

“THE SMALLEST INSTITUTE OF ALL”:
SOCIOLOGY, CLASS AND THE POLITICS OF
KNOWLEDGE IN POST-WAR BRITAIN

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Between 1957 and 1962, the Institute of Community Studies (ICS) published a series of bestselling sociological studies of the working class that rendered the Institute a “sociological phenomenon”. In an increasingly egalitarian cultural climate, the Institute formulated a vision of class as culture that facilitated the legitimate distinction between classes. As a result, their theories came to occupy a key place in political and sociological discussions of class. This thesis examines the nature and uses of ICS ideologies in order to reveal the deeply politicised nature of expertise in post-war Britain.

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INTRODUCTION:

A Sociological Phenomenon

In 1953, Michael Young left his position as head of the Labour party research department and established the Institute of Community Studies (ICS).¹ Alongside Peter Willmott, Peter Marris, and Peter Townsend, the affectionately named “three Peters”, the Institute pioneered a blend of sociological and anthropological methodologies in order to closely study “the smallest institute”: the working-class family.² The result was distinctively readable: free from jargon and complex theory, filled with protracted quotations from interview subjects and impressionistic details of working-class life. It was, in short, deliberately populist. And, in the manner of all success stories, the texts published by the Institute went on to sell hundreds of thousands of copies. The ICS became the premier private research institute in Britain and, in the words of Jennifer Platt just a few years later, a sociological “phenomenon”.³ This thesis will constitute the first historical study of the nature of this ‘phenomenon’, critically tracing the Institute’s ideologies and their spread throughout post-war Britain.⁴

¹ Asa Briggs, *Michael Young: Social Entrepreneur* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 110-154; Peter Marris, “Knowledge and Persuasion: Research at ICS” in Geoff Dench, Tony Flower and Kate Gavron, eds., *Young at Eighty: the Prolific Public Life of Michael Young* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 1995), pp. 75-83.

² Peter Willmott, “Resolving the Dilemma of Bigness” in Dench, Flower and Gavron, eds., *Young at Eighty: the Prolific Public Life of Michael Young* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 1995), p. 1. See also Malcolm Dean, “The Architect of Social Innovation” in Dench, Flower and Gavron, eds., *Young at Eighty: the Prolific Public Life of Michael Young*, pp. 105-09.

³ Jennifer Platt, *Social Research in Bethnal Green: An Evaluation of the Work of the Institute of Community Studies* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan and Co Ltd., 1971), p. 1.

⁴ The only sociological review of the Institute’s work is Jennifer Platt’s *Social Research in Bethnal Green* which, given it was published less than a decade after many of the ICS texts concerned here, is considered a primary, rather than a secondary, source.

The post-war period was the ‘moment’ of British sociology. Unlike the United States or Continental Europe, there was no strong sociological tradition in Britain prior to the late 1950s.⁵ Earlier research was primarily amateur in nature, seeking to accumulate knowledge about poverty in order to facilitate effective government policy.⁶ In both intellectual and public life, economics was the premier social science.⁷ With the exception of the brief inter-war prominence of the research organisation Mass Observation, sociology and sociological conceptualisations hardly registered in the public sphere.⁸

In 1950, when the inaugural issue of the *British Journal of Sociology* was published, there were eight lecturers and professors of Sociology in the entirety of Britain.⁹ Over the space of two decades, twenty-eight new sociology departments had been established, rapidly surpassing its long established equivalent, social anthropology.¹⁰ Sociologists were granted more research funding throughout the post-war period than ever before, and more than has ever been bestowed since.¹¹

With the rise of an intellectually interested “Penguin public”, and a publisher who

⁵ See in particular Sarah Igo, *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens and the Making of a Mass Public* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2007).

⁶ The most famous of these was Charles Booth’s mammoth study of working-class London: Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London* (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1889-95). See also B. Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty: a Study of Town Life* (London: Macmillan, 1903) and the discussion of these texts in Martin Bulmer, “Development of Sociology and Empirical Social Research” in Martin Bulmer, ed., *Essays on the History of British Sociological Research* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 5.

⁷ A. H. Halsey, “Provincials and Professionals the British Post-War Sociologists”, *European Journal of Sociology*, vol. 23, no. 1 (1982), p. 150 [150-75].

⁸ For a brief history of Mass Observation see Nick Hubble, *Mass-Observation and Everyday Life* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 17-37, 104-132.

⁹ Of these, seven worked at the London School of Economics. See Mike Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940: the Politics of Method* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 119-131.

¹⁰ A. H. Halsey, “Provincials and Professionals: the British Post-War Sociologists”, p. 152; Sharon Macdonald, “British Social Anthropology” in Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland and Lyn Lofland, eds., *Handbook of Ethnography* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001), p. 73.

¹¹ Paul Thompson and Louise Corti “Introduction”, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2004), p. 5.

envisioned this audience to be intelligent enough to read original rather than abridged texts, sociological books sold in their thousands.¹² By 1967, Perry Anderson claimed that the failure to develop a “classical sociology” meant that “British culture” was unable to critically reflect on its own institutions and was thus “characterised by an absent centre”.¹³ To Anderson, sociology was a mode of conceptualisation key to public life. Sociology was not simply an academic discipline but a public phenomenon, cementing itself as one of the key tools of conceptualisation in post-war Britain. To study sociology in the post-war period, then, is not simply to study an academic discipline but to study an ascendant mode of thought.

Though there has been little historical research on this proliferation of sociology, there has been much work documenting the post-war expansion of the expert and expert knowledge. This ‘expert’ was central to all areas of public life, from economic management and social policy to art, architecture, consumption, and, of course, working-class family.¹⁴ His knowledge and skill qualified him as the most proficient figure to enable British social and economic modernisation.¹⁵ The expert, then, was qualified and modern, characteristic of the central values of a

¹² Christopher Hilliard, *English as a Vocation: The Scrutiny Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 108-201; Steve Hare, *Penguin Portrait: Allen Lane and the Penguin Editors, 1935-1970* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1995), p. 306. For a general history of Penguin publishing in this period see Rick Rylance, “Reading with a Mission: the Public Sphere of Penguin Books”, *Critical Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 4 (2005), pp. 48-66.

¹³ Perry Anderson, “Components of a National Culture” in Perry Anderson, ed., *English Questions* (London and New York: Verso, 1992 [1968]), p. 56.

¹⁴ Becky Conekin, Frank Mort and Chris Waters, “Introduction” in Becky Conekin, Frank Mort and Chris Waters, eds., *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945-1964* (London and New York: Rivers Oram Press, 1999), p. 15.

¹⁵ Mike Savage, “Affluence and Social Change in the Making of Technocratic Middle-Class Identities: Britain, 1939-55”, *Contemporary British History*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2008), p. 468.

post-war British society ostensibly committed to social mobility.¹⁶ Based upon this framework of understanding, in which the public was deferential to ‘expert’ knowledge, historians have consistently configured this knowledge as representative of a wider social outlook. The result is a tendency to closely study the opinions and arguments of an ‘expert’, and to implicitly assume that those ideas exemplified general understandings.¹⁷ This methodology fails to heed what Peter Mandler has called the ‘throw’ of a discourse and the methods by which ideologies were moulded and shaped by different participants in different contexts.¹⁸

Designation as an expert, moreover, was not simply dependent upon a claim to the possession of the most knowledge. Expertise had to be created and validated by those who used it. The ICS is a particularly clear case in point. None of the key researchers had any experience conducting social research; they were, in many ways, the epitome of the gentlemanly amateur. And yet the fact that politicians and sociologists drew so willingly upon their data indicates that the ICS sociologists were certainly ‘expert’s’ in the sense expounded by historians. As chapters two and three will show, however, this expert ‘status’ did not mean that ICS information and data was repeated verbatim. Context determined the ways that

¹⁶ Guy Ortolano, *The Two Cultures Controversy: Science, Literature and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 18-19.

¹⁷ See, for example, Frank Mort, “The Commercial Domain: Advertising and the Cultural Management of Demand” in Conekin, Mort and Waters, eds., *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain, 1945-1964* pp. 55-75; Chris Harris, “The Family in Social Britain” in James Obelkevich and Peter Catterall, eds., *Understanding Post-War British Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 45-57; Stephen Brooke, “Gender and Working-Class Identity in Britain during the 1950s”, *Journal of Social History*, vol. 34, no. 4 (2001), pp. 773-795; Chris Waters, “J. B. Priestley: Englishness and the Politics of Nostalgia” in Susan Pedersen and Peter Mandler, eds., *After the Victorians: Private Conscience and Public Duty in Modern Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 209-228.

¹⁸ Peter Mandler, “The Problem with Cultural History”, *Cultural and Social History*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2004), pp. 92-117. The idea of the ‘expert’ seems to have made assumptions of representativeness, and ignorance of the ‘throw’, particularly rife in the historiography of post-war Britain.

politicians' and sociologists' invoked ICS material. Those conclusions based upon ICS knowledge often diverged markedly from those put forward by ICS sociologists. The *idea* of the expert had equivalent cultural capital to the actual content that said expert put forth. Expertise, then, was socially constituted and deeply malleable, a fact ignored by existing historiography on the post-war 'expert'.

It is this conception of the 'expert' that has determined much of the treatment of ICS works. The ubiquity, readability, and the privileged place of quotations within ICS publications have made them popular primary resources in historical study. Predominant use of these texts is unqualified; in the manner suggested above, historians treat these publications, and the sociological conclusions, as representations of a social 'reality'.¹⁹ Those who attempt evaluation have been primarily concerned with determining the validity of ICS conclusions. Thus, Angela Davis and Claire Langhamer both emphasise the silences in Young and Willmott's depiction of the family, Joe Moran suggests that Willmott's conclusions on Dagenham were disproven by those of Tom Harrisson a decade earlier, Jon Lawrence emphasises that most post-war sociologists' retracted their arguments in the 1980s, and Janet Howarth evaluates the veracity of ICS conclusions based on corroborating material.²⁰ Given these sources are used so

¹⁹ Stephen Brooke, for example, studies the "discursive representation of gender within the working classes" and then draws exclusively upon social science texts. This results in the conflation of the sociologists' conclusions with working-class opinion. See Stephen Brooke, "Gender and Working Class Identities in Britain during the 1950s", p. 775.

²⁰ Angela Davis, "Uncovering the Lives of Women in Post-War Oxfordshire: An Oral History Approach", *Rural History*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2008), pp. 112-13; Claire Langhamer, "The Meanings of Home in Postwar Britain", *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 40, no. 2 (2005), p. 349; Joe Moran, "Imagining the Street in Post-War Britain", *Urban History*, vol. 39, no. 1 (2012), pp. 117; Jon Lawrence, "Class, 'Affluence' and the Study of Everyday Life in Britain, c. 1930-64", *Cultural and Social History*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2013), p. 286; Janet Howarth, "Classes and Cultures in England after 1951: The Case of Working-Class Women", in Clare V.J. Griffiths, James J. Nott and William

widely and unquestioningly by historians, it is important to interrogate their ‘validity’ and their methodology.²¹ In the long run, however, it is poor historical practice. By questioning whether or not ICS conclusions are correct or incorrect, these historians posit the existence of a single reality. In these estimations, the success of ICS texts depends upon their ability to ‘capture’ that reality. To treat social science texts in this manner is to treat them as secondary, rather than primary, sources. It is, in many ways, irrelevant whether the texts were true. They were ‘true’ to those who wrote them. In many ways, the theories posed by the ICS sociologists are more indicative of the sociologists’ understandings and assumptions than the lives of the people whom they studied. This does not, however, make the texts any less useful. The sociologists, and those who drew upon sociological ideas, were just as much a part of the historical landscape as the working-class families they sought to depict.

The idea of the ‘expert’, then, has prohibited the recognition of sociologists as historical subjects and of the public ‘throw’ of sociological discourses. This is a problem compounded by the failure of those few existing studies of British sociology to take cognisance of ways that sociological knowledge existed in the *public* sphere. Peter Mandler’s close examination of the work of Geoffrey Gorer and Margaret Mead is founded upon biographical exploration, which tends to emphasise that the analytical frameworks and conclusions they used were

Whyte, eds., *Classes, Cultures and Politics: Essays on British History for Ross McKibbin* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 93.

²¹ This is particularly true of contemporary history, where the “conceptual foundations” are often laid by people of the time and then carried through into historiography. See Paul Addison and Harriet Jones, “Introduction” in Paul Addison and Harriet Jones, eds., *A Companion to Contemporary Britain, 1939-2000* (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 2.

primarily the product of personal, rather than contextual, understandings.²² It is an analysis that tends to ignore the fundamental place of wider social understandings and disciplinary trends in defining conclusions, and is relatively useless for study of institutions such as the ICS. The same is also true of Mike Savage's landmark *Identities and social change*, which analyses trends insular to the sociological discipline and the development of key social science methodologies.²³ By drawing almost exclusively upon sociological publications, Savage is unable to examine, as he intended, the method by which sociology shaped "our enduring preconceptions of identity".²⁴ Fundamentally, neither Mandler nor Savage has envisaged the conclusions of these sociological texts as the product of, and the responses to, key public discourses. Given sociology was a discipline that sought to explain key social changes, the absence of context from existing historiography on the social sciences is particularly naïve.

By conceptualising ICS publications, and the uses of these publications, as commentary upon key class discourses of the post-war period, this thesis breaks away from the existing orthodoxy in studies of the rise of sociology and the expert in Britain. The post-war period saw the breakdown of earlier discourses that distinguished between classes, fundamentally defining the ICS focus upon the working-class family. In the inter-war period, and in accordance with Pierre Bourdieu's famous definition of class, taste and consumption had fundamentally

²² Peter Mandler, "Being His Own Rabbit: Geoffrey Gorer and English Culture", in Griffiths, Nott and Whyte, eds., *Classes, Cultures and Politics: Essays on British History for Ross McKibbin*, pp. 192-208; Peter Mandler, "Margaret Mead Amongst the Natives of Great Britain", *Past and Present*, vol. 204, no. 1 (2009), pp. 195-233.

²³ Mike Savage, *Identities and Social Change*.

²⁴ Mike Savage, *Identities and Social Change*, p. 11.

distinguished the middle classes.²⁵ By the post-war period, these distinctions were no longer discursively or materially valid. The perceived rise of ‘affluence’ among the working class seemed to ensure that consumption, and by extension ‘taste’, could no longer delineate class.²⁶ Moreover, a rhetoric of social mobility and classlessness was mandated by Second World War visions of Britain as a nation of equal citizens and compounded by the universalist discourses of the fledgling welfare state.²⁷ The *language* of taste became rewritten as snobbery.²⁸ Collapse of the ‘material’ foundation of class distinction thus coincided powerfully with the collapse of the discourse that legitimated it. In the post-war period, then, there occurred one of those moments emphasised by Stedman Jones in which a “particular political language...became apposite”.²⁹ From this ‘discursive’ vacuum there arose a number of pressing questions on the nature, purpose, and importance of class and hierarchy. It was these questions that sociology, and those who drew upon sociology, sought to address.

The arguments of the ICS, and those who drew upon these arguments, were a negotiation of the shifting nature of class discourse in post-war Britain. The Institute, Conservative politicians, and sociologists all drew upon sociological

²⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Richard Nice [trans.] (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984). See also James Hinton, “The ‘Class’ Complex’: Mass-Observation and Cultural Distinction in Pre-War Britain”, *Past and Present*, no. 199, no. 1 (2008), pp. 213-16.

²⁶ Though doubt has recently been cast upon the actual growth in affluence of the working classes, what matters here is that belief that affluence was rising was pervasive. See Jon Lawrence, “Class, ‘Affluence’ and the Study of Everyday Life in Britain, c. 1930-64”, pp. 273-299.

²⁷ Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 531; Robert Taylor, “The Rise and Disintegration of the Working Classes” in Addison and Jones, eds., *A Companion to Contemporary Britain, 1939-2000*, p. 371.

²⁸ Mike Savage, “Affluence and Social Change in the Making of Technocratic Middle-Class Identities”, p. 468; Susan Pedersen and Peter Mandler, “Introduction: The British Intelligentsia after the Victorians”, in Pedersen and Mandler, eds., *After the Victorians: Private Conscience and Public Duty in Modern Britain*, pp. 23-24.

²⁹ Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 22.

material in order to formulate a distinct vision of, and argument about, the nature of class, and the working class in particular. These were often competing languages of class, not necessarily founded in the “anterior social reality” of working-class people but rather part of a middle-class scramble to reconceive ‘class’ when earlier languages were rendered untenable.³⁰ In order to emphasise that this was a middle-class, rather than working-class, construct, the language of ‘identity’ and ‘class-identity’, which have predominated studies of post-war class, has been consciously avoided.³¹

Through close examination of the ICS publications between 1957 and 1963 as a concrete site of texts, rather than individual works merely published by an organisation, chapter one will examine the cohesive Institute vision of working-class, and middle-class, life.³² The concern with the structural role of family life for young couples, the elderly, the widowed, the middle class, the mentally ill, and children in education was underpinned by a consistent theory of class as culture, rather than class as a socio-economic category.³³ Within this framework, the oft

³⁰ Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, pp. 7-8.

³¹ On the problematic nature of the idea of ‘identity’ see Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity’”, *Theory and Society*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2000), pp. 1-47.

³² Due to my preoccupation with sociology as commentary on the nature of post-war Britain, an additional ICS publication, Peter Marris’ *Family and Social Change in an African City: A Study of Rehousing in Lagos* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1961), has been excluded. As this text was begun prior to Marris’ involvement in the Institute, it deviated sharply from ICS orthodoxy. Following 1962, the ICS began to move away from the community studies method to national, classless sample surveys structured around issues such as education in Michael Young, *Innovation and Research in Education* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965) and hospital care in Ann Cartwright, *Human Relations and Hospital Care* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964). The two exceptions were Peter Willmott’s *Adolescent Boys of East London* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966) and Brian Jackson’s *Working Class Community* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), though both also marked a departure from the overriding focus on the family and state governance that had characterised earlier ICS work.

³³ Michael Young and Peter Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957) Peter Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People: an Inquiry in East London* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957); Peter Marris, *Widows and their Families* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958); Peter Willmott and Michael Young, *Family and Class in a London Suburb* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960); Enid Mills, *Living with Mental Illness* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962); Brian Jackson and Dennis Marsden, *Education and the*

noted ICS ‘romanticisation’ of the working class becomes conscious and political, rather than nostalgic and naïve.³⁴

The sociological vision of class propounded by the ICS was inherently political as it sought explicitly to enable the development of policy that reflected the needs and habits of constituents.³⁵ Surprisingly, given the Institute sociologists’ link to the Labour party, ICS texts found a central place in the arguments of Conservative politicians throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s. Chapter two will analyse the central overlap between ICS depictions and Tory policy in order to critically re-examine the discourses that governed the welfare state under Conservative rule in post-war Britain. By approaching these political debates through the methodologies of cultural history, it reveals the complex place of need, class, and knowledge in post-war politics.

Chapter three returns to sociological discussions in order to critically examine the received orthodoxy that ICS publications occupied a liminal space within academic sociology. A close study of the ways that ICS data was utilised, criticised, and celebrated by sociologists reveals this was not so, as many of the Institute’s central ideas remained pivotal to sociological understandings. By extending analysis throughout the entirety of the 1960s, a gradual resolution of the conflicting

Working Class (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962); Peter Willmott, *Evolution of a Community: a Study of Dagenham after Forty Years* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).

³⁴ I take my lead here from Jones’ conceptualisation of working-class ‘nostalgia’ as the politicised repudiation of stigma. See Ben Jones, “The Uses of Nostalgia: Autobiography, Community Publishing and Working-Class Neighbourhoods in Post-War England”, *Cultural and Social History*, vol. 7, no. 3 (2010), pp. 356, 366-67. For those who criticise the ICS as romantic see, for example, Robert Taylor, “The Rise and Disintegration of the Working Classes” in Addison and Jones, eds., *A Companion to Contemporary Britain, 1939-2000*, pp. 377-8; Stephen Brooke, “Gender and Working Class Identity”, *Journal of Social History*, p. 774, 791.

³⁵ This was linked to the emphasis on ‘usefulness’ and ‘practicality’ in post-war sociology. See Martin Bulmer, “The Development of Sociology and Empirical Social Research”, in Bulmer, ed., *Essays on the History of British Sociological Research*, p. 30.

discourses of classlessness emerges in a way that both drew upon and fundamentally rejected the ideologies held by Institute sociologists and by politicians.

Carolyn Steedman has written of “lives for which the central interpretative devices of the culture don’t quite work”.³⁶ This thesis does not attempt to make any comment upon those lives. It is, rather, an exploration of ways that one key “interpretative device” of post-war Britain, sociology, attempted to take account of those lives. This was an “interpretative device” used by three different parties, with three markedly different sets of values, in order to negotiate the breakdown in long term class understandings that had been engendered by the confluent, and not altogether divisible, rise of ‘affluence’ and ‘egalitarianism’. It is an investigation of the ways this new “interpretative device” gave rise to series of competing languages of class.

³⁶ Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman* (London: Virago Press, 1986), p. 5. See also Peter Catterall, “What (if anything) is Distinctive about Contemporary History?”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 32, no. 4 (1997), p. 448.

“AN ORDERLY COMMUNITY”:¹

The Institute of Community Studies and the Development of a Working-Class Culture

Family and kinship in East London, the best-selling 1957 sociological study of working-class Bethnal Green and the inaugural publication of the Institute of Community Studies (ICS), was structured around the simple premise that the three-generation family played a definitive, indeed the definitive, role in the everyday life of the working class. The authors, Young and Willmott, argued that the borough’s characteristic friendliness and strong sense of community was founded upon this three-generation family. The family defined lives and, as a result, defined spaces. It was an argument explicitly expounded against the supposedly dominant view that kinship ties had disintegrated since the industrial revolution. In this account family members had once been “bound together...in a comprehensive system of mutual rights and duties” but now lived isolated and independent from each other.² “Far from having disappeared”, the authors argued, the family “was very much alive in the middle of London”.³

Through this construction of the continuing existence of the family, and the rejection of a supposedly normative narrative of familial decline, Young and Willmott founded their vision of the family upon its continuity. *Family and kinship*, and the subsequent community studies published by the ICS from 1957-

¹ Peter Willmott and Michael Young, *Family and Class in a London Suburb* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), p. vii.

² Michael Young and Peter Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p. xv.

³ Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, p. xvi.

1963, asserted that the family always had been, and always would be, the primary constitutive force in working-class life. This was a continuity asserted through the construction and depiction of the “comprehensive system of mutual rights and duties” that had supposedly always underpinned working-class family relations. As a result, it was not only the vision of continuity, but also of “mutual rights and duties” which defined ICS approaches, understandings, and conclusions. This chapter will elucidate the ways that the establishment of this continuing and “comprehensive system” defined ICS study and served to unify the Institute’s texts under a consistent and encompassing framework of conceptualisation which centralised continuity over change, collective duties over individual inclinations, and allocated the family the determining role in working-class relationships to wider society.

It was by establishing that there existed a “comprehensive system of mutual rights and duties” which governed family behaviour that ICS sociologists’ could assert the continuing importance of kinship. Understandings of “mutual rights and duties” were very literal – the ICS texts were permeated with examples of family members caring for one another. Daughters found homes due to their mother’s efforts and connections while fathers and brothers assisted each other in the search for employment.⁴ For the elderly, “the handicap of living alone” was rendered negligible by relatives who “helped them in all kinds of ways”.⁵ Money was freely shared in times of need ensuring that “people with relatives...seldom go short of

⁴ Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, p. 23, 63, 74; Peter Willmott, *The Evolution of a Community: A Study of Dagenham after Forty Years* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 32.

⁵ Peter Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 15.

money in a crisis”.⁶ This was particularly true of the elderly who “received regular sums of money from relatives”.⁷ In times of illness, pregnancy, or simply daily childcare, it was the family who provided continual assistance.⁸ When Peter Townsend contested “the assumed ‘burden’ of old age” upon society, he did so by highlighting the childcare, cooking and cleaning performed by elderly relatives for other family members.⁹ An ideology of reciprocity, therefore, negated the idea of a “burden”, reflecting the equal nature of the system of “mutual rights and duties”. The mutuality of the system extended to all participating members of the family. As reciprocity was used by Townsend to mitigate this “burden” of old age, the exchange of care served to constitute the value of the participant. The elderly could not be a burden upon society, for they upheld the “mutual rights and duties” that underpinned kinship.

This emphasis on reciprocity, on “*mutual* rights and duties”, was central to ICS depictions of working-class kinship. In addition to receiving care for oneself, there was an obligation to care for others. The primary incentive for widows to overcome their grief was to provide efficient care for their children.¹⁰ The only given example of a parent who relinquished their duty of care by willingly committing a mentally ill family member to hospital, occurred in order to effectively care for another member of kin.¹¹ Indeed, these depictions of care within *Living with mental illness* consistently stressed those relatives who made

⁶ Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, p. 114.

⁷ Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People*, p. 65-6.

⁸ Young, and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, p. 34, p. 113; Willmott, *The Evolution of a Community*, pp. 61-62; Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People*, pp. 55-56.

⁹ Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People*, p. 50.

¹⁰ Peter Marris, *Widows and their Families* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), p. 49.

¹¹ Enid Mills, *Living with Mental Illness: a Study in East London* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 13.

“great sacrifices to keep their sick children with them”¹², who tried “sometimes for years...to protect the sick man or woman”.¹³ Here, the “comprehensive system” was so important that, even when under great emotional strain, the family refused to relinquish their duty of care. The existence of this system depended upon the exercise of care in all situations and circumstances. Individuals went to great lengths to give care and, as a result, received care from others in all situations of need. This “comprehensive” system, then, was one founded in reciprocity.

Fundamentally, a clear link was formulated between these reciprocal acts of care and the strength of the relationship. The particularly strong mother daughter relationship was due to the fact that “mothers...perform so many important services for their daughters”.¹⁴ The reciprocal acts exchanged between family members, including sharing living space or earnings, ensured that “the bond between child and parent...was maintained”.¹⁵ In those relationships where a member assumed a “special responsibility” to care for another, the bond between them was thought particularly strong. This “special responsibility”, and the sacrifices it entailed, led to the development of strong loyalty and obligation. This included children toward widowed mothers, mentally ill family members to their mothers, and grammar school daughters to their parents.¹⁶ As these cycles of care were maintained above and beyond the expected and standard duty, a special relationship was thought to have developed. The greater the effort to *give* to another, the greater the obligation, and thus affection, the receiver felt.

¹² Mills, *Living with Mental Illness*, p. 67.

¹³ Mills, *Living with Mental Illness*, p. 28.

¹⁴ Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, p. 33.

¹⁵ Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People*, p. 80.

¹⁶ Marris, *Widows and their Families*, p. 66; Townsend, *The Family life of Old People*, p. 29; Mills, *Living with Mental Illness*, p. 67; Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, p. 153.

This logic was so strong for ICS sociologists that acts of care were repeatedly used simply to evidence the existence of a strong relationship. Thus, the “regular visits” children made to their parents were “inspired by a sense of duty to the mother”.¹⁷ As the mother had been the primary carer, the ICS sociologists deduced that the visits – themselves an expression of affection – must be ‘inspired’ by her. These visits were rendered intelligible through the discourse of reciprocity, rather than that of, for example, affection. In the ICS construction of the family, this affection was directly equivocal with the exchange of care. Therefore, it was asserted that widows “defend themselves against an unspoken reproach” by repeating “the sacrifices they had undergone in nursing their husbands”.¹⁸ That this was a “defence” is notable for two reasons. The first is that it was through professions of care that these widows were able to assert the strength of their relationship. However, in light of the ICS logic of care, these proclamations were also treated as defence because death was a mark of the failure of care. These widows needed to defend their relationships because the absence of care that was embodied in their husband’s death was also the absence of a relationship at all. Professions of care thus validated the widow as wife-carer. It was only through an emphasis on these professions that the relationship could be intelligible in ICS terms.

It was this formulation of care and affection that underpinned one of the Institute’s most famous assertions – the rise of the ‘husband and wife partnership’.¹⁹ The development of the partnership marriage was evidenced by an increase in reciprocal care. The husband, it was argued, now shared responsibility for the

¹⁷ Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, p. 55.

¹⁸ Marris, *Widows and their Families*, p. 20.

¹⁹ Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, pp. 11-15, 162.

number of children and for their welfare, taking “pride in their children’s turn out”.²⁰ The wife was able to “look forward with more assurance...to the continuing support from men”.²¹ These contributions of care resulted in the development of a “partnership marriage”: of a family relationship in which “duty and affection...coexist”.²² The “partnership marriage” has become a staple in the historiography of post-war Britain, and *Family and kinship* is the key source of evidence.²³ By failing to analyse the ICS works as a body of texts unified under a single conceptual logic, historians have emphasised the companionate partnership marriage as part of the changing landscape of post-war Britain. It is, rather, an expression of the fact that Institute sociologists’ conceived affectionate relationships through the dialectic of care. The existence of an affectionate relationship was thought to reveal the existence of reciprocal care.²⁴ This dialectic was so strong that, from the evidence of a relationship, the ICS sociologists’ could deduce the presence of reciprocal care. Relationships and care were so thoroughly entwined in ICS understandings that they were only comprehensible when linked together.

²⁰ Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, p. 13.

²¹ Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, p. 8.

²² Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, p. 162.

²³ This is a key argument in the historiography of post-war Britain. See, for example, Fiona Devine, *Affluent Workers Revisited: Privatism and the Working Class* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), pp. 114-15; Wendy Webster, *Imagining Home: Gender, ‘Race’ and National Identity, 1945-64* (London: UCL Press, 1998), p. 74; Janet Finch and Penny Summerfield, “Social Reconstruction and the Emergence of Companionate Marriage, 1945-59”, in Graham Allan, ed., *The Sociology of the Family* (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), pp. 12-34; Claire Langhamer, “Adultery in Post-war England”. *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 62, no. 12006), p. 90, 93; Angela Davis, “A Critical Perspective on British Social Surveys and Community Studies and their Accounts of Married Life, c. 1945-70”, *Cultural and Social History*, vol. 6, no. 12009), pp. 49-50, 54-56, 58.

²⁴ This is compounded by the fact that the companionate marriage is discussed over a total of five pages throughout the entirety of *Family and Kinship*. Discussions of, for example, the mother daughter relationship occupied a more prevalent place in Young and Willmott’s account. Historians have dedicated a disproportionate amount of space to the rise of this ‘partnership’.

These ICS conclusions stressed emotional affection as a product of care, rather than the catalyst for it. Relationships were created by care. In light of this, it is no surprise that participation in family networks of care engendered emotional fulfilment. Emotion was, once again, the by-product of participation. This was a family system that served “as a check on the acquisitiveness of local people”.²⁵ As a result, they wanted for little. In this account, the material deprivation Young and Willmott encountered was the product of choice. Familial cycles of care, then, were so effective that they erased need and desire. It was a family system that constituted the individual, providing them with the “security of belonging” to “get the respect they need”.²⁶ In fact, individuals derived value simply through participation in their kinship network. They were “secure in the knowledge that they are valued because they are members of the family” rather than because they “have this or that quality or achievement to their credit”.²⁷ It was “from the affective securities of family life” that individuals derived a sense of “living to some purpose”.²⁸

If individuals derived purpose and emotional fulfilment from participation in family cycles of care, the inverse was also true. The retired pensioner’s unhappiness derived from the fact that his “period of usefulness to others was coming to an end”.²⁹ This “usefulness” was defined by his financial contribution to other members of the family and, thus, the reciprocation of family care. For the same reason the mentally ill were deemed “worse off if they do not work at all”;

²⁵ Willmott, and Young, *Family and Class in a London Suburb*, p. 130.

²⁶ Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, p. 134.

²⁷ Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, p. 162.

²⁸ Brian Jackson and Dennis Marsden, *Education and the Working Class* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 159.

²⁹ Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People*, p. 140.

without money, they could not reciprocate care and develop strong and meaningful relationships.³⁰ Following their husbands' death, widows became "overwhelmed with a sense of futility and emptiness of mind".³¹ The rupture caused by death of a family member resulted in "futility", reinforcing the ICS logic that functioning systems of care gave participants a sense of "living to some purpose". In light of this conceptualisation, it is no surprise that it was the "presence...of an affectionate family" which facilitated a widow's return into everyday life.³² Just as the widow or widower's unhappiness and malaise derived from ruptures in the family cycle, the reassertion of this cycle ensured a return to happiness and purpose.

In light of the central role played by kinship in the fulfilment of emotional and material needs, a series of grave conclusions were proffered for those isolated from, or entirely without, family. "Those most isolated from family life" were repeatedly deemed "the poorest people, socially as well as financially".³³ Assertions of loneliness were explicitly assigned to those individuals without family members living locally, testifying to the pivotal emotional role played by the family in ICS formulations.³⁴ In extreme cases, the emotional deficiency that derived from isolation from family resulted in severe illness. Of the mentally ill it was concluded, "more of them lived alone, and fewer had children, than would be expected amongst widowed and divorced people of their ages",³⁵ just those elderly

³⁰ Mills, *Living with Mental Illness*, p. 106.

³¹ Marris, *Widows and their Families*, p. 16.

³² Townsend, *The Family of Old People*, p. 175; Marris, *Widows and their Families*, p. 40.

³³ Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People*, p. 166

³⁴ The only exception from the association of loneliness and familial isolation were those who had recently lost a spouse or family member, as discussed above. In these instances, loneliness was a temporary aberration, rather than a long-term affliction. See, for example, Willmott, *Evolution of a Community*, p. 34.

³⁵ Mills, *Living with Mental Illness*, p. 75.

individuals “who are socially isolated in old age...tend to make greater claims on hospital...services and to die earlier”.³⁶

It is not an exaggeration, then, to argue that the ICS conceived family care as the definitive factor in emotional fulfilment and physical health. In the absence of the systematic care family networks provided, individuals were lonely, unhappy, and even gravely ill. The kinship derived cycles of care did more than ensure material needs were met. The very act of participation provided the individual with a strong sense of purpose that subsequently maintained emotional and physical health. As a result, offering care was, in many ways, a method by which the individual was able to care for himself. No clear distinction was drawn between caring and being cared for –enacting care for another engendered respect, fulfilment, and happiness in an identical manner to the reception of care. The individual was essentially constituted by the act of care and, by extension, by their participation in the family system. Their satisfaction and experience, then, was wholly defined by their successful engagement with a collective group. Upon this cycle of care, the ICS envisioned and evidenced a family structure that effectively and efficiently catered to all the needs of its participating members. Those within functioning traditional family systems did not want for anything.

The ICS constructed a functioning system that served to cater to all the needs of its members. The exchange of reciprocity ensured that no member went without. It also served to create strong and sustained relationships. In addition, individuals developed purpose and meaning through the act of caring for another. The

³⁶ Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People*, p. 180.

individual, therefore, was entirely subsumed into the social structure that constituted them. This was a construction of the family that was fundamentally indebted to the dominant anthropological theory of the mid-twentieth century: functionalism. Developed from inter-war work of anthropologists' Bronislaw Malinowski and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, functionalism defined the social scientist's task as the explanation of how a social system functioned efficiently.³⁷ This process was primarily achieved through close examination of the ways that distinct social 'institutions', such as kinship or politics, interacted with each other. Malinowski's theorisations of functionalism, in his focus on the ways that systems benefitted individuals, diverged greatly from those of Radcliffe-Brown, who emphasised the unity of a self-perpetuating system.³⁸ From this divergence there arose an abundance of derivative strains of functionalism, creating a remarkably flexible and adaptable theory.³⁹ Generally, the interest lay on systems and structures, and particularly the ways that these systems and structures functioned as a cohesive and unified whole.⁴⁰ Actions, rituals, relationships, and social customs were all read as practices that existed to perpetuate a functioning system. Hence, in ICS works, cycles of care were taken to underpin the unity and happiness of the

³⁷ For their most famous ethnography's see A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *The Andaman Islanders* (New York: Free Press, 1962 [1922]); Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: an Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagos of Melanesian New Guinea* (London: G. Routledge, 1922). For theory see A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society: Essays and Addresses* (London: Cohen & West, 1952).

³⁸ For an in depth discussion of the relationship between Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski see George W. Stocking Jr., "Radcliffe-Brown and British Social Anthropology" in George W. Stocking Jr., ed, *Functionalism Historicised: Essays on British Social Anthropology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), pp. 131-191.

³⁹ There derivative versions of functionalism are clearly elucidated within John Holmwood, "Functionalism and its critics" in Austin Harrington, ed., *Modern Social Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp. 87-109.

⁴⁰ The most famous of these are E. E. Evans-Pritchard's early works, prior to his infamous repudiation of functionalist theory in 1950, Talcott Parsons, and Robert K. Merton: E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: a Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940); Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951); Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1949).

functioning community. Reciprocal acts of care functioned to create relationships, to fulfil individual needs in a Malinowskian manner, and, as Radcliffe-Brown envisioned, to endlessly perpetuate the social system.

Drawing upon Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown argued that there were no “individual facts”, only normative social patterns predicated upon unified values.⁴¹ It was the logic that motivated the individual, rather than the individual in question, that was important. This was fundamental to ICS understandings of the family. Working-class family relationships could be standardised because they all functioned according to the same logic of “mutual rights and duties”. The use of the individual interview and anecdote in order to study an entire social system was also dependent upon this theory: individuals became inherently representative of the social logic that also sustained the group.⁴² Moreover, it was this very theorisation that underpinned ICS inferences of the existence of reciprocity from the existence of a relationship. It determined that the social logic of reciprocity must have founded individual action. So too could ‘friendliness’, ‘self-respect’, and ‘purpose’ be interpreted as signs of the functioning family system, rather than an individual expression.⁴³

⁴¹ Adam Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists: the Modern British School* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 47.

⁴² According to Mike Savage, Elizabeth Bott and the ICS were pioneers of the interview in sociology. Though he provides no explanation for ICS use, Savage argues that Bott’s conception of the standardised social ‘role’ validated the use of the individual case study. This idea of ‘standardisation’ and ‘typification’ was originally theorised by Radcliffe-Brown. See Mike Savage, “Elizabeth Bott and the Formation of Modern British Sociology”, *The Sociological Review*, vol. 56, no. 42008, pp. 600-601, Elizabeth Bott, *Family and Social Network: Roles, Norms, and External Relationships in Ordinary Urban Families* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1957).

⁴³ John Holmwood has usefully described this emphasis on ‘function’ as the intertwining of ‘cause’ and ‘effect’. In functionalist thinking, what would generally be designated as the “effect”, social cohesion or friendliness for example, became both the catalyst for action and the product of that action. Thus, the existence of social cohesion or friendliness, somewhat circuitously, marked a functional system. See Holmwood, “Functionalism and its Critics”, *Modern Social Theory: An Introduction*, p. 89.

The Institute construction of a system of care that served to engender material and emotional fulfilment drew partially upon Malinowski's arguments that social systems functioned to ensure that individual needs were met.⁴⁴ Due to his focus upon biological 'need', such as sleep or reproduction, social scientists' in this period often thought Malinowski's arguments to be reductive and simplistic.⁴⁵ Due to the influence of Radcliffe-Brown's conception of 'social facts', the language of biology seemed generally inimical to practice of social science. The ambivalent language of ICS definitions of care, often primarily referencing the existence of shared help as opposed to the specific listing of methods of care, engendered their system with a flexibility that overcame these limitations and restored focus to the social dynamics which the system created. The assertion of the "underlying rights and duties" was, in itself, a fundamentally functionalist task, geared toward comprehending the underlying logic that allowed a system to function in unity.⁴⁶

In this way, the ICS were not merely asserting the continuing value and existence of the working-class family. By drawing explicitly on a famous anthropological theory, the Institute asserted that the working classes were a functioning and thriving cultural group. This cultural structure was founded upon, and expressed through, the family. Through functionalist theory, the working class became a distinct social group marked by its ability to efficiently and effectively cater to the needs of its members.

⁴⁴ Kuper. *Anthropology and Anthropologists*, p. 8, 24.

⁴⁵ A good example of this is the otherwise laudatory Raymond Firth, ed., *Man and Culture: an Evaluation of the Work of Bronislaw Malinowski* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957). See also Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 68.

⁴⁶ There is a wealth of literature on functionalist theory. For good introductory overviews see Alan Barnard, "Functionalism and Structuralism", *History and Theory in Anthropology*, pp. 61-79; Adam Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists: the Modern British School*, pp. 3-34, 66-93.

This construction was necessitated by a powerful post-war discourse that asserted the imminent decline of the working class.⁴⁷ Ross McKibbin has shown how, in the inter-war and immediate post-war period, government and social science mechanisms of measuring class were based upon the assumption that “a ‘middle-class’ style of life was possible only an income of £250 a year or above”.⁴⁸ In this configuration, economic distinctions defined spending habits and thus “style of life” or culture. Culture followed wealth. As a result, when affluence began to perceptively spread to the working classes in the post-war period, it was assumed that accumulation of wealth would lead the working classes to adopt middle-class cultural practices.⁴⁹ As a distinct cultural entity, the working class threatened to decline into non-existence. An extended public commentary developed on the nature of this decline. There was a proliferation of texts that claimed to represent the “traditional working class voice”, and were laden with discourses that either defended the continuing existence of the working class or bemoaned its decline.⁵⁰ The ICS construction of a working-class culture was a response to this perceived decline of the working class as a distinct social entity. By asserting the existence of

⁴⁷ Jose Harris, “Society and the State in Twentieth-Century Britain” in F. M. L. Thompson, ed., *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 106-08; Joanna Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain, 1860-1960: Gender, Class and Ethnicity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 25; Stuart Laing, *Representations of Working-Class Life 1957-1964* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1986), p. 19.

⁴⁸ Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 44.

⁴⁹ Jon Lawrence has highlighted that the spread of affluence actually began to occur in the inter-war period but was not perceived until after the war. See Jon Lawrence, “Class, ‘Affluence’ and the Study of Everyday Life in Britain, c. 1930-64”, *Cultural and Social History*, vol. 10, no. 22012), pp. 273-299. See also McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, pp. 132-33.

⁵⁰ The most famous of these is Richard Hoggart’s *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958). For a good discussion of Hoggart and Raymond Williams, another famous “authentic working class voice” of this period, see Stefan Collini, “Critical Minds: Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart”, *English Pasts: Essays in History and Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 210-230. For a critical analysis of this “authentic voice” and on the “decline” of the traditional working classes see Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman* (London: Virago Press, 1986), particularly p. 7, 11, 19, 22, 72.

a functioning, unified working-class system, the ICS were attempting to negate claims that the system was in decline. Through functionalism, the pre-dominant anthropological theory, the ICS asserted that class was not socio-economic but cultural in nature.

The emphasis placed by functionalist theory upon flexibility and adaptation made it a particularly apt choice for the ICS' assertion of the longevity of the working-class system. Within functionalist configurations, societies had to adapt to changes in order to continue to function and thus continue to exist. The most famous of these understandings was Radcliffe-Brown's body analogy, where institutions of a body functioned in the same way as social institutions: by adapting to the changing needs of the body/society.⁵¹ In this configuration change was a natural mode of adaptation necessary to the continuing functioning of a social system. It was thus organic and smooth.⁵²

These ideas underpinned ICS conceptions of a flexible system of care based upon the specific roles that comprised the three-generation family. When necessary, these roles could adapt to any absences or deviations in structure.⁵³ Thus, siblings tended "turn to the elder sister after the mother's death"⁵⁴ and "a mother-in-law is more likely to become like a mother" to those son-in-law's with deceased

⁵¹ Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology*, pp. 62-3, 66.

⁵² It is important to emphasise that this was change and adaptation *internal* to the social system, not that developed from either exposure to or imposition upon other social structures.

⁵³ There occurred a general shift toward social roles, as opposed to social status, in the sociology of this period, notably in the work of Elizabeth Bott, *Family and Social Network* and Raymond Firth, *Human Types* (London and New York: T. Nelson, 1938). This was a shift clearly indebted to functionalism, envisioning social roles rather than individual places. See Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology*, pp. 82-5; Mike Savage, "Elizabeth Bott and the Formation of Modern British Sociology", pp. 579-605.

⁵⁴ Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, p. 60.

parents.⁵⁵ Likewise, when widows reached old age, their children, particularly their sons, “often delayed marriage, sometimes indefinitely” to care for her.⁵⁶ In each of these accounts, the family adapted in order to ensure that no member was left without assistance. Any ‘vacancies’ that emerged in the standard framework were organically filled. This process was unsurprisingly configured through the rhetoric of care. Thus, needs that may have arisen due to a family member’s death were seamlessly filled.⁵⁷

Most importantly, this understanding was underpinned by the assumption that absences of care were entirely embodied within a role, rather than an individual, and could thus be fulfilled by a substitute. In the absence of a mother, siblings or mother-in-law assumed the role and associated duties of care. The care proffered by a sibling or mother-in-law was not rendered in any way deficient by comparison to a biological mother. Just as relationships were created by duties of care, roles were defined by the care provided. Thus, the individual who assumed the role was of secondary importance to the role itself and the duties of care that underpinned it. As in the case of Radcliffe-Brown’s body analogy, the original structure and the derivative and adapted structure were of equal value. Both served to provide the systems of care upon which the family, and by extension the unified and functioning structure, depended. As working-class culture organically adapted itself in order to continue to provide these systems of care, there was no reason to doubt the general viability of the system. Founded upon an assumption that a functioning system depended upon unity and eternity, the ICS correlated the

⁵⁵ Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People*, p. 86.

⁵⁶ Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People*, p. 81.

⁵⁷ This representation had the correlative effect of conceiving death, and mourning, as the absence of care as opposed to individual grief. Emotion was again the product of the cycles of care, or lack there of, and “social facts”, and functioning systems, took precedence to individual experiences.

system as it 'is' with the system as it will be. Using functionalist theory, then, allowed the ICS to construct a social system that would exist into perpetuity. Functionalist theory was thus invoked to negate any claims to the decline of the working class.

Repudiation of the discourse of decline was complicated by a growing public deference to the idea of an egalitarian society. This egalitarian society was most prominently envisioned through ideas of education and, thus, of social mobility.⁵⁸ Increasingly, hierarchies founded upon status and class distinction were rejected as 'snobbery'.⁵⁹ Similarly, class was no longer demarcated by essentialised or innate characteristics.⁶⁰ To deny the working classes education and social mobility was fundamentally untenable in the post-war period.⁶¹ The ICS construction of the working class as a social and cultural structure, predicated on the family, was a product of and a response to these ongoing negotiations and reconfigurations of class and hierarchy. It was by drawing upon these well-known, dominant anthropological theories that Institute sociologists' were able to constitute the

⁵⁸ Robert Taylor, "The Rise and Disintegration of the Working Classes" in Paul Addison and Harriet Jones, eds., *A Companion to Contemporary Britain, 1939-2000* (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005), p. 371; Jose Harris, "Society and the State in Twentieth-Century Britain", in Thompson, ed., *The Cambridge Social History of Britain*, p. 106; Laing, *Representations of Working-Class Life*, pp. 24-25.

⁵⁹ James Hinton, "The 'Class' Complex": Mass-Observation and Cultural Distinction in Pre-war Britain", *Past and Present*, vol. 199 no. 12008), p. 212; Mike Savage, "Affluence and Social Change in the Making of Technocratic Middle-Class Identities: Britain, 1939-55", *Contemporary British History*, vol. 22, No. 4 (2008), pp. 457-59, 468.

⁶⁰ Guy Ortolano, *The Two Cultures Controversy: Science, Literature and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 6, 232.

⁶¹ Mort, Conekin and Waters have construed this ICS depiction as a *challenge* to the ideas of post-war affluence. However, this is to conflate 'affluence' with 'decline'. Though the two phenomena were interconnected, they were not identical. The language of culture and social systems played a far more important role than affluence in ICS texts, hence the focus on the family and silence on issues of economics. See Becky Conekin, Frank Mort and Chris Waters, "Introduction" in Becky Conekin, Frank Mort and Chris Waters, eds., *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945-1964* (London and New York: Rivers Oram Press, 1999), p. 6.

Bethnal Green family and community as a cultural group.⁶² In their depiction of a working-class family that functioned to meet the needs of its members, the ICS explicitly deconstructed earlier arguments about the decline of the importance of the family and implicitly asserted the continuing existence of the working class as a general cultural unit. In this configuration, it was cultural cycles that were important to the working classes, rather than a 'lifestyle' derived from income levels. It was for this reason that ICS texts were almost entirely absent of industry and employment, subjects which had previously dominated sociological work on the working classes. Class was constituted by social systems rather than by occupation or income. Moreover, class-as-culture was a discourse that delineated the difference between the working and middle classes without invoking stigma or hierarchy.⁶³ In this way, it was to become invaluable to post-war commentators.⁶⁴

It was the establishment of a parallel, but fundamentally different, middle-class culture within *Family and class* and *Education and the working class* that solidified ICS accounts of a distinct working-class system. The middle-class system was continually contrasted to that of working-class Bethnal Green. The middle-class husband and wife were "more likely than in Bethnal Green to lead shared lives, to develop common interests, to deepen their attachment to each other".⁶⁵ As the nuclear family were "much more on their own, more independent,

⁶² This language of anthropology was also enforced by use of anthropological jargon, such as 'kinship', the occasional use of anthropological kinship diagrams and repeated references to Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown's work. The dearth of footnotes throughout ICS texts testifies to the particular importance of these anthropological references.

⁶³ This is an understanding of 'culture' as anthropological rather than consumerist phenomenon mirrored by the understandings of Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson in this same period. See Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1958), p. 15, 17, 18, 301-14; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968 [1963]), pp. 9-11.

⁶⁴ See Chapters Two and Three of this thesis.

⁶⁵ Willmott and Young, *Family and Class*, p. 65.

more self-sufficient”⁶⁶ in middle-class Woodford than in working-class Bethnal Green, the “relationship of husband and wife matters more”.⁶⁷ This was a husband and wife pair complemented by “a small, intimate network of friends”, which was “the analogue to the ‘extended’ family of the East End”.⁶⁸ Clubs and societies were used by the middle classes “to make up for the fact that”, by comparison with the working classes, “they have less to do with relatives and neighbours”.⁶⁹ Within each of these constructions, the middle-class system and the working-class system were carefully and explicitly distinguished. They were, however, also comparable; revealing that both working-class and middle-class systems were founded upon the same principles, and functions, of care.

Given this overlap in the function of working-class and middle-class cultures, it is no surprise that reciprocity was central to the development of strong middle-class relationships. The “stable domestic partnership”⁷⁰ was evidenced by men who “regularly helped their wives with the housework” as well as the “work, worry, pleasure of the children”.⁷¹ Young and Willmott used this evidence of care in order to dismiss the alleged weakening of “the domestic partnership” that supposedly occurred as “functions have been transferred from the home”.⁷² Here, fear of the decline of the relationship and refutation of this decline was predicated on the correlation between care and relationship strength. As in working-class family relationships, the development of strong friendships was dependent upon an exchange of care. Due to the fact that “the young couples almost certainly provide

⁶⁶ Willmott and Young, *Family and Class*, p. 35.

⁶⁷ Willmott and Young, *Family and Class*, p. 76.

⁶⁸ Willmott and Young, *Family and Class*, p. 102.

⁶⁹ Willmott, *The Evolution of a Community*, p. 84.

⁷⁰ Willmott and Young, *Family and Class*, p. 15.

⁷¹ Willmott and Young, *Family and Class*, p. 22.

⁷² Willmott and Young, *Family and Class*, pp. 26-7.

a good deal of practical help to each other”,⁷³ this intimate network of friends was described as “a group...with functions somewhat similar to those of the East End extended family”.⁷⁴ Though the middle-class system delivered care in a different manner to the working-class one, the success of this social structure was marked by the fact that “the people of Woodford felt they belonged to a friendly, helpful community almost as unanimously as the people of Bethnal Green”.⁷⁵ Working-class and middle-class systems thus functioned for the same purpose: to satisfy the needs of their participants. The manner in which these needs were satisfied, however, was fundamentally different. Within this account, the ICS had constructed a distinct vision of two different class cultures.

Accounts of the working classes attempting to participate in middle-class systems explicitly propounded this theory of class as culture. Middle-class Woodford pubs, with their “carpeted lounges furnished in pseudo-Jacobean style”, tended to make “bricklayers, dockers and motor fitters...feel ill-at-ease”.⁷⁶ “Every custom, every turn of phrase, every movement of judgement” in the grammar schools was so “rich in middle-class values” that the working classes were aware “that the grammar schools do not belong to them”.⁷⁷ These middle-class schools were unable to cater to the working-class child’s needs.⁷⁸ By attempting to divorce the working-class child from their working-class neighbourhood, the schools squandered “the manifest sources of aid in established family and community

⁷³ Willmott and Young, *Family and Class*, p. 105.

⁷⁴ Willmott and Young, *Family and Class*, p. 106.

⁷⁵ Willmott and Young, *Family and Class* p. 103.

⁷⁶ Willmott and Young, *Family and Class*, p. 95.

⁷⁷ Jackson and Marsden, *Education and the Working Class*, p. 215.

⁷⁸ See, for example, the account of teacher’s attempt to substitute the local working-class rugby league with the culturally “remote” rugby union. Jackson and Marsden, *Education and the Working Class*, p. 107.

life”.⁷⁹ In this way, it was not just that middle-class systems made the working classes feel “ill at ease”; they fundamentally could not accommodate the key features of the working-class system. When older, these children fell “into an adult malaise, into a drifting and rudderless existence”.⁸⁰ “Pitiful that this language of need should be lost upon us”, Jackson and Marsden lamented, that “that many years of second-class schooling should have bred...disappointment, frustration, carelessness...need”.⁸¹ The working-class grammar school child, half way between middle-class and working-class systems, was left fundamentally unfulfilled and uncared for. As each class, or culture, was entirely self-sufficient, and wholly able to fulfil the needs of its members, it was unable to incorporate the values or patterns offered by the other system. In this way, working-class and middle-class culture were mutually exclusive.

Strikingly, given the post-war stress on social mobility and affluence, this emphasis upon mutually exclusive cultures led Institute sociologists’ to advocate class isolation and reject ‘social mobility’.⁸² The ICS attempted to rewrite the nature of social mobility, sharply dividing increased affluence and living conditions from cultural practice. None of the key studies examined explored work or employment in any meaningful way and many of the most celebrated features of the working-class community, including the partnership marriage or the mother-daughter relationship, were shown to be *strengthened* by the general increase in wealth. The rising affluence of the working classes, it was argued, contributed to

⁷⁹ Jackson and Marsden, *Education and the Working Class*, p. 223.

⁸⁰ Jackson and Marsden, *Education and the Working Class*, p. 158.

⁸¹ Jackson and Marsden, *Education and the Working Class*, p. 202.

⁸² See, for example, Willmott, *Evolution of a Community*, pp. 112-16; Jackson and Marsden, *Education and the Working Class*, p. 224; Willmott and Young, *Family and Class*, pp. 128-31.

their key cycles of reciprocity and thus served to sustain working-class culture.⁸³ Yet, ‘social mobility’ was linked directly to hierarchy, and progression *up* the hierarchy, in a manner inimical to the Institute vision of culture. “It was as though, in the mind’s eye, people had turned the whole of East London on its side”, Willmott and Young noted, “to clamber up the slope was success, to remain at the bottom, failure”.⁸⁴ As the use of a passive register implied, they explicitly refuted this vision of social mobility. Rather, they argued, middle-class “Woodford is no haven” to the working classes that occupied it.⁸⁵ This paralleled earlier arguments that “social ascent (as it has been called) has also been quite rare”⁸⁶ for “such ambitions...are not, of course, held by everyone”.⁸⁷ Satisfied by their current working-class system, these people did not desire to ‘ascend the social ladder’.

Within these refutations of hierarchy, and the attendant emphasis upon functioning systems and needs, the ICS created a space in which class difference could be discussed without explicitly invoking the discourse of hierarchy. Functionalism allowed for the creation of a ‘value-neutral’ ICS vision in which the middle and working classes were separate, and different, but equal. The oft-derided “romanticism” of the ICS texts and their depictions of the friendly and caring working-class community was, therefore, not simply a naïve vision imposed by middle-class outsiders.⁸⁸ Accounts of care, and the subsequent happiness which

⁸³ Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People*, p. 164; Marris, *Widows and their Families*, p. 129.

⁸⁴ Willmott and Young, *Family and Class*, pp. 4-5.

⁸⁵ Willmott and Young, *Family and Class*, p. 5.

⁸⁶ Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, p. 155.

⁸⁷ Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, p. 14.

⁸⁸ Pat Thane, “Population and the Family” in Addison and Jones, eds., *A Companion to Contemporary Britain*, p. 54; Chas Critcher, “Sociology, Cultural Studies and the Post-War Working Class”, in John Clark, Chas Critcher and Richard Johnson, eds., *Working Class Culture: Studies in History and Theory* (London and Melbourne: Hutchinson, 1980), pp. 14-15. See also Susan Pedersen and Peter Mandler’s similar critique of Hoggart and J. P. Priestly for attempts to preserve the “traditional” working-class family structure as a emblematic of the lasting influence of

arose through participation in cycles of care, evidenced a functioning working-class *culture*. Institute sociologists thus constructed a language of class, and of class distinction, that was devoid of hierarchy and tenable in the egalitarian climate of post-war Britain. It was this vision of class as a holistic and self-sufficient entity that would prove to have a significant hold upon contemporary readers.

Victorian norms: Susan Pedersen and Peter Mandler, "Introduction: the British Intelligentsia after the Victorians" in Susan Pedersen and Peter Mandler, eds., *After the Victorians: Private Conscience and Public Duty in Modern Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) p. 17.

“A SERVICE BY HIS RESEARCHES”¹

Sociology, Government and the Delineation of Need

The Institute of Community Studies’ publications had, from the beginning, a very clear structure. The introduction would establish the class and family environment, and subsequent chapters would break down the systems of care that comprised everyday relationships. The book would conclude with suggestions for appropriate modifications to existing government policy that would enable it to complement and support these relationships. Each publication was, therefore, firmly organised around the state.² Given the overriding emphasis on the working-class family, these texts served to centralise family and class in their vision of the nature and purpose of the state.

As one would expect from the historiography on the ‘expert’, politicians also drew heavily upon sociological publications to evidence their arguments.³ These references to sociological texts were, in many ways, a form of deference to the expertise and knowledge that the Institute, and the ‘expert’, claimed to possess.⁴ There was also a clear sense of rhetorical flair in the ways in which sociological data was used, as the Institute and the author’s name and the publication’s title, were all clearly explicated. The relationship between politicians and sociology

¹ Charles Morris, HC Deb 19 February, vol. 607, cc. 1560-61.

² For a discussion of the connection between social science and governance within Nikolas Rose, “The Death of the Social? Re-figuring the Territory of Government”, *Economy and Society*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1996), pp. 327-56.

³ For an overview of historiographical literature on the expert, see the Introduction of this thesis.

⁴ See, in particular, Madeleine Davis, “Arguing Affluence: New Left Contributions to the Socialist Debate 1957-1963”, *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 23, no. 4 (2012), pp. 499 and Trevor Smith and Alison Young, “Politics and Michael Young” in Geoff Dench, Tony Flower and Kate Gavron, eds., *Young at Eighty: the Prolific Public Life of Michael Young* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 1995), pp. 135-142.

was, however, more complex than simple deference. Much as the ICS constructed a particular vision of government in their policy recommendations, politicians' used Institute publications in such a way that reinforced Party politics and attendant visions of governance and the welfare state. Ironically, given the Institute's public links to the Labour Party, it was Conservative visions of governance that most closely dovetailed with those ideas proposed by the ICS.⁵ By closely examining the overlap in ICS, Conservative, and Labour visions of government, this chapter will critically explore the political uses to which sociological understandings were put and the political discourses they were used to sustain.

Policy suggestions by the Institute were intended to facilitate the state's ability to "meet the (often unrecognised) needs of ordinary people".⁶ Social scientists had long predicated their claim to legitimacy upon the supposed practical value of their research to effective state governance.⁷ Early twentieth-century social science had focussed particularly upon social structures that engendered poverty.⁸ They sought

⁵ Michael Young reflected on his connections with the Labour Party in an interview with Paul Thompson, "Reflections on Researching Family and Kinship in East London", *International Journal of Social Research*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2004), pp. 35-44.

⁶ Peter Willmott, "Resolving the Dilemma of Bigness" in Dench, Flower and Gavron, eds., *Young at Eighty*, p. 3; Peter Marris, "Knowledge and Persuasion: Research at ICS" in Dench, Flower and Gavron, eds., *Young at Eighty*, pp. 75-83.

⁷ Martin Bulmer, "The Development of Sociology and Empirical Social Research", in Martin Bulmer, ed., *Essays on the History of British Sociological Research* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 30; Frank Whitehead, "The Government Social Survey" in Bulmer, ed., *Essays on the History of British Sociological Research*, p. 85; For a discussion of the importance of 'practicality' to intellectual research in Britain, see Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 465-8.

⁸ The most famous of these are Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London* (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1889-95) and also B. Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty: a Study of Town Life* (London: Macmillan, 1903). There were a number of texts from the 1950s that reflected this 'problem' oriented tradition, notably Madeline Kerr, *The People of Ship Street* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958). See also the scathing review by the Institute's Peter Marris: Peter Marris, "The People of Ship Street by Madeleine Kerr; *The Community: an Introduction to a Social System* by Irwin T. Sanders", *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 9, no. 3 (1958), pp. 286-88.

to distinguish between those able to care for themselves, and those structurally limited few who depended upon government assistance and support. The role of the state, then, was dictated by the focus on a pre-existing and generally acknowledged social ‘problem’. However, the implication within these texts was that the working classes were fundamentally unable to care from themselves, and, as a general sector of society, were a social “problem”. The working classes depended upon government for assistance because their existing habits were deficient. This is a vision of the working classes that obviously conflicted with the thriving, functionalist working-class culture conceptualised by the ICS.

The ICS vision of the state was founded upon this tension between a self-perpetuating, functioning working-class culture and the attempt reform government policy. The traditional space of state intervention in working-class societies used by earlier social scientists, poverty, would have entirely voided ICS construction of a functioning working-class system of care. In order to mediate this paradox, and to create a space for government reform within their texts, the ICS constructed the state as an *imposition* upon traditional working-class systems.

Existing government policy, the ICS concluded, threatened to undermine the very system that the Institute had shown to be naturally thriving into perpetuity. Given the focus on cycles of reciprocity as the foundation of the working-class cultural system, it is no surprise that it was through representations of an impaired reciprocity that the existing fault of government policy was emphasised. As pension allocations did not recognise that gifts to family members “were genuine needs on which money had to be spent”, the elderly struggled to reciprocate the

held offered to them.⁹ The same was also true of widows. The widow, it was argued, was increasingly “dependent” upon family members, for the limited government pension meant that she was unable to reciprocate the “practical services” offered to her.¹⁰ Family ties were ruptured by government hospitals that found it ‘too difficult to cope with people’s families as well as people themselves’.¹¹ Even the stigma of mental illness was attributed to government policy.¹²

To the ICS, the government was an affliction on working-class life. The state’s processes and policy were inimical to the key constitutive elements of a functioning working-class system. This vision was, in many ways, the product of the ICS conceptualisation of the working-class community as a functionalist system that provided for all its members. Given that the successful system was evidenced by this provision, any naturally arising failure to provide would have, in fact, marked the system’s non-existence and invalidated ICS conception of class as culture.¹³ However, it was this naturally arising failure that government policy could have repaired, or at least supplemented. In the juxtaposition of government and working-class family, the existence of family care precluded the need for government policy or assistance. “The basis of individual fulfilment”, Peter

⁹ Peter Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), pp. 159-160.

¹⁰ Peter Marris, *Widows and their Families* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), p. 46.

¹¹ Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People*, p. 200.

¹² “And it is largely the way in which we conceive mental illness through our laws and institutions which forces so harsh a choice”. Enid Mills, *Living with Mental Illness* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 62.

¹³ See Chapter One of this thesis.

Townsend argued, “rests on life membership of an active family of three generations”.¹⁴ There was no place for the state within this configuration.

Within government debates about the family, and particularly elderly, Conservative politician’s tended to stress this idea of family care. They did so by drawing upon ICS texts as evidence for the continuing and pivotal importance of the family within everyday life, refuting a supposedly normative argument that declared that family systems were in decline.¹⁵ “I do not admit the criticism that families today are any less mindful of their obligations to their old people”, Anthony Kershaw said.¹⁶ Citing Peter Townsend, he argued that “care of the old is in the family”.¹⁷ As “it has been proved that the majority of young people care for their old folks in some way”, Joan Vickers refuted the supposition that “young people as a whole are thoughtless about their old folks”.¹⁸ “I do not believe there is any evidence”, Kenneth Robinson stated, for “the theory...that...people are less willing to look after...the older members of their families”.¹⁹ The declaration that “at least two-thirds of the old people receive help in some form or other...through their families” was explicitly founded upon evidence within *The family life of old people*.²⁰ As a result, these Conservative minister’s alleged that any policy developed should anticipate the fact that “inside the family it is customary to make sacrifices for the old people and for the children”.²¹

¹⁴ Peter Townsend, “The Aims of the Institute”, [Unpublished], as quoted in Briggs, *Michael Young: Social Entrepreneur* (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 146.

¹⁵ Rhetorically, this resembled the arguments in Michael Young and Peter Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), pp. xv-xvi. See also the discussion in Chapter One of this thesis.

¹⁶ Anthony Kershaw, House of Commons Debates, 12 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 530.

¹⁷ Anthony Kershaw, HC Deb, 12 February 1958, vol. 582, cc. 529-30.

¹⁸ Joan Vickers, HC Deb, 5 June 1959, vol. 606, c. 540.

¹⁹ Kenneth Robinson, HC Deb, 5 June 1959, vol. 606, c. 576.

²⁰ Anthony Kershaw, HC Deb, 5 June 1959, vol. 606, c. 526.

²¹ Ian Fraser, HC Deb, 7 July 1958, vol. 591, c. 108.

In both ICS publications and government debates, the supportive family that cared for the needs of its members was contrasted to those unfortunate few who were deprived of provision by the family. To the Institute, the Government's role was "to support the family and to provide substitute help when it no longer exists".²² They explicitly established that government services were primarily of "value to people with no relatives or friends to depend on".²³ Thus, recommended pension increases were intended to release the widow from the "fear of financial dependence" that had developed from her attempt to be simultaneously a male breadwinner and a mother.²⁴ If she were not widowed, it is implied, she would not need government assistance. For the same reason, Mills emphasised the importance of developing an adequate policy for international and domestic migrants. These migrants, it was argued, lacked a family system of support and were thus fundamentally more vulnerable to illness and unhappiness.²⁵ This ICS formulation was one in which "substitutes" of care, or the type of care that the government may have legitimately provided, was primarily "accepted by those without families".²⁶ As the functioning family unit was a self-sufficient and cohesive system, the state existed to offer care in those spaces where there was an absence of family. Consequently, the ICS opposition of state and family was sustained. State institutions did not need to provide for those with a functioning three-generation family system of care. This was a conceptualisation that denied the state the ability to supplement family care.

²² Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People*, p. 203.

²³ Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People*, p. 198.

²⁴ Marris, *Widows and their Families*, p. 129.

²⁵ Mills, *Living with Mental Illness*, pp. 136-37.

²⁶ Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People*, p. 199.

The vision of the family proposed by the Conservative Party similarly foregrounded that those most in need of government support were individuals without family. It was the individuals who had “no family close to them”, and could thus be labelled the “poorest of the poor”, who should receive supplementary pensions from the National Assistance Board”.²⁷ The argument that Government “home helps” should be extended to those cases where “members of a family... may live a long distance from their old people” was similarly underpinned by the assumption that the family was the prime, and ideal, carer.²⁸ It is no surprise, then, that the isolated members of New Housing estates were juxtaposed against “the wonderful network of kinship... well described recently by Michael Young and his colleagues”.²⁹ This was an interpretation of ICS work that stressed the division between ‘isolates’ and families, and, by extension, between those in need of government aid and those who were not. Similarly, Murton explicitly argued that the welfare state should cater specifically to “those unfortunate enough to have no family”.³⁰ The dedicated debate devoted to Townsend’s suggestion that a list “be compiled... of all widowed or unmarried pensioners” assumed that the primary of care should be devoted to those without families.³¹ “The first duty of any good Government”, Horace King declared, “ought to be to the aged, the widowed, the fatherless, and the man unemployed”.³² The aged, the widowed, the fatherless and the unemployed were all, of course, variations on the same theme – the ruptured family system.

²⁷ Keith Joseph, HC Deb, 17 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 954. See also his identical argument just four days earlier, Keith Joseph, HC Deb, 12 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 533.

²⁸ Neil Carmichael, HC Deb, 19 February 1965, vol. 706, cc. 1508-98.

²⁹ Lord Stephen Taylor, House of Lords Debates, 25 February 1959, vol. 214, cc. 492-542. He was referring to *Family and Kinship*.

³⁰ Oscar Murton, HC Deb, 19 February 1965, vol. 706, c. 1578.

³¹ See in particular HC Deb, 12 February 1958, vol. 582, cc. 529-38, quote c. 537, but also HC Deb, 7 July 1958, vol. 591, cc. 64-156 and HC Deb, 05 June 1959, vol. 606, cc 507-600.

³² Horace King, HC Deb, 20 April 1959, vol. 604, c. 113. Similar criticisms of the Conservative policy were made by William Ross in HC Deb, 17 February 1958, vol. 582, cc. 964-7.

This conceptualisation of the family as the primary site of care, and the government need to substitute in its absence, founded a series of crucial Conservative Party arguments. Some people, it was argued, had “adequate private means” and others were “fortunate enough to be cared by relatives”.³³ “Why should we”, Eden questioned, “go on subsidising the well off” when, for both these groups, “the present rate...is adequate”.³⁴ The economically self-sufficient were conflated with those who were self-sufficient due to the care provided by the family. Due to this common self-sufficiency, government assistance was rendered unnecessary. Drawing on ICS publications, Kershaw demonstrated that “six per cent of retired people had the services of some sort of home help and that more than fifty per cent were looked after by the family”.³⁵ “That”, he concluded, “is the measure of difference in responsibility which the community and family take for old people”.³⁶ The account of the family provided by ICS texts served, once again, to negate the need for any state assistance. To the Conservative way of thinking, vast majorities of those eligible for supplementary pensions did not draw on them because, “as Mr Townsend shows”, “they were helped by their families”.³⁷ No wonder, then, that Conservative minister Keith Joseph’s primary interpretation from *The family life of old people* was that “there is no justification for an attempt to supplant the family with State services”.³⁸ These Conservative policies were all underpinned by the understanding that the government operated complementary

³³ John Eden, HC Deb, 20 April 1959, vol. 604, cc. 120-21.

³⁴ John Eden, HC Deb, 20 April 1959, vol. 604, c. 121, 125.

³⁵ Anthony Kershaw, HC Deb, 12 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 531.

³⁶ Here, “community” referred to the state. Anthony Kershaw, HC Deb, 12 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 531

³⁷ Anthony Kershaw, HC Deb, 12 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 531. See also Keith Joseph, HC Deb, 17 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 954.

³⁸ Keith Joseph, HC Deb, 12 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 533.

and competing systems of care to the family, and that the family did a markedly superior job. In doing so, Conservative politician's delineated government responsibility in relation the family system of care that was advocated by the ICS. These arguments enforced, rather than negated, the salience of the 'state' and 'family' divide that was embedded within ICS arguments. Appreciating the existence of family care, for these Conservative politicians, was about appreciating the *limited* role that the government would subsequently need to play.

It is no surprise that it was Conservative politicians who emphasised the restricted role of the state. Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Conservative Government was engaged in a partial withdrawal of the Welfare State, foregrounding need above universal care.³⁹ This was primarily executed within housing policy, and the decline in public housing.⁴⁰ In many ways, however, the family was an ideal space upon which to limit the welfare state. The long held division between the public and the private spheres, and the liberal ideology of the self-regulating individual that underpinned it, meant that, prior to the welfare state, the family had been largely beyond the scope of government policy.⁴¹ Though the welfare state did theoretically expand the jurisdiction of the state into the private

³⁹ Jose Harris, "Society and the State in Twentieth-Century Britain", in F. M. L. Thompson, ed., *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 96; Harriet Jones, "The State and Social Policy" in Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, ed., *Women in Twentieth Century Britain* (Essex: Longman, 2001), p. 330; Michael Sullivan, *The Development of the British Welfare State* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1996), p. 73.

⁴⁰ Peter Weiler, "The Conservatives' Search for a Middle Way in Housing, 1951-64", *Twentieth Century Britain*, Vol. 14, no. 4, 2003, pp. 360-390; Peter Mandler, "New Towns for Old: The Fate of the Town Centre" in Becky Conekin, Frank Mort, and Chris Waters, ed., *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945-1964* (London and New York: Rivers Oram Press, 1999), pp. 208-27.

⁴¹ Jane Lewis, "Public Institution and Private Relationship: Marriage and Marriage Guidance 1920-1968", *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1990), p. 234; Catherine Ellis, "No Hammock for the Idle: The Conservative Party, 'Youth', and the Welfare State in the 1960s", *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 16, no. 4 (2005), pp. 448-49; Susan Pedersen and Peter Mandler, "Introduction: The British Intelligentsia after the Victorians" in Susan Pedersen and Peter Mandler, eds., *After the Victorians: Private Conscience and Public Duty in Modern Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 4.

sphere, its very principles were founded upon a sustained reliance on unpaid female labour and, by extension, by a clear division between private and public realms.⁴² The longevity of these discourses served to legitimate not only the ICS division between family care and the state, but also the emphasis placed upon this division by a Conservative Government invested in limiting universal welfare.

The Conservative withdrawal of universal welfare, and emphasis on need, was not, however, a repudiation of ideas of welfare altogether. This is highlighted by the revealingly moderate register used by Conservative politicians when discussing the benefits that may have been accrued through this clear distinction between ‘government’ and family’. Economic savings entailed by the relinquishment of care were acknowledged but consistently underplayed. Though family care “may save the great expense to which the community is put”, the emphasis remained upon the fact that family care would “greatly increase the happiness of the old people concerned”.⁴³ The government should institutionalise family care, it was argued, as it made the elderly happy: any savings made by the state were secondary. Pitman’s assertion that family care entailed “much less cost to the taxpayer” was similarly mediated by a protracted discussion of the emotional benefits of the family.⁴⁴ He concluded that, by encouraging family care, the government can ensure that “the situation, both for the child and for the aged, [was] such that an important element of affection is kept alive”.⁴⁵ Rhetorically at

⁴² Ellis, “No Hammock for the Idle”, pp. 448-49; Leonore Davidoff, “The Family in Britain” in Thompson, ed., *The Cambridge Social History of Britain*, pp. 128-29; Dolly Smith Wilson, “A New Look at the Affluent Worker: The Good Working Mother in Post-War Britain”, *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 17, no. 2, 2006, pp. 206-229.

⁴³ Here, the ‘community’ refers to the state. Anthony Kershaw, HC Deb, 12 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 533.

⁴⁴ I J Pitman, HC Deb, 5 June 1959, vol. 606, c.564.

⁴⁵ I J Pitman, HC Deb, 5 June 1959, vol. 606, cc. 565-6.

least, the affective nature of the family was of more importance to Conservative arguments than any savings made by the subsequent withdrawal of the state.

“More emphasis is to be placed on the care of old people for as long as possible in their own family”, Thompson declared, “I am sure that is what elderly people themselves want”.⁴⁶

This emphasis on the happiness of citizens reflected one of the central tenants of the welfare state – that the government’s role was to fulfil the needs of its constituents and, thereby, ensure their happiness.⁴⁷ In both Conservative conceptions and the discourse of the welfare state, ‘need’ was both material and immaterial.⁴⁸ This language of altruism permeated political rhetoric and underpinned the discourse of government that was produced by, and necessary for, the welfare state.⁴⁹ Thus, any economic benefits derived from the institutionalisation of family, as opposed to state, care were consistently downplayed in Conservative arguments. The happiness of the individual was of primary importance. Moreover, this clear division between economic gain, and altruism had particular salience in post-war Britain; by drawing explicitly upon it, the Conservative politician’s enforced the fundamental benevolence of their practice.⁵⁰ So too was the emphasis on choice part of a growing rejection of the idea that the government “knew what was best”, a rejection primarily engendered

⁴⁶ Richard Thompson, HC Deb, 12 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 585. See also Keith Joseph in that same debate, cc. 532-4.

⁴⁷ James Obelkevich and Peter Catterall, “Introduction: Understanding British Society” in James Obelkevich, Peter Catterall, eds., *Understanding Post-war British Society* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 6-7.

⁴⁸ Michael Freedon, “The Coming of the Welfare State” in Terence Ball and Richard Bellamy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 18.

⁴⁹ Harris, “Society and the State in Twentieth-Century Britain” in Thompson, ed., *The Cambridge Social History of Britain*, p. 115

⁵⁰ Stefan Collini, “The Literary Critic and the Village Labourer: ‘Culture’ in Twentieth Century Britain”, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 142004, p. 97, 116.

by the discourse of the welfare state.⁵¹ It was a principle of giving ‘the people, not orders, but opportunity’, through the extension of choice, which had underpinned Conservative campaigns and policy from 1951.⁵² Though they negotiated and gradually withdrew key aspects of the welfare state throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the Conservative Party continued to draw heavily upon, and reproduce, the key discourses that underpinned and sustained the welfare state.

The ICS’ intention to facilitate state policy reform through their knowledge and recommendations was also underpinned by this vision of the benevolent state. If the knowledge they provided was to engender change, the ICS depended upon the state’s altruistic attitude toward the described family cycles of care. In this formulation, it was assumed that the government would *want* to go to any means possible in order to preserve the community. It was simply a lack of adequate knowledge that had led to the government’s imposition upon working-class culture. Within this account, the government was simply misinformed. Thus, it was argued that “those concerned with social and health administration must, at every stage treat these old people as an inseparable part of the family group” because this concern, or not, determined “their security, their health, and their happiness”.⁵³ The state was assumed to have a vested interest in ensuring the happiness of its citizens. Willmott’s later recommendation that the state facilitate working-class sociability because it “obviously matters to many of those at Dagenham” was similarly founded upon a state who was explicitly concerned with the happiness of

⁵¹ Harris, “Society and the State in Twentieth-Century Britain” in Thompson, ed., *The Cambridge Social History of Britain*, pp. 103-04.

⁵² Conservative Party, *The Industrial Charter*, London, 1947, pp. 3-4 as quoted in Harriet Jones, “New Conservatism? *The Industrial Charter*, Modernity and the Reconstruction of British Conservatism after the War”, in Conkein, Mort and Waters, eds., *Moments of Modernity*, p. 177.

⁵³ Townsend, *The Family Life of Old People*, p. 204.

its constituents.⁵⁴ That ICS policy recommendations were couched in such highly moralised terms reflected a conceptualisation of the state as an entity fundamentally concerned with benevolence. “If the authorities regard [community] spirit as a social asset worth preserving”, Young and Willmott argued, “they will not uproot more people”.⁵⁵ By questioning the benevolence of the government, Young and Willmott expected to incite action. In this way, the ICS were fundamentally assured that the government was a primarily benevolent entity. The hold of the discourses of the ‘welfare state’ upon ICS visions of government was such that the sociologists’ could not imagine a government existing in any other form.

Labour politicians denounced Conservative policy in an identical manner to ICS criticism: the failure to be benevolent and the expectation that benevolence was the purpose of the government. The Labour Party consistently predicted that Conservative policy would engender a lack of choice and denial happiness. The Conservative National Assistance programme, it was argued, “would work if all our fellow citizens were willing to go on a means test.”⁵⁶ Given they were not willing to do so, the policy was rendered deficient. Similarly, forced “recourse to the National Assistance Board” would inevitably result in discontent.⁵⁷ “What we have heard has not been a reflection of the generosity of the Government”, William Ross contended, “but a record of the consequences of Tory financial folly and

⁵⁴ Willmott, *The Evolution of a Community*, p. 123.

⁵⁵ Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship*, p. 166.

⁵⁶ R. H. S Crossman, HC Deb, 13 April 1960, vol. 621, c. 1314.

⁵⁷ E. Fernyhough, HC Deb, 17 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 958.

failure”.⁵⁸ The Tory failure to be generous was, in essence, a mark of their failure as a government.

Generosity, or lack thereof, was a key theme in Labour critique. Conservatives were unwilling to support social welfare causes but were devoutly enthusiastic about defence policy and, in moralised Cold War rhetoric, the atomic bomb.⁵⁹ It was the treatment of “young and aged members of the population” that determined “the test of the decency, the value, and the integrity of a country” and the Conservatives, it was alleged, had thus roundly failed.⁶⁰ The financial emphasis in the Conservative Government’s reform of the National Insurance scheme was dramatically contrasted with Labour’s own intention: “to deal with the greatest social challenge of the Welfare State – the existence of grinding poverty”.⁶¹ Just as the Conservative’s had carefully divided economic benefit from benevolent fulfilment of citizens, Labour contrasted their own benevolence with the unfeeling, and economically focussed Tories. “On the opposite side of the Committee”, Labour’s C. W. Gibson argued, “property is the most important thing and not human life”.⁶² Within these criticisms, the priorities of Conservative government and Conservative politicians were judged to be out of step with the benevolent and caring role that the state, or at least a *good* state, was supposed to perform.

Within these Labour criticisms, the Conservative failure to be benevolent had important consequences. Importantly, there was a very consistent pattern of those

⁵⁸ William Ross, HC Deb, 17 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 960.

⁵⁹ S. O. Davies, HC Deb, 5 June 1959, vol. 606, c. 511; Frank Allaun, HC Deb, 5 June 1959, vol. 606, cc. 517-8; R. H. S. Crossman, 11 November 1958, vol. 595, c. 307.

⁶⁰ Leslie Hale, HC Deb, 13 April 1960, vol. 621, c. 1320.

⁶¹ R. H. S. Crossman, HC Deb, 11 November 1958, vol. 595, c. 299.

⁶² C. W. Gibson, HC Deb, 17 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 967.

who ‘gained’ and those who ‘lost’ in Labour accounts of these Conservative policies. The Conservative politicians, it was repeatedly alleged, simply could not understand poverty and need. “Can he appreciate the bitterness that this is causing particularly in the mining communities?”, it was asked.⁶³ Labour politicians loudly claimed that they were “more closely related” to the issue of poverty “than the hon. Members opposite”.⁶⁴ “Old people cannot manage” on the existing pension, Frank Allaun declared, “and anyone who claims otherwise either does not know or does not care”.⁶⁵ Conservative politicians, it was alleged, were “very interested in the prospects and prosperity of the landlords” rather than the poor for whom the National Assistance Board existed.⁶⁶ Criticism was laden with examples of the men injured in mines, the “industrial worker” compelled to demand an increase in wages, and cotton workers, coal miners, ship builders, and engineers obligated to return to work due to Tory policy.⁶⁷ These were criticisms laced with a clear discourse of class. Tory policy, it was asserted, sought to benefit the landlords, Londoners, and the already wealthy rather than aiding the old, the sick, and the family.⁶⁸ It is no surprise, then, that “the general charge” made by Horace King “against the Government is that it has steadily widened the gap between the richer people and the poorer people”.⁶⁹ The failure to act benevolently was, then, more than a failure to act with compassion and to extend choices to the people. It was a failure to act in an egalitarian manner.

⁶³ E. Fernyhough, HC Deb, 17 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 957.

⁶⁴ Richard Crossman, HC Deb, 20 April 1959, vol. 604, c. 130.

⁶⁵ Frank Allaun, HC Deb, 5 June 1959, vol. 606, c. 512. See also Arthur Probert, HC Deb, 5 June 1959, vol. 606, c. 544.

⁶⁶ E. Fernyhough, HC Deb, 17 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 956.

⁶⁷ E. Fernyhough, HC Deb, 17 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 957; Robert Edwards, HC Deb, 24 March 1958, vol. 585, c. 76; Alfred Robens, HC Deb, 6 March 1959, vol. 601, c. 793; H. Hynd, HC Deb, 6 March 1959, vol. 601, c. 797; S. O. Davies, HC Deb, 5 June 1959, vol. 606, c. 530.

⁶⁸ William Ross, HC Deb, 17 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 964; C. W. Gibson, HC Deb, 17 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 966; Margaret Herbison, HC Deb, 17 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 971; Richard Crossman, HC Deb, 20 April 1959, vol. 604, c. 138.

⁶⁹ Horace King, HC Deb, 20 April 1959, vol. 604, c. 113.

Given the fact that post-war Britain placed a premium of class neutral and egalitarian discussion, this was a criticism with freighted with cultural meaning.⁷⁰ Public perception of preferential class treatment or unequal political rhetoric would have invalidated a policy or a Party. This can be contrasted to the deeply classed nature of early twentieth-century policies, which were almost entirely directed at regulating and aiding the working classes.⁷¹ The welfare state, by contrast, was intended to extend welfare to all.⁷² The explicit silence of class rhetoric in political debates in post-war Britain was particularly important in these discussions of public benefits and pensions, where discourses of ‘charity’ and the deserving citizen had long been founded upon distinctions between classes.⁷³ To reproduce the distinctions between the ‘deserving poor’ and the ‘undeserving poor’ that had been pivotal to earlier government discussions would have been to commit an egregious political error. As a result, there was a general silence on explicit class language in parliamentary discussions.⁷⁴ Class discourse had such a loaded place in this period that even mentions of class hierarchy were taboo. As a result oblique references to class permeated political discussion, including the above Labour criticism or references to “middle income” as opposed to “middle-class” families.⁷⁵

Lagden, who did label the lower-class woman a “working-class woman”, was

⁷⁰ James Hinton, “The ‘Class’ Complex”: Mass-Observation and Cultural Distinction in Pre-war Britain”, *Past and Present*, vol. 199, no. 1 (2008), p. 212; Mike Savage, “Affluence and Social Change in the Making of Technocratic Middle-Class Identities: Britain, 1939-55”, *Contemporary British History*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2008), pp. 457-59, 468.

⁷¹ Arthur Marwick, “Class” in Paul Addison and Harriet Jones, eds., *A Companion to Contemporary Britain, 1939-2000* (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005), p. 79.

⁷² Freedon, “The Coming of the Welfare State” in Ball and Bellamy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, p. 8.

⁷³ Nicholas Deakin, “Civil Society” in Addison and Jones, eds., *A Companion to Contemporary Britain*, pp. 407-426; Freedon, “The Coming of the Welfare State” in Ball and Bellamy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, pp. 12-14.

⁷⁴ For example, a brief search of the online Hansard record reveals that “working class” was used only 777 between the years 1956 and 1964. By comparison, the phrase was used 2, 248 times throughout the 1940s, 4, 646 times throughout the 1930s and 1, 544 times throughout the 1970s.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Keith Joseph HC Deb, 6 March 1959, vol. 601, c. 778, 785.

careful to apologise for his use of “that awkward and nasty phrase”.⁷⁶ It was as though by avoiding class rhetoric, the politicians could avoid the difficult moral weighting that such rhetoric carried. This reflects Ross McKibbin’s suggestion that silence on potentially subversive topics, including sex and politics, was the predominant method by which the British avoided controversy in everyday conversation.⁷⁷ Political dependence upon silence, then, is indicative of a culturally conditioned response to controversy. However, this silence did not, of course, remove the power that class had as a conceptual framework. Rather, it reflected its continuing legacy.

Both the Labour and Conservative Party’s oft-noted attempts to appeal to a wider variety of voters in this period exemplify the central place of class within the political sphere.⁷⁸ This extended appeal was conceptualised primarily as appealing to differing classes, as opposed to gender or race.⁷⁹ As egalitarianism was a necessary condition of intelligibility and validity in post-war Britain, the broadening of appeal was more than a matter of garnering additional numerical support. The claim to appeal to only one class, or the claim to appeal to all, was of pivotal importance. The egalitarianism that was implied by wide appeal was of

⁷⁶ Godfrey Lagden, HC Deb, 6 March 1959, vol. 601, c. 788.

⁷⁷ Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), c.f. 426, 522-23.

⁷⁸ This is a rich historical literature. See for example Stuart Laing, *Representations of Working Class Life 1957-1964* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1986), pp. 3-13; Tim Bale, *The Conservatives since 1945: the Drivers of Party Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 56-57.

⁷⁹ This is not to say that other classificatory categories were not appealed to, only that class dominated discussions. For the contradictory place of the female voter see James Hinton, “‘The Tale of Sammy Spree’: Gender and the Secret Dynamics of 1940s British Corporatism”, *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 58(2004), pp. 86-109.

equal significance to any consequent numerical increase, a point often missed in historical accounts.⁸⁰

It is therefore of pivotal importance that, despite the limited rhetoric available to them, Labour designated the Conservative Party's policy and behaviour as unequal and elitist. Though it was a criticism that drew on a long tradition of criticising Conservative politicians for a failure to recognise the 'working classes', it was an accusation that carried particular weight within the post-war context.⁸¹ It also reveals the extent to which 'benevolence' of government was tied up with the ideology of classlessness.

These criticisms of class bias, and therefore of the violation of egalitarianism, were underpinned by assertions of Labour's superior experience with, and knowledge of, the working classes. In order to vest their arguments with legitimacy, Labour politicians spoke explicitly from their experience "as an old trade union officer"⁸² or their close relationship with "some of those people in Oldham who are living on £2 10s. a week".⁸³ The fact that Probert declared that "I have the acquaintanceship of many miners' widows...I know them personally" was intended to position him

⁸⁰ Peter Mandler has made a similar point regarding the heated historiographical debate regarding post-war political "consensus". Appearing to be "consensual" was as important as any corollary effects entailed by such a performance. This is clearly linked to ideas of governmental benevolence and egalitarianism. See Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: the History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 214. The literature on consensus is rich, for a good overview see Paul Addison, "British Historians and the Debates over the 'Postwar Consensus'" in W. M. Roger Louis, ed., *More Adventures with Britannia: Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain* (Austin: Texas University Press, 1998), pp. 255-264; Harriet Jones and Michael Kandiah, eds., *The Myth of Consensus?: New Views on British History, 1945-64* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

⁸¹ See, for example, the place of inequality in Labour's 1945 election campaign in David Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 152-53.

⁸² James Griffiths, HC Deb, 7 July 1958, vol. 591, c. 41

⁸³ Leslie Hale, HC Deb, 13 April 1960, vol. 621, c. 1320. See also Richard Crossman, HC Deb, 20 April 1959, vol. 604, c. 130; William Ross, HC Deb, 17 February 1958, vol. 582, cc. 964.

as an authority and thus validate his argument.⁸⁴ Those Labour politicians who drew upon sociological texts, or ‘expertise’, tended to intertwine it with their own personal experience. Thus, S. O. Davies had noticed the tragedy of retirement “borne out in my town and in many other parts of South Wales” in the same ways “Mr Townsend saw in the course of his enquiry in East London”.⁸⁵ Occasionally, these claims to knowledge through experience were explicitly juxtaposed against that of the ‘expert’. King declared that he had “never been an economist or statistician” but that the “problem of poverty is a human one” lived by “men and women of character whom, all my life, I have seen in such condition and suffering”.⁸⁶ His intimate knowledge of poverty was declared more important, more “human”, than that of the expert. Experience enabled King to empathise with those in poverty, resulting in a more authoritative knowledge than that of the economist or statistician.

In this manner, the Labour ministers conceptualised empathy and understanding as derived solely from experience. As a result, in those instances where empathy and benevolence were appropriately expressed, the conclusions were thought to have been “obviously based on a close contact throughout the years with the people of whom he has spoken”.⁸⁷ Similarly, those speeches that expressed a lack of empathy demonstrated a lack of personal experience. Thus, those who criticised recipients of National Assistance had clearly “never been in that position themselves”.⁸⁸ Given that empathy was necessary for ‘benevolent’ governance, and said empathy was derived from experience, Labour used their close

⁸⁴ Arthur Probert, HC Deb, 5 June 1959, vol. 606, c. 545.

⁸⁵ S. O. Davies, HC Deb, 5 June 1959, vol. 606, c. 509.

⁸⁶ Horace King, HC Deb, 20 April 1959, vol. 604, c. 115,

⁸⁷ Alfred Robens, HC Deb, 6 March 1959, vol. 601, c. 790.

⁸⁸ R. E. Prentice, HC Deb, 24 June 1959, vol. 607, c. 1280.

experiential contact with the working classes to position themselves as better able to govern the welfare state. This emphasis upon emotion as a sign of the ‘right’ to govern was linked to an increasing expectation that politicians be publically emotional.⁸⁹ Expression of emotion, then, was pivotal to political legitimacy. By entwining emotion and experience, these Labour politicians attempted to claim authoritative knowledge over the working class and thus over ability to manage the welfare state.

That Labour politicians claimed knowledge and authority through ‘experience’ contradicts a strong orthodoxy in the historiography of post-war Britain – the predominance of the expert. The expert, it has been argued, was the dominant figure of modernising Britain, exemplifying a new meritocratic social order.⁹⁰ Historians have argued that the knowledge provided by the expert underwrote political campaigns and both Labour and Conservative image reform throughout the entirety of the post-war period.⁹¹ Based upon the historiographical prevalence of this ascendant expert knowledge, Mort argues that the use of ‘voices’ of those under scrutiny in the 1957 Wolfenden report was “potentially explosive” to the “commitment to the power of expert knowledge”.⁹² The voices of prostitutes and homosexual men, Mort suggests, marked a radical break from this “commitment”

⁸⁹ Martin Francis, “Tears, Tantrums and Bared Teeth: The Emotional economy of Three Conservative Prime Ministers, 1951-1963”, *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 41, no. 3 (2002), pp. 354-387; Martin Francis, “The Labour Party: Modernisation and the Politics of Restraint” in Conekin, Mort and Waters, eds., *Moments of Modernity*, pp. 152-170.

⁹⁰ See in particular Becky Conekin, Frank Mort and Chris Waters “Introduction” in Conekin, Mort and Waters, eds., *Moments of Modernity*, pp. 1-21.

⁹¹ See, for example, Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning, and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 149-51; Martin Francis, “The Labour Party: Modernisation and the Politics of Restraint”, in Conekin, Mort and Waters, eds., *Moments of Modernity*, pp. 157-58; Harriet Jones, “New Conservatism?” in Conekin, Mort and Waters, eds., *Moments of Modernity*, p. 188.

⁹² Frank Mort, *Capital Affairs: London and the Making of the Permissive Society* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 173-5, quote p. 173.

to expertise. However, the Labour emphasis on experience seems to point to the partial nature of this discourse of expertise even within the corridors of power. To the Labour politicians, experience was *superior* to that gained through an expert figure.

This claim of the superiority of experience over expertise was sustained by a number of key understandings in post-war Britain. Expertise was, in itself, often based upon the idea of experience. Participant observation, dominant in the community studies method in this period, derived knowledge from experience. Carolyn Steedman has illustrated how working-class children were taught to write autobiography in order to facilitate the development of an ‘authentic self’. As this authentic self was correlated with the self-reflexive engagement with personal experience, the idea of the ‘authentic self’ was an expression of the value for experientially derived knowledge.⁹³ The influential work of Raymond Williams in this period similarly emphasised a working-class knowledge that could *only* be derived from lived experience of working-class ‘structures of feeling’.⁹⁴ Experience as knowledge, then, was not a marginal discourse in post-war Britain; in the late 1950s it was as valid as that provided by the expert.

The mediated place of the expert in late 1950s Britain is also demonstrated by the fact that Conservative politicians used the expertise of sociologists in an almost identical manner to the Labour Party’s invocation of ‘experience’. This consistent

⁹³ Carolyn Steedman, “State-Sponsored Autobiography” in Conekin, Mort, and Waters, eds., *Moments of Modernity*, p. 43, 49-50, 54.

⁹⁴ See the discussions in Dennis Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Post-War Britain: History, the New Left and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 85-96.

purpose suggests the equivalent nature of both epistemologies.⁹⁵ Conservative speeches were laden with references to sociological reports. Joseph used *The family life of old people* in order to illustrate the “enormously increasing misery of loneliness” and suggest that a policy initiative be developed to eradicate it.⁹⁶ The “gradual erosion of the earnings rule” was celebrated, for this policy had had an “immense psychological effect” upon those old people “who felt that they were doing something wrong because they wish to go back to work”.⁹⁷ The importance of extending employment to the elderly was evidenced by references to sociological accounts of a “feeling...of utter boredom” and the “feeling that they are not positively wanted” that developed following retirement.⁹⁸ Employing the elderly, Lagden suggested, would reflect “a law of civilisation that will give these people an opportunity to live in dignity”.⁹⁹ By emphasising the emotional need detailed by the sociologist, Lagden was able to explicitly frame his policy recommendation in the discursive terms set by the welfare state. “The best analysis that I have read”, argued Keith Joseph, illustrated that “people defer their retirement not because of the effect on income, but because they enjoy the work”.¹⁰⁰ In each of these examples, sociology provided the rhetoric through which Conservative ministers were able to emphasise their empathy for the emotional situations that the elderly underwent. Due to the work of the expert, these ministers were able to claim a deep awareness of “loneliness”, “psychological effect”, “boredom”, and “dignity”. Moreover, by labelling the

⁹⁵ Though the fact that Labour’s 1964 campaign, and subsequent victory, were heavily dependent upon discourses of expertise suggests that the experience-knowledge dialectic was on the wane. See Chapter Three of this thesis and Laing, *Representations of Working Class Life*, pp. 21-22.

⁹⁶ Keith Joseph, HC Deb, 17 February 1958, vol. 582, c. 954.

⁹⁷ Anthony Meyer, HC Deb, 19 February 1965, vol. 706, c. 1557.

⁹⁸ Godfrey Lagden, HC Deb, 6 March, 1959, vol. 601, c. 788.

⁹⁹ Godfrey Lagden, HC Deb, 6 March 1959, vol. 601, c. 790.

¹⁰⁰ He was referring to Townsend’s *The Family Life of Old People*. Keith Joseph, HC Deb, 24 March 1958, vol. 585, cc. 67-68.

sociologist, the politician made himself explicitly indebted to their work. By emphasising those portions of the text that discussed emotion, the Conservative minister offered a very specific, and selective, interpretation of the sociological publications. In doing so, he used these works in an identical manner to Labour politicians' personal anecdotes and accounts. It was through the sociological text that the Conservative politician was able to claim understanding and empathy and thus develop policy that addressed *emotional*, rather than physical or biological, need.¹⁰¹

This emphasis on emotion was in line with the dominant discursive construction of the welfare state, in which the state sought to benevolently ensure that its citizens had “the good life”.¹⁰² However, it was also important to the Conservative politicians for another reason. Emotion, and particularly unhappiness, marked deprivation and need. Need underpinned the Conservative mediation of the universal welfare that was put in place by the Labour Government a decade earlier. As has been frequently argued, the Conservative Party conceived of welfare in comparatively limited terms to the Labour Party.¹⁰³ Politicians repeatedly asserted that the government should cater exclusively to those in need. It was consistently argued that “we must help those who need help”.¹⁰⁴ Conservative politicians argued that Labour ministers conflated “the words ‘retirement pension’ with the words ‘those in need’” and thus fundamentally mistook the purpose of

¹⁰¹ Francis, “Tears, Tantrums and Bared Teeth”, pp. 354-387; Martin Francis, “The Labour Party: Modernisation and the Politics of Restraint” in Conekin, Mort and Waters, eds., *Moments of Modernity*, pp. 152-170.

¹⁰² Freedon, “The Coming of the Welfare State” in Ball and Bellamy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, p. 14.

¹⁰³ Catherine Ellis, “No Hammock for the Idle”, p. 448; Harriet Jones, “The State and Social Policy” in Zweiniger-Bargielowska, ed., *Women in Twentieth Century Britain*, p. 330.

¹⁰⁴ Keith Joseph, HC Deb, 20 April 1959, vol. 604, c. 108. See also John Eden, HC Deb, 20 April 1959, vol. 604, c. 121.

government.¹⁰⁵ That the withdrawal of universal aid was executed through the conflation of ‘emotion’ and ‘need’ testifies to the continuing predominance of visions of the benevolent government to Conservative policy. Despite the fact that Conservative arguments fundamentally modified the nature of the welfare state, they continued to be conceived within its discursive framework.

Further, there was also a fundamentally classed dimension to this emphasis on sociologically delineated emotions. By focussing on need rather than universal welfare, Conservative policy marked a general return to earlier forms of governance, when state institutions had existed primarily to aid, or discipline, the working classes.¹⁰⁶ However, demarcating and isolating the working class as the sole subject of social policy was fundamentally impossible in the egalitarian post-war climate. The emotion foregrounded by the discourse of the benevolent government provided the Conservative ministers with a way to apportion need without invoking class rhetoric. It is no coincidence that, though never acknowledged by the politicians themselves, the sociological texts referenced were all about the working classes. It was from these texts that Conservative ministers claimed to know the emotions of their constituents. It was also from these texts that the Conservative ministers claimed to know the needs of their constituents, and thus proceeded to develop policies aimed at the needy rather than the needless.

Post-war sociology, then, was primarily a platform for the Conservative Party to negotiate between the predominant vision of the government as a benevolent force that ensured the happiness of its constituents and a belief that welfare should only

¹⁰⁵ John Boyd-Carpenter, HC Deb, 20 April 1959, vol. 604, c. 144.

¹⁰⁶ Janet Fink, “Welfare, Poverty and Social Inequalities” in Addison and Jones, eds., *A Companion to Contemporary Britain*, p. 268.

be extended to those in need. This was a use that was partially enabled by a similar tension with ICS texts between the self-sufficient family and the enabling government. In fact, the preponderance of this benevolent government discourse throughout arguments of the ICS, and both Conservative and Labour politicians points towards its discursive centrality in visions of governance. Conservative focus on need, then, must be treated as a variation upon, rather than a deviation from, this conceptualisation of the benevolent government. These politicians sought to understand and empathise with their subjects in the same way as Labour members; they simply interpreted the space of the benevolent government in markedly different terms. This was not, as has been argued, a Conservative caucus that was unconcerned with equality.¹⁰⁷ It was, rather, a government attempting to delineate the nature of existing inequality in a cultural context that judged traditional associations of inequality and class to be deficient. Moreover, it was this belief in the discourse of the benevolent government that compelled Conservative politicians to attempt to eradicate this inequality. The family, those without family, those who were happy and those who were needy were all variations on a consistent theme: how to determine need and, therefore, inequality. For these Conservative politicians, ICS texts provided a means by which that could be achieved.

¹⁰⁷ Ellis, "No Hammock for the Idle", p. 448; Noel Whiteside, "Creating the Welfare State in Britain, 1945-1960", *Journal of Social Policy*, vol. 25, no. 1 (1996), p. 98; "Society and the State in Twentieth-Century Britain" in Thompson, ed., *The Cambridge Social History of Britain*, pp. 113-15.

“THE TRADITIONAL SOCIETY”

Sociology and the Invalidation of Cultural Cycles

The rise of the Institute of Community Studies occurred within the period in which British sociology transformed from a marginal, gentlemanly pursuit to an established and thriving academic discipline. As we have seen, sociology, and the ICS in particular, had become a public “conceptual tool”, drawn upon by politicians in order to claim expertise. The dominant account of the ICS and ‘the sociological academy’, by contrast, is one of conflict: of a critical and elitist academic practice that was threatened by the populist independent research organisation.¹ A brief examination of any of the sociological literature published throughout the 1960s immediately reveals this to be false. Sociologists drew heavily upon ICS texts, integrating the data into their own, and explicitly establishing survey schedules and research topics in relation to that previously studied by the Institute. However, these latter sociologists did not simply replicate the arguments put forth by the ICS. Rather, the ICS conclusions were discarded, and often contradicted. The data provided by the Institute was used by these sociologists in such a way that redefined sociological visions of class as culture. Though these sociologists fundamentally re-evaluated the working-class culture, their continuing reliance on Institute data reflected a series of sustained emphases upon class as culture, community, behaviour, and space. This chapter traces the relationship between the sociological academy of the 1960s and the works

¹ This has particularly been central to the ICS researcher’s personal reflections on the Institute. See particularly the essays in Geoff Dench, Tony Flower and Kate Gavron, eds., *Young at Eighty: The Prolific Public Life of Michael Young* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 1995). See also, Jennifer Platt, *Social Research in Bethnal Green: An Evaluation of the Work of the Institute of Community Studies* (London and Basingstock: Macmillan and Co Ltd., 1971), p. 8.

published by the Institute and, in doing so, highlights the increasingly contrary place that the working classes, and the community, occupied within sociological work.

The community studies method, practised by the ICS in their close studies of Bethnal Green, was generally predominant in post-war sociology.² By adopting the methods of the anthropologist, and descending upon a small and self-sufficient community to live among the locals for a protracted period of time, the community studies method was thought “to quantify and generalise without losing the particular, the individual”.³ This community studies method was initially devised within the American *Middletown* in order to formulate a theory of the nation, in which the community was a nation ‘in miniature’.⁴ This process was enabled by a supposed selection of the ‘middle’, of the most average, town in America.⁵ In Britain, by contrast, the centrality of class to understandings of both the community and of the nation meant that this methodology was not quite tenable in sociological practice.⁶ The Institute itself established from the very beginning of

² The most famous community studies from this period are Norman Dennis, Fernando Henriques and Clifford Slaughter, *Coal Is Our Life: an Analysis of a Yorkshire Mining Community* (London: Tavistock, 1956); Margaret Stacey, *Tradition and Change: a Study of Banbury* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960); Ronald Frankenberg, *Village on the Border: a Social Study of Religion, Politics and Football in a North Wales Community* (London: Cohen and West, 1957); W. M. Williams, *The Sociology of an English Village: Gosforth* (London: Routledge, 1956). For a good overview of the place of the community studies methodology in Britain see Graham Day, *Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 27-87.

³ Dorothy E. Cole, “Family life of Old People: An Inquiry into East London, by P. Townsend”, *The Economic Journal*, vol. 68, no. 271 (1958), p. 567.

⁴ Robert S. Lynd, Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: a Study in American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1929); Robert S. Lynd, Helen Merrell Lynd *Middletown in Transition: a Study in Cultural Conflict* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1937).

⁵ For a good analysis of the *Middletown* phenomenon and the assumptions of the quintessentially American that underpinned it’s search for the ‘middle’ see Igo, Sarah. *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens and the Making of a Mass Public* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 29-100.

⁶ As we shall see, the emphasis on developing complementary knowledge of the middle class and the sustained formulation of class as culture disproves Savage’s argument that British community studies were a search for a British ‘Middletown’: Mike Savage, “1956: The End of Community: The Quest for the English Middletown” in *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940: the*

Family and kinship that generalisations based upon their of Bethnal Green were of tenuous validity for the remainder of the East End, let alone to remainder of Britain.⁷ This was mirrored in the responses to ICS publications by sociologists. There were general calls for “comparative surveys of other areas and classes”,⁸ and a recommendation that the Institute be “more explicit in relating their findings to general propositions”.⁹ “Unfortunately”, Halsey wrote critically, “they do not...attempt a comprehensive restatement of this sociological topic by relating their own findings to other recent studies”.¹⁰ Other sociologists who celebrated the cumulative nature of ICS studies, building upon knowledge of the working-class family from the perspectives of the widow or the elderly, worked from a similar conceptual foundation.¹¹ This integration of sociological findings also shaped the uses of ICS work. In Ireland, the distinction between ‘traditional’ communities and ‘urban regions’ was alleged to mirror the difference “between families of general labourers in old neighbourhoods in contrast to those in the new housing estates in London”.¹² As the ICS had uncovered similar patterns of working-class socialisation, Elizabeth Bott felt justified drawing general conclusions about the

Politics of Method (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 137-164; Mike Savage, “Against Epochalism: An analysis of conceptions of change in British sociology”, *Cultural Sociology*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2009), p. 229.

⁷ Michael Young and Peter Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p. xix.

⁸ Christine Cockburn, “Widows and their Families by Peter Marris”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 1, no. 10 (1952), p. 82.

⁹ Duncan Mitchell, “Tradition and Change: A Study of Banbury by Margaret Stacey; *Family and Class in a London Suburb* by Peter Willmott; Michael Young”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1961), p. 194.

¹⁰ A. H. Halsey, “*Family and Class in a London Suburb* by Peter Willmott; Michael Young”, *American Sociological Review*, vol. 26, no. 5 (1961), p. 796.

¹¹ Cole, “*Family Life of Old People*”, *The Economic Journal*, p. 567; Rosalind Chambers, “Widows and their Families, by Peter Marris”, *Population Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1958), p. 170; Robert H. Hyde, “51. *The Family life of Old People* by Peter Townsend”, *Man*, vol. 59 (1959), p. 39; Cockburn “Widows and their Families by Peter Marris”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, p. 82.

¹² Alexander J. Humphreys, *New Dubliners: Urbanisation and the Irish Family* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 245.

working classes through one family.¹³ The emphasis within criticism, celebration, and use of ICS texts lay upon the development of a highly integrated discipline, in which new publications explicitly developed upon previous work.

This concomitant emphasis upon a highly integrated discipline that builds upon earlier publications and the emphasis upon community studies methodology gave rise to a very specific vision of the nation within sociological work. The nation became comprised of a conglomeration of individual and self-sufficient communities which, when accumulated together, could give rise to patterns across Britain. The nation was, quite literally, a series of “imagined communities”.¹⁴ This understanding of a cumulative nation was embodied in the development of a number of texts that collated the findings of existing community studies. The very titles of these texts, such as *Samples from English cultures* and *Communities in Britain*, highlighted the general rejection of a singular or unified nation.¹⁵ The emphasis instead lay on the characteristics of specific segments of society; the North or the South, the village or the city, the working or the middle class. Those texts that compiled together community studies were structured around regions, emblematic of the assumption that patterns and habits congregated in particular spaces as opposed to in an abstract nation. By comparing between these individuated communities, these sociologists both retained the sanctity of the self-sufficient community and were able to develop a vision of the nation as a whole.

¹³ Elizabeth Bott, private correspondence, referenced in Savage, *Identities and Social Change*, p. 42.

¹⁴ This phrase is, of course, from Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

¹⁵ Josephine Klein, *Samples from English Cultures: Volume One* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1965); Josephine Klein, *Samples from English Cultures: Volume Two* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965); Ronald Frankenberg, *Communities in Britain: Social Life in Town and Country* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966).

These comparisons between regions were often comparisons between classes. Sociologists tended to use ICS data in such a way that emphasised and reproduced the ICS correlation between class and space. Particularly important was the direct reproduction of ICS contrasts between Bethnal Green and Woodford. Within this comparison, both Bethnal Green and Woodford remained internally homogenous and, thus, any divergences were derived from class differences.¹⁶ In a way fundamentally parallel to the ICS' own conceptions, class became *the* key variable in distinguishing between regions. In accordance with this understanding, and the general emphasis upon developing a vision of the nation through comparison, sociologists repeatedly emphasised the need to study the middle classes in addition to the working classes. It was consistently argued that comparative studies of "other areas and classes" were needed to test the 'reach' of ICS arguments.¹⁷ Klein lamented the lack of research on the middle classes, arguing that her section on middle-class patterns lacked "even that small amount of credence which is now justifiable in the case of the working classes".¹⁸ Yet: the fact she felt compelled to conclude the section at all "because the argument of the book as a whole needed it" is illuminating: sociologists could no longer focus their studies on the working class alone.¹⁹ If they did, it was argued, they assumed "that the views of 'producers' or of members of the general public aren't also worth knowing".²⁰ The

¹⁶ Jack Goody, "288. On Nannas and Nannies", *Man*, vol. 62 (1962), p. 182; Morris Carstairs, "Discussion: the Family and Mental Disorder: An Incomplete Essay", *The Milkbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 2 (1961) p. 214; Josephine Klein, *Samples from English Cultures: Volume One*, p. 343

¹⁷ Cockburn, "Widows and their Families by Peter Marris", *The British Journal of Sociology*, p. 82. See also a similar response in J. A. Banks, "Evolution of a Community: A Study of Dagenham after Forty years by Peter Willmott", *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1963), p. 297.

¹⁸ Klein, *Samples from English Cultures: Volume One*, p. 304.

¹⁹ Klein, *Samples from English Cultures: Volume One*, p. 303.

²⁰ Platt, *Social Research in Bethnal Green*, p. 39. See also the criticism in G. Duncan Mitchell, *A Hundred Years of Sociology* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co Ltd., 1968), p. 263.

increasing need to accumulative a vision of the nation, through the distinctive community, meant that studies of the working classes alone were partial and deficient. In these visions of the cumulative nation, middle-class patterns, assumed to be fundamentally different in nature to those of the working classes, were required.

Consequently, sociologists increasingly constructed their studies around a comparison of working-class and middle-class habits. “Class differences have played an important role in British society”, Gavron argued, so “any study of this nature ought to include a comparison between the middle class and working class”.²¹ Despite the fact that Rosser and Harris wished to examine the validity of ICS conclusions to Welsh kinship, they founded their study on a comparative examination of middle-class and working-class districts.²² This clearly reflects both the growing importance of class comparison to sociological studies and the fundamental nature of visions of space to the delineation of class category. For this reason, *Family and class* was read as a successful examination of the extent to which ‘relationships and patterns of behaviour differed’ between Woodford and Bethnal Green.²³ By studying a middle-class region through the same analytical framework as working-class Bethnal Green, it was argued that the ICS had effectively answered the extent to which “the ‘extended family’ was to be found in a middle-class suburban area as well as in a working-class urban area”.²⁴ Most

²¹ Hannah Gavron, *The Captive Wife: Conflicts of Housebound Mothers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p. xiii.

²² Colin Rosser and Christopher Harris, *The Family and Social Change: A Study of Family and Kinship in a South Wales Town* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 1-4, 81-91.

²³ Gavron, *The Captive Wife*, p. xiii.

²⁴ Ernest Krausz, *Sociology in Britain: a Survey of Research* (London: B. T. Batsford Limited, 1969), p. 188.

striking about this argument is the fundamental assumption of difference between the middle and working classes; this was difference until proven otherwise.

This method of regional comparison, with its emphasis on the differences of habits and behaviour between classes, was underpinned by a sustained conception of class as culture. Regions were demarcated as middle or working class by the presence of a particular class' behavioural patterns. Class as culture was explicit and, in many ways, mandatory in sociological analysis: the working classes lived "in a culture emphasising solidarity", the grammar school process ensured "cultural class distinctions are being preserved" and relocation to a housing estate engendered "something like culture contact".²⁵ The conceptualisation of class as combination of cultural actions and attitudes was often asserted through an overt refutation of those that defined class through employment or wealth. Thus, while the general public was inclined to "think primarily of social classes...as broad economic divisions", the sociologist understood classes as "cultural groupings marked by distinctive standards and styles of living and by characteristic values and social attitudes".²⁶ "Attendance at public school", or circulating in other institutions with explicit class indicators, delineated social class more correctly "than, for example, occupational status".²⁷ Rather than using the "convenient" designation of class by "occupational status", Humphreys' class categorisation drew variously upon a subject's "income, residence and education; their relative

²⁵ Michael Banton, "34. *Two Studies of Kinship in London* by Raymond Firth; *Family and Kinship in East London* by Michael Young; Peter Willmott", *Man*, vol. 58 (1958), p. 35; T. R. Fyvel, *The Insecure Offenders: Rebellious Youth in the Welfare State* (Middlesex: Penguin books, 1963 [1961]), p. 239; Klein, *Samples from English Cultures: Volume One*, p. 270.

²⁶ Rosser and Harris, *The Family and Social Change*, p. 95.

²⁷ Goody, "288. On Nannas and Nannies", *Man*, p. 181.

social power; their privileges and obligations; their general style of life”.²⁸

Conceptions of class through culture were so predominant that even those accounts that studied work explicitly rendered element of the working environment, and economic wage, secondary to cultural context.²⁹ As in ICS accounts, “what matters most is the significance which social class has for behaviour in specified social situations”.³⁰

It was in their conceptualisation of how class-culture was expressed that later sociologists diverged from their ICS predecessors. Sociologists were increasingly concerned with the ways that class structured thought and consciousness, and the ways that this ‘class consciousness’ was expressed in behaviour. This marked a break from the ICS emphasis upon the passive and unconscious expression of cultural norms. Thus, it was the expression of “social class...in specific social situations” that mattered to Banton in the definition of class.³¹ Mitchell’s interpretation of *Family and class* accentuated a distinction between “objective differences”, which were “slighter than they have ever been”, and “subjective ones”, which resulted in the fact that “the community is socially divided”.³² In this analysis, “subjective” differences defined the patterns of Woodford sociability and were therefore more important than any “objective” differences in wealth.

²⁸ Humphreys, *New Dubliners: Urbanisation and the Irish Family*, p. 6.

²⁹ See, for example, Stephen Edgell, “Spiralists: Their Careers and Family Lives”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 21, no. 3 (1970), p. 317; David Lockwood, “Sources of Variation in Working-Class Images of Society” in Martin Bulmer, ed., *Working-Class Images of Society* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, [1966], 1975), p. 17.

³⁰ Michael Banton, “179: *Family and Class in a London Suburb* by Peter Willmott; Michael Young”, *Man*, vol. 61 (1961), p. 146.

³¹ Michael Banton, “179: *Family and Class in a London Suburb* by Peter Willmott; Michael Young”, p. 146.

³² Donald Mitchell, “*Tradition and Change: A Study of Banbury* by Margaret Stacey; *Family and Class in a London Suburb* by Peter Willmott; Michael Young”, p. 194.

Analyses of this nature were often cyclical: class ‘consciousness’ was expressed in behavioural patterns that, in turn, served to reproduce a particular class-consciousness. Thus, one study of working mothers concluded that a woman’s ability to meet “the emotional needs of family members” was fundamentally determined by the “reasons why a mother goes out to work or stays home”. Needs and reasons were both determined by “the socio-economic background of the family”.³³ In this analysis, the reason why a woman chose to work and the ability of that woman to continue to meet the needs of her family were fundamentally contingent on class. The satisfactory delivery of classed needs was thus contingent, somewhat redundantly, upon the extent to which a woman’s choice was based upon her class, which it inevitably was. Class-culture thus defined both action and consequence.

Within this formulation, class defined choices and actions. Class also determined the outcomes of these choices and actions. Klein’s examination of childrearing practices reflected this understanding of cyclical thought-behaviour patterns. She examined the differing approaches that middle-class and working-class women had to childrearing through close examining of such diverse practices as toilet training and displays of discipline and affection.³⁴ Any differences that arose in her analysis were, of course, judged to be product of class. Most importantly, these different approaches were used to expound standardised working-class and middle-class ‘character’ traits. Adult personality was, in this Freudian formulation, the product of childrearing patterns. As class defined these child-rearing patterns, class

³³ Barbara Thompson and Angela Finlayson, “Married Women Who Work in Early Motherhood”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1963), pp. 150-1.

³⁴ Klein, *Samples from English Cultures: Volume Two*, c.f. pp. 476-478.

also created ‘character’ and personality. Class begot action, which in itself reproduced the class system.

This psychological and cyclical methodology bore striking resemblance to the Freudian formulations of anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer a decade before, who focussed on English child-rearing practices in order to explain an essential English character.³⁵ While Gorer’s arguments were roundly rejected by the discipline of anthropology, Klein enjoyed a rather rapturous support.³⁶ The primary distinction between the two texts was the emphasis on class; Gorer’s text was entirely free of class language. By contrast, Klein’s argument was founded upon, and structured by, it.

This was a formulation of class as a cycle of thought and behaviour. This cycle was simultaneously the product of, and the cause for, class orthodoxies. It was a conceptualisation of class that sublimated psychological ideas of personality into class-culture dialectic. Psychological elements were thus integrated into class patterns, the traditional terrain of sociological study. As personalities were the by-products of class, they were rendered general rather than individual.

This was the culmination of an ongoing struggle between psychology and pathology over the cause of ‘social problems’ and, in particular, on the cause of pathological habits and disease. Psychologists and doctors, in their accounts of the

³⁵ Geoffrey Gorer, *Exploring English Character* (London: Cresset, 1955).

³⁶ Peter Mandler, “Being His Own Rabbit: Geoffrey Gorer and English Culture” in Clare V. J. Griffiths, James J. Nott, William Whyte, eds., *Classes, Cultures and Politics: Essays on British History for Ross McKibbin* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press: 2001), p. 193; See, for example, the description in *A Hundred Years of Sociology* of Klein’s work as “one of the most impressive attempts to draw conclusions...[on] the changing face of Britain”: G. Duncan Mitchell, *A Hundred Years of Sociology*, p. 296.

causes of disease and pathology, had conceptualised sociological factors as a gloss upon biological foundation. The fundamental ‘fact’ was biological deformity, which was subsequently enhanced or eased by sociological elements.³⁷

Sociologists, of course, argued the opposite; that biology and illness were determined by social factors. Neuroses derived from the strain of rehousing and the loss of kinship ties, children deviated from the norm due to “maternal deprivation”, and the “pressures of society” served to engender teen delinquency.³⁸ These articles were all predicated upon an, often explicit, rejection of biology.³⁹ Rather deviance was the product of poor social patterns, which served to claim personality as the space of sociological, rather than psychological or medicinal, study.

It was this explicit rejection of psychology that limited the appeal of Gorer’s text in the mid-1950s and, also, Enid Mills’ *Living with mental illness*.⁴⁰ It also underpinned the generally liminal place of the psychological interview in sociological practice until Bott’s 1957 formulation of ‘social roles’. This emphasis

³⁷ See, for example, Martin Roth, “Problems of an Aging Population”, *The British Medical Journal*, vol. 1, no. 5181 (1960), p. 1228; M. W. Susser, “Rationale for the Community Care of Mental Disorder”, *Mental Care*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1965), p. 53, 56; C. Murray Parkes, “Effects of Bereavement on Physical and Mental health: A study of the Medical Records of Widows”, *The British Medical Journal*, vol. 2, no. 5404 (1964), pp. 274-279.

³⁸ F. M. Martin, J. H. Brotherson, and S. P. Chave, “Incidents of Neurosis in a New Housing Estate”, *British Journal of Preventative and Social Medicine*, vol. 11, no. 4 (1957), p. 197; H. R. Schaffer and Evelyn B. Schaffer, *Childcare and the Family: A Study of Short Term Admission to Care*, Occasional Papers on Social Administration No. 25 (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1968), p. 7, 81; Fyvel, *The Insecure Offenders*, pp. 220-224.

³⁹ Sociologists could occasionally become vituperative in their rejection of psychological accounts. See, for example, G. Duncan Mitchell, *A Hundred Years of Sociology* pp. 160, 178-80, 182-84.

⁴⁰ Mills’ text posited mental illness as a ‘reality’ around which the family adopted. By comparison with all of the other ICS texts, it was reviewed primarily in medicinal journals and barely registered in sociological journals when published. The only sociological text I have found that referenced Mills did so as part of a general review of ICS publications. Ernest Krausz, *Sociology in Britain: A Survey of Research*, p. 25. See also, for a contrast of reception, the sole sociological review J. C. Read, “*Mental Hospitals at Work* by Kathleen Jones; Roy Sidebotham; *Living with Mental Illness* by Enid Mills”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1963), pp. 191-2 with the medical A. W. Beard, “Community Care of Mentally Ill; *Living with Mental Illness: A Study in East London* by Enid Mills”, *The British Medical Journal*, vol. 1, no. 5337 (Apr. 20, 1963), p. 1079; J. A. C. Brown, “*Living with Mental Illness: A Study in East London*, by Enid Mills”, *British Journal of Industrial Medicine*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1962), p. 225.

on roles, Savage has demonstrated, allowed sociologists to *bypass* questions of personality and individuality.⁴¹ This wholesale rejection of personality became unnecessary with the formulation of the cyclical interconnection of behaviour and thought. This conceptualisation allowed sociologists to commentate upon personality and mental state as social phenomena, rather than individual singularities. While the focus of the struggle between psychology and sociology had previously occurred over ideas of deviance, the integration of behaviour and thought with sociological ideas of class enabled sociologists of the 1960s to claim personality as their field of study. This interweaving of ‘behaviour and ‘thought’, then, marked a significant departure in sociological understandings and a significant expansion of sociological territory.

The emphasis upon the relationship between thought and behaviour became the dominant feature of sociological analyses of class in the 1960s. Given that the community as a conglomeration of class practices was the primary site of sociological study, it is no surprise that communities were increasingly subjected to an analysis of thought and behaviour cycles. In the case of the working classes, it was local networks and allegiances within communities that were continually emphasised. The strength of local kinship relations in Bethnal Green, it was argued, developed from the “avoidance of unregulated interaction with people who are not properly part of the local network”.⁴² It was concluded that, due to the local community orientation of the working classes, “the traditional working man lacks training in the sort of attitude which would enable him to confront large-scale

⁴¹ Mike Savage, “Elizabeth Bott and the Formation of Modern British Sociology”, *The Sociological Review*, vol. 56, no. 4 (2008), p. 601.

⁴² Klein, *Samples from English Cultures: Volume One*, p. 209.

organisations, abstract ideas or unfamiliar situations”.⁴³ Here, localised behaviour patterns were indicative of a deeply local, and thus limited, interior mental state. Localised socialisation was inimical to non-local or, rather, “abstract” thought and thus engendered what Klein described as a “cognitive poverty characteristic of many traditional societies”.⁴⁴ As the community systematically encouraged the working classes to think in local, rather than national, terms, working-class culture was not satisfying but limiting. By transferring her focus from behaviour to the thought produced by behaviour, Klein criticised working-class ‘culture’ for one of its constitutive elements – local insularity.

This conception of working-class culture as behaviourally, and thus ideologically, local permeated the sociological literature of the 1960s. A “more than average distrust of human reason” reflected the “traditionalism characteristic of rural areas”.⁴⁵ This working-class culture engendered a “stubborn determination not to develop...attitudes or behaviour which would make for a richer and more interior life”.⁴⁶ In this context, it was “quite horrifying” that the working class were so “influenced by the traditional lore”.⁴⁷ The idea that the local community engendered a limited interior life was founded upon these connections between insular behaviour and insular knowledge. Through these conceptualisations of “cognitive poverty”, the working-class community was increasingly configured as a space of *confinement* rather than satisfaction. These are arguments that clearly disprove the common, and often ahistorical, notion that ‘community’ has been a valuable concept within sociological analysis due to its valorised and entirely

⁴³ Klein, *Samples from English Cultures: Volume One*, p. 214.

⁴⁴ Klein, *Samples from English Cultures: Volume Two*, p. 525.

⁴⁵ Humphreys, *New Dubliners: Urbanisation and the Irish Family*, p. 26.

⁴⁶ Klein, *Samples from English Cultures: Volume One*, p. 87.

⁴⁷ Gordon Rose, *The Working Class* (London: Longmans, 1968), p. 76.

positive nature.⁴⁸ This was an understanding that envisioned “the loosening of these [community] ties” to be “a desirable improvement”.⁴⁹

ICS texts were consistently read by sociologists through this lens of a local, and thus deficient, working-class culture. Raglan concluded that “the picture of Dagenham was a depressing one” due to the “rows of tidy houses occupied by people without an idea or an ambition”.⁵⁰ Community studies generally, and *Family and kinship* in particular, were criticised for ignoring the fact that “a closely-knit society can be narrow-minded and intolerant”.⁵¹ This emphasis upon intolerance reflected an increasing later post-war focus upon individual expression and self-actualisation.⁵² In this context, the community’s inability to facilitate individual expression was fundamentally indefensible. It was argued that the “community spirit”, so praised by the ICS, was dependent upon this insularity.⁵³ This was a social structure that was rendered fundamentally inimical to “diversity and individual idiosyncrasy”.⁵⁴ These accounts were predicated upon an understanding that behaviour and thought were cyclically reproduced by one another. The local proximity that founded the patterns of community behaviour came to indicate, and produce, a local and insular intellectual orientation in which

⁴⁸ Graham Day, *Community and Everyday Life* pp. 1, 24-25; Joanna Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960: Gender, Class, and Ethnicity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 137.

⁴⁹ Ronald Fletcher, *Family and Marriage in Britain: An Analysis and Moral Assessment* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973 [1966]), p. 198.

⁵⁰ Raglan, “264. *The Evolution of a Community: A Study of Dagenham after Forty Years* by Peter Willmott”, *Man*, vol. 63 (1963), p. 200.

⁵¹ Harold Pollins “*Societies in the Making: A Study of Development and Redevelopment within a County Borough* by Hilda Jennings”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1963), p. 295. See also J. H. Robb, *Working-Class Anti-Semite: A Psychological Study in a London Borough* (London: Tavistock, 1954).

⁵² Claire Langhamer, “Love, Selfhood and Authenticity in Post-war Britain”, *Cultural and Social History*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2012), pp. 277-297; Simon Duncan, “The World we have made? Individualisation and Personal Life in the 1950s”, *The Sociological Review*, vol. 59, no. 2 (2011), pp. 242-265.

⁵³ Jennifer Platt, *Social Research in Bethnal Green*, p. 21.

⁵⁴ Platt, *Social Research in Bethnal Green*, p. 17.

everyone unquestioningly ‘knows their place’.⁵⁵ Where the ICS used ‘culture’ to account for consistent patterns of behaviour, the sociologists of the 1960s envisioned a community unable to accommodate diversity or even contestation of the established social order. To the ICS, unity represented a functioning and, thus fulfilling, community. To the sociologists that followed, this same unity was a marker of a mental state that was profoundly local, deeply exclusive, and thus fundamentally deficient.

The consistent emphasis upon a working-class community that mandated conformity was pivotal to sociological conceptions of change. The working-class community, it was argued, systematically “eschews individual striving to be different”.⁵⁶ Conformity is, of course, the sublimation of deviation from a norm. Through this stress on conformity, the sociologists essentially eliminated the possibility that change could organically develop within working-class communities. It was implied that any behaviour that deviated from standard practice, and thus had the potential to shift patterns of limited thought, was strictly suppressed. Just as the ICS had emphasised the cyclical nature of working-class reciprocity and care, so too did later sociologists use the interdependence of behaviour and thought to formulate a system that threatened to cycle on endlessly.

Class remained defined by cultural patterns, but the emphasis on mental states, and the subsequent ‘discovery’ of a strict mandate on conformity, meant that sociologists no longer practiced the ICS’ careful cultural relativism. The working-

⁵⁵ Lockwood, “Sources of Variation in Working-Class Images of Society” in Bulmer, ed., *Working-Class Images of Society*, p. 20; Eric A. Nordlinger, *The Working-Class Tories: Authority, Deference and Stable Democracy* (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1967), p. 17.

⁵⁶ David Lockwood, “Sources of Variation in Working-Class Images of Society” in Bulmer, ed., *Working-Class Images of Society*, pp. 17-18.

class community was rendered limiting rather than, as for the ICS, fulfilling. This resulted in a very distinct reading of ICS publications, in which the dissatisfaction of those working-class subjects in housing estates and middle-class towns was celebrated. Within ICS accounts, this dissatisfaction was a sign of the rupture of the community. Thus, in later interpretations, this rupture became a sign of hope.⁵⁷ That the Woodford working-class closely “resemble the middle class” was a sign that it was possible to “shed working-class characteristics”.⁵⁸ The ICS study of Dagenham had optimistically illustrated the resilience of the working-class community structure. To Klein, however, this resilience suggested that “there is a relatively brief period in which the opportunities for change” arose.⁵⁹ The “breakdown” of the extended family, Fletcher suggested, was “the outcome of factors which, on the whole are decidedly improvements”.⁶⁰ These arguments were evidenced directly by material detailed within ICS publications. The conclusions of the later sociologists, conclusions underpinned by ICS data, were an entirely contrary vision of the working-class community. This is indicative of the principles that ICS writers and 1960s sociologists shared. The focus on region, locality, class as culture, and rupture underpinned both arguments. These key conceptual ideas were thus sustained throughout the entirety of the post-war period.⁶¹ Emphasis and interpretation, however, were markedly divergent. Thus, though the sociologists increasingly configured the community as a limiting environment, this conclusion represents continuity rather than schism from earlier understandings.

⁵⁷ This is exemplary of the confluence of ideas of ‘cultural critique’ and ‘social engineering’ that have characterised social science of the nation more generally. See Federico Neiburg and Marcio Goldman, Peter Gow [trans], “Anthropology and Politics in Studies of National Character”, *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1998, pp. 63-64.

⁵⁸ Rose, *The Working Class*, p. 128.

⁵⁹ Klein, *Samples from English Cultures: Volume One*, p. 271.

⁶⁰ Fletcher, *The Family and Marriage in Britain*, p. 193.

⁶¹ A general rejection of the community studies method began to occur from the early 1970s. See, in particular, Colin Bell and Howard Newby, *Community Studies: an Introduction to the Sociology of the Local Community* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971).

The emphasis upon rupture as sign of hope that the limiting cycles of working-class culture could be broken was most explicitly expressed in discussions of education. Jackson and Marsden's *Education and the working class* underpinned a legion of discussions about the inhibiting and limited nature of working-class culture and about the potential that education posed for liberation. The accounts detailed within *Education* were read as evidencing the unmotivated and limited outlook of working-class parents and, occasionally, students towards education. "The children of manual workers are less well motivated and academically oriented", it was argued, "so they obtain a limited benefit".⁶² The success of particular working-class children was attributed to a certain style of parenting, in which "the urge to succeed comes from a deeper and more emotional source than the need to pass an examination".⁶³ The "pattern of motivation" indicative of success or failure was judged "neither natural nor accidental".⁶⁴ In this way, the "cognitive poverty" endemic to the working-class community was transposed upon responses to school and education. The insular community, dependent upon isolation from outside ideas, was judged to be inimical to education. It was upon these understandings that Platt argued that "there is something sociologically odd about combining the advocacy of education with a desire to maintain traditional working-class family patterns".⁶⁵ There is, of course, nothing inherently "odd" about the correlation of tradition and education. This was an assumption founded upon an understanding, and expectation, of the localised working-class community. Thus, the failure of culture and community, as opposed to the failure

⁶² Rose, *The Working Class*, p. 40.

⁶³ Klein, *Samples of English Culture: Volume Two*, p. 509.

⁶⁴ Lockwood, "Sources of Variation in Working-Class Images of Society" in Bulmer, ed., *Working-Class Images of Society*, p. 23.

⁶⁵ Platt, *Social Research*, p. 15.

of the education system that Jackson and Marsden had sought to emphasise, had become a self-evident sociological orthodoxy.

Education occupied such a prominent place within criticisms of the limited nature of the local working-class culture because education was thought to be the means by which this localism could be reversed. This ideology was, in part, the natural product of a culture whose primary flaw was “cognitive poverty”. Therefore, it was “the spread of education” that ensured that the “working class...can set their sights a good deal higher”.⁶⁶ It was positive that the grammar schools fostered children who ceased “to adhere to some working-class social practices”.⁶⁷ The grammar school, Klein argued, was filled with an “atmosphere of educational excitement and ambition” that clearly diverged from the limited working-class environment.⁶⁸ Moreover, it was argued that contemporary circumstances ensured, that so long as they received the right education, the working classes would be successful. “Everyone”, Gavron suggested, “is viewed in terms of his potential skills and abilities”.⁶⁹ The English “anti-intellectual trend” was stringently rejected for “excluding...those who have qualified themselves”.⁷⁰ “Access to favoured occupational positions”, it was argued, “is improving for the children of manual and non-manual strata”.⁷¹ These sociologists envisioned conditions in which skill was valued above social rank, thus facilitating social mobility. It was “the acquisition of some type of *expertise*” that would offer working-class individuals

⁶⁶ Rosser and Harris, *The Family and Social Change*, p. 177. Emphasis in original.

⁶⁷ Lynn McDonald, *Social Class and Delinquency* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 106.

⁶⁸ Klein, *Samples from English Cultures: Volume One*, p. 421.

⁶⁹ Gavron, *The Captive Wife*, p. 21.

⁷⁰ Klein, *Samples from English Cultures: Volume One*, pp. 370-1. This idea of a traditional English rejection of the ‘intellectual’ has been critically explored as an enduring cultural concept in Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁷¹ Trevor Noble, “Social Mobility and Class Relations in Britain”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 23, no. 4 (1972), p. 434.

the “opportunity for social and economic mobility”.⁷² Education, then, would ensure more than a break from the working-class cultural cycle. As education and skill founded success, education guaranteed equality of treatment.

This was a celebration of education that fundamentally reproduced the ideology of the ‘meritocracy’. Historians have argued that this meritocracy was the pinnacle and embodiment of predominant post-war understandings of class, hierarchy and equality.⁷³ A meritocracy is, of course, a hierarchy founded upon merit rather than upon birthright or class heritage. This is a vision of equal access rather than of ‘equality’ in the strictest sense of the word. Historians argue that this meritocracy underpinned post-war negotiations of hierarchy and class difference. Moreover, in the post-war period, the discourse of the meritocracy was underpinned by the celebration of education.⁷⁴ Through the expansion of education, the egalitarian meritocracy could become a reality. It was this understanding of education, and of the meritocracy, which gave rise to the pivotal 1944 Education Act that abolished fees at most grammar schools and made entry to them contingent on performance in the national 11+ exam.⁷⁵ The emphasis upon the ‘expert’ as the key cultural emblem of post-war Britain was fundamentally underpinned by the discourse of meritocracy: the concomitant deference to hierarchy and celebration of equal access that underpinned the meritocracy also founded the expert’s claim to

⁷² Nordlinger, *The Working-Class Tories: Authority, Deference and Stable Democracy*, p. 25. Emphasis in original.

⁷³ Guy Ortolano, *The Two Cultures Controversy: Science, Literature and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 18-24; Stuart Laing, *Representations of Working-Class Life 1957-1964* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1986), pp. 3-22, 221; Mike Savage, “Affluence and Social Change in the Making of Technocratic Middle-Class Identities: Britain, 1939-55”, *Contemporary British History*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2008), pp. 459-60.

⁷⁴ James Hinton, “The ‘Class’ Complex”: Mass-Observation and Cultural Distinction in Pre-war Britain”, *Past and Present*, vol. 199, no. 1 (2008), pp. 207-236.

⁷⁵ Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 226-269.

authority.⁷⁶ As he was appointed by merit, the ‘expert’ was the manifestation of an egalitarian hierarchy founded upon skill and education. And, the formerly working-class, grammar school educated ‘expert’ was a physical marker of the reality of this meritocratic hierarchy, and thus afforded prime authority value within post-war Britain.⁷⁷

The fundamentally meritocratic vision underpinning sociological analyses of the post-war working classes is clear. By explicitly arguing in favour of education and expertise, these sociologists suggested that it was the meritocracy that offered the greatest opportunity for working-class citizens. Given their celebration of the meritocracy, it is no surprise that these sociologists rejected the working-class community. The ‘cognitive poverty’ and disinterest in education the community engendered was fundamentally inimical to these sociologists’ meritocratic values. Moreover, in their explicit use of the discourse of meritocracy, these sociologists continued to prize an egalitarian society. It was only because equality, or at least the meritocracy, was their final goal that these sociologists were able to criticize working-class cultural patterns. They exemplify the celebration of the ‘meritocratic’ future and equality that historians have shown to permeate throughout the entirety of the post-war period.

⁷⁶ Christopher Hilliard, “Is it a Book That You Would Even Wish Your Wife or Your Servants to Read?”: Obscenity Law and the Politics of Reading in Modern England”, *American Historical Review*, vol. 118, no. 3 (2013), p. 676.

⁷⁷ This is a dominant orthodoxy in historiography of post-war Britain. See in particular the essays in Becky Conekin, Frank Mort, Chris Waters, eds., *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945-1964* (London and New York: Rivers Oram Press, 1999), p. 14; Adrian Bingham, “The “K – Bomb”: Social Surveys, the Popular Press, and British Sexual Culture in the 1940s and 1950s”, *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 50, no. 1 (2011), p. 165; Nicholas Deakin, “Civil Society” in Paul Addison and Harriet Jones, eds., *A Companion to Contemporary Britain, 1939-2000* (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005), p. 412.

Yet, if the meritocracy was indicative of general understandings of the entire of post-war period, it is curious that the discursive tropes of the meritocracy only began to clearly emerge within sociological understandings from the mid-1960s. Neither the ICS, nor political debates, betray any sign of this meritocracy. After all, the word ‘meritocracy’ was first envisioned in an apocalyptic portrayal of society’s future.⁷⁸ This text, written by the Institute’s own Michael Young, warned against the ‘meritocracy’. The explicit celebration of working-class culture and rejection of the decline of the working class that underpinned the Institute’s formulations were partially a rejection of the meritocratic discourse that predicted this decline. The fact that Institute texts sold in their hundreds of thousands testifies to the validity, or rather the temporary validity, of this rejection of the meritocracy. The same was true of Labour politicians, who claimed their authority over the welfare state through ‘experience’ and, often, through an explicit rejection of expertise. These discussions of class were fundamentally, as we have seen, discussions of equality and egalitarianism. That they discussed these ideas without invoking the discourses of the meritocracy points toward a fundamental weakness in the historiographical conflation of post-war negotiations of class and the celebration of the meritocracy.

This is not to suggest that the discursive celebration of the ‘meritocracy’ did not exist throughout the entire post-war period. It certainly did. Rather, the progress from rejection within ICS publications of the late 1950s to the wholly celebratory texts of the mid-1960s marks a radical “quickenings” of the discourse of the

⁷⁸ Michael Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy, 1870-2033: an Essay on Education and Equality* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1958).

‘meritocracy’.⁷⁹ In the late 1950s, the ICS was able to publish a series of influential and bestselling texts premised upon the rejection of a meritocracy. Alternative visions to the meritocracy had been legitimate. By the mid-1960s, however, sociologists unanimously celebrated the meritocracy and its attendant vision of society. The meritocracy had assumed discursive hegemony.

That this was so is not surprising. In line with the general celebration of egalitarianism, the post-war period was marked by an ongoing interrogation of the validity of patrician power. This critical examination, and conclusive rejection, of these forms of traditional class authority were a highly publicised affair, and included such notorious events as the Lady Chatterley’s Lover trial, the Suez crisis, and the Profumo affair.⁸⁰ Concomitantly, perceptions of British economic and social decline, accelerated throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁸¹ The ‘gentleman’ was explicitly held to blame.⁸² As a cultural figure, the ideals epitomized by the ‘gentleman’ were fundamentally untenable in the egalitarian climate of post-war Britain. The explicit complement to the gentleman was the

⁷⁹ The term “quickenings” is Ann Stoler’s, who heeds the historian to pay attention to the speed at which discourse “pulses” in order to fully evaluate its strength. Ann Laura Stoler, “The Pulse of the Archive”, in *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2009), pp. 17-53.

⁸⁰ Hilliard, “Is this a Book That You Would Even Wish Your Wife or Your Servants to Read?”, pp. 653-678; Jon Lawrence, “Paternalism, Class and the British Path to Modernity” in Simon Gunn and James Vernon, eds., *The Peculiarities of Liberal Modernity in Imperial Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), pp. 147-164; Frank Mort, *Capital Affairs: London and the Making of a Permissive Society* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 281-48.

⁸¹ Jim Tomlinson, “Inventing ‘Decline’: The Falling Behind of the British Economy in the Postwar Years”, *Economic History Review*, vol. 46, no. 4 (1996), pp. 731-757; Jim Tomlinson, “Economic Policy” in Roderick Floud, Paul Johnson, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 205-06.

⁸² This was most strongly advanced within Arthur Koestler, ed., *Suicide of a nation* (London: Macmillan, [1962] 1994). For a discussion on the place of the gentleman in post-war Britain see Marcus Collins, “The Fall of the English Gentleman: the National Character in Decline, c. 1918-1970”, *Historical Research*, vol. 75, no. 187 (2002), pp. 90-111, particularly p. 93; Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 208-219.

‘expert’. As Peter Mandler has highlighted, the increasing division of society into clear segments facilitated this rejection of the ‘gentleman’.⁸³ So too did sociologists depend upon an isolation of the working classes from the remainder of society in order to argue that working-class culture engendered limiting, and non-meritocratic, patterns. The ‘decline’ of the gentleman was, in many ways, a compliment to the interrogation of the working-class culture. Just as this rejection of working-class culture increased throughout the 1960s, the idea of the ‘meritocracy’ proliferated throughout culture and the public sphere. The vituperative arguments of both C. P. Snow and F. R. Leavis in the infamous Two Cultures debate were founded upon a belief in the meritocracy and in the ‘expert’.⁸⁴ The Marxist New Left, particularly the work of such scholars as Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn, began to shift noticeably toward an explicit emphasis on the importance of theory and the expert to the development of revolutionary understanding.⁸⁵ The meritocracy underpinned Harold Wilson’s 1964 reformulation of the Labour Party, in which he constructed the Conservative Party as members of a gentlemanly, and thus backward, “Establishment”.⁸⁶ Nor is it inconsequential that Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher, the subsequent Conservative leaders after their 1964 loss, exemplified this meritocratic order.⁸⁷ The meritocracy had, by the mid-1960s, become a cultural imperative.

⁸³ Mandler, *The English National Character*, p. 217

⁸⁴ Ortolano, *The Two Cultures Controversy*.

⁸⁵ This marked a greater distance from the working class that had underpinned the understandings of E. P. Thompson and Raymond Williams. See Dennis Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 1997), pp. 79-124.

⁸⁶ David Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 153-54; Laing, *Representations of the Working Class*, pp. 21-21.

⁸⁷ Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain*, p. 163.

Thus, though the discourse of the meritocracy existed throughout the entire post-war period, it reached a fever pitch in the mid-1960s. The increasing predominance of the ‘meritocratic’ society is testified to by the shift in sociological analyses of the working class, and their readings of the data provided by the ICS. Within sociology, satisfaction and happiness could no longer validate a culture. Conceptions of class as culture fundamentally shifted throughout the 1960s in order to emphasise the intertwined nature of behavior and of mental understandings. It was based upon this conception of culture that the localised behavior of the working-class community became indicative of a localised, and thus deficient, consciousness. This localised consciousness was inimical to the values of education, mobility, and expertise celebrated in the increasingly orthodox meritocracy. The working-class culture celebrated by the ICS became untenable within this increasingly meritocratic context. By conceptualising the post-war period as a relatively stable and homogenous cultural entity, historians have emphasised the continual presence of the meritocracy instead of exploring its increasing velocity throughout the post-war period.⁸⁸ The meritocracy was not the only solution to the valorisation of equality that emerged in the aftermath of the Second World-War. The fact that it did become so, in sociology and elsewhere, tells a different story of post-war Britain to that shown thus far.

⁸⁸ This homogenisation of the entire post-war period in many ways develops from a rejection of earlier teleological accounts that juxtaposed the conservative 1950s against the radical 1960s. Tracing similarities between the decades need not necessitate, however, the total exclusion of difference. On this literature of rewriting the 1950s, see Nick Thomas, “Will the Real 1950 Please Stand Up? Views of a Contradictory Decade”, *Cultural and Social History*, vol, 5, no. 2 (2008), pp. 227-236.

CONCLUSION

The Politics of Knowledge in Post-War Britain

When Michael Young and Peter Willmott returned to London in the early 1970s to restudy the family, the landscape of sociological research had changed drastically.¹ The expansion of computing capacity facilitated the dramatic rise of the national social survey, and signalled the end of the community study methodology. With the nation as the site of study, rather than a local and integrated community, class ceased to play *the* constitutive role in everyday relations. Functionalist visions of self-sufficient class cultures were no longer apposite in this research context, in which principal value was accorded to the development of understanding of national trends and ‘theory’ became the new catchword of academic practice.² Even those studies that did focus exclusively on the working classes directed their focus to working life and working conditions, rather than a constitutive and cyclical culture.³ Class returned to its earlier status as a socio-economic classification and as a *variable* that was of equal importance to other ‘categories’,

¹ Michael Young and Peter Willmott, *The Symmetrical Family: a Study of Work and Leisure in the London Region* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).

² On the rise of theory in academic practice see Adam Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists: The Modern British School* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 159-75; Dennis Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Post-War Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 125-81. See, also, Peter Mandler on the “yearning” for a national identity in the 1970s: Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: the History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 226-27.

³ See, for example, Jim Cousins and Richard Brown, “Patterns of Paradox: Shipbuilding Workers’ Images of Society” in Martin Bulmer, ed., *Working-Class Images of Society* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 55-82; Colin Bell and Howard Newby, “The Sources of Variation in Agricultural Workers’ Images of Society” in Bulmer, ed., *Working-Class Images of Society*, pp. 83-97; Roderick Martin and R. H. Fryer, “The Deferential Worker?” in Bulmer, ed., *Working-Class Images of Society*, pp. 98-115, all published in the collection that Savage misleadingly labels the final paean to, rather than reformulation of, studies of working-class community: Mike Savage, “Working-Class Identities in the 1960s: Revisiting the Affluent Worker Study”, *Sociology*, vol. 39, no. 5 (2005), p. 929.

including gender and race, in the determination of behaviour. *The symmetrical family* embodied all of these changes: sampling a wide range of London boroughs that were rarely distinguished within analysis, emphasising the importance of work and leisure, whereby leisure was the absence of work, in definition of family patterns, a comparison of women and men's employment, and a focus on changes that filtered through all social classes.⁴ With the development of new methodologies and an increasing emphasis on the nation, the sociological 'moment' of class as culture had drawn to a close.⁵

However, the shift away from class as culture may be more complex than the simple shift away from the community study. We have seen that, in the post-war period, the question of *how* one knew what one knew was of pivotal importance. 'Expertise' was a deeply selective designation. These invocations of knowledge were embedded in a politicised language of class, a language that facilitated the construction of a Functionalist culture, the delineation of need, and the creation of a localised working class in desperate need of a meritocratic order. The Institute used interviews and long quotations from working-class subjects in order to privilege not the working-class voice but the Durkheimian social fact. Only the sociologist could explicate the functioning system of care from the anecdotal interviews he conducted. When Labour politicians used experience to claim emotional empathy and thus authority over the discourses of the benevolent welfare state, Conservative politicians responded through invocation of sociological accounts. The fact that subsequent Labour election campaigns were formulated upon 'expertise' indicates that, in this contest of epistemologies, the

⁴ Young and Willmott, *The Symmetrical Family*, pp. 1, 9-11, 30-33.

⁵ It did, however, continue to have a significant sway in the parallel discipline of cultural studies and even in history.

Tory authority through the sociologist rather than the subject had won. In the accounts of sociologists of the 1960s, it was the subjection of working-class culture to this very discourse of knowledge that served to render the working-class 'lifestyle' and 'culture' generally deficient.

Within this reformulation of class, there arose a discourse of knowledge that fundamentally asserted the sociologist's, and by extension the Conservative minister's, superior knowledge of the working class: of his right to evaluate who and what the working classes were, and what, exactly, should be done about them. These were the quiet tensions of an inherently politicised knowledge, tensions incomprehensible in a monolithic account of 'expertise'. The ICS, politicians', and sociologists all sought to commentate on, and speak for, a working class that seemed, to these middle-class commentators at least, ever more elusive. And, as the post-war period drew to a close and the changes engendered by the cultural phenomena of 'the sixties' began to sweep across 1970s Britain, this was a politicised language of class and knowledge, of speaking for rather than speaking of, that became gradually untenable.

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