives have brought in new industries over the years, though many of the new firms did not stay. New office developments have been established. The older men of Thornaby seem unable to connect to office employment, though it could be argued that most should be quite capable of performing many office tasks. Many men also appear to have ignored the light industries that have set up in the area. Although many of them are feminised light mass production units, there are what these men would consider 'male jobs' in them, but these are frequently seen as inevitably low paid and often rumoured to be under an aggressive management. Another factor is ageism. This is a feature of the recruitment practices of many firms. Thus, from this mix, many older men were of a certain frame of mind, taking the attitude that it was simply pointless looking for work.

As well as major changes in Thornaby's economic base, its administrative base has changed, and been changed three times in nineteen years. Its movement from the North Riding of Yorkshire, into Teesside County Borough in 1968, then into Cleveland County in 1974, to later be relegated to basically become a suburb of Stockton-on-Tees in 1997, has left a large number of Thornaby people attempting to regain what they consider to be their town of Thornaby. Many of these people feel that Thornaby is being airbrushed off the map. Although many respondents dislike the present arrangement - as part of Stockton-on-Tees - and there is a lot of volatile talk from the Thornaby Independent Association, none of this has yet transferred itself into any militant form of action.

This all needs to be positioned into the familiarity of place, how it looks, sounds, and feels; its basis from which the foundation of a cultural identity can emerge that enables its inhabitants to develop a sense of who they are (Cook 1988, p.217). The state and capital can intervene into a location in a number of ways, but its inhabitants still see that place as where they interpret the social world - as somewhere they belong (Beynon *et al* 1994, p.5). For them, place mostly relates to human contacts with the others around them (Hudson and Johnson 1975, p.2).

What has emerged from the interviews is a sense of loss of Thornaby, as a place with some kind of status. Many of the people of Thornaby feel that they are under some form of attack, a view that perhaps becomes understandable when one considers how people see place as permanently fixed, locked into a past, regardless of what power and history do to it (Hall 1989, p.70). As quoted at the start, Orum says that people

view where they live as

*'...places of affection and security, places that cannot and will not be moved because they are, after all, home.'* (Orum 1998, p. 4).

It is much of this which has been lost, and perhaps many of these Thornaby people resist losing any more.

Much of past Thornaby life tended, for many people, to be encased in a very structured, almost rigid, society. Encased by work - the works - and play - the club/pub, or in some cases the church/chapel. Life was bounded by these institutions. A number of the respondents interpreted Thornaby as being 'insular'. This is similar to Wadleigh *et al*, and their 1991 study of Yorkshire mining communities after the 1984 coal dispute; this also could include such factors as self-support systems and an inward looking society (Wadleigh *et al* 1991, p.28). Also, as shown in that study, Thornaby people tend to stay within the place, though younger adults are more likely to travel to nearby places such as Stockton or Middlesborough for a more exciting social environment. Prior to redevelopment in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Thornaby's pub and club cluster, in Mandale Road, often attracted people to it, and going to Stockton or elsewhere was once an exception for many Thornaby people.

The collapse of Head Wrightson and other industries weakened the ability of 'traditional' Thornaby to reproduce itself. Post-industrial Thornaby has also had to accept new arrivals. There appears to be some ambivalence directed at people in

social housing being transferred into Thornaby from Stockton, as housing estates there become modernised, even though these are people with similar backgrounds and social structures. However, the influx of people coming in from further afield to live in Thornaby, many of them working or studying at Teesdale, is probably far greater, though their presence appears to be less recognised by those 'of Thornaby'. Many of this outside group of individuals will not relate to a Thornaby of Head Wrightson, heavy industries and a solidaristic community. For those coming in to settle, it is likely to be at Thornaby's newer private estates, or the Village. For these people Thornaby is a place of modern housing, often close to pleasant green and wooded river locations, and a large village green with a quaint old church on it. Thus, for the more established working class population, who usually live in the council estates or street houses in Thornaby, where any friction and conflict towards incomers does emerge, it may be tied to difference, and a reflection of alternative ideas and ways of doing things being imported from elsewhere.

Many respondents talked of 'a strong sense of community'. Defining that strength is very difficult. Thornaby has a number of large family-based networks, and it can be supposed that within them people mostly look after each other. One of the police officers said

*'What you do notice is how lots of families all seem to live together, or at least close to each other, often in the same street. Elsewhere these days, people have moved out, gone to wherever's the best for their career. .... But here you get a lack of movement. It's two speed. There's them that want to*

*get on but most seem to want to stay at home. A lot hardly ever leave  
Thornaby. I suppose, though, the other side is that families do stay together  
a bit.' (PC2)*

It is also probable that if one has no ties to these networks, then any sense of community is not as pronounced when compared to the popularly declared version of what Thornaby's community is supposed to be. These were initially communities forged through migration to seek work in the emerging heavy industries during industrialisation and its associated poverty. Many established Thornaby residents talk of how they help each other in adversity. Clearly, over time, intermarriage occurred. How many of Thornaby's residents without those family linkages have been left out of this helping, sharing world? Given the ambivalence already mentioned towards 'outsiders', one can presume that such exclusion is not a new phenomenon. Consequently, this version becomes an idealised interpretation of community. For example, A1, a West Indian, felt no sense of community in Thornaby, though he did when he lived a few miles away in Skelton.

There is, however, still a reciprocal self help system evident at various levels. As far as this project is concerned, it was visible on allotments, where produce and tools were often shared. It also shows itself in areas such as car repair and computer maintenance, along with house painting and decorating. There are a number of 'experts' at these various tasks, though very few with any detailed intimate knowledge of them. What did emerge from allotment conversations was that these mutual self help networks were made up of people who had known each other through their

lifetime. Talk between them often fell back to schooldays and events in childhood. There are similarities in this pattern to Arensburg's 1939 study of rural Ireland, and a large percentage of Thornaby's population has an Irish background. Arensburg noted these mutual self help networks across families and close friends as essential in binding the individual to the community, thus strengthening strands of the network (Frankenberg 1969, p.37). Strangers and those without relatives 'on this side' were left out of it (Arensburg 1939, p.66).

To place this into perspective, using the example of A1; he has a wife who is white, though she is not originally from Thornaby. Thus, regarding his family, he is not 'of Thornaby', neither has he married into it. Whilst Thornaby people are friendly enough towards them as regards daily interactions, his family can never be part of what could be called Thornaby's 'core community'. He states how all of his four children have now left Thornaby. For him the defining factor that led to his social detachment was simply to be different, a point Mark also mentioned, when he stated how he experienced aggravation through not being part of a clique.

Whilst 'sense of community' has been talked about by many respondents as 'good' it is nevertheless a very subjective area. Being a 'stranger', or being different can have negative connotations. It can also make that stranger wary, and thus interpret the community in negative terms. GD, one of the priests spoken to, stated that people who came from outside, such as those from from Billingham and elsewhere in the Teesside area, those not Thornaby born, were never any part of a close communal Thornaby. Here, GD referred to an idea of closeness tied to working roots, such as

Head Wrightson, ICI and the rest. All these people lived round the Bon Lea and Five Lamps, in the small patch that was old Thornaby town. They could go back through their in-laws, grandfathers, and other relatives, and it all provided bonds. He then added that whether or not incomers and strangers felt linked to any part of the community was inevitably tied to any desire to be involved; some people like to keep their own distance, do their own thing. However, if, of course, the reception given to some incomers is negative then it is quite likely they will not choose to be involved and will consequently interpret Thornaby's community in negative terms.

Wadleigh *et al* make the point that that during the 1984 miners strike, despite much talk of preserving communities by miners and their families, the sense of community that emerged at the time of the strike was not necessarily evident previously (1991, p.29). In this context, need is a major component of the creation of a strong 'sense of community'. For Thornaby, the deindustrialisation during the 1980s led to a lot of relative poverty. A number of people said that Thornaby's sense of community was not strengthened during this period, a time when some may well have thought it would have been. But, given that many established families were dispersed out of the old town of Thornaby onto the council estates constructed after the Second World War, the concentration of family members within the small geographical area that was once Thornaby town was reduced. A number of respondents, D, C, S and A, noted how they relied heavily on family support, a trend which has probably never abated. Thus, in this particular model, community as talked about by Thornaby's established working class, relates to a concentrated group of people within a small geographical area. Many are related to each other, and have similar material and

social needs. The dispersal of these people has not necessarily diminished their networks between each other, though the networks are now more geographically dispersed. In many ways the talk of 'community' as it was supposed to have been suggests the holding on to a mythical version of the past. Thornaby was once a place of face-to-face communications, a town but like a village in many ways. Its enlargement has significantly restricted communications at that level.

For many older men, the reduction of these networks may well have them seeing themselves as victims. Being part of a closely linked group appears important in the solidaristic community. Being denied that can thus be seen as socially destructive. The effect of Thornaby's solidarism can be shown in the way that many Thornaby people say they would not move out of the area on the basis that they do not know anyone 'there', wherever 'there' may be.

## *2 Ideas of self in a supposed post-Thatcherite individualised and classless (?) non (?) society*

Thornaby, since industrialisation, has always had a predominantly working class population. For most of the respondents this has not altered. Lack of mobility, or even interest in it, has meant the continuation of a subservient and passive group of working class people. In turn, the lack of employment, also income, for many older men, has meant any sense of consumer-centred individualism, as encouraged initially during the Thatcher years, is weak or absent. For many of the respondents, goods are purchased according to need, and availability of cash.



Another tenet associated with the changes initiated during the 1980s is the concept that there is 'no such thing as society', an ideology tied to neo-liberal thinking which underpinned much of the Thatcherite logic adopted during that period. This is also linked to ideas of consumerism, that individuals construct lives around consumption options. As an ideology it has a history going back to the 1930s and Hayek's 'The Road to Serfdom' (1944). Its application during the Thatcher period was associated with a broad movement frequently referred to as the 'New Right', though there were many other strands feeding into that discourse; as Atkinson and Moon point out, it would be improper to credit the New Right with a coherence it never possessed (1994, p.12). The main strand that enabled the Thatcherite Conservative Party to emerge in the form it took, was linked to neo-liberal thinking, and specifically, in this context, to neo-liberal ideals of freedom, choice, the free market, minimal state intervention and the primacy of the individual (Joseph and Sumption 1979). It also appears to suggest that by enabling the market to dictate many terms by which the less powerful lead their lives - both in work and in how they spend their leisure - those unable to engage in the market would be left behind. The high unemployment and poverty created by the policies adopted by the Thatcher government appear to confirm this. Hayek's perspective can be thus viewed as fundamentally anti-egalitarian, in fact probably creating new forms of serfdom. Within the paradigm, democracy and government are also treated with suspicion in, for example, how majorities can oppress minorities and politicians may well want to intervene (Atkinson and Moon 1994, p.13). Also, Atkinson and Moon add, the market being seen as the only mechanism for enabling effective consumer choice means that this

model is consequently sympathetic to supply side economics, which is considered as being capable of removing perceived bottlenecks in the economy enabling provision of consumer demand (1994, P.13). Out of this can be envisaged the Thatcherite and New Right rhetoric based around the rolling back of the state, which was often referred to at the time.

In fact, reflecting on the effects of that ideology on Thornaby, the respondents' own strong sense of community, still existing in Thornaby, destroys the notion of there being 'no society'. Community association appears important for many, particularly older men, and is visible in workingmen's clubs, allotments, or simply by frequent association with friends. The shift towards encouraging a consumer-led form of individualism has had little impact on these respondents. However, for the younger generation this is not necessarily the case. A lot of - mostly younger - Thornaby people have moved to Ingleby Barwick, a large housing estate made up of owner-occupied dwellings, where consumerism and 'keeping up appearances' appear to have a high priority for many residents. It is probable that as more people embrace the consumerist lifestyle the solidaristic aspects will wither. There are, of course, those left behind, who are unable to participate as a result of unemployment and for other reasons. But it would appear that the younger people in Thornaby are now a lot less solidaristic in their approach to the place and the people they live around.

The respondents clearly recognise Thornaby as a place with a community, hence society, of which they are a part. They also see themselves as 'working class', and having a role within that society in that context. Since industrialisation there has

been a continuous reproduction of this particular working class configuration, continually evolving. Statements such as Thatcher's - that there is no such thing as society - thus are meaningless in this context, though it does suggest a viewing of the social from a different discourse. For the respondents, like many working class people, a central tenet of their lives is linked to the ideals of solidarity, though the intensity and strength of that can vary considerably. The existence of the solidarity can be contrasted with middle class individuality, linked to, for example, the career and ambitions of a manager who is backed by capital - or even, for that matter, a Prime Minister. This is an uneven situation, one the working class have traditionally, in more recent times, countered through democratically based institutions such as trade unions, and of course the Labour Party. However, many of those worker-based institutions have been subject to forms of government-led attack since 1979, through a variety of methods, including repressive legislation restricting individual rights within the workplace, and also physical violence by the police against striking miners in the 1980s.

A not infrequent Prime Ministerial theme since 1979 has been the suggestion that the United Kingdom is now a 'classless society'. The respondents dispute this. Their own view of themselves as working class can appear as somewhat fixed into a solidaristic mould, a version similar to that often portrayed of miners. It is a view that can perhaps present a false impression of the strength of unity of working people when viewed from the inside, by themselves. This is because for many individuals living in such places, one is surrounded by others in similar circumstances - quite probably for an entire life. Thus association with, and knowledge of other people,

and of other ways of living, is very limited.

With reference to their own version of themselves as working class, one can attempt to look into how they see themselves. In Thornaby one frequently hears reference to 'the working man'; how, for example, the 'working man' is badly treated, or how the government does not understand the needs of the 'working man'. These people are at the end of an expanding chain of historical events, social manipulations and arrangements. As Blackwell and Seabrook put it:

*'...part of a continuous moulding of human possibilities which are always being redefined in ways that make a profit for capitalism' (1985, p. 179)*

In fact, by virtue of a lack of skills, age, and perhaps health also, capital has mostly discarded them, spat them out as surplus to requirements.

Byrne (2004) refers to Williams (1980) and his ideas of 'residual' and 'emergent' cultures. Byrne discusses this in the context of the takeover of the Labour Party by the agents of organised corporate capital, rather than organised labour. This has entailed a detachment of political connection to the working class of the mainstream political organisations. Many people therefore see themselves as excluded from participation in the political process.

Byrne also mentions the people who vote for 'New Labour', even though its policies run counter to their own traditional beliefs, and those of the traditional Labour Party,

*' - because their granny would turn in her grave if they didn't vote Labour'*

*(Byrne 2004, p. 17)*

This mode of political behaviour also applies to most of the respondents, one sentiment being that if you did not vote Labour you would give your vote to the Tories.

Referring to this voting behaviour, Byrne talks of Williams' - 'structure of feeling' - how people have absorbed Labour as part of their structure, and he wonders what will happen as New Labour continues the decay of that relationship. Byrne brings in Williams' 'residual' and 'emergent' cultures, noting Williams' comments that there are those values and meanings that cannot be defined, that function as part of a dominant culture - whatever is meant by dominant culture in this context. These undefinable values are practices on the base of the residual, leading to an almost sub-conscious continuation of a particular voting pattern continues.

How can the idea of a dominant culture be defined against a variety of both competing and parallel discourses within any locality? Using the example of the respondents: is it the one that dictates, such as the government and capital led one, or is it the one in which people live their lives alongside others - specifically, in this case, the solidaristic one? Different cultures surely interact with each other, people drawing particular strands from each as needed. The behaviour of government and capital has been the catalyst leading to the Thornaby of today. But, the 'older blokes'

of Thornaby live their lives looking inward, interacting with each other, as in a bubble - just as they always have done. They have also met the demands of the dominant authoritative culture of state and capital, as needed. They have gone to work, to return to socialise with each other. Similarly, they have met the demands of the Jobcentre, or other state agencies, as and when required. It is basically a case of giving to Caesar what Caesar demands when Caesar wants it, then getting back to your own life. It is almost as if one steps to and from parallel universes.

So what might the dominant culture be? The suggestion was made that many of the older men of Thornaby tend to look and interact with each other, as if in a bubble. This bubble analogy can be useful. Within it, these people are the dominant culture. And, just as in a child's bubble blowing game, the size of the bubble is no indication of its strength. In turn, Thornaby's solidarism ends at its borders, being mostly strong within them, though it is important to note that not everyone in Thornaby subscribes to that version of place association. Many of those accepting the solidaristic discourse are also older people, the younger ones detached from the past industrial base that led to the social structures that held the solidarity together. Thus the solidaristic aspects of Thornaby's working men will slowly diminish and eventually die with them. Whilst it continues, though, however small the bubble becomes, it will represent a powerful discourse operating between its participants, within Thornaby.

Thus, if the current post-Thatcherite capital-led model attempts to suggest that there is now a classless society, with some subscribing to that view of there only being

individuals and no society, they are incorrect. That is not to say that there are not places and people elsewhere that subscribe to such ideals. But the people of Thornaby, and no doubt many others elsewhere, are clearly of the opinion that society exists, though association with family and close friends may have a powerful input to this interpretation; and although many people appear to lead more individualised lives, many of them would also clearly see themselves as part of the society in which they live.

Simply as an additional comment: the continuation of the present capital-led model in its current form is by no means a certainty. Wide poverty, with little hope of closing that gap, both in the United Kingdom and abroad, along with the lack of political accountability - linked to the idea that there is no alternative to that present capital-led model - could well lead to a response by the disenfranchised, challenging it.

3      *Relationships of individuals and the demands of the state and capitalism, via benefit dependency, and adaptation to long term non-employment as a viable alternative to low paid work.*

Many of the respondents were of the opinion that there were simply no jobs. From this position a variety of strategies exist. The most common - particularly for older men - is to go on Incapacity Benefit: ' *they generally leave you alone*' (K). Increased disability amongst older men, and a weak demand for their labour, based both on ageism and low skills, affects both participation in the labour market and the viability

of even trying to get a job. In fact, when one is on Incapacity Benefit one can be called up for a medical at a moment's notice to determine the level of fitness, and consequently be taken off the benefit if deemed to be fit enough. That happened to respondent BC, even though he has heart problems. In many cases, following a lengthy appeals process, the benefit is reinstated. Nevertheless, from a lay perspective, the decision-making processes around judgements about fitness for work can appear a little irrational, perhaps even perverse.

There are also difficulties for people going on and off benefits, into work, and then returning to the benefits system when a period of employment ends, difficulties linked to red tape procedures. These can leave the individual without any income - already a situation to avoid in the first place. Nearly all the respondents cited negative experiences with benefit officials. The only ones who did not were former salaried workers, those able to find work soon after losing their job, and people able to take up early retirement. Jobseekers Allowance can appear to operate officially from a punitive stance. Older workers are likely to find it harder to gain employment than many other groups. Also, many are unskilled, or their skills are redundant. Jobseeker rules expect the claimant to place no restriction on the rate of pay after six months job hunting. Apart from the introduction of the minimum wage following the election of the Blair government in 1997, there is still no incentive, at this level, for an older person in that circumstance to seek employment. Thus Incapacity Benefit, if it can be secured, becomes the only viable option, it is also the most secure, and financially the better choice. This might initially appear strange, but when compared to minimum wage employment it clearly emerges as a viable alternative. In fact non-



employment, or involuntary retirement, is not necessarily a chosen option for many of these people. Individuals like DK, who had a private pension, were able to take up part-time employment, an option denied those on benefits.

Linked to the usage of Incapacity Benefit is its - probably unofficial - function of hiding true unemployment. Ward level data for Thornaby indicates a significantly higher than national average of people of working age not employed (see Fig. 10). With a large proportion of working age people on Incapacity Benefit, most of whom can be assumed to be capable of some work, there is a distortion of the real availability of employment. Assuming that many of those on Incapacity Benefit would take worthwhile work - however one chooses to define that - if it came their way, their perception, that there is little or no work out there, may well be correct, at least when viewed from their position. A key issue is: what work can many of these people do, given their limited skill base?

Nickell (2004) refers to a 'long-tail' in the UK skills distribution, created by the decline in the demand for unskilled labour. This is placed in the context of the UK having a particularly large proportion of low skilled people within its labour force. For places like Thornaby, where the skills once needed were mostly geared to the specific demands of dominant firms such as Head Wrightson, and often had little value elsewhere, the proportion of unskilled people becomes even higher.

Nickel also points out that the glut of unskilled people in the UK labour market has been around for a very long time, and is something that appears to have remained

stable, regardless of any improvements in qualifications. For Nickel, it is the UK's large number of very low skilled workers which is responsible for the significant increase in both poverty and worklessness over the past 25 years. Technological changes have fed the weakening of demand for unskilled labour, reducing opportunities and incomes for these individuals, particularly when compared to the higher skilled ones.

It is probably correct to say that this large number of poorly skilled individuals is the continuation of a long-established bottleneck in the UK labour market. By exposing these people to the vagaries of the market, government is perhaps saying that it is now 'up to them'. The problem is that many would not know where to begin.

Persuading many of these people into work and training may well involve elements of both coercion and cooperation, and also attempting to have them recognise they can develop skills that perhaps they had never thought themselves capable of.

Applying coercion to get individuals back into employment can only be effective up to whatever point resentment starts, generating refusal to co-operate.

Should many of these individuals find work, it is likely to be paid at minimum wage, where the only option - if one is to achieve what would be considered a viable wage - is to work very long hours, when possible. Without that enhancement, many people would probably not even consider getting out of bed for such a job. But many employers these days no longer pay overtime premiums - time and a half and double time for Sundays - as was once the norm. This means that in a long working hours environment, individuals could easily find themselves working ten to twelve hours a

day, seven days a week - much as D experienced when he went back to welding. As he said, *'I'd rather go without than let somebody exploit me...'*. This a fairly common sentiment.

The older people, in particular, appear wary of the motivations of government and employers. This is backed up by their past experiences. For example, respondents talked of the poor track record of past into-work courses initiated by the Jobcentre. Given the close liaison between the Jobcentre and the administration of these courses, the same lack of trust which led people like K to state, *'I know all their games and tricks to catch you out'*, holds firm in the context of any state-led initiatives to deal with worklessness at this level. Many of these courses were viewed as close to worthless, merely a means of keeping unemployment figures artificially low.

Since many respondents still view the employment situation as one where there are no jobs, if the state is ever to approach the matter of worklessness seriously, both the availability of jobs and the creation of awareness of the presence of those jobs is one major hurdle it has to overcome. That is especially so as regards those individuals well embedded into benefit reliance, and particularly those on Incapacity Benefit who have often been 'left alone'.

Many employers in Thornaby have a preference for taking on younger people. By side-lining a large percentage of older people onto Incapacity Benefit - thus off Jobseekers Allowance and the attendant pressures to find work at any cost after six

months - the government is able to suggest that unemployment is lower than it really is. Moreover, this accommodates employers' demands for mostly a young labour force. Men over 50 have been encouraged, via redundancy packages that came with Incapacity Benefit information, to go in that direction. Persuading these individuals onto what was then Invalidity Benefit could be seen by a Jobcentre management as the only way the office could meet unemployment reduction targets (Toynbee 1999). Given that policy can often be rather slow in adjusting at ground level, following new initiatives, and also a change of government, it is quite possible that the continued usage of Incapacity Benefit in this way has carried on. Thus, when considering getting these people to take employment, one perhaps should also look at this extra available labour in relation to whatever vacancies exist. Are the jobs really there? From this perspective, then, if one abandons unemployment simply as a definition, and thinks instead of people without work who would take it if it were available, then there is probably still a substantial shortage of jobs.

Another point is linked to the common discourse within which most of the respondents grew up. It was a defined world; they were working class and did certain jobs as a consequence. Most accept that has gone. They are also people without much money and financial influence, thus easily exploitable. However, unlike, for example, certain religious or alternative lifestyle groups, these individuals are not people likely to have a lifestyle consciously dictated by an ideology, though the state may well be seen as attempting to impose its ideology on them. They are, though, people with a sense of pride - a pride that suggests that some of them, should they find themselves coerced into low paid work, may simply drop out and rely on friends

and family until retirement age. That is the strategy of people like EC, who lived in his allotment hut for many years until he was persuaded to take a council flat.

Usage of Incapacity Benefit can therefore appear as a practical response at both individual and government levels. Certainly there is a division of attitudes between the people using it, and that of the government. It could also be that the government is taking a pragmatic approach, recognising that many of these individuals, with their limited skill base, have little to offer the modern economy. However, the government is now talking in terms of 'persuading' individuals into work from Incapacity Benefit:

*'Incapacity benefit is to be split into two, with an increased allowance for the permanently disabled or sick, but a new "rehabilitation support allowance" for those able to get back into the job market, the government announced today.' (Tempest 2005).*

How much of this will translate into practice, how much of it is sabre rattling by the state, and how much will be quietly discarded through fear of a backlash by various disability groups is evidently open to speculation.

For those currently reliant on benefits in Thornaby, there was very little evidence of welfare recipients working 'on the side'. It does occur, though appears nowhere near as prolific as some elements of the popular press might suggest. There was, though, some evidence of people engaging in various activities, such as car repairing, fishing,

and CD and DVD manufacturing, to subsidise benefit incomes. None of these actions were at a level which could provide what might be considered an adequate income.

#### **4.1 Adapting to change**

This study has made frequent reference to the concept of the solidaristic community, and not without reason. The men of Thornaby were expected to sell their labour in conditions of insecurity to a small number of employers, the town dominated by one. Relative poverty has always been common, often leading to various loose support systems, usually between families, friends and neighbours. Official help was often dominated by a dogmatic approach, demonising recipients, this frequently worse than it is today. The post-war introduction of the welfare state legitimised the right to assistance via the unemployment benefit system, and what was later to be called Social Security. Previous experiences of unemployment and poverty, particularly the depression of the 1920s and 1930s, led to the political consensus enabling the creation of this 'safety net'.

Dealing with the problem of insecurity is important to the working class. Thorpe states that the creation of unemployment appeared to workers as deliberate policy (1976, p. 71). Certainly the policies and events commenced by Thatcher in 1979 appear to support that view. Thatcher was often accused of creating mass unemployment as a means of controlling the working class, and particularly the behaviour of the trade unions. Before that, efforts were made to minimise the impact

of unemployment, especially by trying to introduce new sources of employment for those who had lost their jobs. But as far as many respondents are concerned, the new jobs brought in after deindustrialisation, particularly under Thatcherism, were not for them but for other people. They feel that they have been left out of this brave new world.

The new jobs have brought with them new methods, and also new cultures of working, cultures specific to each firm. At one time a firm had a gaffer, or foreman, a manager, and the workers did not concern themselves too much above that. Now firms talk in terms of 'teams', 'team leaders', and a variety of other status-enhanced titles that to the outsider may appear quite meaningless, and which for many older workers denote a structure very different from previous patterns of employment.

Tradesmen, such as fitters, welders, people who had served time as an apprentice, always had an assumed sense of status in many industrial and construction working environments. Tradesmen often had a 'mate' who would hand them their tools, sweep up after them, and perform other menial tasks for the benefit of the tradesman. Fitter's mate, joiner's mate, and welder's mate were all once familiar job titles in the North East. Interestingly, this status factor was not evident when I lived and worked, in a non-industrial context, in London. These people were simply considered to be workmen, seemingly just the same as all the others. Thus, there is a place specific slant to this perceived status, though it is not necessarily reciprocated by other workers, as I found in my own experience in the chemical industry in Teesside. There, the higher level operator grades required a good basic scientific understanding

(Nichols and Beynon, 1977, p. 66). In turn, the fitters and welders, who often were less qualified than the newer operators entering the industry, were on a higher grade. This was often contentious when a process came to a standstill because, for example, no fitter was immediately available to perform a routine task that could easily be taught. This pattern of workplace organisation was typical of many places at that time, and is held to have been a cause of productivity inefficiencies (see Donaldson 1975, Witz 1986).

For many older workers, recent changes in workplace cultures also now mean sidelining tradesmen, stripping them of their assumed status. They are now the same as everybody else in the factory. Basically, it is a traditional case of deskilling. It means that at a local level the idea of learning a trade, which was once emphasised to many boys at school, no longer has the same value. In turn, the remaining workforce is now able to carry out the basic routine tasks that only these apprentice-served workers were once allowed to perform. In reality, what happened was the introduction of working practises common in nearly all of the industrial world, except the United Kingdom where demarcation had enabled this segregation of certain workers from the rest. Thus, whilst some people might have interpreted this as a backwards move, to others it was a catching up exercise. Respondents bemoaned the lack of apprenticeships now - perhaps indicating an inability to connect to the world of work as it is at present. It was, though, the older people who mostly had difficulty facing up to these changes (see Strangleman and Roberts 1999).

Having said that there appears to have been a failure to adapt by many Thornaby



people, it can be said that this failure - which also appears to be a form of resistance to change - has always been there. This phenomenon is certainly not unique to Thornaby, it is perhaps common across a wide spectrum of former working men in industry. Today it is perhaps difficult for some people to understand that, in the past, a management proposal that would mean a different grade of worker would perform a task in the interests of efficiency would often be howled down in protest, even occasionally leading to a work-to-rule or strike action should they attempt to implement it. With resistance embedded into many working people of that period at that sort of level, and a form of segregation through demarcation established as the normal way of doing things, it is probably unsurprising that many of these men appear to have failed to accept recent changes in workplace organisation.

Nationally, the 1960s and 1970s were characterised by trade union dominated militant behaviour. But the history of Teesside's industry led to an evolution of a paternalistic managerial approach in its main firms (see Beynon *et al* 1994). This, in turn, meant Teesside workers tended to be less militant than in some other places, though trade union action did certainly occur. This behaviour, in that period, can be placed into the post-war consensus which had led to, not only the welfare state, but also expenditure on other projects such as council housing. There was also a lot more government involvement in the workplace, such that financial help might be available when a firm such as Head Wrightson hit a lean period. Within this series of events, workers often led their lives in a passive way. Out of the experiences of the command economy of the Second World War, people were more responsive to the demands of authority, in that government was seen - through the welfare state,

nationalisation of key industries, the new National Health Service, and council house building - to be working for the benefit of people. It also meant that others decided many things affecting people's lives, such as where one lived, through council house allocations. For many people, it was 'they' who made the major decisions. In fact, very little decision making was needed by many people. Wages were paid weekly, and rent collected weekly, along with other regular bills such as insurance. Gas and electricity were frequently paid for via a coin in the slot meter, whilst the water bill was incorporated into the rent. Hoggart remarked upon how

*'The little payment-books cluttered behind an ornament are marked by the week too, and are usually for "paying off"'. (Hoggart 1957, p. 133)*

If people were seen as not taking risks it was because they did not need to, and perhaps because it could mean sacrificing the little that one already had.

The post-industrial culture instigated during the Thatcher years, promoted by government as the only option and continuing today, takes a different attitude. In this model, people create their own chances, assuming responsibility for their own lives. The key in this package is entrepreneurial behaviour and risk taking, all very different from Hoggart's description of working class life, and different from a (past) way of living that would be very recognisable to most older Thornaby people.

Not everyone is able, or wants to participate in the new world. For example, many of the older men in Thornaby do not have a credit card, because of the debt stigma.

They have always received their income, paid what they had to, and kept the rest for food, heat and other things. That is how it was, and that is how it continues. One only has to visit any of the small Thornaby shops with pay point facilities to see that a large cross section of Thornaby people do not pay bills by direct debit. Gas, electricity, and rent are all paid over the counter - in cash.

At one level it can be argued that these people are failing to adapt, but why should they? For example, for those who do not use them, getting credit cards probably would benefit only the banks. These people still have to budget their lives around what little income they have, and it seems pointless adding more complicating factors to that. And, if one is on benefits one probably cannot get a credit card in any case, and it may be better to curtail temptation to purchase what is really unaffordable. For people to change there surely has to be a positive reason for it.

#### **4.2 New places, new people, and a changing Thornaby**

Before deindustrialisation, Thornaby's reliance on a small range of industries yielded social characteristics similar to Bulmer's (1970) assessment of a typical mining community. Much of this was due to Thornaby's isolation both from the rest of the North East of England and from the rest of the United Kingdom. Its geographical position, wedged between Stockton-on-Tees and Middlesbrough, inevitably meant it was eclipsed by those places. Thornaby was both independent, yet very reliant on them.

The construction of Teesdale, the Teesside Park shopping and entertainments centre to the north, and Ingleby Barwick to the south, has led to Thornaby slowly becoming more connected with different forms of commercial activity, and has brought in different people, attracted by the new developments. These developments have also led to the construction of three new bridges across the river Tees, improving access to and from the place. While some Thornaby people still hardly ever leave it, other people have now come to it. Parts of Thornaby, such as the Village area, have become more known as attractive areas to live, being adjacent to green areas and the river. Developments at Teesdale and elsewhere are bringing in new, and sometimes affluent, people into Thornaby. Also, some students at the Queen's Campus of Durham University have taken accommodation in Thornaby, a number of older terraced street houses being purchased by people hoping to profit from this influx. This does mean that there are people bringing in different ideas and ways of doing things into Thornaby.

The residual 'Thornaby' population, in turn, is slowly reducing numerically, as some of the younger generation moves elsewhere. Much of the younger generation remaining in the older part of Thornaby possesses the lower skill range mentioned by Nickel (2004) above. Thus, this part of Thornaby will show more of the type of problems one associates with inner cities; it is becoming dominated by property owned by private landlords and is characterised by people on low incomes, and also has a constantly changing student population. PC3, talking of this, stated how because landlords receive their rental income directly from the Benefits Agency, both them and their tenants '*.... couldn't care less. They get money off the social*'. If that

is a reflection of a popular attitude to the area from sectors of authority, then this part of Thornaby could become ghettoised.

The Holmes estate, a large council estate near the new town centre, and other estates close to the Mandale public house, house a population that closely reflects what might be considered, in terms of the respondents' own views, the 'true Thornaby'. Largely working class, frequently with many family members close by, it is made up of mostly lower skilled individuals. Many of these are the people who were transferred from the street houses during earlier redevelopments, or are their descendants. It is this group of people that appears to have the strongest sense of 'loss of Thornaby'. Part of that may be a reflection of the loss of the town around them, whilst the optimism that existed when they moved into the new council houses seems to have been lost as well. JW talked about how the whole of his old street moved into the new road together. This practice was quite common at the time. For example, I was also informed that the people who once lived on the Head Wrightson side of old Thornaby town centre, a small residential area at that time, were moved into council houses around Richardson Road. Many of these are now owner occupied houses.

The Village area and the fringes towards, and including, Ingleby Barwick, show indications of being sought-after places to live. These already attract people from outside the area who are working here. Whilst undoubtedly many of these individuals do make various contributions to the place, their long term commitment is probably not as deep as those born in the place into existing family networks.

Many of these people are transitory, passing through during a career which could take them to a variety of places.

#### **4.3 Older men and getting into work**

*'When people think of the working class, the traditional worker is the coal miner. There are hardly any of those left. What they should be thinking about is the cleaner' (Rose, quoted in Brindle 1998)*

Currently, one can visit quite a few homes in Thornaby where the only employed people are female. A lot of these women appear to be spread across three main centres of activity, though some obviously are engaged in other tasks. These are cleaning, care home assistants, and supermarket work. Just as the men used to be seen, frequently en-masse, wearing overalls or dirty working clothes, a common sight now in Thornaby is of women in a smock - perhaps with the logo of a cleaning firm on it, or perhaps wearing the uniform of a care home, and even more frequently, wearing clothing in Asda's bright green. The women are now the visible front line of paid work in Thornaby. It also indicates a shift from manufacturing to not simply the service sector, but to a particularly servile component of that. Many of these women are on low wages, the majority probably on the minimum wage, employed by firms and organisations whose main interest is the immediacy of profit at the lowest cost to themselves. This level of servility, linked to the wages and conditions many of these people labour under, can almost seem like a return to a world of upstairs and downstairs, one fed by the need of those employed in it simply to earn some sort of

living.

Undoubtedly there are many people prepared to be employed in these roles, under the wages and conditions imposed, and capital exploits them to the best of its ability. Many older men appear to be of the opinion that they have been exploited, in that manner, enough through a lifetime of paid work, and have better things to do with their lives. Remember, that a person used to doing practical tasks in their spare time, such as growing food on allotments and DIY at home, is going to lose much of that productive time should they take up work. A minimum wage job thus can become a liability, making the individual materially worse off.

If then, the – particularly - older men are to return to work, then market interventions will most likely be required. After all, it was the market that mostly created their situation in the first place. As elsewhere, the older men of Thornaby are not in fact a homogeneous mix. Many, such as D, have developed their lives in new directions and have forged new careers. Some, like DK, have adequate pensions and need not work, though may undertake part time employment - something denied benefit recipients because they stand to lose benefit pound for pound. There is, though, a large group - perhaps seen by many as unemployable - mostly unskilled, who have not worked for a long time, for whom the future is simply more of the same. Given the low wages and poor conditions many once laboured under - and would expect again should they return to paid work - their current situation, particularly for those on Incapacity Benefit, is probably seen as the only realistic option. Why this has been progressively allowed to happen is explained by Webster who comments

*'This differential results from the strong belief of British policy makers, which took hold during the 1980s at the urging of supply-side economists such as Richard Layard, that unemployment benefits ought to be kept as low as possible in order to encourage people to move to employment. Sickness benefits, though scarcely generous, have not been affected in the same way. In this respect British policy is different from that of France and Germany, which have continued broadly to share Beveridge's view that unemployment is as much a misfortune as is sickness. It does not appear to have occurred to the British advocates of lower unemployment benefits that people might respond rationally (as economists say they should) by moving to sickness benefits instead of jobs, where the latter are unavailable.'* (2002)

Webster also states

*'Beatty & Fothergill (1999) showed using individual level regression analysis that receipt of an occupational pension was a significant predictor of an IB rather than JSA claim. This was explained by the fact that because JSA is means-tested, it removed the benefit of the pension, whereas IB was non-means tested.'* (2002, see also Beatty et al 2000)

Also, for many older unskilled people, pay has tended to decline with age, though older workers are not in fact more expensive to keep. This in turn means that the gap between benefits and wages reduces as many get older, limiting incentives to carry on



in employment (Clayton 2005).

What a person previously did in employment might be considered a useful guide to what they might do in the future, if they can be persuaded into employment. But that in itself is possibly unhelpful. Hirsch (2003) points out that one of the reasons people took an early exit from employment is simply that they hated their job (in Clayton 2005). In a place like Thornaby, which has historically had limited job opportunities, some people may well equate employment and awfulness in the same framework; certainly D did, with his years spent welding. Secondly, the majority of papers and reports based around the theme of returning people to employment appear to view employers as somehow neutral, or even benevolent. That some employers behave in a quite awful manner to their workforce is never considered, and in a small town like Thornaby those firms are soon made known. The onus is always on the unemployed, or those being targeted for return to work, to present and accommodate themselves to the needs of the employers, whilst there is an absence of legislation to ensure that the employer behaves responsibly towards their workforce. This issue particularly applies to lower skilled individuals, those with little to offer in the context of the job market.

There are some firms that will happily employ older people; the DIY chain B & Q is often mentioned, but firms like B & Q are in the minority - and it would certainly need a lot of B & Q branches to have any major impact on the older non-employed workforce. It can be safely assumed that if a higher percentage of older people are to enter the workforce government will have to use measures to encourage, or even

coerce, firms into enabling it to happen.

That does not mean that all older people, or younger people for that matter, are easily employable. Some of the respondents would probably struggle in a firm like B & Q. Whilst many would probably have a sound practical approach, they lack many basic arithmetical and writing skills, and quite a few lack the social and diplomatic skills needed when dealing with the public. This can be verified by my own experiences dealing, in a training centre context, with both post-school teenagers, and also older people - some, from both groups, being defined as having learning difficulties - who have very poor numeracy along with basic reading and writing skills. In fact I have found that many of these people are surprisingly intelligent and easy to converse with.

For older people lack of basic skills is even more problematic. Clayton (2005) points out how many older people view any training and classroom situation as 'going back to school'; they say they are 'too old', or incapable of doing something else (Ford et al 2003). In a similar vein, Middlesbrough's *Evening Gazette* reported a story about a former 44 year old construction worker from Whinney Banks, a Middlesbrough suburb adjacent to Thornaby, who acquired arthritis and had to seek other employment. He was placed on a course where he was considered to be in need of maths training after failing an exam, and was thus expected to go on a 26 week course. His response was

*'It's like going back to school. I think it's ridiculous. It's insulting. Maths*

*has never been my subject, I left school at fourteen. I have never been out of work for nineteen years. I am able to construct a building from drawings. I don't need to go back to school. I need proper help in getting a job. They are just using this to bring down the dole figures.'* (Haworth 2005)

Again, in a training context, I have seen a former steelworker walk out of an exam room after three months of hard training on the basis that '*I can't do this sort of thing*'.

Thus if one is to discuss the future of the lower skilled working class men of Thornaby, one needs to take in the future of their children and grandchildren and intervene to end the continued reproduction of the low skill culture. In many ways the mass redundancies of the 1980s simply made the issue more visible.

What interventions might work, given that pressurising them into low paid work means into a job that hardly constitutes an 'opportunity'? Teaching practical skills has to have a high priority. Thornaby's Five Lamps training centre once ran courses such as joinery and carpentry, as well as car maintenance - courses that were popular and well subscribed. Other course areas could include topics such as horticulture. Courses already exist, albeit at a very basic level, for computer maintenance. However, very little help is available beyond entry level, though the demand for technicians in this field does offer possibilities. Clearly a whole range of other subjects could also be considered.

There is also the matter of temporary employment. In the manual sector, temporary work usually takes one of two forms. There is the traditional fixed term contract, or on a construction site, working till the job is complete. There are also some firms - for example, in Teesside a major flat pack furniture manufacturer - who employ people on a fixed term contract basis to avoid making them permanent staff and therefore liable for redundancy and other payments. These firms will dismiss individuals as close as a day short of the qualifying period for redundancy payments and re-appoint them - sometimes under different terms and conditions - a day or two later, again under a fixed period contract. Inevitably, the terms of the contract are biased in favour of the firm making it possible to dismiss them before the end of the contract. Older people, who already face a battle to acquire employment, may well choose not to consider temporary work, unless the financial rewards are suitably high to compensate for that.

Perhaps an element of 'carrot and stick' may become necessary to bring some individuals back into the workplace. The question is perhaps: 'how much stick'? Two points here; firstly the already mentioned unwillingness to learn, particularly in a classroom situation. Secondly: how far can some people be driven until they, for example, walk off a course, and perhaps lose the right to benefits? If this were to occur on any scale then it is quite likely that informal networks will be established between individuals, ironically resulting in many of these people working in the informal economy. An American study based around families who lost entitlements in Illinois placed 38% as being involved in the informal economy, though this can include baby sitting, a variety of odd jobs, and does not suggest forms of criminal

activity (Illinois Family Study Policy Brief No. 3, 2002). In fact, many older people do not have to wait too long before entitlement for state retirement pension, and some of these may choose to 'disappear' until that time. At one level it would seem prudent to apply less pressure from the 'stick' the closer a person is to official retirement.

Whilst nationally the government may see unemployment as an issue mostly under control, the view from the North East is somewhat different. The Tees Valley is one of a number of areas that does suffer from a serious lack of labour demand (Adams 2005). The government looks to the supply side, citing unemployment as the fault of the unemployed, even though many respondents say that there are no jobs. That difference of view is noted by Adams who states

*'For many people living in the North East the proposition that a key problem facing the region is a lack of jobs would seem to be so obvious that they might find it hard to believe that this is a matter of serious contention' (2005).*

As well as a lack of jobs, there are other factors holding people back from getting back into paid work. The spatial distribution of many firms to locations away from residential areas makes paid work both inaccessible and unaffordable for many individuals. According to a Joseph Rowntree Foundation paper, a major impediment to gaining employment was that only half of unemployed men had driving licences (2001). They also add that there is a perception by some employers that those reliant on public transport are less reliable and are unwilling to be flexible as regards starting and finishing times, on account of bus timetables. In fact, some employers will not

consider someone without a car. Conversely, some people find public transport very expensive, even prohibitive, and incompatible with work demands (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2001). Linked to this, undoubtedly some would say 'get on your bike', and there are those that do. But, given the dangerous state of many roads, and lack of serious investment in cycle paths and facilities - particularly in the context of day to day use as opposed to leisure purposes - this is an option that often has to be discounted purely on safety grounds.

Various initiatives have been introduced to try to place older people back into employment, and some have had a degree of success. The government set up the *Pathways to Work* scheme, in some pilot areas, including locations in the North East, though not Thornaby or Teesside. This scheme targeted those who had been on Incapacity Benefit up to four months. The data regarding its success appears promising, though is both early and open to revision (Adams 2005). There is a broad consensus that Incapacity Benefit is a barrier to work. New proposals from the government would require individuals to attend work focussed interviews. Also claimants would be placed on a 'holding' allowance at the rate of Jobseekers Allowance until after the assessment of their ability to take up employment. Undoubtedly many of these claimants can, and will, take up viable employment when available. However, it would most likely push some borderline individuals, in areas such as the North East where there is a shortage of employment, into greater poverty than they would face now. Unlike the current situation where their incapacity would help place them onto Incapacity Benefit, they will most likely find themselves stuck at the lower rate.

There are a number of other schemes, such as New Deal 25. However, a Working Group of the National Employment Panel found that only 25% of participants moved from benefit into sustained, unsubsidised jobs and almost 46% of those who leave the programme end up back on welfare (National Employment Panel 2004). Campbell argues that schemes should not push people into unstable employment, adding that three in four jobs taken by the long-term unemployed are unstable (Campbell 2001).

The government does not consider unemployment a priority issue any longer. As far as the North East and Thornaby are concerned, it still is. In fact, government estimates suggest that employment would have to rise over 100,000 to place the North East up to the overall UK employment rate (HM Treasury/Department for Work and Pensions 2003).

At the very beginning of this study (page 1) I said that

*'For much of my lifetime I have seen North East-based regional news bulletins preoccupied by the lack of employment opportunities and its effects on communities. That is still the case, although the nature of work has altered significantly. [.....] The absolute lack of what many North Eastern males would consider meaningful work seems to be ignored, though some commentators may appreciate that work for its own sake is not necessarily the answer, given the wages, conditions, and temporary nature of much current employment.'*

It would seem that over the years very little has in fact changed. The older workers in this study are facing an ongoing dilemma. Older workers once unemployed, particularly unskilled ones, have always found it hard to find employment. The effects of the economic restructuring impacted particularly on the 'post-war baby boomers'. By the 1990s that generation were heading towards their fifties - a difficult age to get a job. Looking at Teesdale today, many of the call centres will eventually shut and a new generation of the older sector of that workforce will face similar problems. And just like the workers of Head Wrightson, which was once on that site, whose own skills were often worthless once the firm shut, many of these people will find themselves in a similar situation, facing an endless stream of courses and training schemes.

Policy intervention is often limited and temporary. Schemes come and go, like putting a finger in the dyke every time a leak occurs to slow down the water. But without a major political change it is basically all policy can do. Even where jobs are supposedly plentiful, questions need to be asked about the quality of many of them. At the time of writing, the House of Commons faces strike action from contract cleaners who earn £5 an hour, have no sick pay or pension, and only get 12 days holiday a year. These people are also expected to use a store room as a rest room. As one of these workers recently said:

*'we don't want to just live and work. We want to live and work like human beings' (Pai 2005)*



That is the future visualised by many of the older workers in Thornaby, should they be coerced into employment. One in which they have no say but simply do as they are told and face poverty as a consequence of meeting the demands of the shareholders of firms - tantamount to feudalism.

It can be argued that there is a major flaw in the capitalist system that allows so many workers to be 'discharged' once they are deemed 'too old'. Employers can be educated, persuaded, even coerced, into employing them. But where there is an excess of people seeking work, compared to the jobs available, as in the North East, the older workers are likely to continue to be left behind.

As for the unskilled older workers one can only see a future of 'more of the same'. Learning-centred initiatives - which would generally mean a classroom situation - have to be the starting point. For that, coercion may be the only option. Part of that is said from experience. The training centre I teach in also has an intake of older people, all unqualified and unskilled. There have been some marginal short term 'successes' with these individuals. For example, some have obtained warehouse work at Christmas, and someone on Income Support based Jobseekers Allowance without dependants can find that financially rewarding. Mostly, though, these are people who feel the system has given up on them, and simply go through the motions of doing what they are told to maintain their benefits. They have no expectations of employment, certainly not any rewarding employment.

This project set off to give a voice to a mostly ignored to group of people. They have said what they have. Has anybody listened to them? More importantly, will anybody taken any notice of anything they have said?

## **Appendix**

### **Interviewees**

A – female - early 30s. Works for the NHS in a clerical capacity. Has had a variety of jobs in the past, mostly clerical. Was also the training manager for Asda's Thornaby branch, before it was taken over by Walmart. Originally from Middlesbrough, she and her husband (respondent S) lived in Thornaby on a modern private estate. They now live at Ingleby Barwick.

A1 – male - late fifties/early sixties, a well travelled West Indian who came to London in the late 1950s. He found himself unable to work as a teacher there because of racism. He then worked for ICI in one of their laboratories for a number of years, but later moved on to the railways as a guard because the money was a lot better. Lives in the older part of Thornaby, though was relocated from a street house in the old town centre during the 1960s/70s redevelopments.

AL-1 – male, late fifties. Has had a variety of jobs, but spent most of his working life driving buses. He was invalided from that and has not worked for a number of years. Is currently on Incapacity Benefit. He is native to Thornaby. Lives in a former council house property.

AJ – male - retired, previous employment included being in the RAF, working for a wire factory in Middlesbrough, coal miner, and cleaning supervisor. He has never

been unemployed. He came to Thornaby via marriage and leaving the RAF. He was one of group of people that came together under the heading of 'Remembering Thornaby', dedicated to celebrating the Thornaby of the past - before the redevelopment commenced in the 1960s that led to the demolition of most of Thornaby's old town centre and immediate surrounds. Lives in a council house.

BC – male - late forties/early sixties, has spent most of his time working as a gardener. Currently has heart problems, but was declared 'fit' following a medical examination by a DHSS doctor. He is unemployed. He lives in a council house.

CR – male - fortyish, originally an apprentice plater but the firm he was employed at shut before he could finish that. He worked as a scaffolder for some years, becoming foreman for part of that period. Has had a period of drug addiction. Now a neighbourhood drug co-ordinator. Originally from Thornaby, near the Mandale area, he now lives in Stockton.

Credit union official – female - fifties

C – female - early 40s, married to D. Traditional housewife, has worked in factories, a home, school kitchen, and clerical role. Lives in a purchased former housing association property.

D – male - early to mid forties, a former welder at Head Wrightson. Following redundancy took a degree course at Teesside University, and was employed by

Church Action on Poverty at the time of the interview. He is married to C. They live in a purchased former housing association property.

DK – male - early sixties. Had spent most of his working life as a laboratory technician in an industrial research environment. From Middlesbrough, though married to a Thornaby person, he was employed part-time by Thornaby town hall in a secretarial context. Lived in a private house at Acklam in Middlesbrough (Died in 2003).

DT – Dari Taylor, Member of Parliament for Stockton South since 1997.

EC – male - early sixties, did mostly labouring, though spent some time travelling with a fairground. He has rarely worked since the 1970s. Lived for a number of years on his allotment, because of frequent vandalism. He looks a lot older than his age. Lives in a council flat.

EG – male - originally from the Midlands, moved to Teesside in 1960. He worked for the North East Electricity Board, initially based at Thornaby in an office complex behind the Town Hall; the office moved to Thornaby new town centre in the late 1960s. He now lives in New Zealand.

Five Lamps Director – male – since the interview has left and been replaced.

Fortyish, originally from a working class council house part of east Middlesbrough, an area with similar social and economic based problems to Thornaby.

G – male - early forties, not from Thornaby but living there. His partner, at the time of interview, was J who is from Thornaby. They lived in a flat on the run-down Holmes estate in Thornaby. J has had little in the way of unemployment. He seems more driven towards an 'alternative' lifestyle, though this is somewhat unspecific in nature. However, he has proven to be a very keen, able athlete and cyclist and has had good placings in various races, and also the London marathon. His parents are both retired teachers. He came to live in Thornaby with J following burglaries and other problems as victims of crime when living in a bedsit in Stockton.

GD – Roman Catholic priest, early fifties, one of two Catholic priests spoken to. Originally from Middlesbrough, his career has involved periods in two Thornaby parishes.

GM – male - mid fifties, chartered civil engineer, came to Teesside in 1970, now works in Scotland.

HH – male - fiftyish, an Anglican priest. His previous parish had been in east Middlesbrough, in an area with similar social problems to Thornaby.

Howard – male - mid sixties, a former plater, though did have other jobs before his apprenticeship. Has worked for a variety of firms, including Head Wrightson. Most of his time was spent working for sub-contractors in metal-based environments.

Following the collapse of much of Teesside's industry in the 1980s, he worked in Germany, until illness invalidated him out. At the time of interview he was on Incapacity Benefit. Originally from Thornaby, he moved to Redcar (Died in 2002).

J – female - early thirties, partner to G. Until university, where she dropped out, she had lived all her life in Thornaby. After that period she has lived in Middlesbrough and Stockton. She has a very artistic streak, proven in paintings and graphics. Like G, she also appears to be directed towards an 'alternative lifestyle'.

JH – female - late forties. It was originally intended to speak to both her and her partner. He dropped out at the last minute, so I interviewed her. JH is very Thornaby-centred, born in Thornaby of Thornaby parentage, she is one who sees a Thornaby of strong community and traditions. Has had a variety of jobs since leaving school. A single mother with an older child, she and her partner, who has difficulty finding suitable work, have not married due to benefit rules, though would like to. Lives in old Thornaby.

JM – male - fifties, a former butcher who was on Incapacity Benefit at the time of interview. Thornaby born and bred and focussed on the place. A widower for a number of years, in the past he was involved with non-conformist Christian activities. He still sings with a choir. Since the interview he has restarted work as a self employed odd-job gardener. Lives in an older private house.

JW – male - mid forties, engineering background in shipping. He now works for his

brother in Bradford delivering prescription drugs. He returns to Thornaby at weekends and has no intention of relocating to Bradford. Thornaby born and bred. He was previously involved with a Congregational church in the middle of the Holmes Estate that was vandalised to the extent it had to be demolished. Despite problems of that kind he still looks at Thornaby in a very positive light

K – male - late fifties, has had a variety of jobs, mostly contracting on sites in an unskilled capacity. Has lived in Thornaby all of his life, though has spent periods working away. A former Cleveland County Councillor,. Now on Incapacity Benefit. Lives in a council flat.

KC – male - late fifties, of German parentage, but lived most of his life in South Wales. Came to the North East, where he married a Thornaby girl. Has had a variety of jobs, mostly delivering papers and journals for a wholesaler, and in later years in the security industry. He was invalided out following heart problems, but has been deemed fit by a Benefit Agency doctor. Since then he has been unemployed. He is very active in local authority initiated community activities in Thornaby. Lives in a council house.

M1 – male - mid forties, currently employed as a barman in his brother's public house. Had a variety of jobs before then, none of them lasting for any substantial period of time. His father spent many years unemployed, and M1 thinks that might be his future if his present job goes. He is Thornaby born and bred, and reluctant to leave the place, even though he has been offered work elsewhere in the catering



trade. Lives in a council house.

Mark – male - late forties. Has had a variety of manual jobs in various engineering firms, including Head Wrightson, and became unemployed following redundancy in the 1980s. In the mid 1990s he started work for MENCAP part-time, using Family Credit to top up his income. Following a domestic crisis, and finding himself a single parent, he has had to give up that employment due to managerial inflexibility. He currently lives on Income Support, and has two children of school age to care for. Mark originally came from Tyneside, moving to Thornaby at a pre-school age. He lives in a council house.

N – male - late sixties, retired. All of his working life was involved with railways, including as a London-based official trade union representative. His working life was unusual in as much as he had never found himself unemployed. He was the Chairman of Thornaby Town Council at the time of interview. Other activities involved being a magistrate on the Teesside Bench, and working with the Boys Brigade for over forty years. He was also very active with Thornaby Baptist Church. N was very Thornaby-centred, being born and bred there. He was a person that would stop and speak to people in the street, from which much of his knowledge of Thornaby appeared to be based. That is how I came to know him, passing his house regularly when cycling for exercise purposes. He lived in a private house close to Thornaby Green (Died in 2003).

P1 – male - mid forties, has had a variety of unskilled jobs, though most of his adult

life has been unemployed. He has two children and now avoids employment because of the child maintenance he would immediately be expected to pay, a sum he considers the children's mother would not receive in full, and which would also leave him heavily short of available cash. In fact, he is very resourceful and he makes sure the children are well catered for, his relationship with the children's mother being good. One of his current activities involves buying cars cheap from auctions, which he repairs and improves to later sell. He also sea fishes as a hobby, and supplies a friend who owns a chip shop. He was born and bred in Thornaby, has lived all of his life there, apart from two periods in a youth detention centre. Despite his own background he has encouraged his children at school, and both already have a high standard of qualifications. He lives in a council house.

PC1 – male - a police constable based at Thornaby. Had been based in other run-down parts of the Cleveland police force area.

PC2 – male – policeman based at Thornaby station, he was part of a rapid response unit. His father had worked for Head Wrightson, which appeared to make him more aware of Thornaby's strong sense of community.

PC3 – male - based at Thornaby police station, station sergeant at the time of interview. Very conscious of Thornaby's community.

PK – male - mid fifties, unemployed but has had a varied career in the past, from labourer, to public house manager, to undertaker. Has lived most of his life in

Thornaby, but he now lives in Stockton in private housing.

PL – male - forties, unemployed. Apart from a few jobs such as working in Woolco, and table tennis instructor, he has had very little employment, part of which might be attributed to a disability restricting his walking ability. He lives in council property.

PW – female - late fifties, an 'open all hours' shopkeeper. She is a very well known person in Thornaby, selling a wide range of produce at a natural stopping off point for those on their way to or from work wanting cigarettes etc. Her shop is also a focal point for conversation and gossip. Originally from south Durham, she married a Thornaby man, and has been very close to the town and its people for a long time.

RL – male - forties, an engineering firm sales representative. He had a variety of jobs after leaving school, then went in to the army for ten years. Following that, he did a degree which helped him find his present employment. Married with children, he is originally from Scotland, and came south as a child, originally to Stockton, moving to Thornaby by the time he was at comprehensive school. By then his mother was already well established in Thornaby, as a hairdresser.

S – male - early forties, a camera person by profession. He had previously had a variety of jobs. Originally from Middlesbrough, he and his wife (respondent A) lived in Thornaby on a modern private estate. Prior to the interview they moved to Ingleby Barwick.

SP – late sixties, a Roman Catholic priest, originally from Eire. He considered Thornaby's community to be the strongest he had known since leaving there.

ST – male - mid sixties, retired. Did a variety of jobs but mostly worked as a window cleaner. Originally from the Eston area, he moved into Thornaby in 1964 and has lived there ever since.

SW – male - mid fifties, unemployed since the 1980s. Has worked mostly on building sites, though started his working life at Head Wrightson. Born and bred in Thornaby, very Thornaby-centred.

Other respondents included:

Thirteen customers at a hut, run by Thornaby Allotments Society, which sold gardening related products, interviewed at the time of the AL-1 interviews, which were spread over a few weeks.

Casual conversations in pubs, on the street, in shops and in cafès, particularly at Five Lamps training centre's cafeteria.

Casual conversations during a presentation ceremony for the Five Lamps centre at Thornaby Village Social Club.

*Since the start of this project, three of the respondents listed above have passed away. This is in remembrance and thanks to them.*



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