Empowerment Unmasked

Welfare Professionals and the Reluctant Exercise of State Power

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Abstract

This study employed the methods of critical ethnography to examine the phenomenon of 'empowerment' as it occurred in a south London community project. The initiative aimed to form a partnership between welfare professionals and local people, in order to identify the health needs of the population, as a basis for collective action to address the social, economic and environmental influences on health. However, this strategy proved unsuccessful and the focus of the project shifted towards the psychological empowerment of individual participants, and the provision of social support and health advice at a Drop-in Centre.

By combining a detailed ethnography of the community project with a broader historical and structural critique of empowerment, the study aimed to appraise the emancipatory potential of the phenomenon. Key themes of the research were: the extent to which such initiatives could produce emancipatory knowledge, whether the exercise of professional power could be dismantled, and the effect that empowerment would have on the consciousness and practical activity of participants.

It was found that despite their subjective commitment to an emancipatory agenda, the welfare professionals' location within the state effectively neutralised the emancipatory potential of empowerment. Rather than producing a highly mediated social critique capable of informing emancipatory activity, the initiative produced a positivist needs assessment aimed at influencing local statutory agencies. Instead of generating critical consciousness amongst its lay participants, the project further subordinated them to professional surveillance and regulation, and created a culture of low expectations and authoritarianism. It was concluded that the professionals' self-identity made them the unwitting bearers of state-power, and that despite their subjective commitment to empowering people they were unable to participate in genuinely emancipatory activity.

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Introduction

This study originated in my experiences as a public-health researcher with a south London health authority. My work brought me into daily contact with a range of welfare professionals, including: public health doctors, health promotion officers, social workers, and advocates for ethnic minorities. Like all wage-labourers, welfare professionals are concerned with earning a living and preferably advancing their careers. However, subjectively at least, it seemed that many of the people I met also had more idealistic reasons for working in the welfare sector; put simply, they wanted to do 'good-works'.

Altruism is not uncommon amongst members of the caring professions, but here 'good-works' appeared to have a political meaning, rather than simply referring to the provision of welfare services. As well as trying to meet their clients' immediate needs, there was also a common commitment to the pursuit of an emancipatory agenda; to enabling people to gain greater control over the social and economic factors that influenced their lives, and transforming them into more effective agents of social change. It is important to note that this emancipatory agenda was not viewed as something that lay outside of their professional role, for instance, as membership of a political party would, but rather as an integral part of their job. The assumption appeared to be that welfare professionals could use the intellectual and material resources, available to them as employees of the state, to facilitate the emancipation of local people. As such, the phenomenon lies outside of the traditional modes of political struggle, such as the labour and trade union movement, or even the new social movements. The category I have used to describe this synthesis of professional and political practice is empowerment.

With hindsight the claims of empowerment seem naïve, but then in the current conjuncture any progressive political impulse appears utopian. Also, it would be wrong to assume that welfare professionals who are committed to such an agenda see it as a complete emancipatory strategy, rather they appear to see it as 'doing their bit' or 'moving things in the right direction' whilst waiting for more fundamental political change to occur. The aims of my study were, to record what happened when the

welfare professionals I worked with attempted to put empowerment into practice, and to appraise the emancipatory potential of such activities.

Fortunately, the political aspirations of the welfare professionals I worked with took on a concrete organisational form in the Waterfront Health Action Project (WHAP). WHAP began as a community development project, in which welfare professionals attempted to forge a partnership with local people, to help them to identify their health needs and take collective action to address the social, economic and environmental influences on their health. As an employee of the health authority I was directly involved in WHAP from its establishment in July 1991 until the spring of 1995. As a founder member I shared the welfare professionals' aspirations for WHAP, and my 'insider' role enabled me to engage in a participant observation of the initiative, and conduct a series of in-depth interviews with professional and volunteer members of the project. Whilst such close proximity allowed for detailed observation and a high degree of empathy, it was also a potential source of bias and distortion in the research. The contradictory nature of my involvement in WHAP is explored in the discussion of methodology in appendix I.

As well as conducting an ethnographic study of WHAP I also wanted to engage the academic literature on empowerment from the perspective of critical social theory, in order to place the phenomenon in an historical and structural context. Critical ethnography offers a methodology that combines the two lines of inquiry, but it is an uneasy synthesis, and the difficulties and opportunities offered by the approach are also discussed in the appendix on methodology.

Chapter one sets the scene for the ethnographic study by providing a historical and structural analysis of five modes of empowerment: 'consumerism', 'citizenship', 'self-help', 'community participation', and 'community development'. The analysis aims to reveal the conditions of existence for each mode of empowerment, and assess their emancipatory potential. All of the modes of empowerment considered are constrained by prevailing social and economic relations, but their capacity to transform such relations, that is, their emancipatory potential, depends upon the extent to which these relations are integrated within their internal logic. Thus, four of the modes were found to have a self-limiting internal logic: consumerism because it is based upon the market

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relation, citizenship and community participation because they rely upon the state-form, and self-help because it adopts a subjectivist approach to knowledge production. Only community development appears to avoid the incorporation of alienation into its internal logic. Whilst community development faces the same structural constraints as the other modes of empowerment, its open ended internal logic means that the potential for emancipatory practice is not automatically foreclosed. It is concluded that unlike the other modes of empowerment the emancipatory potential of community development initiatives cannot be predicted by theoretical deduction, but depends upon empirical enquiry into a specific example - hence the rationale for studying the Waterfront Health Action Project.

The second chapter presents a chronological description of the Waterfront Health Action Project derived largely from documentary evidence. Interpretation and theoretical analysis are kept to a minimum in this chapter, but an important transition is noted; namely WHAP's transformation from a traditional community development project into an empowerment initiative. A number of key themes are identified, that were used to give a focus to the in-depth interviews, these include: the production of knowledge, the relationship to the state and professional power, and the effect that WHAP had on the consciousness of its volunteer members. This chapter also provides a 'thick' description of WHAP to facilitate generalisation of the study's findings to similar initiatives, and to provide a basis for potential alternative readings of the ethnographic data.

Chapter three looks at the way in which WHAP's initial orientation was based upon the production and articulation of what was believed to be emancipatory knowledge. The basis of the approach is found to be a communicative model of knowledge and action, that relies on the assumption that statutory agencies will act in the community's interests, if they are presented with authentic information about local people's needs. Consequently, WHAP focused on giving local people a voice with which to articulate its demands to the local state. In effect this transposes the structural alienation between the state and the community to the discursive level, thereby disguising its political character. However, the problem of alienation re-emerged as a series of problems, including: the difficulty of achieving cultural synthesis between the professionals and representatives from the community,

epistemological difficulties, and problems with the mediation of research findings. It is concluded that WHAP failed to produce emancipatory knowledge because it overlooked the problem of the welfare professionals' structural location within the state, and because a positivist methodology was employed rather than critical social research.

The fourth chapter considers WHAP's attempts to overcome the exercise of professional power. Although the WHAP professionals subjectively subscribed to an emancipatory agenda their location within the state obliged them to act as agents of social control. The professionals attempted to overcome this contradiction by trying to establish a more informal and trusting relationship with the WHAP volunteers. However, despite their conscious efforts the professionals continued to exercise surveillance and regulation over the volunteers. The problem lay in the intellectual and material resources that the professionals brought to the project. Whilst these resources were seen as essential to the project, their utilisation activated welfarist frames of reference that tended to subordinate project members to the exercise of professional power. In the discussion section, different theories of professional power are examined, and the most adequate is found to be that which explains professional power as a function of state-power. The question of why welfare professionals who are subjectively committed to an emancipatory agenda are incapable of effectively challenging their role in the exercise of state-power is answered by looking at the managerial structure of control, and more importantly, by examining the process by which professionals are interpellated into a self-identity that is structured by welfarist frames of reference.

The apparent failure to produce a body of emancipatory knowledge, or, to effectively challenge the exercise of professional power, contributed to WHAP's transformation from a community development project into an empowerment initiative, and the final chapter addresses the consequences of this transformation in terms of the project's emancipatory potential. Essentially, this change of focus entailed moving away from the attempt to produce emancipatory knowledge as a basis for social action, towards the more introspective goals of raising the self-esteem and inter-personal competence of the volunteers, and providing social support and health advice to the local community at a Drop-in centre. Both goals were pursued by encouraging the

volunteers to adopt a quasi-professional self-identity, in which they saw themselves as the providers of welfare services to a needy community. Although this gave a boost to the volunteers' self-esteem, it was based on a myth - rather than improving their life chances or emancipating them, the adoption of a quasi-professional identity served to subordinate the volunteers and their 'clients' more thoroughly to professional surveillance and regulation. The discussion section examined the politics of empowerment, and found that assumptions such as a pluralist model of oppression and a subjectivist conception of knowledge, served to legitimate the intervention of welfare professionals to directly mediate inter-personal relationships between oppressed groups. Rather than creating critical consciousness amongst members of the community, empowerment initiatives led 'clients' to internalise a culture of victimhood, personal risk, self-regulation, and low expectations of the capacity for autonomous collective action.

It was concluded that the claimed emancipatory potential of empowerment is largely a myth. It provides a 'mask' for welfare professionals, enabling them to persuade themselves and their clients that they are engaged in emancipatory activity, when in reality their actions only serve to further subordinate people to the new authoritarianism. A detailed summary of the conclusions drawn from the study is presented at the end of the final chapter.

It only remains for me to acknowledge the debt I owe to the people who 'empowered' me to conduct the study and complete my thesis. I was fortunate in receiving the guidance and support of two supervisors; John Butler, who helped me to focus my thoughts on a 'doable' project, and Frank Füredi, who set a standard for hard work and intellectual rigour that I could only aspire to. That I was able to pursue a course of graduate study is in no small part due to the support of my former boss, Dr Liz Dean, who tenaciously clung to the value of staff development and academic inquiry in a National Health Service that was losing faith in both - I am grateful. I would also like to thank Catherine Adams for her forbearance and for shouldering more than her fair share of domestic drudgery, particularly over the last year - I promise to make amends.

Finally, I suspect that should any of the welfare professionals or volunteers who participated in WHAP ever read my thesis they will view its critical conclusions as a

betrayal of their trust and friendship. In mitigation I can only point out that my intention was not to portray them as gullible or disingenuous, but to show what happens to reasonable people in unreasonable circumstances. If we are to develop a new form of emancipatory politics the first requirement is that we are clear-sighted about the failings of previous approaches, and I hope that this study will make a small contribution to that objective.

1. Five Modes of Empowerment

> *There will be no art, no literature, no science. When we are omnipotent we shall have no more need of science. There will be no curiosity, no enjoyment of the process of life. All competing pleasures will be destroyed. But always - do not forget this Winston - always there will be the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and constantly growing subtler. Always, at every moment, there will be the thrill of victory, the sensation of trampling on an enemy who is helpless. If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face - for ever.*
>
> *George Orwell*

Orwell's portrayal of the down trodden individual, oppressed, abused, and worst of all in receipt of poor quality goods and services, is one of the more potent political icons of post-war British culture. Whether 'Big Brother' is defined as the institutions of the state, large corporations, Trade Unions, the professions, or simply one's neighbours, the implication remains the same: the individual must be rescued from the oppressive behaviour of the powerful, and enabled to exercise greater control over the forces that affect his/her life.

The belief that the individual can and should be able to obtain freedom from oppression and the capacity to control the forces affecting his/her life, rather than simply accepting 'the will of God' or a subordinate position in the social hierarchy, has a long lineage, but has taken a particular form under modernity. Eric Hobsbawm (1962) has traced this impulse to the period between 1789 and 1848, marked by political revolution in France and industrial revolution in Britain. This 'dual revolution' opened up the possibility of exercising conscious control over nature (through industrialisation) and social relations (through political struggle), in order to maximise the satisfaction of human needs and ensure personal freedom. However, as well as opening the door to popular freedom and happiness the dual revolution also generated an acute awareness of the extent to which industrialisation and the emerging

social and political order were failing to meet those high aspirations. Whilst industrialisation was bringing dramatic increases in productivity it was accompanied by the emergence of an impoverished urban proletariat who rather than exercising greater control over their productive activity, were increasingly dominated by the industrial process. Similarly, whilst the overthrow of the *ancien regime* often brought freedom from absolute monarchy and the feudal system, for many it was replaced by the wage-labourer's subordination to the owner of capital, without the reciprocal claims that the peasant could make on the feudal lord.

Thus the modern society ushered in by the dual revolution immediately gave rise to ambivalence. On one hand it challenged the certainties of the past, placing political emancipation and freedom from want firmly on the agenda, but on the other hand it also revealed the extent to which bourgeois democracy and the capitalist mode of production were constraining the full realisation of these goals. This new and ambivalent form of social consciousness manifested itself in the arts with the rise of the rather vague and inconsistent creed of Romanticism. As Hobsbawm has noted, Romanticism represented both left and right wing extremes of the response to modernity, containing the socialist impulse towards a more radical political and economic transformation, and the reactionary desire to return to a 'golden' pre-capitalist age. What the Romantics shared was a common sense of estrangement or 'alienation' from the modern world, and it is this concept that also lies behind Orwell's fear of 'Big Brother', and which is essential to our analysis of empowerment.

Unfortunately, for the Romantics alienation was more of an ethereal sensibility than a rigorous theoretical concept. And whilst we need to retain the sense of alienation as an amorphous theoretically under developed frame of mind, it is equally important that we trace its origins as a sociological concept. The genealogy of alienation can be traced back to Fichte (if not further), but it was Hegel who introduced the concept to the world (Jordan, 1971). For Hegel the knowable world was nothing more than externalised human consciousness, and alienation resided in the failure of Spirit (or self-consciousness) to recognise the world as its own creation. Instead the products of human consciousness confronted the individual as alien entities over which s/he had no control. The historical process entailed humanity recognising the world as its own creation and thereby overcoming alienation.

The idealist conception of alienation advanced by Hegel continues to influence contemporary sociology, but it contains a flaw; if alienation simply comprises the individual 'forgetting' that the world is his/her own creation, then a simple reminder should suffice to overcome it. It was Marx who recognised that alienation also resided in material circumstances, objects, institutions, and social relations, that had to be physically changed if alienation was to be overcome. Rather than conceptualising history as a one sided unfolding of Spirit, Marx identified the dialectical relationship between the human organism and the material and social world. Key to this dialectical process is production, by which Marx meant not just the manufacture of goods and services, but the much broader process of practical activity in which human consciousness both transforms and is transformed by the objective world. The process of production necessarily entails the individual entering into relationships with other humans. Crucially these 'social relations' are not created from scratch by each generation, they have a history as well as a material existence, which the individual is born into and which shapes his/her consciousness. It is the ahistorical *appearance* of social relations, (or their phenomenal forms) that leads the individual to perceive them as both alien and immutable. Thus, overcoming alienation entails the dual process of recognising that phenomenal forms are socially constructed (and therefore amenable to change) and the practical activity of transforming those phenomena or social relations.

It is this struggle to overcome alienation both in consciousness and in practical activity that lies at the heart of Marx's emancipatory project, and his early writings strive to reveal the alienation inherent in religion, the family, the state, law, morality, science and art. David McLellan has noted that:

> *In all fields the common idea was that man had forfeited to someone or something what was essential to his nature - principally to be in control of his own activities, to be the initiator of the historical process.* (McLellan, 1980:p.118).

It is important to note that Marx's point of departure was the social subject struggling to gain consciousness of the historically constructed limitations on personal freedom

and human potential in order to transform those social relations. That Marx went on to focus on alienation in the relationship between labour and capital should not obscure the relevance of his approach to other strands of emancipatory activity, for example, those organised around race or gender. That all forms of alienation can be studied from a Marxist perspective, does not mean that Marxism contains a universal theory of emancipation. For Marx, alienation and the struggle to overcome it was always particular and historically specific, and always required empirical study. Most obviously because the phenomenal forms of the social relations in which alienation inheres are constantly changing over time and between places. The capacity to challenge alienation also varies, giving rise to different historical agents with equally varying degrees of critical consciousness. Whether one chooses to challenge racism, sexism, social class, a combination of the three, or an entirely different form of alienation, remains a subjective matter dependent upon one's personal and historical circumstances. However, the fact that Marx chose to focus on production relations is instructive, not least because his analysis reveals the extent to which the production of commodities distorts and constrains the development of other social institutions (see chapter 4 for an account of the relationship between capitalism and state formation), and forms of consciousness. It is not that the project of overcoming alienation and oppression is exhausted by a challenge to capitalism and the state, nor that worthwhile political gains cannot be achieved under capitalism, but rather that the persistence of capitalism must ultimately constrain the scope of any emancipatory initiative.

The foundational character of the capitalist mode of production and the capitalist state form means that they provide a litmus test of the emancipatory potential of any political initiative. It is not that in order to be emancipatory all political initiatives must contain an overt challenge to capitalism and the state, but rather that if the internal logic of a political initiative is dependent upon either the market mechanism or the state-form then its emancipatory potential must be limited. Thus, when evaluating the emancipatory potential of a political initiative it is reasonable to ask: 'Does it require the capitalist market in order to function?', or, 'Does it depend upon the capitalist state to achieve its objectives?'. The purpose of this chapter is to ask those questions of five modes of empowerment, by examining the ways in which they have conceptualised alienation, and the historical development of their internal logic. First, it is necessary to account for our use of the term 'empowerment', and why its

genealogy can be traced in five modes of political practice, none of which bear its name.

Big Brother (or alienation) may be everywhere, but his opponents are equally widespread, and a diverse bunch they are. Whilst the rhetoric of empowerment might traditionally be associated with socialists striving to emancipate the working class, or with the efforts of 'new social movements' to liberate other oppressed or minority groups, today there is no limit to the range of individuals and groups claiming the right to empower us. Social workers, school teachers, health promoters, community workers, architects, planners, even police officers, can all be heard mouthing the mantra of empowerment. Even the Government is getting in on the act; the privatisation of public utilities, the introduction of an internal market to the National Health Service, the establishment of grant maintained schools, and the 'rights' conferred under the Citizen's Charter, have all been legitimated by the claim that they would empower the consumer or recipient of services.

In the face of such a widespread and multi-faceted campaign for empowerment, Big Brother, (whomever he may be), must be concerned that the days of oppression are drawing to a close. But need he worry? Empowerment may be a common phenomenon, but it is also poorly defined, and the label is often applied to activities without regard to their emancipatory potential. The various advocates of empowerment may all pay lip-service to the sovereignty of the individual subject and the pursuit of personal freedom and choice, but what do such abstractions mean in practical terms?

As we shall see, 'empowerment' is an amorphous category, and any attempt to derive a generally applicable definition is always likely to be refuted by specific examples. One solution is to provide an empirical description of an empowerment initiative, that can be generalised to other projects that share its characteristics. This is the approach taken in chapter five, where a description of empowerment is derived from the WHAP case study and generalised to other initiatives that are characterised by the same social relations. The problem with this approach is that it is by definition ahistorical, and

therefore conceals insights gained from studying the development of the phenomenon over time.

A further complication arises from the poor fit between the observable characteristics of empowerment as a phenomenon and application of the label. This is a two dimensional problem. First, the category of empowerment was not used to label the phenomenon prior to the 1960s, and did not enter common usage until the 1970s, giving the appearance that empowerment has no history prior to this. Secondly, the characteristics of empowerment can be found in phenomena that are not labelled as such and which have a different structural character, for example, consumerism aims to empower the consumer, but the phenomenon is clearly different to that described in chapter five. Despite such differences, study of these other phenomena does shed light on the type of empowerment we are concerned with.

In effect there are different modes of empowerment, which do not bear the label, and which have evolved over time. This chapter traces the genealogy of five modes of empowerment, identifying their conditions of existence, their internal logic, and attempting to theoretically assess their emancipatory potential. They are: 'consumerism', 'citizenship', 'self-help', 'community participation' and 'community development'. This may not be an exhaustive list of the categories in which characteristics of empowerment can be found, but their selection can be justified on the grounds that they appear most frequently in the literature, and that the insights they reveal are representative of the field as a whole. The categories are presented in ascending order of their relevance to the mode of empowerment discussed in chapter five, and the space assigned to them varies according to the same principle.

Consumerism

Perhaps the most visible manifestation of consumerism in Britain is the *'Which?'* magazine, published monthly by the Consumers Association. The Association was established, (by the sociologist Michael Young), as a non-profit making company, independent of government or industry. The need for independent consumer advice had been argued by groups across the political spectrum, some of which are quoted in

the first edition of the magazine in 1957. For instance, the Labour Party had embraced the consumerist cause in 1949:

> *Most housewives are good buyers. But it is often impossible for them to know the true value of many articles until they have tried them, and it may then be too late. An independent and publicly financed Consumer Advice Centre will therefore be set up. This will conduct expert tests and examinations of the various consumer goods on the market.* (Labour Party, 1949, p.2)

As the quotation suggests, the provision of reliable information based upon objective research and evaluation of commodities was seen as the key to empowering the consumer. However, it was also noted that by improving the efficiency of the market mechanism consumerism would also benefit the producer of goods. Thus, the President of the Board of Trade had argued that more discerning consumers in Britain might enable British firms to compete more effectively in foreign markets:

> *The more discriminating and capricious the public is, the better for us, because unless we can meet the demands of that kind of public at home, we shall never hold on to export markets abroad.* (President of the Board of Trade, 1956, p.2)

When the first edition of *Which?* appeared with its reviews of electric kettles, sunglasses, Aspirin, cake mixes, and scouring powders, it aimed to empower the 'housewife' by giving detailed information on the relative quality and performance of different brands of goods, whilst simultaneously feeding back to manufacturers the shortcomings of their produce. Initially then, the key mechanism of consumerism, at least in its *Which?* manifestation, was purchasing power, that is, the ability of consumers to express their needs and preferences by making informed choices about what to buy. The condition of existence for this form of consumerism is the production of commodities to be exchanged on the free market. However, this does not mean that the scope of consumerism is limited to the pursuit of good value for money.

In fact, consumerism has been adapted as a means of pursuing broader political objectives. Extra-parliamentary pressure groups have used the 'consumer boycott', and Government has invoked the rights of the consumer as a rationale for introducing privatisation or market style reforms into the public sector. The consumer boycott has been invoked by a number of groups, for example, prior to the political changes in South Africa the Anti-Apartheid movement urged a boycott of that country's produce, and of Barclays' Bank, because of its substantial investment in the South African economy. Environmental groups have also encouraged consumers to buy 'environmentally friendly' produce; a stimulus to which many producers have responded, (at least in terms of advertising and marketing). The environmental pressure group 'Greenpeace' has also encouraged consumer boycotts as a means of applying pressure to national governments and multi-national corporations, for example, consumers have been urged to boycott mahogany products in order to preserve the tropical rain forest. Similarly, in 1995 the Shell oil company was persuaded to abandon its plans to dispose of the Brent Spar oil installation at the bottom of the North Atlantic off the west coast of Scotland and Ireland. Greenpeace published (what proved to be erroneous) figures about the quantity of pollutants contained in the oil platform. This provoked a public outcry and a consumer boycott of Shell petrol, which was particularly effective in west Germany. As well as Shell's climb down, the campaign also led to a European ban on the disposal of oil platforms at sea. However, despite such 'successes' the consumer boycott remains a rather blunt instrument for achieving political or economic change, relying on the capacity to influence government and corporate policy by inflicting economic sanctions, rather than on a direct challenge to the basis of political and economic power.

The British Government's championing of consumer sovereignty throughout the 1980s is even more suspect as a means of empowerment or emancipation. The term has been used to legitimate the introduction of market style reforms into a wide range of institutions that were previously primarily regulated by bureaucratic models of social and economic planning, for example, in the National Health Service, and the rail network. However, it is important to observe two caveats when considering this apparent transformation. First, it would be wrong to describe the former arrangements as independent of the market, or as free from alienation. For example, whilst nationalisation may overcome some of the irrationality associated with a free market,

it does not enable the recipients of goods and services to exercise direct control over their production and distribution. Hence, the electoral support for Conservative policies amongst the dissatisfied customers of often unresponsive state monopolies. Secondly, the extent of the transformation should not be over estimated. Whilst the reforms of the 1980s extended the use of market mechanisms, robust government regulation meant that this was always a 'managed market', particularly for example, in the National Health Service. Despite these qualifications the policy of extending consumer sovereignty did serve to reinforce a pro-capitalist ideology, in which social planning was presented as inevitably leading to bureaucratic domination and inefficiency, and the free-market was claimed as a guarantor of personal freedom and choice.

Belief in the emancipatory power of the free market was not an invention of the consumer movement; it has been a fundamental element of liberalism from Adam Smith onwards. Hayek, for instance, in *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) praised the regulation of production and distribution by what Smith called the 'hidden hand of the market', in preference to the tyranny and oppression that he believed were the inevitable consequences of a planned economy.

This theme has been taken up by Milton Friedman (Friedman and Friedman, 1980), who suggests that the market facilitates the voluntary exchange of goods and services. This voluntary exchange is governed by the price mechanism, which according to Friedman: provides information on what goods are available and what they can be exchanged for, provides incentives by indicating where demand exceeds supply, and, distributes income (what people receive for what they sell).

For simple commodities such as fruit or vegetables price may also indicate the quality of the goods on offer; poor quality vegetables are easily recognised by the purchaser and are, therefore, likely to have a lower price than fresh vegetables. This mechanism begins to break down as commodities become more complex, How, for instance, is a consumer to know whether one washing machine is more efficient than another? This is where the *Which?* style of consumerism comes in; by providing such information it aims to increase the efficiency of the market mechanism.

But no matter how efficient the market mechanism can be made there are limitations on the extent to which it can empower consumers to influence the production and distribution of goods and services, for example, the environmental impact of production, the claims made by advertising, and rights of redress if goods prove faulty or dangerous, cannot be fully addressed by the traditional form of consumerism. Thus, during the 1960's the consumer movement came to recognise that there was a growing 'disequilibrium' between business and consumer that could not be resolved simply by providing better quality product information. The perceived solution to this problem was to lobby for greater regulation of production and distribution by central government.

Gardiner-Jones & Gardiner (1976) writing about the American consumer movement, describe consumerism in terms of a triangular series of relations between consumers, business and government. Gardiner-Jones uses the analogy of a farmer who needs to club the donkey to get his attention. Government is in effect the club used to gain the attention of business which will respond by extending consumer influence over the production and marketing process. The belief that government regulation should play a role in protecting the consumer has also influenced the British consumer movement, for example *Which?* now regularly carries articles lobbying government for, amongst other things, better crash testing of motor cars (*Which?*, January 1993) and more accurate food labelling (*Which?*, May 1993).

Superficially, calls for government to regulate the relationship between business and consumer may appear to be a departure from liberal belief in the free market. Hayek, for instance, implies that the emancipatory nature of the free market lies in the fact that it does not need to be consciously regulated by a plan, thereby avoiding the need for coercion of individuals by state or bureaucracy. However, Hayek is not opposed to government intervention per se; only to that which would interfere with the free working of the market, for example, if government were to intervene to prop up an ailing business. But Hayek is a keen supporter of the rule of law, thus legislation which applies to all producers, without favouring one group over another, is acceptable.

.... a free system does not exclude on principle all those general regulations of economic activity which can be laid down in the form of general rules specifying conditions which everybody who engages in a certain activity must satisfy. They include, in particular, all the regulations governing the techniques of production. (Hayek, 1960, p. 224)

It would, therefore, be incorrect to view the transition from producing consumer research and information, to lobbying for government regulation in favour of the consumer, as in any sense a radicalisation of the consumer movement, or a move away from the ideology of the free market. The forms of government regulation urged by the consumer movement in fact serve to strengthen market relations by reinforcing the claimed legitimacy of commodity production. The appearance of 'fair' exchange, the production of high quality goods and services, environmental protection, and legal redress for faulty goods, can all be contrasted with the absence of such mechanisms in the former Soviet Union, in order to support the claim that the free market is superior to social & economic planning.

The consumer movement can lobby government to encourage it to tighten the legal framework in which the market operates, and thereby obtain marginal benefits for the consumer. But ultimately this can only strengthen the efficiency and legitimacy of the market mechanism. According to its own internal logic consumerism cannot challenge the basic principle of the market; that the production and distribution of goods and services are regulated by the law of value rather than by conscious social and economic planning. It is this acceptance of market relations that limits consumerism's emancipatory potential, because no matter how effective consumerism becomes, it can never empower people to satisfy their needs by exercising direct control over the production and distribution of goods and services.The internal logic of the category is based upon the assumption that the production and distribution of goods and services is best governed by the market mechanism, rather than by democratic social planning. Thus, although consumerism may enable people to express their preferences by exercising their right of exit, (i.e. by refusing to purchase particular products), the potential for obtaining a more fundamental form of economic emancipation or empowerment is effectively capped

Citizenship

As David Held (1991, p.19) has pointed out, for most of the last two decades, discussion of 'citizenship' has more often than not arisen in relation to the immigration question. More recently both left and right have scrambled to rehabilitate the term.

The Conservatives, first with Douglas Hurd's 'active citizen', and then with John Major's 'Citizens Charter', have invoked the term in an attempt to temper the individualistic ethos of Thatcherism. Thus, for the Government citizenship not only confers entitlement to good quality public services, but also the obligation to be a good neighbour and a public spirited member of the community:

> *The Citizen's Charter is about giving more power to the citizen. But citizenship is about our responsibilities - as parents, for example, or as neighbours - as well as our entitlements. The Citizen's Charter is not a recipe for more state action, it is a testament of our belief in people's right to be informed and choose for themselves.* (Citizen's Charter, 1991, p.2)

For all the resonance of one nation Toryism to be found in the Conservative rediscovery of citizenship, there is little practical evidence of a radical departure from the policies of the 1980's. The entitlement side of citizenship has blended with the consumerist agenda to become entitlement to good quality services, (for example trains that run on time, shorter NHS waiting lists), to be brought about by further privatisation, performance related pay, and new complaints procedures. Whilst, on the other hand, the duties and obligations of citizenship have amounted to little more than the substitution of unpaid labour for services that were previously provided by the state, for example in caring for the elderly.

Whereas the Right attempted to appropriate citizenship as a means of reasserting social responsibility and countering the claim that the individualistic ethos of the '80s had weakened the social fabric, the Left have used it to exorcise an altogether different ghost - that of the Stalinist regimes of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European

satellites. Again, the image of the dissident demanding his rights from an undemocratic and authoritarian state is at work here. Citizenship is for certain sections of the British Left a convenient means of theorising the activities of East European dissidents, in a fashion which can be brought to bear against western governments. Thus citizenship was a central concept in the British Communist Party's attempt to re-define its political project in the pages of its now defunct journal *Marxism Today*.

As David Selbourne (1991) has indicated, this sudden conversion to Citizenship is based upon the claim that western parliamentary democracy amounts to a form of dictatorship which is essentially the same, (though not as severe), as that exercised in the former 'Communist' bloc. For Selbourne, this claim is little more than a 'lie' stemming from political desperation:

> *...at a time of left frailty, when its projects lie around its feet in political ruins, and its intellectual pretensions seem to those not on the left to be more suspect than ever, the burden of truth rests particularly heavily upon the lefts shoulders as it tries - in any way it can - to resurrect its ideological fortunes.*
> (Selbourne, 1991, p.91)

Selbourne's analysis has two valuable elements: first, that demands and forms of activity which have grown up in opposition to Stalinist regimes cannot simply be transposed to the struggle against the capitalist state; clearly the two social formations are quite different. Secondly, that the attempt to do so is an act of political and theoretical desperation that cannot be achieved within a recognisably Marxian framework.

Unfortunately Selbourne is not content to leave his argument there, and in his attempt to atone for his own youthful dalliance with Marxism, by burying the Marxist project entirely, he becomes increasingly ahistorical and contradictory. For example, 'Marxist' becomes a catch all category that can be applied consistently to anyone who lays claim to it, irrespective of their political position or historical location. This enables Selbourne to perform an intellectual sleight of hand. Having exposed the opportunism of those who would claim Citizenship for a renewed Marxist project, he

generalises this observation to all the diverse strands of Marxist theory and practice, implying that the entire Marxist project can be despatched by reference to the revisionism of a handful of British 'Communists'.

This is a contradictory position for Selbourne to hold, having indicated earlier that he sees the appropriation of Citizenship as a departure from Marxism, rather than a revision of it. However, his final argument is yet more contradictory. Having correctly severed the link between Citizenship and Marxism, and noting the inappropriateness of importing Eastern European campaigns for Citizens rights into a bourgeois democratic context, Selbourne goes on to argue, not that these so called Marxists should abandon the politics of Citizenship, but that Citizenship *really would* possess emancipatory potential in a Western democratic context, if only it could be purged of Marxist or even socialist influences.

Selbourne's analysis tells us much about the degeneration of the New Left of the 1970's and 80's, which by his own admission he is a lapsed member of. Ironically though, in attempting to distance himself from his former colleagues, he only succeeds in revealing their shared trajectory towards bourgeois liberalism, and the role that Citizenship plays in that progress.

Arguably, Selbourne's ideal of a Citizenship stripped of any socialist pretensions, has already been recognised in the Charter 88 movement, founded 300 years after the 'glorious revolution' of 1688. Again the spectre of Stalinism is at work, with Britain's Chartists drawing their inspiration from the dissident civic movements of Eastern Europe, particularly Vaclav Havel's Charter 77 movement in Czhekoslovakia. However, unlike the British Communist Party, the Chartists make no attempt to harness Citizenship to a broader socialist agenda. As with their Eastern European counterparts the Chartists seek to change the relationship between the state and the individual by constitutional reform. These reforms include: civil liberties enshrined in a Bill of Rights, freedom of information, electoral reform, democratic government, and a written Constitution. (Charter 88, 1991)

The absence of any economic dimension to the Charter has made it particularly attractive to the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats, who have added many of its

demands to their respective manifestos. However, unlike its eastern European equivalent, Charter 88 has failed to obtain mass support, and remains an instrument by which its liberal intellectual membership can lobby the establishment Parties.

As we have noted above, this failure to attach citizenship to a popular movement is also true of Conservative and New Left attempts to appropriate the category. However, the same cannot be said of the New Social Movements many of which have successfully built support for elements of the Citizenship agenda within their own constituencies. For example, the women's movement, anti-racism, gay rights and more recently the disability movement, have successfully mobilised grass roots support in their campaigns for equality before the law, equal opportunities, and anti-discrimination legislation.

Citizenship in the 1990's is then, a contested category to which an apparently disparate range of groups lay claim. But what are the differences between these alternative claims, and do they share a common denominator? Again these questions can only be answered by historical and theoretical analysis. The most influential attempt to provide a sociological account of Citizenship is found in the work of T H Marshall, particularly his *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950).

Marshall argues that Citizenship is fundamentally concerned with the rights and responsibilities associated with membership of a common society. The nature of these rights and responsibilities varies between societies and over time, however, in the western democracies the notion of equality has been a key element. Marshall identifies three aspects of Citizenship: civil rights, in which the freedom of the individual is protected by the rule of law, political rights in which the development of parliamentary institutions facilitates participation in the exercise of political power, and social citizenship which includes:

> *...the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in society.* (Marshall, 1950, p.11)

According to Marshall, the three elements of Citizenship were linked during the feudal period but developed separately thereafter. Broadly, civil rights evolved during the eighteenth century as the bourgeoisie established the freedoms associated with capitalist production. Political rights emerged during the nineteenth-century in response to working class pressure, but the working class were unable to wield the political power delivered by the nineteenth-century Reform Acts, and so developed the trade union movement to press for social rights that emerged in the form of the welfare state during the twentieth century.

The development of civil rights facilitated the growth of capitalism by challenging the ascribed status of the aristocracy under feudalism, and leaving all citizens 'free' to enter into market relations. However, the development of political and particularly social rights increasingly brought the egalitarian principle of citizenship into conflict with the essentially unequal nature of social class on which capitalism is based. Marshall is not suggesting that this conflict can or even should be resolved. Social citizenship cannot totally remove class inequality, however, it can reduce the scope of its operation, for instance by removing ability to pay as a criterion for access to education or healthcare.

The value of Marshall's analysis, is that it reveals citizenship as an historically developing category, (in fact three categories), associated with the interests of different social groups and the development of specific institutions. Moreover he demonstrates that the egalitarian principle of citizenship must eventually be constrained by, or at least come into conflict with, class inequality. The great failing of Marshall's approach is that it is based upon an uncritical conceptualisation of the state as simply the repository of rights, independent of class relations. As we shall see, this is not the case, and the institutionalisation of rights in the state-form involves both a gain and a loss for the working class. However, for this analysis we must turn to Marx.

For Marx genuine power resided in control of the means of production. Under capitalism the mass of the population is alienated from such control, and is, therefore incapable of exercising genuine power. The rights of citizenship enshrined in the institutions of the state are a manifestation of this alienation, giving an appearance of equality and freedom to a system that is essentially based on inequality and the powerlessness of the masses.

The state does away with difference in birth, class, education, and profession in its own manner when it declares birth, class, education, and profession to be unpolitical differences, when it summons every member of the people to an equal participation in popular sovereignty without taking the differences into consideration, when it treats all elements of the people's real life from the point of view of the state. Nevertheless the state still allows private property, education and profession to have an effect in their own manner, that is as private property, as education, as profession, and make their particular natures felt. Far from abolishing these factual differences, its existence rests on them as a presupposition, it only feels itself to be a political state and asserts its universality by opposition to these elements. (Marx, 1843, p.45)

And again,

When the political state has achieved its true completion man leads a double life, a heavenly one and an earthly one, not only in thought and consciousness but in reality, in life. He has a life both in the political community, where he is valued as a communal being, and in civil society, where he is active as a private individual, treats other men as means, degrades himself to a means, and becomes the plaything of alien powers. (Marx, 1843, p.46)

In this sense, the pursuit of rights through the state apparatus is inevitably contradictory; on one hand it may confer greater access to resources, but on the other hand it must also reinforce the legitimacy of the state and alienation from the means of genuine social power. This applies not just to civil and political citizenship, to use Marshall's terminology, but also to the social element. For example, obtaining the right to free education and healthcare might well, as Marshall suggests, reduce the realm of inequality by giving the masses greater access to vital resources, but it also transforms the struggle for genuine social power into calls for ever greater state intervention.

Marx was not suggesting that citizens rights were illusory, or that they were not worth having, but simply that they could never go far enough and that genuine emancipation depended on more fundamental structural change:

Political emancipation is of course a great progress. Although it is not the final form of human emancipation in general, it is nevertheless the final form of human emancipation inside the present world order. (Marx, 1843, p.47)

But what do the insights of Marx and Marshall tell us about citizenship in the 1990's? First, that citizenship is essentially concerned with reforming the state apparatus, and in fact that the state is the condition of existence for citizenship. This dependence on the state limits the emancipatory potential of citizenship because the state itself is a manifestation of the masses alienation from genuine social power, and also because the state is unlikely to introduce reforms that might significantly interfere with the accumulation of capital, for example, the recent Disabled People's Civil Rights Bill was dismissed on the grounds that it would entail costs to industry. Thus, where the emancipatory potential of consumerism was found to be limited by its incorporation of alienation in the form of market relations, citizenship is found to be constrained by a self-limiting internal logic based on the alienation inherent in the state-form.

The above points were true in Marx's time and remain so today. There is however, a fundamental difference between the citizenship described by Marx and Marshall, and that which currently prevails. We know from Marshall's historical analysis that citizenship has previously entailed an ascendant class attempting to use the state apparatus as a means of improving its position in relation to a dominant class, for example, in the 18th and 19th centuries the bourgeoisie used citizenship as a means of wresting power from the Aristocracy, whilst in the late 19th and 20th centuries the extension of citizenship represented the state's response to working class pressure. Clearly this is no longer the case in Britain where none of the new advocates of citizenship can claim mass support. Instead citizenship has become for the most part a minority interest.

This change in the social nature of citizenship has robbed the category of any clearly discernible political imperative, with the result that it can be appropriated by almost anyone. Thus the Government, lapsed Communists, petit bourgeois Chartists and the disability movement can all lay claim to citizenship either to atone for old policies or to legitimate new ones.

29

Self-Help

As with the categories discussed above, self-help appears to be a politically ambiguous concept, evoking both right and left wing libertarianism. In the latter this comprises a critique of the state as an instrument of class domination, whilst the former reflects a much broader anti-collectivism and a reiteration of bourgeois individualism and morality. Suspicion of state intervention would superficially appear to be a common theme of both, however, since the late 1970's central government and Local Authority Social Service Departments have increasingly sought involvement in the facilitation of self-help initiatives. In fact different self-help initiatives can be classified according to their relative independence from the state.

Self-help initiatives also vary according to their point of intervention; some are concerned with the self improvement of the individual, for example through education or moral instruction, whereas others are more concerned with the identification of common problems and the organisation of collective action to overcome them. Self-help initiatives can, therefore, be modelled along two continua: their relative autonomy from the state, and their point of intervention between the individual and society. Unfortunately, such a model cannot represent the tensions and contradictions that exist within phenomena and the extent to which they are transformed over time. For example, it could be argued that historically the state has pursued a dual strategy of subordinating autonomous/social self-help initiatives to regulation and control, whilst simultaneously encouraging the voluntary sector to develop semi-autonomous/individualistic self-help initiatives, in order to reduce demand for more expensive statutory services.

These tensions or contradictions can be traced back to the nineteenth-century. It is obviously a methodological error to ascribe causality to a text, or even to see it as a summary of the dominant ideological themes of a given period. Even so, two particular texts can add to our understanding of the emergence of the ideological theme of self-help in the nineteenth-century. First, Samuel Smiles' *Self Help*, (1859), secondly, Peter Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*, (1901, but based on articles written during the 1880's and '90's).

Smiles' work contains many themes from Victorian liberalism and laissez faire economics, for instance, the suggestion that economic success, (both personal and

national), is dependent upon the inner resources of the individual, and that assistance by the state can only render the individual incompetent:

> *The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual; and, exhibited in the lives of many, it constitutes the true source of national vigour and strength. Help from without is often enfeebling in its effects, but help from within invariably invigorates. Whatever is done for men or classes, to a certain extent takes away the stimulus and necessity of doing for themselves; and where men are subjected to over guidance and over government, the inevitable tendency is to render them comparatively helpless. (Smiles, 1859. P.1)*

Thus Smiles' book comprises a series of mini-biographies of eminent men, in the hope that readers will seek to emulate their virtues of self-improvement, enterprise and thrift. From this it might be deduced that Smiles' self-helping individual is in some way the practical arm of citizenship; a forebear of Douglas Hurd's 'active citizen'. However, Smiles' approach includes a critique of parliamentary democracy that is almost Leninist in its vigour:

> *To constitute the millionth part of a Legislature, by voting for one or two men once in three or five years, however conscientiously this duty may be performed, can exercise but little active influence upon any mans life and character. Moreover, it is every day becoming more clearly understood, that the function of Government is negative and restrictive, rather than positive and active; being resolvable principally into protection - protection of life, liberty and property. (Smiles, 1859, p.2)*

Like Marx, Smiles recognised the way in which the state-form reduces personal freedom and limits human potential, but unlike Marx, he was incapable of conceptualising a collective alternative. Although Smiles did not object to mutual aid, this was essentially a basis for individual advancement within the existing social and economic order, rather than a means of overthrowing it.

Kropotkin was equally critical of the state, though for different reasons. Where Smiles saw the state as a threat to personal initiative and enterprise, Kropotkin was concerned at the extent to which the rise of the modern state had eroded the social cohesion and

mutual support that he believed were characteristic of small village communities during the medieval period. In writing his book *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin sought to challenge the claims of social Darwinism which implied that the process of natural selection which Darwin theorised as the driving force of evolution, could be applied to human relations, thereby naturalising the existing order, which it was argued was based on competition and the survival of the fittest. Kropotkin aimed to debunk this myth by revealing the role played by co-operation, both in the process of evolution and in the development of human relations. Progress depended on overthrowing the existing order and returning to the fraternal social relations that had characterised earlier societies. Kropotkin saw the re-emergence of mutual aid in the cohesion of 'slum' neighbourhoods and the growing number of friendly societies and trade unions:

> *...neither the crushing powers of the centralised state nor the mutual hatred and pitiless struggle which come, adorned with the attributes of science, from obliging philosophers and sociologists, could weed out the feeling of human solidarity, deeply lodged in men's understanding and heart, because it has been nurtured by all our preceding evolution. What was the outcome of evolution since its earliest stages cannot be overpowered by one of the aspects of that same evolution. And the need of mutual aid and support which had lately taken refuge in the narrow circle of the family, or the slum neighbours, in the village, or the secret union of workers, reasserts itself again, even in our modern society, and claims its right to be, as it has always been, the chief leader towards further progress.* (Kropotkin, 1901, p.284)

We might scoff at Kropotkin's romantic anti-modernism and his essentialist claims concerning human nature, but his analysis does highlight what might be termed the collectivist strand of nineteenth-century self-help, that is, the ability of oppressed groups to identify a common problem and collectively struggle against it. Kropotkin also recognised that the increasing solidarity of the working class was potentially a threat to the state.

This alternative strand of the self-help tradition is examined in PHJH Gosden's study of nineteenth-century voluntary associations (Gosden, 1973). Gosden begins his analysis with an account of the emergence of friendly societies prior to the nineteenth-

century. The friendly societies offered a range of benefits, including sick pay and funeral expenses, funded from regular contributions by members.

The idea of workers collectively setting aside part of their income for use in times of hardship had a double appeal for the ruling classes. First, it was seen as a means of reducing the cost of poor relief on the wealthy. Gosden cites an anonymous pamphlet published in 1728 urging magistrates and the governing classes to encourage the establishment of friendly societies in order to reduce the burden of the poor on the rates. Secondly, the friendly societies were seen as an extension of liberal notions of self-help and thrift. For instance, Smiles felt able to support this example of mutual aid; even defending the fact that many societies held their meetings in public houses where a proportion of the fund was spent on beer, on the grounds that the social aspect was a necessary addition to the practical benefits of membership. But this belief in the benign nature of the growing number of voluntary associations, expressed by Smiles in 1859, was not shared by members of the ruling classes earlier in the century, many of whom, with the French revolution fresh in their memories, saw the potential threat posed by organised labour. Gosden notes:

> *The attitude of some of the governing and influential groups to friendly societies was coloured at the opening of this period, by fears of possible subversion of a revolutionary nature... In an era when the Combination Acts were regarded as an essential defence against revolutionary upheaval, the friendly societies seemed to offer an obvious way round the difficulties placed in the way of combination for trade union purposes.* (Gosden, 1973, p.30)

Thus, the ideology of self-help posed much more of a dilemma for the ruling classes, particularly in the early years of the nineteenth-century, than might initially be assumed. On one hand notions of individual advancement through enterprise and thrift, legitimated the position of the capitalist entrepreneur who could claim to have achieved his success through personal effort and initiative. In addition, the extension of the self-help principle to mutual aid, promised to reduce the burden of providing for the poor. However, on the other hand, it was feared that workers who combined to address their welfare needs might also seek to improve their position by more radical means.

This dilemma was resolved by a process of containment and registration, in which successive governments throughout the nineteenth-century brought the voluntary associations under greater statutory regulation; whilst at the same time encouraging their development as financially sound agents of mutual aid.

By the 1930's the nature of mutual aid had substantially changed. The institutional development of the labour movement had long since diminished the political aspect of the voluntary associations, and the state was increasingly taking responsibility for welfare provision, culminating in the establishment of the welfare state in the post war period. Although this marked the demise of self-help as a mass movement, the essential components of the perspective re-emerged in a multitude of single issue support groups.

Alcoholics Anonymous, founded in the United States in 1935, established the model for this form of voluntary self-help organisation. Since then the number of such groups has rapidly increased and now includes organisations for: drug addicts, rape victims, ex-mental patients, the physically disabled, fat people, anorexics, stutterers, short people, people with eczema (Robinson & Henry, 1977, appendix), in fact it seems that for virtually any human ailment or adverse experience there is a self-help group in which members can share their grievances with other victims.

Essentially, such groups aim to provide support or therapy for minority groups whose needs are not adequately met by the statutory sector. Whereas Smiles had sought to use the example of successful Victorian men to inspire thrift and personal endeavour in those seeking social mobility, self-help in its modern manifestation employs the experiences of ex-alcoholics, ex-drug addicts, ex-mental patients, etc. to restore the afflicted to 'normality', or at least enable them to accept their alienation. Unlike the universally applicable key to social mobility envisaged by Smiles, or the basis for working class solidarity and emancipation advanced in Kropotkin's formulation of mutual aid, modern self-help has a much narrower focus and substantially lower expectations. However, although modern self-help groups lack the high aspirations and universality of their nineteenth-century equivalent they are firmly rooted in the same self-help/mutual aid ideology. Thus in their attempt to account for the recent growth in the number of self-help groups Robinson and Henry (1977) espouse an anti-modernism and romantic nostalgia for the 'good old days' of social cohesion, that

almost exactly mirrors the views expressed by Prince Kropotkin in the above quotation:

> *There is a growing rejection of a society that demands that unsupported individuals ought to be 'successful' and socially, psychologically, and emotionally competent. The erosion of the family and religion, while justified by an ideology that stresses the importance of the individual and his freedom to make his own unfettered choices, is producing a population of rootless people who are unsure about how to cope or how to fulfil themselves. In this situation of 'cultural rudderlessness', with traditional forms of security missing, self-help groups are held to be one aspect of the attempt to grope toward a replacement and redefinition of the meaning of life.* (Robinson & Henry, 1977, p.11)

Much here is resonant of Kropotkin, but it is worth noting that this account of mutual aid is based on a reinterpretation of collectivism that the Prince would have found alarming. Rather than a means by which working people can organise to amplify their individual powers and bring about radical social and economic change, collectivism is reduced to a kind of psychological prop in the absence of which individuals lose their social, psychological and emotional competence.

As well as the pull of mutual support, modern self-help groups are also pushed by dissatisfaction with statutory services; both the quantity of services and the way in which they are delivered. Robinson and Henry (1977) note that many of the participants in self-help initiatives express a virulent anti-professionalism, particularly towards the medical profession. This anti-professionalism is often matched by a subjectivist approach to social and personal problems, according to which only fellow sufferers can understand, and therefore help, the afflicted.

The origins of this tendency are easy to identify in people's everyday encounters with welfare agencies. Whilst many are obliged to enter into a relationship with the state in order to gain access to resources, such as, housing, healthcare, benefits, etc., these resources are often quantitatively and qualitatively inadequate, and recipients have no control over their production and distribution. Moreover, access to these resources does not come without strings attached. In order to gain access to services recipients

are obliged to expose themselves to surveillance and disciplining by welfare professionals; which further increases their feelings of powerlessness and dependence.

In the light of this the desire to turn away from statutory services and organise a collective alternative with the support of fellow sufferers can be understood. However, the subjectivist tendency that this gives rise to cannot be considered progressive. First, because it takes the inadequacy of statutory services out of its social and economic context and places it in an epistemological one. Rather than being the product of inadequate funding and lack of democratic control, the failings of the welfare state are explained in terms of the inability of others to understand the subjective experiences of those in need, which it is argued leads to professional insensitivity and paternalism. Secondly, the subjectivist perspective is inherently fragmentary. Tabloid jokes about one legged black lesbians may be distasteful, but they do indicate the trajectory of subjectivist movements towards endless sub-division, the ultimate destination of which is the isolated individual left alone with his/her subjective experiences which according to subjectivist logic only s/he can comprehend.

From the subjectivist perspective there is no such thing as objective need which can be collectively identified and satisfied by social planning, and there is, therefore, little point in engaging in attempts to change the existing social formation. The only viable strategy left is to accept one's alienation and seek solace in the company of fellow sufferers. Gartner and Reisman (1977), in describing the characteristics of Alcoholics Anonymous, identify the inward looking perspective of many self-help initiatives:

> ..the focus on behaviour; the attention to symptoms; the importance of the role of the group and the value of the knowledge and experience of the old timers' (long time members); and the viewing of the problem as chronic (the alcoholic is viewed as never being cured). (Gartner & Riessman, 1977, p.27)

The defeatism inherent in this orientation is highlighted by Robinson and Henry:

> Concentration on individuals and their problems is, of course, an essential feature of the self-help process. It is the basis upon which sharing and project work can begin to displace the problem and construct a more bearable life. But it means as well that self-help groups rarely explicitly focus their attention

on any broader structural features of the shared situation in which they find themselves. (Robinson & Henry, 1977, p.126)

Up to now we have characterised modern self-help groups as anti-professional and independent of the state. Whilst this may be true of the ideology of *self-help* groups and a reflection of the views of many of their participants it is increasingly not the case in practice. As Gartner and Reisman (1977) point out, although *self-help* groups are often hostile to professionals and statutory agencies, many of them are established by or receive funding from the statutory sector. For example, in Britain the Government's commitment to 'welfare pluralism', (manifest in the policies of Care in the Community from the mid 1980's onwards), led to the establishment of a number of national institutions to fund and co-ordinate the development of self-help initiatives (Humble, 1989).

Many Social Workers based in Local Authority Social Service Departments are also involved in instigating and participating in self-help initiatives. Helping others to help themselves is viewed as a move away from paternalism and the limitations of the traditional social work model. However, as Adams (1990) has noted, their involvement may have negative consequences:

> *The more effective self help activities become, the more they are at risk of co-option by professionals. Self appointed experts, media personalities, researchers, writers and practitioners in many fields appear from time to time, riding on the backs of self helpers. Professionals can make only a limited contribution to self help endeavours before they begin to take over and reduce other people's belief in their ability to break out of constraints and take control of their own circumstances.* (Adams, 1990, p.118)

There is then a strong tendency for the relationship between social workers and self-help groups to reproduce the relationship between existing statutory services and their recipients, that is, dependence on professional expertise and resources and a consequent loss of autonomy and self determination on the part of the volunteers.

In conclusion, although the modern manifestation of self-help shares a common ideological core with its nineteenth-century equivalent, in practice the two phenomena are quite different. This becomes apparent when their conditions of existence are

examined. Nineteenth-century self-help may have had one foot in the laissez faire liberalism of Smiles, and the other in the anti-modernism of Kropotkin, but its most important practical manifestation was based on neither the free market as a means of social mobility, nor a return to pre industrial social relations. Instead it depended on the emergence of a class of autonomous wage labourers whose welfare needs were not fulfilled by crumbling feudal ties, or by the welfare state of the future. In this vacuum members of the working class had little option but to collectively set aside part of their surplus against future hardship, and in so doing entered into forms of organisation that possessed substantial political potential.

The modern manifestation of self-help is dependent upon a different set of social imperatives. Whereas the voluntary associations of the nineteenth-century had a class base, the modern equivalent is organised around the grievances of a diverse range of single issue groups, whose only common denominator is a belief that their needs are not adequately satisfied by statutory welfare agencies. Superficially this adds a radical gloss of anti-professionalism and opposition to welfare state paternalism, to the traditionally conservative ideology of self-help. However this radical appearance is only skin deep; masking a movement whose social character is essentially conservative. This essential conservatism stems not just from the fragmentary composition of the movement, but also from its adoption of a subjectivist epistemology which renders it politically harmless. In addition, the claimed anti professionalism and critique of welfare paternalism is largely rhetorical, in practice many self-help groups are dependent on the state for financial support and are increasingly reliant on the input of welfare professionals. Rather than posing a threat to the welfare state, the new self-help groups offer an opportunity to transfer responsibility for welfare provision from increasingly costly statutory bodies to the voluntary sector whilst maintaining surveillance and control through professional regulation. Thus the condition of existence for the modern self-help movement is a welfare state whose services are insensitive to the needs of many of its clients, and which is going through a process of restructuring to save costs.

In the nineteenth-century the conservative strands of the *self-help* ideology cloaked a movement which was potentially progressive; in the twentieth century a radical variant of the same ideology masks a movement which is essentially conservative. The form taken by modern self-help initiatives may have been largely determined by the

relationship of alienation that prevails between professionals and their clients under the welfare state, but unlike consumerism and citizenship, it is not the internalisation of structural relations that gives self-help a self-limiting internal logic, but the adoption of a subjectivist epistemology. From this perspective knowledge becomes a means of differentiating the individual and 'fellow sufferers' from the rest of society, rather than a way of creating the kind of shared inter-subjectivity required for a broad based emancipatory struggle. The assumption appears to be that our particular needs and preferences can never be understood by others, which in effect denies the possibility of social solidarity and collective action. As we shall see, this is also a characteristic of the form of empowerment described in chapter five.

Community Participation and Community Development

Community participation and community development are sufficiently different to be treated as discrete phenomena. However, both are grounded in the ideology of community, and it is important to address this theme in its own right before turning to the associated categories of participation and development.

In its most neutral sense 'community' is little more than a generic term describing the people of a district, or, those with common interests (Williams, 1988, pp.75-76). Unfortunately, since at least the beginning of the nineteenth-century 'community' has also been the bearer of a more ideological meaning. As Robert Nisbet (1966) has noted, the emergence of community as a sociological category, (during this period), had much to do with the conservative backlash against the enlightenment and the social changes that accompanied it.

The enlightenment had challenged the belief that social relations should be regulated by tradition, or, by irrational concepts, such as: kinship, religion or monarchy. In modern society the individual would be free to choose which relations s/he entered into. This would be governed by contract in accordance with natural justice. Initially, this belief in the sovereignty of the individual, unfettered by traditional obligations or duties, fitted well with the expansion of industrial capitalism, with its dependence on a free labour market. But, by the beginning of the nineteenth-century, enthusiasm for the enlightenment project had turned into fear of the consequences of modernity.

Industrialisation had been accompanied by population migration from small rural villages to large modern cities, and it was felt that urbanisation had led to the decline of traditional forms of social control, which in turn might allow political unrest to blossom.

This fear of atomisation and alienation, that it was felt characterised modern urban life, led to the rediscovery of 'community' and calls for a reaffirmation of the ties of family, religion and fellowship. As Nisbet has pointed out, calls for a return to the mythical village communities of the medieval period were not made exclusively by conservative commentators; in fact a broad range of politicians, philosophers and theologians, across the political spectrum expressed similar views. The only significant dissenting voice was that of Marx who pointed out that traditional village communities, for example in India, had stifled personal freedom and inhibited human development.

> *We must not forget that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies...... We must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinction of caste and by slavery, that they subjugated man to external circumstances instead of elevating man to the sovereign of circumstances, that they transformed a self-developing social stage into never changing natural destiny..... (Marx, 1853, pp.350-351)*

In spite of Marx's critique, the ideology of community is still referred to in order to explain both the causes *and effects* of social malaise. Slum clearance, pit closures and the development of out of town shopping malls are blamed for the destruction of 'traditional working class communities', and 'the loss of a sense of community' is blamed for violent crime, joy riding and drug addiction. There is of course considerable irony in this. Two hundred years ago the rediscovery of community was prompted by the rise of industrial capitalism and the accompanying population migration from village to city. Today this process is in reverse, manufacturing industry is in decline and the working classes are leaving the cities, and yet Bishops,

politicians and sociologists are still to be found condemning loss of community for the upward march of crime statistics and other social problems. The only consistent theme here is that social arrangements that existed in the past are automatically preferred to those of the present or future.

In his book on middle class perceptions of crime Geoffrey Pearson (1983) identifies a tendency to view the past as a 'golden age' when houses could be left unlocked, and people could walk the streets at night without fear of molestation. Each generation 'rediscovers' this golden age locating it before the war, or before the 1960s, or before 1979. The same could be said of the mythical 'sense of community', which throughout the last two centuries has always existed somewhere in the recent past, slightly out of reach, but obtainable if we could just turn the clock back a few years.

Calls for a return to the spirit of community, even when made by politicians or the clergy, rarely go beyond moral exhortation, and the few specific policies that have emerged tend to be modest in scope, for example, opening the occasional youth club or community centre, or pedestrianising the high street. However, this is changing and a consortium of academics, community workers and clergy in the US have transformed 'Communitarianism' into a detailed political programme comprising a specific and far reaching set of social policy objectives. The Communitarian agenda is defined and promoted in Amatai Etzioni's *The Spirit of Community* (1993).

Like the nineteenth-century advocates of community, Etzioni begins with a description of social malaise in which atomised individuals and special interest groups pursue selfish goals by lobbying the state to grant them an increasingly diverse and fragmentary range of 'rights'. This pursuit of self interest is matched by a lack of social responsibility, reflecting a concern for personal entitlement and disregard of obligations to others.

According to Etzioni, this tendency to take from the community without giving back must inevitably lead to crisis, and it is revealing that he uses an environmental metaphor to illustrate the point:

> *Communitarians are dedicated to working with our fellow citizens to bring*
> *about the changes in values, habits, and public policies that will allow us to do*

for society what the environmental movement seeks to do for nature: to safeguard and enhance our future. (Etzioni, 1993, p.3)

This *'shoring up of our moral foundations'* is to be achieved by a number of measures, including: *(i)* the revival of the family, (for instance, by slowing the divorce procedure), *(ii)* moral education, (both in schools and through compulsory national service for the young), *(iii)* careful adjustment of individual rights which have negative consequences for public health and safety, (for example, the introduction of random sobriety checks to catch drink drivers), *(iv)* limiting the ability of vested interests to buy political influence, and, *(v)* a moratorium on the minting of new rights that might be socially divisive, or, devalue the currency of existing rights.

It has been suggested that Communitarianism is nothing more than moral majoritarianism repackaged in a form that is acceptable to Etzioni's liberal audience (D'Antonio, 1994, p.16). But Etzioni is not advocating a wholesale return to what he sees as the coercive and oppressive forms of moral regulation that prevailed in the 1950's. Instead, the communitarians argue that their reforms will generate a *'change of heart'* amongst the American people, that will facilitate the informal regulation of public morality and thereby lessen the need for state intervention:

> *The best way to minimise the role of the state, especially its policing role, is to enhance the community and its moral voice.* *If most of us, most of the time, observed the speed limit, especially near schools and where children play, there would be much less need for police. If we basically paid our share of the taxes due, there would be less need for IRS agents and auditors. If divorced fathers paid agreed-upon amounts of child support, there would be no need for the state to go after them. There are always some who violate what is right, and hence the state is unlikely to wither away, at least until very far reaching and fundamental changes occur in human nature.* (Etzioni's emphasis).
> (Etzioni, 1993, p.44)

The Communitarian agenda has not gone unchallenged, but many critics of the movement have concentrated on questioning specific proposals such as restricting divorce, (D'Antonio, 1994, p.16), without addressing the broader theoretical basis of the approach. This is a mistake because the detailed proposals could be changed or even abandoned according to public opinion, but leaving the ideological basis of the

movement intact. To understand Communitarianism we must begin by asking what problem it sets out to solve, Etzioni states his problematic as the tendency for Americans in the 1990's to have a strong sense of entitlement, but a very weak sense of social responsibility or moral duty, leading to social problems. The widespread appeal of Etzioni's approach is that he accounts for this tendency by synthesising a right-wing moral panic with its left-wing equivalent:

> *In the 1960s we went way too far with psychological self-interest....Then in the 1980s it was greed; then Freud ran amok, and Adam Smith. I am suggesting a third way that reminds us we are all brothers and sisters, but we can't wait for government to take care of us. We all must sacrifice, take care of our responsibilities, do our share.* (Etzioni, 1994, p.16)

Thus Etzioni tips his hat in two directions. First, he raises the spectre of the '1960s'; (this is an important moral panic for modern conservatism as it evokes images of promiscuity, civil unrest, the counter culture, welfare dependency, progressive educational policy et cetera). Secondly, Etzioni makes use of a more recent moral panic concerning the monetarist policies and economic individualism of the '1980s', that evokes equally strong images of welfare cuts, unemployment, and widening social inequality. That Etzioni is able to weld together both ideological themes into an apparently consistent approach which appeals to both left and right is a remarkable political feat. However, this synthesis can only be achieved by abandoning any attempt at a sociological analysis, and returning to moralistic explanations of human behaviour.

Thus Etzioni makes no attempt to explain either the '1960s' or the '1980s' by reference to economic forces or structural arrangements, instead he explains both phenomena in terms of poor moral choices on the part of the individual. Superficially this enables Etzioni to present himself as the voice of liberal moderation: hence, he does not reject the challenge to authority that he believes characterised the 1960s, nor does he reject the pursuit of economic self interest under the free market capitalism of the 1980's, rather, according to Etzioni, the problem is that both tendencies simply went too far, and the reason that they went too far was that the rigid and sometimes discriminatory/oppressive forms of moral regulation and civic duty that were

justifiably challenged during the 1960s were not subsequently replaced by a new order of Communitarian values:

> *The problem is that the waning of traditional values was not followed by a solid affirmation of new values; often nothing filled the empty spaces that were left when we razed existing institutions. The result is rampant moral confusion and social anarchy.* (Etzioni, 1993, p.24)

Although this reduction of social phenomena to the level of personal morality is politically convenient its explanatory range is lamentably short. For instance, Etzioni ascribes a great deal of explanatory power to the supposed challenge to the old moral order during the 1960s, but how does he account for this challenge? Did a generation of Americans simply wake up on the morning of the 1960s with a commitment to cultural revolution mysteriously embedded in their consciousness?

The explanatory weakness of Etzioni's approach undermines even his more accurate observations. For example, he notes disdainfully, that minority groups and individuals increasingly pursue their interests in the form of 'rights', or more precisely, through litigation claiming the infringement of such rights. He cites (amongst others) the example of death-row inmates who sued to protect their reproductive rights through artificial insemination, and a New York mother who sued her son's High School for failing to admit him to the school's honour society, on the grounds that such exclusion would damage his future prospects and was, therefore, a violation of his rights. Etzioni correctly notes that the pursuit of an ever growing range of such 'rights' is problematic; it devalues the currency of existing rights and may increase state oppression, for example when pressure-groups seek to use constitutional reform as a means of silencing people whose views they find offensive. However, although Etzioni's observations may be accurate in these instances, he is not able to account for the social divisions and economic contradictions that give rise to such claims, nor, why it is that they are articulated in the form of rights. The absence of any sociological understanding of the 'rights' phenomenon leads Etzioni to see it as a question of personal morality; of people expecting their needs to be met as a 'right', but not recognising their responsibility for meeting the needs of others.

In fact, this apparent blindness to the reality of genuine structural and economic divisions within society is characteristic not just of Communitarianism, but of middle

class paternalism generally. Rather than recognising their sociological and economic origins, social problems are reduced to moral fecklessness, usually on the part of the working classes, but occasionally amongst avaricious capitalists who allow the pursuit of profit to override their civic responsibilities, or public servants who are insensitive to the needs of their clients. The unspoken implication is always the same: 'if only everyone else were a little more civilised, a little less selfish, a little more moral, a little more public spirited, in fact a little more like the liberal intelligentsia'.

This is the nub of the problem with Communitarianism, not simply that it proposes a few reactionary social policies, for instance limiting divorce, or introducing sobriety checks, such proposals could easily be modified or even abandoned, but rather that it fundamentally rebuts the project of gaining a sociological understanding of social problems and replaces it with moral sanction. Thus personal morality is seen as the panacea for all social ills, and social policy is simply seen as a means of rebuilding this moral outlook, rather than a direct means of changing social relations. More specifically, such an approach posits the state, in the guise of the welfare professional, as a moral guardian, responsible for regulating the inter-personal relations of an amoral populous. As we shall see, this phenomenon arises in the mode of empowerment discussed in chapter five.

Both the nineteenth-century advocacy of 'community-spirit' and its modern equivalent are based on the belief that social ties have been eroded by modernity. However, the solution to the consequent social malaise is defined in terms of personal moral rehabilitation, and overlooks the economic contradictions and structural divisions that lie behind the fragmentation and alienation inherent in contemporary society. Community may simply be used as a generic term for the people of a district, but, it may also carry ideological baggage of a conservative nature. This ideological baggage has consequences for both community-participation and community-development, because both can entail assisting the agencies of the state in the administration and moral regulation of everyday life, without enabling people to take direct control over the production and distribution of goods and services, or the institutions of state power.

■ Community Participation

At face value community participation is such a broad category that it is theoretically worthless. However, as Ann Richardson (1983) points out, since the late 1960s the term has acquired a more specific usage that refers to the direct involvement of citizens in the government and management of statutory services. Richardson locates the rationale for community participation in the growth of the welfare state and the belief that electoral representation through Parliament and local government is too remote to ensure that services are responsive to the needs of service users.

Some participatory initiatives have developed in response to pressure from service users, and many pressure groups and voluntary organisations have successfully lobbied for a greater involvement in service planning and decision making. However, here we are concerned with formal arrangements for community participation established by the state. There are few areas of social policy in which participatory mechanisms have not been introduced. Many of these were established during the 1970s, for example Community Health Councils were introduced in the 1974 reorganisation of the National Health Service, and arrangements for lay participation in the provision of public sector housing, education and social services were also introduced during this decade. Since the late 1980s further initiatives have been introduced, for example, facilitating greater parental involvement in the management of state schools, and allowing council tenants to take responsibility for the management of their estates. Before looking more closely at actual examples of community participation it is important to obtain a conceptual grasp of the category and the contradictions that exist within it.

Community participation can be theoretically unpacked in a number of ways; a useful starting point is Sherry Arnstein's 'Ladder of Participation' (Arnstein, 1969). Arnstein suggests that different types of participatory initiative can be identified and ranked according to the amount of power they confer on the participant, and proposes the following typology or 'ladder':

8. CITIZEN CONTROL   )
7. DELEGATED POWER   ) Degrees of citizen power
6. PARTNERSHIP   )

5. PLACATION	)	
4. CONSULTATION	) Degrees of tokenism	
3. INFORMING	)	

2. THERAPY	) Non-participation
1. MANIPULATION	)

The first two types: manipulation and therapy, refer to programmes which seek either to gain the support of community representatives for decisions that have already been taken by politicians or bureaucrats, or else attempt to alleviate social problems by changing the behaviour of members of the community, for example, housing programmes in which tenants are asked to 'participate' in 'control your child' campaigns, and are thus distracted from more pressing issues, such as arbitrary evictions or lack of maintenance.

The next three types: informing, consultation, and placation, constitute varying degrees of tokenism, in which planning and decision-making agencies enter into a limited dialogue with the community, but are not obliged to act upon the feedback they receive. Genuine participation only begins at the sixth rung of the ladder. Thus, partnership refers to arrangements where citizens have sufficient rights and resources to influence the decision-making process, although a right of veto is retained by the state. Delegated power refers to participatory initiatives in which responsibility for the management of a project is delegated to community representatives, but in which key guide-lines and budgets are determined in advance by a statutory agency.

The final rung of Arnstein's ladder is citizen control, in which the planning and management of a programme is carried out by the community without external interference. Arnstein gives examples from the US where neighbourhood projects have been directly funded without the interference of state intermediaries.

Although Arnstein's typology is a useful indicator of the centrality of power to any evaluation of participatory initiatives, her approach is overly simplistic and can

be criticised on a number of points. First, Arnstein overlooks the difficulty of ensuring that participants are genuinely representative of the community from which they are drawn. There are basically two forms of representation: descriptive and electoral, both of which are problematic. The former refers to attempts to recruit a body of participants that reflects the composition of the community in terms of class, gender, race etc. The problem with this approach lies in the fact that the number of sub-groups in the community is potentially infinite, thus the legitimacy of a participatory initiative can always be challenged by those groups that are excluded, (Morone & Marmor,1983).

The other alternative, electoral representation, is also problematic, because individuals from powerful groups are more likely to possess the time and resources necessary to stand for election, with the result that the views of less privileged groups are excluded from the decision making process (Bates, 1983). As Schattschneider has suggested:

...the flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper class accent. (Schattschneider, 1960, p.35)

Related to the question of representation is that of co-option. Effective participation depends upon the extent to which lay representatives have the power to influence planning and decision making. This demands a close working relationship between lay participants and statutory agencies. Paradoxically, however, this proximity to the decision making process can lead lay participants to adopt the agenda, views and interests of the agency they are dealing with, and lose touch with the constituency they supposedly represent. There is a danger that lay representatives become co-opted as unpaid 'managers' and lose their distinctively lay perspective.

Arnstein also overlooks what Steven Lukes (1974) has referred to as the 'third dimension' of power. Whilst Arnstein recognises that power can operate through coercion, or, through exclusion of the community's views from the agenda for debate, she fails to take account of the unconscious exercise of power, in which a group or community is unaware of its objective interests and, therefore, fails to

oppose, or even actively participates in, actions that run counter to those objective interests.

If the community is denied the resources to develop a rational evaluation of its objective interests, or if those interests are masked by ideological mystification, then even if the state does confer formal decision making power upon members of the community the decisions taken are still likely to reflect the interests of the powerful. Thus, the Education Reform Act (1988) superficially appears to extend parental choice by enabling schools to opt out of Local Education Authority control. Funding and curriculum decisions are centrally determined, but management issues are delegated to a Board of Governors in each school.

According to Arnstein's typology the new arrangements occupy a position near the top of the participatory ladder as they enable community representatives to take decisions without the interference of bureaucrats. However, such an analysis overlooks the current ideological climate and the effect that it is likely to have on the consciousness of parents and school governors. Since the end of the 1970's government ministers and the tabloid press have waged a moral crusade against progressive teaching methods and multi-culturalism, typified in John Major's address to the 1992 Conservative Party conference in which he called for primary school teachers to restrict their activities to teaching children to read and write rather than the politics of race, gender and class. In such a climate it is perhaps unlikely that parents will be able to make an objective assessment of which educational policies best serve the interests of their children. Thus what appears to be an attempt to empower the community, may in reality serve to marginalise 'progressives' in the teaching establishment and use the lay views of parent governors to implement policies that may not be in everyone's long-term interests.

This is not an argument in favour of bureaucratic control, but an illustration of the way in which arrangements that formally delegate power to the community, without providing the economic and intellectual resources needed to develop conscious awareness of the community's objective interests, can lead to ideological manipulation.

Thirdly, Arnstein's typology fails to take account of variations in the scale or scope of participatory initiatives, or external constraints that limit policy options. Thus, the state may encourage citizen control of small scale projects that are not likely to lead to a radical change in existing power relations or structural arrangements. Similarly, community representatives may be given 'freedom to choose' in situations where the range of options are severely limited by external constraints, such as limited funding. By contrast, more significant policy decisions, such as large scale changes in structure or resource allocation, are unlikely to be delegated to community representatives and participation is likely to be tokenistic at best.

Arnstein correctly identifies the power to influence planning and decision making as the key variable by which participatory initiatives can be evaluated, but her analysis fails to deal adequately with issues of representation, co-option, consciousness of objective interests, the influence of external constraints, and the scope and scale of participatory projects. When the above variables are brought into the analysis, the ladder metaphor becomes inappropriate; suggesting as it does, a linearity between types, in which one level is automatically preferable to that which precedes it. In reality no such assumption can be made, for instance, the availability of accurate information (level 3) concerning an important new policy, may be of greater value to a community that is conscious of its objective interests, than being invited to participate in the development of a less significant project (level 6) where the options are limited by external constraints.

Arnstein is primarily concerned with the 'Model Cities' programmes developed in the US during the 1960's, however, her typology can be usefully applied to an evaluation of existing arrangements for community participation in NHS planning and decision making, if the above variables are also borne in mind.

The following arrangements currently exist for community participation in NHS planning and decision making: Community Health Councils, lay representation on Health Authorities and Family Health Service Authorities, and small scale non-statutory initiatives such as patients councils and health forra. In addition the Joint Planning structure brings together senior officers from Health and

Local Authorities with representatives from voluntary sector agencies to plan the development of some community services.

When Community Health Councils (CHCs) were established by the NHS Reorganisation Act (1973), Shirley Williams commented that they were:

> ...the strangest bunch of administrative eunuchs any department had yet foisted on the House, a seraglio of useless and emasculated bodies. (Williams, 1971, p.29)

Certainly their formal powers were, (and continue to be following subsequent reorganisation), extremely limited. CHCs have the right to be consulted by a District Health Authority on any proposals for substantial changes in NHS service provision, and a right of appeal, first to the Regional Health Authority, and finally to the Secretary of State. In addition, CHCs have the right to visit or inspect any NHS facility, and to demand information regarding the provision of services.

In practice CHCs have had difficulty in using their powers to achieve substantial influence over NHS decision-making, (Lee & Mills, 1982). Indeed, it has been suggested that the power of the CHC lies chiefly in its ability to publicly disclose sensitive information, and to threaten to delay the implementation of plans via the lengthy appeals procedure. These limited powers have brought minor victories, most often in single issue campaigns capable of motivating public support, for example, the closure of cottage hospitals. However, for the most part CHCs have had difficulty in influencing the planning process in its early stages, and their limited resources have constrained their ability to develop counter proposals. To use Arnstein's typology, the role of the CHC is one of placation rather than genuine participation.

Similarly, CHCs have only a very marginal claim to represent the community, as their membership is often neither electorally, nor, descriptively representative of the community. Co-option is also likely to be a problem. When CHCs are invited onto Health Authority planning teams they are usually represented by their senior officer. who as a paid professional is vulnerable to the adoption of a managerial perspective, given that CHCs are not electorally accountable to the community.

Lay members of health authorities face many of the problems encountered by their CHC colleagues. They are not electorally or descriptively representative of the community they serve. Their lack of independent resources and organisational support leaves them dependent upon senior officers to frame the planning agenda and compose different decision options. Thus, whilst non-executive members formally have equal status to their executive colleagues, their position in the decision making structure and their lack of accountability to the community render them as little more than unpaid managers; a 'rubber-stamp' for bureaucratic decision making. The introduction of general management into the NHS from the late 1980s onwards has moved the role of lay members even further in this direction.

At least superficially, patient councils and health forra appear to possess greater validity than the formal mechanisms discussed above as they facilitate the direct participation of service users in, for example, the management of a mental health day centre or a GP surgery. However, although such arrangements can often make a substantial input into the management of a facility, they are not able to influence more important strategic decision making; at best they offer substantial influence over relatively minor concerns. Similar conclusions could be drawn about the involvement of voluntary sector representatives in the joint planning mechanism. Although they are more closely integrated into their constituency, their influence is limited to relatively mundane issues, hemmed in by external constraints.

Before drawing general conclusions about existing arrangements for community participation it is worth pausing briefly to consider likely future developments in this area. Leaving aside the impact of the recent NHS reforms, the development of techniques which seek to involve the community in the prioritisation or rationing of services is perhaps the most significant likely development. For example, the Oregon Formula (Klein, 1991), used limited studies to estimate the health status of clients following a given medical intervention. Members of the local community were then asked to rank the health outcomes in order of desirability. This information was used to rank medical interventions in order of their perceived utility. Available resources could then be allocated to those procedures that were

considered to be most beneficial and funding withdrawn from procedures below a certain point in the ranking.

The Oregon experiment is important because it demonstrates how instrumental rationality and what appear to be democratic principles can be used to involve members of the community in actions that are not in their objective interests - rather than fighting for increased spending on health the residents of Oregon were persuaded to participate in the rationing of existing resources. It is important to note that calls for a more rational and democratic form of health care provision are not automatically progressive.

If we adopt Arnstein's typology of participation, moderated by additional criteria such as representation, co-option, external constraints, false consciousness, and scale, then existing arrangements offer very little in the way of genuine community participation in health sector planning and decision making. To adapt (or mix) Arnstein's metaphor; there appears to be a glass ceiling halfway up the ladder of participation which effectively bars the community from exercising control over significant policy and resource allocation decisions. Whilst citizens are sometimes able to exercise considerable influence over minor operational issues, this influence quickly evaporates in proportion to the magnitude or significance of planning or policy making decisions. Whilst existing arrangements appear to empower the citizen, in essence they have the opposite effect; reinforcing existing power relations and structural forms, channelling dissent into mechanisms of containment, and giving an illusory gloss of democratic legitimacy to a decision making process that is bureaucratic and professionally dominated.

As with self-help, the conditions of existence for community participation are a welfare state over which the community has no direct control. However, self-help did at least emerge in opposition to the statutory agencies, (even if it has since been co-opted by them). But with community development there is not even the pretence of opposition to the state, indeed, the internal logic of community participation is entirely dominated by the state, with members of the community only able to exercise the limited powers delegated to them by the statutory agencies. Whilst this might allow for tinkering with the minutiae of everyday service provision, the scope for obtaining

control over more fundamental aspects of funding and policy, let alone influencing broader social and economic relations, appears to be non-existent.

■ Community Development

The distinction between community development and community participation is often far from apparent in many of the initiatives that use either label. Both categories emerged in their modern form during the late 1960's, both refer, (more or less obliquely), to the ideological theme of community discussed above, and in many instances lay claim to the same raison d'être - namely the involvement of members of the community in the resolution of social problems.

Although there are many similarities between the two categories, there is one fundamental difference; community participation (at least in terms of the definition given above), is exclusively concerned with bringing service users and other non-salaried volunteers into the decision making mechanisms of various statutory agencies and institutions. The form of these mechanisms is determined in advance, and the scope and range of any delegated power is tightly constrained within structural, financial and legal limits. Community development projects often amount to little more than this, but there is nothing within the logic of the community development model that automatically entails subordination to such constraints. Thus some campaigns operating at the margins of the community development model have operated outside of the institutions of the state, and even on the borderline of legality, for example groups of local residents who have taken direct action to oppose what they perceive to be adverse planning decisions.

This does not mean that community development initiatives are immune to social, economic or structural constraints, or that the category is free from internal contradictions that might undermine its emancipatory potential. What it does mean is that unlike the modes of empowerment discussed above community development does not appear to suffer from a self-limiting internal logic. Consumerism can never transcend the constraints of the market mechanism, citizenship is inevitably limited by the state-form, self-help by its subjectivist perspective, and community participation by its reliance on existing institutional arrangements, whilst this does not foreclose the

possibility of some worthwhile political gains being achieved by such methods, it does mean that their capacity to overcome the alienation inherent in capitalist production relations and the state-form is constrained. By contrast, at least at the level of its internal logic, community development is a structurally, economically, and epistemologically autonomous category.

This theoretical open enedness does not automatically render community development a progressive political category, or ensure that it cannot be used by the state as a means of social control. The transformation of a political category into an effective form of practice is dependent upon the process of operationalisation or mediation; which involves the development of: an organisational structure, an agenda for action, and specific forms of activity. It is here at the level of operationalisation or mediation that community development is vulnerable. This becomes apparent when the history of community development is considered.

It was suggested above that community development in Britain emerged in its modern form towards the end of the 1960's, but its origins lie in the efforts of the British Colonial Office to transform third world demands for self-government into a means of facilitating post colonial economic domination.

> *For the British...community development was an export model, first conceived in the 1920's by colonial officials and educationalists to compensate for the shortcomings of the conventional school system in the former British dependent territories, as a vehicle for the progressive evolution of the peoples to self government in the context of social and economic change.* (Hodge, 1970, pp. 66-7)

T.R. Batten, writing in 1957, gives such a rich account of the origins and function of community development in the late colonial period that it is worth quoting him at length. He begins by identifying the founding fathers:

> *Enthusiasts for community development sometimes speak or write about it as if it were something entirely new, and they irritate the very many people who feel that community development is not new, but that its principles were in fact applied by a multitude of individual government officers and missionaries long*

before anyone had thought of such a term as community development. (Batten, 1957, p.2-3)

Although Batten is an advocate of community development, describing it as a means by which local communities *can 'discuss and define their wants, and then plan and act together to satisfy them'*, he is aware that community development might also operate as a means of domination; he quotes a colonial administrator speaking at a conference in Cambridge, England in 1948 who describes community development as:

> *A movement to promote better living for the whole community, with the active participation and if possible on the initiative of the community, but if this initiative is not forthcoming, by the use of technique for arousing and stimulating it in order to secure its active and enthusiastic response to the movement...It includes the whole range of development activities in the districts whether these are undertaken by government or unofficial bodies. (Batten's emphasis).* (Batten, 1957, p.1)

Batten identifies what is perhaps the fundamental contradiction of the community development model - on one hand it claims to be about people identifying their own objective needs and working together to meet them, but on the other hand it is also a means by which vested interests, (in this case an imperial power), can obtain consent to programmes that may not be in the interests of that community. This contradiction becomes yet more apparent when Batten describes the problematic of community development:

> *...to find effective ways of stimulating, helping, and teaching people to adopt new methods and to learn new skills: methods and skills which are 'better' than the people's traditional methods and skills because they can help them to grow more food, have better health, and possess more material 'goods' than they have previously enjoyed......to help people to adapt their way of life to the changes they accept, or have imposed upon them..... But as change takes place, and new ideas are accepted by some but not by others...standards of conduct tend to become uncertain, the sense of belonging is weakened, and the community may begin to segment or disintegrate. The effects of this may show themselves in various ways: in an increase of crime, such as theft; in a weakening of family relationships; in resistance to traditional authority; in a*

growth of litigation; in a drift to towns; in unwillingness to co-operate for the common good; and even in a general bewilderment and apathy. The prevalence of such undesirable symptoms, and a growing awareness of their cause, have begun to make us realise that to encourage material development is to tackle only a part of the community problem. It is at least equally important as change occurs <u>to ensure that the feeling or spirit of community is not destroyed.</u> (Batten's emphasis). (Batten, 1957, pp.5-6)

The theme of community crisis engendered by rapid social change is redolent of the communitarianism discussed above, and the perceived need to equip the individual with the personal skills required to survive under such circumstances, predicts the account of psychological empowerment given in chapter five. But the community development that Batten describes is that applied to the third world in the immediate post war period, and reflects the concerns of the imperial powers at that time. The war had created a crisis of legitimacy for the imperialist powers, who could no longer claim the moral authority to 'civilise' the third world. There was particular concern that the demobilisation of troops recruited from the colonies would lead to unrest and create a wave of third world nationalism, (Furedi, 1994). In addition, the European powers were economically in no position to use military force to impose order. However, in spite of these difficulties the imperative towards greater economic domination of the third world remained. As the above quotation from Batten indicates this economic imperative demanded the reconfiguration of traditional forms of production and consumption.

The problem facing the imperialist powers was how to maintain (and rapidly develop) its economic domination of the third world, at a time when their moral and military authority were believed to be exhausted beyond a point where the perceived nationalist threat could be contained.

We noted above that a similar problem had faced the British ruling class at home during the nineteenth-century. Rapid industrialisation coupled with the ideological collapse of traditional methods of regulating social relations, generated the same problem of how to maintain order in the face of a perceived threat of rebellion. During the nineteenth-century these fears were articulated through the ideology of community discussed above, and it is not surprising that faced with what was in many

respects a similar problem, the post war defenders of imperialism should resort to a similar ideology. However, history does not repeat itself - during the nineteenth-century the ideology of community was for the most part rhetorical, (leaving aside a few small scale experiments such as model communities etc.), but the post-war British Colonial Office went far beyond this and gave the ideology of community an operational arm with which it could intervene in the management of social relations - that operational arm was community development.

From this perspective the community development model can be viewed as a necessary addition to the imperial arsenal, however, it was not a weapon that could be deployed without caution. To understand this we must return to the original contradiction identified by Batten when he noted that community development referred to both the self organisation of a community in identifying its needs and striving to meet them, and to attempts by the state or an external agency to govern this process and give it direction. This does not mean that community development is an openly contested category, because the state has no interest in such a contest. On the contrary, for community development to work effectively as an instrument of ideological domination it must be *seen* to be about self-government, even though vested interests are behind the scenes pulling the strings. Failure to perpetuate this myth must inevitably render a community development programme ineffective as a means of regulating social relations, again Batten provides an illustration:

> ....communities will build a clinic or a school, not because they want it, but to stop the community worker worrying them. They try to buy him off, as it were, by providing what he seems to want, but with no intention of altering their existing ways. Thus it is easier to get them to build a school or a clinic than to use it or maintain it. [...] all these agencies face the same problem in how to get the people to conform to what the government wants if the people themselves do not really want it too. In such circumstances if the agency wants quick results it must use pressure and go on using it or the people will slip back into their old ways. The alternative is community education, but this is apt to be a slow process, and the temptation to press on with change too fast is very real. (Batten, 1957, pp. 39-40)

Batten offers his own solution to this problem arguing that to be effective, community workers must gain an in depth knowledge of the values, customs and social structure of the community they are working with, and enable people to identify their own projects - but there lies the danger. What if the community worker, (to use an appropriately colonial phrase), 'goes native'? What if rather than pursuing the interests of his paymaster, the community development worker really does enable a community to identify its *own* problems and seek its *own* solutions? To be effective as an instrument of ideological domination community development must convince people that it is a process owned and controlled by themselves, that it is a means by which they can identify their own needs and design collective strategies in order to meet them, but at the same time it must ensure that such plans coincide with the interests of the state. As we shall see, the development of organic links between community worker and community, and the absence of any self limiting logic within the category itself, make this a potentially dangerous strategy for the state to pursue. But this is to anticipate our argument, and we must first return from the third world to examine the ways in which community development was adapted for use at home.

Marjorie Mayo (1974) has noted that the emergence of community development in Britain during the 1960's took two forms; first, grass-root initiatives which developed more or less independently of the state, and secondly, what might be termed state sponsored community development projects. Cowley et al (1977) suggest that part of the stimulus for grass roots community development came from dissatisfaction with the failure of the traditional labour movement to address the concerns of everyday life outside the work place. The civil rights and anti war movements in the United States also provided a model for alternative forms of organisation, that had been emulated in Britain by CND and student protesters. During the late sixties these alternative forms of organisation began to be applied to community concerns, such as housing and poverty, giving rise to a range of voluntary organisations, such as claimant's unions, squatter's groups, and tenant's associations.

Some of these organisations expanded beyond single issue campaigns to address the broad range of concerns facing a particular community, thereby evolving into a recognisable community development approach. One such initiative was the Notting Hill People's Association which existed between 1966 and 1974. O'Malley (1977) has documented the groups experiences. The group managed to gain the support and

active participation of a substantial number of local residents, in addressing specifically local issues including: housing, motor way planning, and children's play areas. A number of benefits accrued from the groups activity: concessions were won from the Local Authority, self-help play groups were established, as well as a number of facilities thought to be of benefit to local residents, such as a claimant's union, a neighbourhood law centre and a community printing press. The organisers of the group had more radical aspirations, but despite discussion in local workshops and the establishment of links with a network of other local groups, they failed to achieve much. O'Malley quotes a paper produced by the Camden Community Workshop which identifies the central contradiction of community organising, and the desire to overcome it:

> *In a very crucial sense there is a tension built into community organising: the overall perspective is that of social revolution and yet the chosen site of activity, the localised neighbourhood, is far removed from such a possibility. This gives a provisional character to the workshop as a form of political work. In fact it explains the adoption of the name workshop: the word encapsulates the idea of experimentation, breaking new ground, developing projects provisional in nature - so the Community Workshop experiments with the elements of a new politics, encourages the mastering of the task of organising and presents itself in its practice without the overall political direction a revolutionary party provides.* (Camden Community Workshop, 1972, p.167)

From her experiences in North Kensington O'Malley identifies three of the factors that limited the ability of the group to move beyond the relatively minor concerns of local politics. First, such initiatives have a very limited range of sanctions: squatting, auction busting, reasoned research, mass meetings, lock ins, none of which are likely to be effective in anything but the most mundane local campaigns. Secondly, O'Malley cites the difficulty of developing a stable organisational structure, in the absence of which meetings tended to be dominated by the loudest voices, with people withdrawing into sub-groups or cliques. Thirdly, the absence of a national network created a tendency towards parochialism and isolationism. O'Malley suggests that these shortcomings might be resolved by forging an alliance between struggle in the community and in the workplace. In spite of these difficulties O'Malley, writing in

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1977, remained optimistic about the political potential of community development, if only as a means of raising critical consciousness:

> ...what was thought to be important was that local people gained a wide experience of confronting the authorities and of all that this entailed - bureaucratic indifference, professional incompetence and open bullying. It was this experience of fighting for control in one area of life which was a vital political education for all involved and could well act as a spring board for challenging the controls over the other parts of one's life. (O'Malley, 1977, p.171)

With the benefit of twenty years hindsight, it can be noted that the 'vital political education' afforded by grass roots community development amounted to little more than the experience of defeat - instruction in the apparent futility of collective action and the inevitability of alienation. Cowley et al, writing in the same year as O'Malley, locate the problem of community politics not so much in the forms of organisation adopted by community development, so much as its inability to transcend the limitations of bourgeois ideology:

> ...why is it that, despite the development of direct action and the establishment of parallel structures of power, there is still an ultimate acceptance of the 'rules of the game' such as language, pressure points, the formal processes of government and so on? (Cowley et al, 1977, p.13)

Thus for Cowley the central contradiction of community development lies in its inability to transcend the confines of state intervention. Rather than challenging the state-form and the social relations that underpin it, grass roots community development initiatives rarely aspire beyond lobbying for further state intervention or minor changes in the way services are delivered. As a consequence, such initiatives tend to be self defeating, or at least self limiting. Cowley suggests that this is due to a lack of theory on the part of the initiatives, and argues for the need to develop a clearer understanding of the capitalist social formation before the inter-relationships that characterise it can be effectively challenged. Like O'Malley, Cowley also identifies the need to link struggle in the sphere of consumption with that in the sphere of production, and to develop forms of organisation that are capable of overcoming the tendency towards fragmentation characteristic of existing community projects.

Cowley's points about the role of theory, organisation, and the need to address the relations between production and consumption, are valid. However, it is reasonable to ask if his recommendations can be met within a framework that is recognisable as community development. In fact, the tendency for community projects to develop their practice within welfarist frames of reference, and therefore lose their emancipatory potential, is a key theme of the empowerment phenomenon, and is examined in detail below.

At the same time that the residents of Notting Hill were obtaining their 'political education', the Wilson government was instigating its own experiment in community development. A key imperative was the perception of an impending inner city crisis stimulated by poverty and racial tensions. Martin Loney (1983) has documented the development of this moral panic, imported from the U.S., and the impetus it gave to the government's Urban Programme, of which the Community Development Projects (CDPs) were a sub-set. The American government had responded to its 'inner city crisis' with the 'War on Poverty' and 'Model Cities' campaigns, both of which made use of community development/participation methods. It has been suggested that the Urban Programme was a British equivalent of the American campaigns, however, Loney points to evidence which suggests that those responsible for establishing the CDPs were for the most part ignorant of the important lessons learned by their colleagues in the states.

In any case, as we noted above, community development was not a novel concept to the British government, which had experience of its application in a colonial context. By the late 1960's proposals were afoot to facilitate community work in many areas of government and service provision, including: social services, (Seebohm Report, 1968), Local Government, (Maud Commission, 1969), and planning, (Skeffington Report, 1969). The similarities between the 'new' community worker of the 1960s and the colonial community development officer of the 1940-50s, becomes apparent when the following quotation from the Gulbenkian Report (1968) is compared with the quotation from Batten above:

> *Community work is essentially about the inter-relations between people and*
> *social change, how to help people and the providers of services to bring about*
> *a more comfortable 'fit' between themselves and constant change, how to*

survive and grow as persons in relation to others. (Gulbenkian Report, 1968, p.13)

Thus the problematic of community work in 1960s Britain was essentially the same as that of its colonial predecessor - to maintain order through a period of rapid social change. We noted above that fears of racial violence stimulated by immigration from the third world were a key factor in the development of the Urban programme, which in turn gave rise to the CDPs, Loney concludes:

> *What government was concerned about, in the wake of the Notting Hill riots, was both the potential for violence contained in the growth of white racism and the possibility of disturbances initiated by inner city blacks. In this context the urban initiatives can be situated within a larger concern with social control and social order.* (Loney, 1983, p.35)

We noted above that the colonial deployment of community development was a response to fears of rebellion amongst impoverished and politicised blacks who were no longer regulated by traditional social relations. By the 1960s this perceived threat had been imported to Britain's inner cities, thereby provoking a similar response from the state. This time the target of the panic expanded to include the white working class of the inner city, but the objectives and the process remained the same - to pacify and control an unruly population by incorporating it within programmes which would define its needs in a way which could be met by the welfare state and that would, therefore, defuse any threat to social order.

The CDP programme was announced in 1969 and continued throughout the 1970's. During that time twelve CDPs were established in inner city locations across England and Wales. The project was instigated by central government, and it was initially envisaged that the projects would be centrally controlled by an inter departmental steering group, but central direction rapidly declined and the local projects obtained a high degree of autonomy.

Initially the objectives of the project reflected the pluralist assumptions of the Seebohm Report - CDPs were supposed to establish a partnership between the local population, Local Authorities, and other providers of welfare services, in order to integrate service provision and make it more responsive to the needs of the

community, as well as encouraging self-help initiatives amongst local people. We noted above that the central principles of community development work were established in the colonial context, however, the CDP model marked a significant development in the technology of community work, in its application of social science research to local problems. Thus each CDP comprised not just an action team, but also a research team associated with a local university. The intention was that social problems would be closely investigated in their local context by the research team, which would then pass on a set of rationally derived recommendations to the action team for implementation.

Although the application of scientific research to social problems is in many respects a progressive step, Loney (1983) notes that the intended research paradigm was one of social pathology, which locates the origins of social problems in working class culture and behaviour, rather than in broader social and economic relations. The approach is, therefore, inevitably a conservative one.

From the provenance of the CDP programme, and its initial set of objectives, one might conclude that it was simply an exercise in social control, akin to the deployment of similar techniques in the third world, however, the actual operation of the CDPs proved quite different to the expectations held by the architects of the initiative. Rather than imposing the governments agenda, some of the local projects developed a radical critique of government policy, locating the origins of poverty, housing and other problems in broader social and economic relations. Two national organisations were established by CDP workers to facilitate co-operation between the local projects and to develop a national perspective on their work; the CDP workers' Organisation was established in 1974, closely followed by the 'neo-Marxist' Political Economy Collective.

The effectiveness of a community development project as a means of social control is dependent upon the project worker developing a close relationship with members of the community and gaining a detailed understanding of their experiences, perceptions and attitudes, in order to ensure that the interests of the state (or other development agency) can be articulated in a way that is meaningful to the community. Indeed the technique relies on the ability of the development worker to organise the development process in such a way that members of the community believe that they are identifying

their own needs and developing *their own* plans to meet them, when in fact they are simply internalising and then articulating the state's agenda. We noted above that this process is potentially a dangerous one for the state, because the relative autonomy and close links with the community, that are essential to the development workers task, may lead him/her to side with the community against the interests of the state. This appears to have happened with a substantial number of CDP workers, with the result that although they failed to bring about the radical transformation they hoped for, they were at least able to counter the government's agenda of using the CDPs to pacify the inner cities.

That the CDPs were able to diverge so drastically from their intended direction, is largely attributable to the lack of managerial control exercised by central government - Loney has catalogued the ineptitude and apathy of the Home Office in allowing this situation to come about. Even so, the CDP experiment demonstrates that community workers employed by the state are not automatically unwitting agents of social control. Again, the way in which welfare professionals are interpellated by welfarist frames of reference and regulated by managerial structures of control, are key themes in the empowerment phenomenon, and are examined in detail in chapter four.

Whether the radicalism of the CDP workers came from an organic link with the perceptions and experiences of the local community, or was simply the expression of a preconceived political agenda, is difficult to judge from the available data - Loney's analysis suggests a combination of the two, and he quotes from an interview with the Director of the Coventry CDP, to support this claim:

> *... the conversion of CDP workers to a marxist perspective was very rapid and needs to be understood, partly as a resolution of dilemmas that CDP workers found because of the ambiguity of their position.* (Loney, 1983, p.38)

Whatever the cause of the development of political consciousness amongst the CDP workers there is little evidence to suggest that such development occurred amongst the communities they served, or that the CDPs found a means of transforming their radical critique into effective forms of action. In any case the CDP model was virtually abandoned by the state during the 1980s, (with the exception of small projects sponsored by Local Authorities). This does not mean that state sponsored community development disappeared with the demise of the CDPs - health promotion

professionals have used the rhetoric of community development almost since the term was coined by the Colonial Office, but it was during the 1980s that the community development model really gained acceptance as a practical means of achieving health promotion objectives.

The association between health promotion and community development may be rooted in the colonial model discussed above, but its modern manifestation stems from the World Health Organisation's critique of the traditional approach to health development. From the mid-1970s WHO began to advocate a new model of health development culminating in the Alma-Ata declaration on Primary Health Care in 1978 and the 'Health for all by the year 2000' (HFA 2000) campaign. The key elements of this approach include: the identification of basic health needs, the integration of health policy within a broader social and economic development strategy, and community participation in health planning.

Throughout the 1980's the HFA 2000 model of community development permeated the British health promotion establishment and references to it appeared with increasing frequency, not just in professional and academic journals, but in the policy statements of Health Authorities, Local Authorities, Trade Unions and professional bodies. The establishment of a voluntary organisation, initially called the National Community Health Resource, but changing its name to Community Health UK in 1993, did much to support the spread of the approach, and a number of practical campaigns and projects emerged in the latter half of the 1980's - most notably the 'Healthy Cities' movement.

Despite the enthusiasm with which the rhetoric of HFA 2000 has been taken up, the approach has not lacked criticism. For example, it has been suggested that the WHO philosophy tends to lift the health programmes of China and other countries out of their political and economic context (Gish, 1979). The effect is to separate the technical processes of a health intervention from the political forces that determined them (Navarro, 1984). This de-politicised technique can then be applied in virtually any context with little danger of disturbing the status quo.

The achievements of political struggles are reified as technical solutions, which can be introduced within an unchangeable set of national and

international power relations, and accomplished through co-operation and collaboration rather than conflict and confrontation. (Farrant, 1991, p.429)

The agenda adopted by the advocates of a community development approach to health promotion is not short of radical sounding phrases about challenging health inequalities, addressing the social and economic influences on health, and enabling people to recognise and collectively address their health needs. But the theoretical weaknesses of the approach mean that it has no practical means of achieving these objectives. The result is that such campaigns can easily be appropriated and used by the state for ideological purposes as it seeks to restructure the welfare state. Davies makes the point that *'self-help, new forms of volunteering, and community empowerment are some of the terms in which a more limited statutory involvement is being cast'* (1987, p.315). There is certainly much in the community development/radical health promotion canon that can be utilised to legitimate a shift from the statutory provision of services to self-help and voluntarism, and Farrant is to the point when she notes that:

> *...as government social and economic policies served to intensify inequalities in health, the basic principles of the NHS were being threatened, and the burden of caring was being thrown even more firmly on the shoulders of unpaid women in the family and the voluntary sector. Under such circumstances, the notion of 'health by the people' begins to look like a convenient cover-up for the erosion of health for the people.* (Farrant, 1991, pp. 425-6)

That the state has been able to hi-jack the health promotion approach to community development and use it for ideological purposes, in a way that it was incapable of doing with the CDP programme, is due to a range of factors too broad to discuss here. However, some of these factors are relevant to our argument: first is the role of the professions and their position within the welfare state. Unlike the CDP workers, Health Promotion Officers are tightly integrated into the NHS, or, at a National level, the Health Education Authority. They often undergo academic training to become qualified members of their profession, and are able to pursue a career path to a relatively senior position usually within a Health Authority or Self Governing Trust. As a result they are tightly bound by the constraints of working within a bureaucratic

organisation, for example, in terms of managerial accountability and career prospects. Not only does this bind the profession to the corporate agenda of the agency for which they work, it also encourages them to present their practical activity as the implementation of professional or technical skills, rather than the pursuit of an overtly political agenda.

The second factor concerns the way in which the health agenda is ideologically constructed. We noted above, that the HFA 2000 approach to community development presents the results of political struggles in the third world as a set of technical processes that can be applied universally, irrespective of the socio-economic context. This de-politicisation is compounded when the approach is applied within the confines of the British National Health Service, which is dominated by a curative bio-medical approach to health and illness. In this context there is a tendency to reduce health to a personal idiom, and overlook the influence of structural relations. Traditionally this has resulted in healthcare taking the form of direct medical intervention to cure unhealthy individuals. Health Promotion has attempted to counter this biological reductionist account of health with an understanding of the broader psychological and sociological factors. However, the necessity of de-politicising this alternative approach and presenting it as simply another form of technical intervention has the consequence of placing the responsibility for health on the lifestyle and behaviour of the individual. Thus, despite what is often quite radical sounding rhetoric, the central tenet of community development, that it should enable people to identify their own needs and take action to ensure they are met, often amounts to little more than enabling people to recognise their need for a no-smoking campaign, or a self-help group.

The role of professionals and the nature of health promotion ideology are more important issues than their cursory treatment here implies. We shall return to them in subsequent chapters, for the time being it is sufficient to observe that both factors are problematic for community development and may enable the state to use such projects for ideological purposes.

We noted above that the ruling class can give free reign to the consumer movement, safe in the knowledge that its most radical demands can only strengthen market relations; that calls to extend the rights associated with citizenship can only reinforce

the alienation inherent in the capitalist state form; that the modern self-help movement from its subjectivist paradigm can only reinforce the isolation of already marginalised groups, and that community participation can only give a veneer of legitimacy to the institutions of the welfare state. Community development faces many of the structural and ideological constraints encountered by the other modes of empowerment, but crucially, does not incorporate these oppressive social relations as an immutable aspect of its internal logic. Therefore, at least at the level of theoretical abstraction, the emancipatory potential of community development is not constrained by a self-limiting internal logic.

The absence of a self-limiting internal logic does not ensure that community development will be a successful emancipatory strategy; only that this question cannot be answered by theoretical deduction. Instead, empirical study is needed to identify how the structural and ideological constraints faced by other modes of empowerment are addressed in the everyday practice of community development. As we shall see in the next chapter, the Waterfront Health Action Project adopted the community development model as its point of departure, and therefore provides an interesting case-study of this mode of empowerment. The analysis presented above suggests that the empirical inquiry should focus on the project's relationship to the state, particularly the extent to which the practical activity of the professionals involved is determined by their location in the state, and whether or not the project adopts a critical stance towards welfarist frames of reference.

Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a context for the study of empowerment presented in subsequent chapters. It was suggested that empowerment was a broad phenomenon varying over time and place, and that a generally applicable definition of the category would, therefore, possess little validity. Instead, five modes of empowerment were examined, to reveal their conditions of existence, internal logic, and emancipatory potential. An historical-logical approach was adopted to reveal changes over time.

It was found that the emancipatory potential of each mode of empowerment was constrained by alienation in prevailing social and economic relations. However, only community development avoided internalising these constraints as part of its internal logic. Consumerism's attempt to empower the consumer has little emancipatory potential because it bases its practical activity on improving the efficiency of the market mechanism, rather than challenging the consumer's alienation from direct control over the production and distribution of goods and services. Citizenship is characterised by the pursuit of 'rights' granted by parliament, however, like the market, the state-form is a manifestation of the masses' structural alienation from social and economic power. The emancipatory potential of citizenship is, therefore, limited by internalisation of this form of alienation. The emancipatory potential of self-help is limited not so much by structural relations, but by the adoption of a subjectivist approach to knowledge production, that in effect alienates its adherents from collective emancipatory activity. Community participation is limited by the fact that it takes place entirely within an ideological and structural frame-work dominated by the statutory agencies, that denies participants the opportunity to define their own emancipatory agenda. This is reinforced by a conservative ideology of community, that stresses the need for moral regulation and statutory policing of inter-personal relations.

Community development is influenced by the same conservative ideology of community, but does not base its internal logic on the assumed immutability of alienation in social and economic relations. Instead, community development focuses upon enabling people to identify their needs and take collective action to ensure that they are met. This does not guarantee the success of community development as an emancipatory strategy, only that its limitations cannot be theoretically deduced from analysis of its internal logic. The Waterfront Health Action Project (WHAP) provided an opportunity to examine community development empirically and assess its emancipatory potential in a specific case-study. As we shall see in the next chapter, during the course of the initiative WHAP evolved into a recognisably different mode of empowerment, but this transformation was at least partially driven by the constraints of community development.

As well as providing a context for the empirical study of empowerment, this chapter also raised several issues to be addressed in the ethnography. They include: the project's relationship to the state, epistemological assumptions about the production of knowledge, the autonomy of participating welfare professionals, the stance taken towards welfarist frames of reference, and fundamentally, whether WHAP enabled its participants to effectively challenge the structural and ideological basis of their alienation.

2. Case Study: the Waterfront Health Action Project

The previous chapter examined the broad historical and theoretical terrain in which this study is located, and identified key research themes. The Waterfront Health Action Project (WHAP) provided the crucible in which those themes were examined, and the aim of this chapter is to provide a description of WHAP, using case study materials, prior to presentation of the ethnographic data and sociological analysis in subsequent chapters.

The case study is drawn from a range of sources including: the minutes of the monthly project steering group meetings, the community development worker's monthly reports, a weekly newsletter produced by one of the volunteers, the project's written constitution, operational plan, policy documents, bids for funding, research design documents, the survey report, progress reports, written correspondence, and my own research notes. Before presenting the case-study it is important to note that my dual role in the group, as both an active member and a participant observer, was in many respects contradictory. My attempts to address this contradiction are examined in the appendix on methodology

Geographical location

The Waterfront Health Action Project covered six electoral wards in and around the town of Thamesmead in South East London, on the Thames waterfront. Thamesmead is a 'new town' developed in the late 1960's on what was formerly marshland. Draining the marshes provided what was at the time the largest area of building land in London. Initially, the development of Thamesmead took place under the auspices of the now defunct Greater London Council, with the aim of providing rented accommodation for the 'over-spill' from inner London boroughs (Chanan, 1992). Like other public sector housing estates of the period Thamesmead has a mixture of tower blocks and their low rise equivalent, all built from pre-formed concrete. Many of the water features and green spaces of the original site have been preserved and

integrated into the design of the town. By the standards of south-east London, Thamesmead has a low population density. The site retains a substantial amount of undeveloped land, and the clusters of housing are connected by a network of wide roads, spanned by concrete walkways.

Following the demise of the GLC in 1986, a private company called Thamesmead Town was established to manage the housing stock. Two Local Authorities, Bexley and Greenwich are responsible for providing the remaining council services to the area. During the 1980s many tenants purchased their homes under the government's right to buy scheme. In addition, much of the new housing on Thamesmead has been built by private property developers for sale rather than rent. Thus the balance of tenure has changed to the point where half of the housing is now owner occupied. There has been very little development of local industry, and Thamesmead is poorly served in terms of shopping and recreational facilities.

The areas around Thamesmead, which are also covered by the Waterfront project, namely Abbey Wood, Belvedere and Erith, are more typical of south London. Much of the housing is of the brick built terraced variety, although there are some tower blocks as well, particularly in Erith. These areas have been established longer and have a comparatively well developed mixture of local industry and infrastructure.

Background to the Waterfront Project

Although the built environment of Thamesmead is quite different to that of the surrounding neighbourhoods, the area as a whole shares a number of social and demographic characteristics. Census data show that the Waterfront area has relatively high levels of social deprivation compared with the Boroughs of Bexley and Greenwich as a whole, and particularly in comparison with the south east region.

As one would expect in an area of high social deprivation the population also suffers a much higher incidence of ill health and premature death than more affluent localities. By the summer of 1991 awareness of these issues had been raised, partly by various reports produced by the Health Authorities and Local Authorities serving the area, and

partly by the reporting of subjective concerns in the local press. Asthma and respiratory illness, particularly in children, were considered to be a growing problem amongst the local population. Whilst there was no hard evidence concerning the local influences on respiratory illness, air pollution was often suggested as a possible cause. This is significant, because at the time, planning permission was being sought for a sewage burning plant, to be situated in Belvedere, and a number of other industrial developments to be constructed locally, all of which it was feared would further contribute to air pollution.

It was in this context of concern over social deprivation, environmental pollution, and their combined effects on the health of the local population, that the Waterfront Health Action Project came into being. The origins of the project can be traced back to a meeting of Thamesmead community workers in 1991. Dr Liz Dean, who was then the Director of Public Health at Bexley Health Authority, gave a presentation on local health issues, that reflected the subjective experiences of the professionals present at the meeting. In the subsequent discussion it was agreed that the group should meet on a regular basis to look at ways in which the health problems of the local population could be addressed.

■ **Early membership of the group**

The first few meetings of the group were not minuted, so there is no written record of who attended them. The first minuted meeting took place on 12 September 1991, and it is possible to ascertain from the minutes of this and subsequent meetings, who the core members of the group were at this point. Some people only attended one or two meetings and then dropped out; the regular attenders at this time were: the Director of Public Health from Bexley Health Authority, the Director of Thamesmead Family Services Unit (a social work organisation with charitable status), a retired social worker who had been based in Thamesmead, the local vicar, the health advisor to the London Borough of Greenwich, and from January 1992 onwards, the Director of Health Promotion at Bexley Health Authority. I also attended in my role as a Public Health researcher from Bexley Health Authority.

In April 1992 a part-time community worker was appointed and began attending meetings. Later in the same year workers from Bexley Council for Racial Equality and the Social Services department of Bexley London Borough began attending the meetings. Initially then, the project steering group exclusively comprised professional and semi-professional workers, and it was not until February 1993 that volunteers from the community began to attend the meetings.

■ The initial orientation of the group

It is unfortunate that the first few meetings were not minuted, as it was then that the original objectives and general perspective of the project were established. This gap can be partially filled by looking at the various bids for funding that were produced during this period. Such bids are written to appeal to potential funding agencies and may, therefore, reflect their agenda, but they do give some indication of the projects concerns. The first bid for funding was made in a letter from the Director of the Family Services Unit, (who had been elected to Chair the WHAP meetings), to the City Parochial Trust. The letter, dated 30 July 1991, defined WHAP as a community health research project, aiming to involve local people in the identification of their health needs.

One month later a more detailed outline of the project had been produced. As well as identifying the aims and objectives of the survey, it also gave some indication of the need for community action:

> *The Group's objective is to co-ordinate community action against the social and environmental causes of ill health. A central element of this objective is the empowerment of the local community. At the first meeting of WHAP it was agreed that the first step in this process would be a community opinion survey, followed by a public meeting to report the findings of the research and plan future strategy.* (Project Outline, August 1991)

Although these statements are brief and non-specific, the project's main aims at this time are identifiable, namely: *(i)* that the project would address the social and environmental influences on health, *(ii)* that this would entail the production of new

knowledge about the population's health needs and the causes of ill health, and *(iii)* that the project would attempt to develop a partnership between participating welfare professionals and local residents, in order to develop a local health strategy.

The final point is an important one. The Waterfront project did not originate within the statutory agencies, either at national, regional or local level, rather it was derived from the experiences and concerns of health and community workers at the grass-roots level. WHAP was not initially conceptualised as a health promotion project, nor as a social work project, located within and constrained by the statutory agencies, but as an independent, community based initiative in which the professionals involved would be accountable to the local population rather than to their formal employers. At least in the early stages, the Waterfront project appears to have had much in common with the community development perspective discussed in the previous chapter. Certainly many of the difficulties associated with community development work are applicable to the Waterfront project, for instance: achieving genuine autonomy from the state, establishing an effective partnership between professionals and volunteers, the identification of the objective needs of the population, and the development of effective strategies for meeting those needs.

The Attitudes to Health Survey

WHAP's first priority was to conduct research into the health status and attitudes to health of the local population. It was agreed that this research should take the form of an interviewer administered questionnaire, developed and conducted in partnership with locally resident volunteers. Several statutory and charitable agencies were approached for funding, but only one proved successful. The South East Thames Regional Health Authority had requested bids for the funding of projects that would improve the 'quality' of statutory health services. This was defined broadly and included 'consumer involvement and empowerment'. A bid for £23,805 was submitted to the fund in October 1991, and two months later the Regional Health Authority agreed to provide the full amount.

The next three months were spent recruiting a part-time community development worker to assist with the survey, finding accommodation for the project, and organising low key publicity. By the end of March 1992 an experienced community worker had been appointed and office space had been rented at the William Temple Church in Abbey Wood. An academic consultant from the University of Kent was also enlisted.

Although the full research design was not written up and submitted to the steering group until the beginning of June 1992, considerable discussion on this matter had taken place prior to the submission for funding. There was an epistemological dilemma at the core of the project; on one hand the group was committed to involving members of the community at every stage of the project, and to producing information that would accurately reflect the experiences of, and be meaningful to, local residents, but on the other hand it was felt to be important that the research was carried out to rigorous academic standards in order to give the findings credibility. Eventually a two stage research design was agreed by the steering group.

During the first stage the community worker would conduct 'outreach' work amongst the local population, in order to informally gather information on health concerns, and recruit volunteers to help with the survey in stage two. It was hoped that this would produce a research agenda that reflected local concerns, rather than the imposition of a professional or academic perspective. It was also decided that this stage of the research would concentrate on obtaining the views and active involvement of marginalised groups, such as: the long-term unemployed, black and minority ethnic groups, women and the elderly. This stage would last for six months, during which time the questionnaire design, sampling and other preparatory work for stage two would be conducted.

The second stage would entail a questionnaire based survey administered by volunteer interviewers recruited in stage one. The survey would be designed and conducted to academic standards and applied to a random sample of people aged 16 years or older who were resident in the six electoral wards covered by the project.

During the first stage of the project the community development worker made contact with 'key informants' from a broad range of local groups, including: a project concerned with the welfare of Vietnamese immigrants, an Asian women's group, an elderly Asians group, staff and parents at a Nursery school, youth projects, the elderly, schools, the mentally ill, the local Labour Party branch, local environmental pressure groups, a patient group attached to one of the local Health Centres, Bexley Voluntary Services Council, Thamesmead community workers group, and Health Visitors at the Abbey Wood Centre. The local press and radio station gave considerable publicity to the project, resulting in several local residents coming forward, either to give informal information or to volunteer help for the second stage of the research project.

There are obviously problems with this type of ad hoc inquiry, the community worker was not a trained researcher, the data were not gathered in a systematic way, and the interviews and group discussions were not tape recorded, or detailed notes kept. Under such conditions, there is no way of ensuring that the information gathered was not systematically biased. However, the aim of part one of the project was not to gather research findings, but to forge closer links with the local population as a prelude to the research process. The objectives were to raise the profile of the project with the local population, recruit volunteers, and to enable the professional members of the steering group who were responsible for developing the research design to improve their *subjective* grasp of the health concerns of the local population, (and of minority and marginalised groups in particular).

The community development worker's findings were fed back to the steering group in the form of monthly written reports, that were summarised at the end of the stage. Many of the more common complaints made by local people might be considered relatively trivial and likely to have only a marginal impact on health, for example dog mess on the pavements and the smell from the sewage works. However, more significant environmental issues were also raised, for instance, air pollution was mentioned by many people, often in relation to respiratory illness. The quality of the water supply on Thamesmead, and health problems associated with tower block accommodation were also raised. Members of minority ethnic groups were also concerned about the effects of racism on health, and felt that health service providers were not sufficiently responsive to their specific needs. Several of the elderly people

contacted reported problems of mobility and anxiety, particularly regarding the fear of crime. Young mothers, as well as reporting a high prevalence of asthma amongst their children, also spoke of their experiences of depression and dissatisfaction with doctors whom they felt did not understand the nature of their problems.

The above information was synthesised with the existing concerns of the steering group to produce a research agenda. After considerable discussion amongst the professionals it was agreed that the survey should focus on the following issues: self reported accounts of ill health, definitions of health, perceptions of the influences on health, how people currently manage their health, attitudes to existing health service provision, views regarding community health action, and personal information about the respondent, for example, housing tenure.

Constructing the questionnaire was a difficult exercise for a number of reasons. First, the research agenda was very broad, necessitating a long and detailed questionnaire. Secondly, it was decided that the questionnaire should comprise mainly multiple choice questions, although some open ended questions were also included. There were practical reasons for this; volunteer interviewers were to administer the questionnaire and it was felt that a multiple choice design would be easier for them to conduct, and easier to collate. It was also felt that open ended questions might generate relatively superficial responses, whereas multiple choice questions, with the different options drawn from the informal evidence gathered in part one of the study, might stimulate a more considered response.

The questionnaire design also caused conflict within the steering group. From the beginning of the project it had been agreed that the survey should be conducted to rigorous 'academic' standards, in order that the data yielded would have credibility with the local population and with statutory and voluntary agencies. This placed constraints on the type of questions that could be included, and on the way in which they could be phrased. Unfortunately, this principle often came into conflict with the aspirations, or, 'common sense' assumptions of steering group members, and heated discussion ensued.

I was made responsible for drafting the questionnaire, this entailed consideration of: the formal statistical data relating to the area, the concerns raised by the professionals involved in the project, the anecdotal evidence gathered from the community in the first stage, and questionnaires used in other studies that had looked at similar issues. Each successive draft of the questionnaire, (there were four in all) was presented to the steering group for discussion and moderation. It is important to note that although volunteers from the community were involved in the project at this stage, they were organised separately and did not attend the steering group meetings. The reason given for this was that they would be intimidated by the professionals involved, and would require training by the community worker to enable them to participate in joint meetings. In effect this meant that the volunteers had a very limited role in the questionnaire design and were only able to comment on the various drafts indirectly through the community worker.

A sample of 702 names and addresses, (approximately 1 in 80 of the target population), was randomly selected from the General Practitioner 'age/sex register', held by Bexley & Greenwich Family Health Services Authority. Approximately ten local residents were recruited as volunteer interviewers for the survey - it is not possible to arrive at a precise figure, as different volunteers joined or left throughout the survey period. All of the volunteer interviewers received training by the community development worker.

The interviewers had been recruited by the community development worker during the first stage of the project and the composition of the group reflected the decision to concentrate on people from minority and marginalised groups - all of the interviewers were working class women living in the locality. Several of the women were from black and minority ethnic groups, or had suffered adverse life experiences such as poverty, long-term unemployment, single parenthood, or, racial harassment.

The interviews were conducted over a six week period from the beginning of October to mid-November 1992. The interviewers worked in pairs and were paid £15 for every five completed questionnaires. An additional payment of fifty pence was made for revisiting houses where the respondent had not initially been at home. Childcare and travelling expenses were also paid where appropriate. At the end of the six week

period 392 questionnaires had been completed giving a response rate of 55.8%. A protocol for statistical analysis had already been developed, and the completed questionnaires were despatched to the Centre for Health Services Studies at the University of Kent for data processing. The basic frequencies for each question were produced in January 1993, with the more detailed statistical data appearing in March.

The basic frequencies were presented and discussed at a day long meeting between the volunteers and professionals involved in the project, in February 1993. Following the release of the full data set in mid March, I spent six weeks writing a draft report on the survey that was also presented and discussed at an away-day, that took place in May 1993. Preparing the report for publication took a further six months. The final report was not circulated until January 1994, fifteen months after the survey had been completed. During the intervening period a summary of the report was produced and circulated in June 1993.

■ The findings of the survey

The final report ran to 20,000 words, and contained information on self-reported morbidity, lay beliefs concerning the main influences on health, local health priorities, and attitudes towards community health action. The self-reported morbidity data supported the anecdotal evidence of a high prevalence of respiratory illness, with 50% of respondents reporting symptoms. Just under 50% of men, and over 60% of women reported symptoms of stress. As we shall see, the latter finding was used to justify the provision of social support and informal counselling of local residents by WHAP members.

Respondents were also asked to rank different social, economic, environmental and cultural factors in terms of their adverse affect on health. On average, drug abuse, homelessness, heavy drinking, smoking and unemployment were considered to be the most important negative influences on health. When combined with the morbidity data and the findings of formal epidemiological studies these concerns could be translated into a series of local health priorities. Stress, mental health, and respiratory illness were felt to be the most pressing issues for WHAP to address, and they were

considered to be largely influenced by poverty, environmental pollution, racism and sexism.

The report also looked at different strategies for addressing local health issues, finding widespread dissatisfaction with the management of statutory services, and a high level of support for various forms of community action. Specific recommendations and plans for action were not included in the report.

■ Presenting the findings of the survey

The main purpose of conducting the survey was to produce an objective body of knowledge about local health issues that could be used to raise the consciousness of local residents and influence the providers of health related services. Promoting the findings of the survey was, therefore, vitally important to the achievement of WHAP's original objectives.

As mentioned above, the findings of the survey were written up in a full report and a separate summary. The summary was circulated in June 1993 to: senior Local Authority Officers, Councillors, local Members of Parliament, Health Authority Officers and non-executive members, Community Health Councils, General Practitioners, managers of local hospitals and community health services, and to relevant voluntary sector groups. The full report was published in January 1994 and circulated to the same list. An article based on the project was published in the Health Service Journal, leading to sales of the report to various academic and health sector organisations nationally (Wainwright, D. 1994).

Public meetings and a press launch were scheduled to coincide with publication of the summary report. Unfortunately, neither were well attended, even though the group had worked hard to contact the media and advertise the public meetings. Several articles on the survey results did appear in the local press, and members of the group were interviewed on local radio. The volunteers and professionals involved in the project presented the findings of the survey and an account of their experiences while conducting it to the following statutory agencies: Bexley Community Health Council, Thamesmead Advisory Forum, Bexley and Greenwich Health Authority and Family

Health Services Authority, Thamesmead Race Equality Forum, Greenwich Community Health Council, and the South Thames Social Services Research Group. A delegation of volunteers and professionals from the WHAP steering group also met with Baroness Cumberlege, permanent under-secretary of state at the Department of Health, at Richmond House, to discuss the findings of the survey and the subsequent establishment of a Drop-in Centre.

A video was also planned to complement the written report. Two film students from a local college were commissioned to produce the film, and the community worker spent time directing their efforts, and conducting filmed interviews with people who had participated in the project. A 'rough cut' of the film was presented at one of the rehearsals for the public meeting; unfortunately it proved to be more 'art house' than 'social realism'. Much of the film comprised external footage of Thamesmead, shot on black and white film, apparently from the back of a moving vehicle, accompanied by a sound track of 'techno' music and sound bites from the interviews. The project steering group was not impressed, (particularly by an often repeated shot of a Thamesmead tower block apparently revolving on its own axis in a surreal fashion), and asked the film's producers for a more conventional edit. The video was mentioned again at various steering group meetings, and a revised edit was shown at an away-day in December 1994.

Generally, WHAP's attempts to mediate the findings of the survey were not conspicuously successful. The public meetings were poorly attended and did not lead to broad based popular support for local community health action. The statutory agencies were obliged to listen to the survey findings, but no significant changes in health policy or service provision occurred as a result.

The Drop-in Centre

The establishment of a Drop-in centre was first proposed at a steering group away-day in February 1993. This was the first formal meeting attended by both professionals and volunteers. Part of the day was spent discussing the volunteers' subjective

experiences of administering the questionnaire, and it was during this discussion that one of the volunteers identified the need for a Drop-in:

> *There is a need for a Drop-in centre: a counselling service with interpreters and help and advice from someone who could identify with the caller, help with stress management, work on combating racism, something for small children, summer play schemes, something structured for teenagers, and after school provision.* (From the minutes of a WHAP away-day, 15th February 1993, at Godden Green)

It is worth noting that the initial findings of the survey were presented later on the same day, that is, *after* the establishment of a Drop-in centre had been proposed by the volunteers. Whilst many of the findings of the survey could be used as a rationale for the establishment of a Drop-in, (for instance, the high incidence of stress and the perceived need for social support), the actual proposal came first and may have acted as a filter through which the statistical findings of the survey were later perceived. This raises the question of whether the Drop-in proposal emerged as a result of the survey, or whether the survey was simply used to legitimate the Drop-in.

It could be argued that the experience of administering the questionnaire, gave the volunteers an insight into the needs and preferences of the respondents that enabled them to anticipate the statistical analysis of the survey findings and develop an appropriate response. However, it could also be argued that as the Drop-in proposal was articulated prior to the presentation of the survey findings, it may have been driven more by the needs and preferences of the volunteers themselves. This question is not easily resolved; on one hand, as will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters, the volunteers gained from the Drop-in in terms of increased self-esteem, social support, and the acquisition of small sums of money, but on the other hand the findings of the survey appear to support the claim that the Drop-in was established to address the needs of the population.

The Drop-in opened in May 1993 in rooms attached to the Church of the Cross in Thamesmead, for one day per week, and was so well attended that the venue was too small to accommodate it, therefore, after six weeks the Drop-in moved to the William

Temple Church in Abbey Wood. The Drop-in was staffed by the volunteers, with at least one professional in attendance. The main activity of the Drop-in involved a combination of health advice and social support. Visitors were provided with tea, (sometimes lunch), and participated in group discussions or individual conversations, which gave them an opportunity to raise their own health concerns, and to receive advice on personal health and welfare issues, like claiming benefits or housing. Some of the volunteers attended training courses in accident prevention, stress management, assertion skills, and counselling. The volunteers also provided facials, massages, manicures, and simple craft activities.

Activity at the Drop-in was monitored and summarised in quarterly reports. Between September 1993 and February 1994 attendance averaged 15 adults per session and 4 children. The majority of attenders, (on average 12 out of 15) were women. On average, four newcomers attended each week. Quantifying the activity of a service that was essentially qualitative was a difficult task, but the Drop-in workers kept a log of the discussions that had taken place and attempted to categorise them. According to these statistics 18% of discussions were about the experience of stress, 17% were about situational problems (such as child rearing, poverty, and caring for the elderly), a further 17% concerned specific medical conditions, and the remainder covered a range of topics from alternative medicine to morality and social responsibility (statistics taken from WHAP's quarterly report to the London Implementation Group).

It is important to note that the establishment of the Drop-in centre, and the issues it addressed, marked a significant turning point for WHAP. The initial emphasis on organising local people to identify their health needs and take social action to satisfy them suggests that the project had taken the community development model as its point of departure. But, the establishment of the Drop-in and the move towards the provision of social support 'services' reflects the transition to a different mode of empowerment. The reasons for this transformation, and its consequences for the project's emancipatory potential, are examined in the remaining three chapters.

WHAP's Constitution and Policy Statements

Constitutional matters were of importance to the steering group from the beginning of the project. A provisional constitution had been adopted prior to the involvement of the volunteers; this was later amended by a joint working party of professionals and volunteers. The final draft, adopted by WHAP in July 1993, formally adopted the name of the project, described the geographical area covered, and re-stated WHAP's aims. Formal arrangements for membership, election to an 'executive committee, and the organisation of meetings were also addressed. At this stage the 'official' aims of WHAP continued to refer to community participation in health planning, collaboration with statutory and voluntary agencies campaigning against adverse social and economic influences on health, and conducting research. However, organising self-help groups and Drop-ins was also included as an aim; reflecting the transition from a community development model to a new mode of empowerment.

This transition was reinforced in October 1994, when the constitution was complemented by a series of policy documents, including: an equal opportunities policy, a specification of the differences between members, volunteers and workers in WHAP, a volunteer recruitment procedure, a volunteer recruiter's charter, and a volunteer's charter.

The document defining the different roles of member, volunteer and paid worker also addressed the issues of contractual obligation, accountability, and participation in the decision making process. Essentially member status conferred the right to attend and help out with WHAP's activities, but without any formal commitment or contractual obligation. Members had the right to vote in elections to the Executive Committee, but not to stand for election themselves. Volunteer status, (including professionals from the statutory agencies as well as local residents), involved a formal application procedure and acceptance of the terms of a volunteer agreement. Crucially, volunteers were to be 'accountable to the qualified paid worker who supervises recruitment and training, and ultimately to the management committee of WHAP'. In return volunteers had the right to receive training, claim expenses, and stand for election to the Executive Committee. Paid workers were bound by a job description and a contract of

employment. They were accountable to the Executive Committee, to which they could not seek election.

The volunteer recruitment procedure and the volunteer recruiter's charter described the process by which members of WHAP achieved volunteer status. Recruiters were advised: to clearly define the 'job' to which they would recruit, (including the production of a job description and person specification), to interview selectively, and to agree a probationary period in order to *'see if the appointment is working, and to allow either side to withdraw gracefully if it is not'*. Potential volunteers, on the other hand, were obliged to complete an application form, giving the names and addresses of three referees, and be interviewed by a panel. Successful applicants would sign a volunteer's agreement that stated, amongst other things, *'the hours and days on which volunteering will take place'*, *'the name and position of the person to whom the volunteer is accountable'*, and, *'the responsibilities of the volunteer as detailed in the job description'*. The volunteer's charter simply listed a series of rights and responsibilities, for example the right to have someone to talk to about the work, to be trained if necessary, and the responsibility to do the job reliably and to respect confidentiality.

In short, the new policy documents set down the terms and conditions of membership of what was essentially a charitable agency, defining the members as voluntary workers rather than political activists. Again, this gave formal recognition to the transition from community development to the new mode of empowerment.

WHAP's relationship to the statutory sector

WHAP was established by welfare professionals, the majority of whom worked for statutory agencies such as the Health Authority or Local Authority. However, WHAP itself was not formally instigated by the statutory agencies; it was established on an ad hoc basis by the participants themselves. This gave the group an unusual and slightly ambiguous status. On one hand the professionals were simply doing their jobs, using time and resources paid for by their employers, but on the other hand WHAP was not accountable to any statutory agency, although agencies were able to limit their

employees involvement in WHAP during working hours. This ambiguity extended to WHAP's initial agenda; the objective of improving the health and well being of the local population clearly fits in with the 'official' objectives of the statutory agencies, but at the same time the professionals were critical of the statutory agencies and sought to establish WHAP as an independent project under the direct control of local residents, and capable of adopting a more critical, campaigning approach.

An important aspect of the autonomy of any organisation is its source of funding. The minutes of the steering group meetings show that considerable time was spent discussing this issue and in the preparation and submission of bids for funding. The possibility of seeking charitable status proved a particularly contentious issue, mainly because the Charity Commission forbids registered charities from engaging in work of a political nature. Even so, the bid for funding under the 'Tomlinson' initiative, committed WHAP to becoming a charity.

Even so, funding for the project came mainly from National Health Service sources. The attitudes to health survey was funded by what was then the South East Thames Regional Health Authority, under a scheme to support initiatives that would improve the quality of health service provision. Fortunately the guidelines for application were quite broad and included 'consumer involvement and empowerment'. This meant that an application for funding could be compiled around the theme of involving local residents in the assessment of health needs, gathering information on satisfaction with existing health services, and facilitating community participation in health service planning and decision making. Careful phrasing meant that the application for funding could be tailored to fit the agenda of the funding agency, without departing from the original objectives of the project. The funding agency did not request any managerial control over the project; six monthly progress reports were requested, but the total funding was paid in advance and was not dependent on the reports. When the survey was completed, a successful application was made under the same scheme, to fund the part-time community worker for a further year, in order to take forward the findings of the survey.

The second major source of funding for WHAP was the agency established to implement the recommendations of the Tomlinson Report (1992) on the re-structuring

of secondary and primary health care in London. The Tomlinson agenda was much narrower than that of the Regional Health Authority's Quality Fund, and applications for funding were judged according to the extent to which they were likely to: meet specific health needs, contribute to the development of innovative primary care, or, reduce demand for acute services. Importantly, projects were funded on an incremental basis, enabling the administrators of the fund to withdraw support from projects that were felt to be ineffective, or which strayed from the Tomlinson agenda.

In its bid for funding WHAP was able to use the findings of the health survey to identify specific health needs of the local population that could be met by community based projects like the Drop-in centre. Much was made of the high levels of stress related health problems reported in the survey, and the need for social support, counselling and health promotion work. Of course, the more political aspects of the community development approach lay outside the Tomlinson agenda, so in successive bids for funding WHAP was obliged to propose: the establishment of new Drop-in centres, the provision of an outreach service to housebound residents, support groups for asthma sufferers and disabled people, and active liaison with statutory service providers.

WHAP was successful in obtaining funds from the Tomlinson initiative, but not the full amount requested. This enabled WHAP to continue with the Drop-in, but severely limited the scope for expansion. The local statutory agencies did not attempt to exercise direct control over WHAP through its professional members, but the role of the professionals was contradictory, because they brought with them the expectations beliefs and forms of behaviour that reflected their role in the statutory sector. This contradiction was deepened by WHAP's dependence on statutory funding. The contradictory nature of professional involvement in the initiative, and the broader question of WHAP's relationship to the state, are addressed in subsequent chapters.

Other Issues Found in the Case Study Materials

In addition to mundane issues about the search for funding, conducting the survey, and later, the day to day running of the Drop-in centre, a number of other issues can also be identified from the case-study materials. Three such issues are briefly identified below, followed by detailed analysis in subsequent chapters.

The first issue is racism and multiculturalism. Racism was a major issue in Thamesmead and the surrounding area throughout the life of WHAP. The British National Party had a book shop in nearby Welling, that distributed overtly racist literature, and was allegedly used as a national headquarters for the organisation. Reports of racially motivated crime in the area began to increase, culminating in two murders in 1993. The incidents of racial violence, coupled with numerous demonstrations against the BNP book shop, kept the issue of racism high on the agenda of the local and national media.

From the beginning it was considered very important that WHAP should develop a strong commitment to multiculturalism, and ensure that discriminatory practices were avoided. During the first six months of the community development work links were made with voluntary organisations and individuals from black and minority ethnic groups, who were asked to participate in the project. The questionnaire used in the survey was vetted to ensure that the questions were not ethnocentric, respondents whose first language was not English were offered the opportunity to be interviewed by someone who spoke their first language, and the findings of the survey were analysed by ethnic group. A formal equal opportunities policy was not adopted by WHAP until November 1994, but considerable discussion on this topic took place throughout the duration of the project.

WHAP's concern to avoid racism in its day to day practice came to a head when one of the volunteers produced a leaflet to advertise the Drop-in Centre without consulting the community development worker. The leaflet was in English and did not contain any mention of services for people from minority ethnic groups. The community worker stopped the leaflet from being distributed, and (together with an ethnic

minority social worker who was then involved in the project), circulated a letter to all WHAP members complaining about the incident:

> At the last full meeting of the committee, concerns were expressed about the development of WHAP as a multi-cultural organisation. [...] We need to have clear strategies and structures in place that are inclusive of all cultures; to ensure that everyone in WHAP at present has a clear understanding of why these are necessary. Events have taken place which if left unchecked could create the very barriers we want to eradicate. There is confusion around different roles and expectations of individual members, professional and community, and how they work together. For example, the preparation of a WHAP information leaflet which was given to a volunteer to do without any long term thinking about:
>
> (a) what WHAP can offer all cultures,
> (b) who the leaflet is for,
> (c) the fact that an English version is by itself exclusive of other cultures...
>
> [...] We are writing this letter because neither of us want to see WHAP develop like other community projects that tokenise cultures which are not English... (Correspondence from the community worker and another professional member of WHAP to all other members, 30th June 1993)

As a result of the concerns raised in the letter a decision was taken that all future publicity materials should be examined by the community worker, or, presented to the steering group, before publication. This caused some ill-feeling in the group and brought into question the nature of the relationship between the professionals and volunteers.

A second issue concerned smoking at the Drop-in and during steering group meetings. Several of the volunteers involved in the project smoked, as did many of the people attending the Drop-in. This created a dilemma; on one hand it was felt that as the main objective of the project was to improve health, smoking should not be allowed, but on the other hand, an outright ban might alienate or even exclude the smokers. In

January 1994 the professionals involved in the project met without the volunteers, and the smoking issue was discussed:

Appreciation of the work and services of the Drop-ins was expressed, as well as some worries especially about the amount of smoking. Smoking should not take place when there are children present and at Christmas there was a positive pall of smoke when children were around. Kate hopes to borrow a smokeliser - a machine which measures the levels of carbon monoxide and oxygen in the blood - for use at the beginning and end of sessions to demonstrate to people what is happening in the blood stream when people smoke. She also wants to obtain a machine which measures blood pressure and pulse rates. Working in this way and providing equipment will help towards raising awareness of the dangers of smoking and eliminating it. Meanwhile there is a need for clear rules about dividing smoking from non-smoking areas. (From the minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 1994)

A month later the matter was discussed in the presence of the volunteers at a full meeting of the steering group:

Smoking: This difficult subject led to constructive conflict but it was eventually agreed that WHAP accepts that it IS very difficult. Many people attending the Drop-in are very stressed and some are heavy smokers who might not stay if smoking were banned altogether. But WHAP is committed to the spiralling down of smoking and helping people towards stopping. We will have only one small area, with a sand tray, where people can go to smoke, on the far right of the bar counter. No smoking anywhere else, except outside. And we must give the information about the effects of smoking and put up posters so that people are clear about where they can, and cannot, smoke. (From the minutes of the meeting held on 10th February 1994)

Despite this apparent compromise, the issue of smoking continued to arouse debate in subsequent meetings, raising the question of how prescriptive WHAP should be in attempting to modify the behaviour of its members and users of the Drop-in.

In August 1994 a series of incidents occurred involving one of the volunteer members, that caused WHAP to develop and implement disciplinary proceedings. The volunteer concerned was experiencing difficulties in her personal life that caused her a great deal of stress, and affected her involvement in WHAP. Matters came to a head during the bank holiday weekend, when the volunteer began behaving manically, this involved visiting or telephoning local statutory agencies and service providers to demand resources for WHAP, thereby bringing the organisation into disrepute. Other volunteers involved in the project where visited by the individual concerned, (some in the middle of the night), and were subjected to anti-social behaviour and verbal abuse. Eventually, a professional member of WHAP was called out in the middle of the night and arrangements were made to have the volunteer 'Sectioned', that is, forcibly admitted to a psychiatric institution.

The episode was very traumatic for the volunteers and professionals involved in WHAP, and it was felt that WHAP's credibility with other local organisations had been damaged by it. Under these circumstances, it was felt that WHAP needed to examine the incident and take a decision about the volunteer's future involvement in the project. The Steering Group met and agreed a procedure by which this could be accomplished. Two volunteers and one professional were elected to hear evidence from those affected by the incident, and to arrive at recommendations that would then be voted on by the steering group.

At the end of this it was agreed that the volunteer should be suspended from WHAP for a month, at which time the matter would be reviewed. At the end of this period, many of the people affected by the incident expressed dissatisfaction with the way it had been dealt with, and it was agreed that the volunteer could return to the project, but would not be given responsibility for financial resources for a further three months. A series of counselling sessions was also set up, in which a social worker involved in the project chaired group discussions of the incident to enable those involved in the incident to share their concerns. The volunteer was eventually expelled from WHAP.

The incident and WHAP's response to it raised a number of issues concerning: the disciplining of volunteers, the exercise of professional power, and the project's

commitment to an emancipatory agenda. These issues are explored in subsequent chapters, where a more detailed account of the incident is given.

This chapter has presented a case study of the Waterfront Health Action Project based on documentary evidence. The intention was to describe the project, rather than give a sociological explanation of it. Several important themes have emerged. WHAP began as a community development project, aiming to empower local people by enabling them to identify the structural, environmental, and cultural basis of their health needs, and to take collective action to bring about change. The production of an independent body of knowledge was considered to be an essential element of this process, that dominated the first two years of the project. However, the case-study also reveals a transition from community development to a qualitatively different mode of empowerment, based on the provision of social support, and other 'services', at a Drop-in centre. This transition, and other incidents recorded in the case-study, raise questions about WHAP's emancipatory potential, particularly: its independence and autonomy from the state, the contradictory nature of professional involvement, the exercise of regulation and control over the volunteers and Drop-in users, and the difficulty of producing emancipatory knowledge.

These themes, (along with those identified in chapter 1), informed the compilation of questions asked during the in-depth interviews with WHAP's professional and volunteer members. The remaining three chapters present a sociological analysis of these themes, based on the interview transcripts and relevant academic literature.

3. The Production of Knowledge

The case-study presented in the previous chapter showed that the production of an alternative body of knowledge about local health issues was WHAP's most important objective during the early stages of the project. The emancipatory potential of knowledge is a key theme for many modes of empowerment. However, as we saw in the first chapter, this potential is likely to be constrained, not just by external influences, but by their incorporation into a self-limiting internal logic. Of the modes of empowerment discussed in chapter one, only community development avoided the adoption of a self-limiting internal logic, although it faced many of the same external constraints. WHAP's initial adoption of the community development perspective, provided an opportunity to study the phenomenon empirically, to find out how these external constraints would be addressed in practice, and whether WHAP would be able to produce a genuinely emancipatory body of knowledge.

The perceived importance of research

It is important to note that the rationale for conducting research, the general research design, and a successful bid for funding were all in place *before* the volunteers became involved in the project and before any out-reach work into the local community had formally been conducted. Thus, at least in the early stages of the project the impetus for research came exclusively from the professionals, rather from the volunteers or the local community.

That the research process was professionally driven is apparent in the interview transcripts. The professionals exhibited a greater tendency to cite the research element as a reason for becoming involved in the project, than did the volunteers who even when directly questioned about the purposes of the research, gave brief and inconsistent answers. This variation may be an artefact of the interview process; the turnover of volunteers was much greater than that for professional members of WHAP, with the result that when I began interviewing, a full year after the survey had

taken place, very few of the volunteers who had participated in the survey were still involved in the project. It may be that the volunteers who had some involvement in the survey would have shared the enthusiasm exhibited by the professionals who had been involved from early on, but there is no available evidence to test this hypothesis. Even so it can be concluded that the rationale for the research process came from the professionals, and that even if they managed to transmit this to the volunteers who participated in the survey, there is little evidence that they managed to pass it on to subsequent generations of volunteers.

Giving a voice to local people

The rationale for producing new knowledge about health needs was based on the belief that existing information overlooked the attitudes and beliefs of local people, and effectively excluded them from the decision-making process. As one of the professionals commented:

> ...we thought people needed a local say, and we felt that the existing services were quite often inappropriate. We felt that people, the ordinary people, weren't sufficiently represented in decision making processes.

(Professional, November 1993)

The intention was, therefore, not just to provide information *about* the health needs of the local population, but to open up a line of communication that would enable people to identify and articulate their own needs and preferences. As the example quoted above implies, it was assumed that the providers of statutory services were unaware of the views of local people, and therefore provided inappropriate services. The aim may have been to give local people a 'voice', but it was for the most part assumed that the audience for this voice would be the statutory agencies.

Knowledge and 'partnership'

The concept of a 'bottom-up' approach to social research described above, implies the need to take on the perspective of the local population, in order to 'speak' with an authentic 'voice'. This is a significant epistemological claim, suggesting that valid knowledge of the attitudes and beliefs of the local population can only be obtained by reducing the cultural distance between researcher and subject, or even by replacing the traditional distinction between researcher and subject with the principle of interaction or 'partnership'. The failure to achieve such a 'partnership' by local service providers and decision makers is posited as an explanation of the inadequacy of their knowledge, and a justification for WHAP's role as mediator of the community perspective.

The rationale for establishing a partnership with local people in the production of knowledge was two-fold . On one hand it was required to ensure that the knowledge captured the authentic views of the different sub-groups of the population, but on the other hand, compiling a 'community view' was seen as a means of creating inter-subjectivity and galvanising solidarity:

> *...before you have a partnership with a group of people, which is local people,*
> *then you actually have to find out what their issues are and what they want to*
> *get out of it.*

(Professional, September 1994)

To summarise the position so far. The rationale for the research came from the professionals involved in WHAP during the first few meetings of the group. A key objective was to produce a body of knowledge that represented the authentic views and attitudes of the local population, to remedy the inadequate or incomplete knowledge produced by local service providers and decision makers. This would be achieved by forming a research based 'partnership' with members of the community. Of course, the production of an 'authentic voice' is only one side of the conversational equation. For a 'voice' to be heard it's message must be intelligible to the 'listener', in this instance, local service providers and decision makers. As the following

quotation implies, it was assumed that such an audience would only be prepared to listen to quantitative statistical research:

> *... if you're going to be saying things to organisations, from Cory* [an industrial developer planning to build a waste burning plant locally] *to the local Health Authority, then you need to have a body of statistically agreeable and kind of valuable statistics to use. If you don't have it, you can't use it. There's always a difficulty when you've got it, is whether people want to listen to it, but I mean you've got to have it in the first place if you want to get into that debate.*
>
> (Professional, September 1994)

It was also felt that local decision-makers would only be prepared to fund WHAP if the research was relevant to their own agendas:

> *... part of this game is that ...it's helpful, to do these things, to have money, so there are certain things you have to do for people that give you the money, and so therefore you have to blind them with bull-shit if necessary. Do you know what I mean, sort of like you have to give them stat's, they're going to want Health of the Nation gear I should imagine. You've got to show that you've somehow made a contribution to reducing unwanted pregnancies and coronary heart disease and things like that. But those are necessary evils, and you have to do all sorts of things to try and get resources, which will enable you to do something a bit better.*
>
> (Professional, February 1994)

Essentially the argument is that statutory agencies will be prepared to fund community projects if they present statistically valid data which address issues that are already on the statutory agencies' agenda. Whatever we may think of the validity of this thesis (more of that later), it is important to note that the production of statistical data to elicit funding from the statutory agencies, cannot easily be reconciled with the desire to present the authentic voice of the local population.

A communicative model of knowledge and action

It is possible to derive a theoretical model that expresses the way in which the professionals involved in WHAP initially conceptualised the process of producing knowledge and achieving change. This is referred to as a communicative model of knowledge and action, (illustrated in the diagram on page 89), because it assumes that the role of the Waterfront project is to communicate authentic knowledge about the health needs and preferences of the local population to the various statutory agencies, which will then take action to improve the provision of services and address the wider influences on health. It is important to point out that this is not intended to be a model of what actually took place, but rather a representation of how the professionals initially *thought or anticipated* the production of knowledge would bring about change.

The diagram on page 89 represents the four main groups in the model as boxes. Towards the centre of the diagram is the Waterfront Health Action Project, comprising a 'partnership' between local volunteers and welfare professionals. To the right is the local population, and to the left are the statutory agencies and service providers. The final group comprises local industry and commerce.

The model suggests that WHAP was involved in two external relationships; the first was with the local population, the second with the statutory agencies. WHAP had very little direct contact with local industry, so the relationship with this group is represented indirectly via the regulatory powers of the statutory agencies.

The relationship between WHAP and the local population was two-fold. First, it entailed the gathering of information primarily through the out-reach work and survey, (expressed in circles on the diagram), and through the direct input of the volunteers. Secondly, the relationship also involved a feedback loop in which the findings of the survey were mediated back to the local population. The nature of this relationship would change with the development of the Drop-in centre which allowed the provision of services to a small number of residents, based on needs identified by the survey. However, this was not envisaged as a key element of the model at the outset of the project.

The Communicative Model of Knowledge & Action

RESOURCES

STATUTORY AGENCIES
SERVICE PROVIDERS

LOCAL
INDUSTRY ETC.

VOLUNTEERS

WHAP

PROFESSIONALS

OUT-REACH
WORK

SURVEY

SURVEY RESULTS & SERVICES

BETTER SERVICES & OTHER HEALTH BENEFITS

LOCAL
POPULATION

100
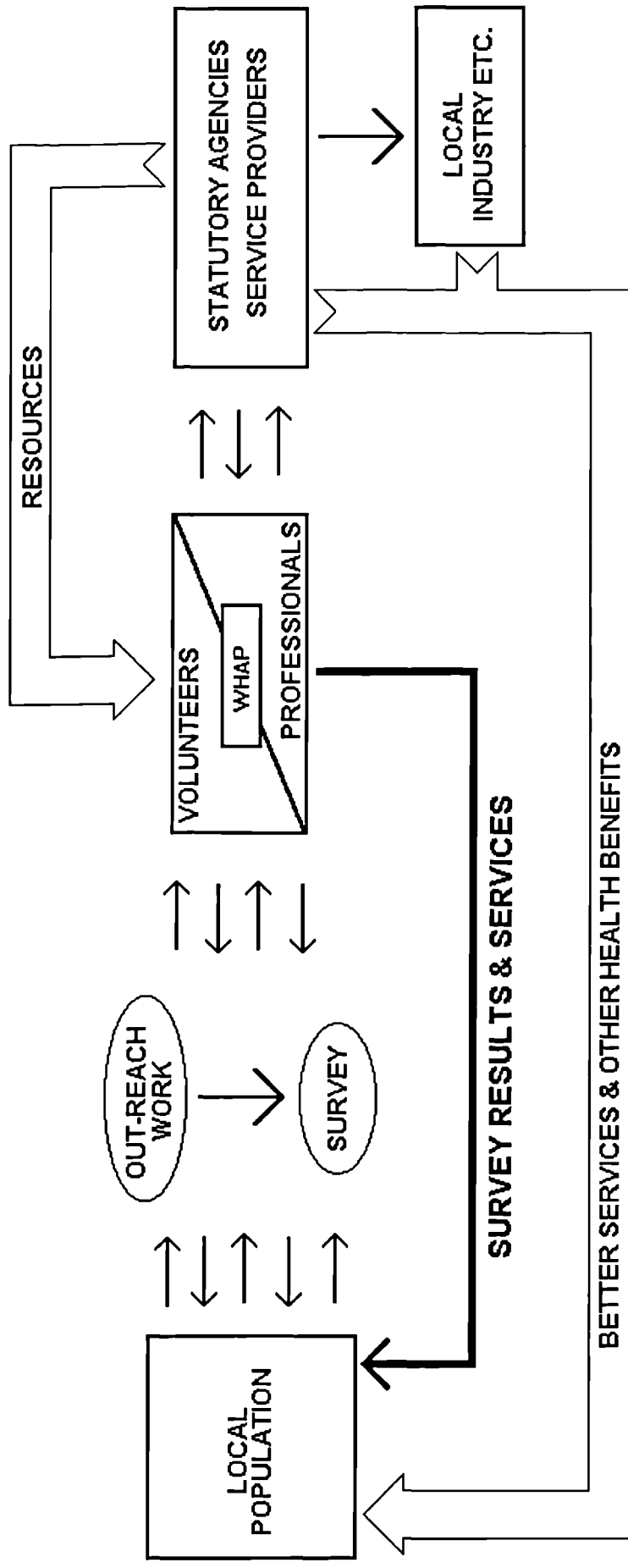
WHAP's relationship with the statutory agencies and service providers was also twofold. On one hand the relationship was about communicating the findings of the research in a form acceptable to the statutory agencies, this was to be achieved via the report, by verbal presentations made by volunteers and professionals from WHAP, and also by direct participation in the planning and decision making process. The other side of the relationship was financial; the research was funded by the Regional Health Authority, but it was hoped that following the presentation of the research findings the statutory agencies would provide resources for WHAP to continue its role as mediator of the articulated needs and preferences of the local community. Again, this relationship changed over time, and the establishment of the Drop-in changed the nature of WHAP's claim for resources from that of advocate/mediator to that of service provider. But again, this was not seen as a central element of the model during the initial stages of the project.

The model also identifies relationships between the statutory agencies and local industry, and between both of these groups and the local population. The statutory agencies are related to local industry in a regulatory capacity, which indirectly influences the health of the local population, and to the local population via the provision of services. These relationships were in place before WHAP was established, but the model predicts that the information provided by WHAP would lead to the provision of services that were more sensitive to the needs of the local population, and to better regulation of the health damaging and health enhancing activities of local industry.

To briefly summarise, the model attempts to show how the professionals, who instigated the research process, conceptualised the processes by which the knowledge produced would lead to action to improve the health of the population. Essentially the model predicts that a partnership of professionals and volunteers will be able to carry out research that will adequately grasp the health needs and preferences of the local population, that the presentation of this information to the statutory agencies, in a form that they find acceptable, will lead to the provision of better services and other health benefits for the local population, and to continued financial support for WHAP in its capacity as community advocate.

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Before examining the difficulties faced by WHAP in putting the model into practice, it is worth briefly analysing its theoretical weaknesses, as this predicts many of the difficulties encountered. The weaknesses of the model can be placed in two categories; assumptions about processes that are external to the model, and its internal tensions and contradictions.

■ External assumptions

A fundamental element of the model is the prominence it gives to the statutory agencies and service providers as agents of change. Although the process of reporting back to the community is also included, the central focus of the research is on producing information that will be acceptable to, and capable of influencing, the statutory agencies. The model is, therefore, primarily concerned with bringing about social reform within the existing framework of the welfare state, rather than building critical consciousness amongst the population. This contrasts with the project's aims, (presented in chapter two above), that point to the social and economic influences on health and the need for direct community action. There is, therefore, a gap between the project's written aims, and the way in which the process of knowledge production and mediation was operationalised through the 'common sense' assumptions reported in the ethnographic evidence.

Secondly, the model assumes that it is a lack of authentic information on the health needs and preferences of the local population that is the main impediment to the development of better services and other health benefits. The influence of structural and economic factors, such as financial constraints and the distribution of formal decision making power, is not represented in the model.

Thirdly, the model proposes a 'circulatory' or 'hydraulic' theory of change in which the movement of knowledge through the system creates sufficient pressure to force out better services, and other health benefits, elsewhere in the system. It is assumed that there is a 'pump' capable of driving the 'hydraulic fluid' around the system, in other words, an assumption that the statutory agencies will have a strong enough incentive to listen to, and act upon, the information presented by WHAP. In this instance there

are two potential 'pumps' or sources of pressure. The first is government policy; a number of official policy documents compiled at both local and national level emphasise the objective of listening to 'local voices' or 'putting the customer first'. But, despite this commitment on paper there is no structural dynamic or organisational mechanism that obliges local statutory agencies to listen to projects like WHAP. The second potential source is direct pressure from the local population. The model does allow for this source to be tapped into, with its proposal for reporting the findings of the research back to the local population, but does not address the problem of organising mass support, relying instead upon the recruitment of a small number of volunteers to press for WHAP's objectives. Whether these rather weak sources of momentum are sufficient to overcome the bureaucratic inertia of the statutory agencies is a matter for empirical enquiry that is addressed below.

■ Internal tensions and contradictions

As well as the external pressures listed above, the internal logic of the model is also theoretically weak. First, the model implies that a 'partnership' between volunteers and professionals is essential to the production of authentic emancipatory knowledge. This partnership must be one of cultural synthesis, in which the professionals involved adopt the worldview of the volunteers, and the volunteers are able to exert a high degree of control over the production of knowledge. It is assumed that such a relationship is viable, but as we shall see, there are structural obstacles that may be insurmountable.

This leads on to the main internal contradiction of the model - the claim that the authentic 'voice' of the community can be obtained by research, and that this process is compatible with the presentation of research findings in a form that is acceptable to existing statutory agencies. Accessing the subjective beliefs of the community implies the need for a qualitative methodology, but the data yielded by such an approach might not be acceptable to the statutory agencies which prefer quantitative statistical data. WHAP attempted to overcome this difficulty by combining qualitative out-reach work with a quantitative survey, but it cannot be automatically assumed that this compromise was satisfactory. The epistemological issues raised by this contradiction are considered below.

Finally, the model assumes that the process of mediating the research findings to the statutory agencies and the local population will be unproblematic. As we shall see, WHAP encountered problems in involving both parties in deriving strategies for local health action based on the survey results

The internal contradictions and tensions of the model are addressed below, under two main headings: designing and conducting the research, and mediating the knowledge produced. The issue of cultural synthesis will be addressed under each of these headings. The second half of the chapter places the findings of the WHAP case study in the context of a broader sociological debate about the production of knowledge and the exercise of power, and it is there that the external assumptions of the model are addressed.

Designing and conducting the research

■ **The research 'partnership'**

We have already noted that the establishment of a close research partnership between professionals and members of the local community was an essential element of WHAP's approach to the production of knowledge. The rationale for this partnership was noted by one of the volunteers:

> ... you're doing this, cos you want more contact with people on the street, cos you want to find out what the people on the street are on about. And this is basically why I think the professionals are involved, because you don't know, [...] say somebody like Kate... Kate couldn't possibly know half the things that are going on, only the things that she might see on a report ...
> (Volunteer, February 1994)

The argument implies that the professionals involved in the project did not have sufficient exposure to the experiences of local people to adequately research their subjective beliefs about local health issues. It was assumed that a close partnership

with representatives of the community would enable the professionals to gain sufficient insight into their everyday lives. Ethnographers achieve this by participant observation or in-depth interviews, but these options were not open to the professionals involved in WHAP, because they could only relate to the local population in their capacity as welfare professionals, not as impartial observers, or partisans. It was hoped that this deficiency would be overcome by the out-reach work conducted by the community worker. But as we saw in chapter two, this only provided fairly unreliable second-hand accounts of people's health concerns. The professionals did not come face to face with the volunteers until after the survey had been conducted, and as the following quotation suggests, this had negative consequences:

.... *they* [the professionals] *talked around the issues for too long and didn't get the women involved. So I think, for example with the survey, it was a professionally produced methodology, that the women were in effect paid to apply, and, therefore, although the women did have a voice in the understandability of or comprehensiveness of the questions that was translated through the one paid worker* [...] *the professionals didn't see the need to take those women in with them, so that they jointly owned the survey* [...] *they were given a survey to administer, they were in effect paid to administer the survey, they gave that over and lost sight of the results. In the meantime they developed the drop-in. And when the results came out it was not exactly 'oh yes that's very interesting but let's get on with the drop-ins', but it wasn't far away from that, and I think that dislocation is indicative of the fact that they didn't own the survey and the results, because they weren't involved early enough in the process.*
(Professional, November 1993)

According to the professional quoted above, the failure to directly involve the volunteers in the design of the questionnaire from the outset, not only led to a failure to establish cultural synthesis, but also had the effect of alienating the volunteers from the body of knowledge they were producing. The 'official' reason for not bringing the professionals and volunteers together at this stage, was that the volunteers lacked the necessary skills to interact effectively with the professionals and would, therefore, feel

intimidated. As a result, the professionals were forced to rely exclusively on the testimony of the community worker for information concerning the views of local people. There is little evidence to suggest that genuine cultural synthesis occurred at this stage of the project, rather it appears that the research agenda and questionnaire design were for the most part professionally dominated and that the volunteers played little part in the process.

■ Subjectivity & objectivity

Professional dominance of the questionnaire design did not mean that the process was free from controversy. The design of the questionnaire provoked heated debate, much of which focused on the difficulty of reconciling the constraints of the quantitative survey method with the desire to capture the authentic attitudes and opinions of the local population. When interviewed about the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology employed the WHAP members gave a range of answers. Some focused on the perceived benefits of adopting a quantitative approach, either because it would be acceptable to professionals and the statutory agencies:

> *I think the scientific, that would appeal to the professionals, so I think that is good; otherwise you wouldn't be able to touch anybody if you didn't have a scientific approach. So that is definite. It's made it more valid, hasn't it?*
> (Volunteer, June 1994)

...or, (from a different volunteer), because it would provide an objective basis for the creation of inter-subjectivity:

> *I liked all the figures, 'cos that's important on any report, is the figures. Because it said that this is actually happening, that it's not a figment of your imagination. You're not saying well there's about twenty-five percent of this, and seventeen of that, and that's about what we think. This wasn't a think, this was an actual, you know, happening. This was actually happening, and the truth is better than lies, because you can build on the truth, but you can't build on lies.*
> (Volunteer, September 1994)

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Others doubted that the quantitative approach had adequately captured the subjective beliefs of the interviewees:

> *I can see the scientific aspect, but then you need to have a personal level as well.*

DW-WHY DO YOU THINK YOU NEED THAT PERSONAL APPROACH?

> *Because it gives you more information, a person like talking on a one to one, you can find out much more, because like having a questionnaire, and it says like, it gives you say three choices, you might not come into those three choices, but you choose one, just to put a tick, so it's like misinformation really.*

(Volunteer, June 1994)

This dilemma can be read as a purely methodological dispute between the advocates of qualitative and quantitative research, but there is a more fundamental reason for this dispute that lies at the heart of the communicative model of knowledge and action. The model demanded that WHAP capture the authentic voice of the local community, and that the research findings must be presented in a form acceptable to the statutory agencies, but these two imperatives are logically incompatible. Tapping into the authentic voice of the community must entail enabling local people to produce inter-subjective knowledge about their concerns and how they might be addressed, as such it is a form of sensuous human activity, a process of communication and planning for action - it is the production of knowledge *by and for* the community. Such knowledge can never be acceptable to the statutory agencies because it assumes that the identification of needs and strategies for meeting them are open-ended, and that the community should choose which needs to address and how to address them. But the state offers a limited range of services operating within tight structural and ideological constraints, as such, the state may be interested in statistical data about the number of people requiring such services, it may even respond to 'tips' on how the services can be 'improved', but the assumption is always that the structural constraints are immutable and that decision-making power resides with the state.

Thus, presenting the authentic voice of the community in a form that is acceptable to the statutory agencies is an irresolvable contradiction. The state is interested in quantitative knowledge *about* the community, not in the process by which people become conscious of their needs and take direct action to meet them. WHAP struggled to overcome this contradiction by quibbling over the content of the questionnaire in an attempt to embed the subjective beliefs of the community into a quantitative methodology. Having failed to achieve a genuine partnership with local people, that would have entailed integrating the research into their conscious practical activity, WHAP attempted to compromise by trying to include a sensitive account of people's individual beliefs, into what would inevitably be a lifeless statistical account. As the following quotation suggests, such a compromise must inevitably be unsatisfactory:

> *...if you didn't have it statistically acceptable, it was useless,* [...] *It had to have a kind of professionalism to it, and it had to have the back up you get from people* [inaudible], *so the University of Kent, you know, Calnan,* [the academic consultant] *that was absolutely needed, it needed that cache* [...] *you are then asking* [about the] *making of that questionnaire, between people who were on the scientific end of the scale, and those who were much more* [on the] *community based end of the scale. And in the first period it was one of the frictions within the steering group,* [...] *So it was a process of moving conflict to a kind of working compromise, between involvement and statistically relevant facts, that in some ways left a lot of people feeling they didn't get quite what they wanted. And that's the problem with compromise - it has that quality.*
>
> (Professional, September 1994)

WHAP failed to achieve an acceptable compromise because it was trying to combine two quite separate and irreconcilable activities - the production of knowledge *by and for* the community, with the production of knowledge *about* the community, but *for* the state. The communicative model of knowledge and action is based on the assumption that this contradiction can be resolved, however, the empirically grounded analysis presented above suggests that this is not possible.

■ Science & ideology

Criticism of the methodology adopted by WHAP was not limited to the process of data collection; as the following quotation suggests, the interpretation of research findings was felt to be equally problematic:

I don't believe in all these so called surveys, [...] sometimes they sit there and they take certain things from certain surveys and they put them together, and it's all computerised [...] Let me give you an example, somebody had the cheek to bring in a newspaper cutting, to show me about a survey that had been done, [...] according to this survey, all Spaniards were dirty and didn't wash, because they didn't buy soaps. What was the most aggravating and annoying part of it was did they bother to find out [whether] they bought other toiletries? [...] when I was in Spain in August I really made a big point of going.. each family member I went to, I looked in the bathroom, and I thought have they got any bars of soap, and I actually saw there are no bars of soap. At the sink there was things like them bottles that you squirt - the soap squirts out. In the shower it was all shower gels and things. Plenty of toiletries, but no bars of soap. So..
(Volunteer, December 1993)

The essential point in the above quotation is that the interpretation of survey data may not take adequate account of cultural variations, with the result that misleading or false conclusions may be drawn. Partly this revisits arguments presented above, about the need to develop cultural synthesis with the population being researched, and that failure to do so may render quantitative methods insensitive to the respondents' subjective meanings. However, when these concerns were raised earlier they related to the process of data collection, the above quotation moves the argument into the level of interpretation and theory construction. The following quotation, this time from one of the professionals, makes a similar point, but refers directly to the WHAP survey, and implies that such errors of interpretation may be more intentional than accidental:

...say we came across a finding that we didn't like, or that some professionals didn't like, there'd be some like qualifying explanation, you know. Particularly when it came to equal opportunities issues. Like when you didn't expect so many women to be concerned about this, then suddenly there was a qualifying statement, and that was not applied in other categories. [...] in the way it was presented there was a bias [to] support the under dogs, the oppressed, to ensure that it wouldn't be used against them and it could be used for them. And I think the motives were justified, but [...] there is a danger that if you do that kind of thing it actually detracts from the objectivity of the exercise. [...] And I think also, if I'd written the report I would have abandoned objectivity all together (laughter) it would have been a propaganda document, because that's the way I like to write them. You know there's a discipline about scientific objectivity which I get bored with, partly because I want it to be read by the people. I would be influenced more by journalism than by academia. But I'm aware that this was essentially an academic project.

(Professional, February 1994)

There is an important contradiction in this quotation. First, it is suggested that professional concerns about equality led to a distorted interpretation or presentation of the data, and that this undermined the validity of the research. But on the other hand it is argued that the *'discipline about scientific objectivity'* associated with the adoption of an 'academic' perspective, limited the ability to draw political conclusions from the research. This contradiction is not simply a logical inconsistency or slip of the tongue on the part of the professional who articulated it, rather it reflects another fundamental problem with the communicative model of knowledge and action.

The above quotation, and the one before it, both express doubts about the process of interpreting and drawing conclusions from statistical data. On one hand it was recognised that this process is vulnerable to manipulation and distortion. But on the other hand, as the second quotation implies, it was recognised that interpretation is essential if recommendations for action are to be derived. The process of moving from raw data to recommendations for action was a problem for WHAP on two counts: first, because the failure to establish a genuine partnership with local people meant that interpretation of the data would have to be conducted in their absence, and

therefore be open to accusations of manipulation or distortion, and secondly, because the injunction to produce information in a form that was acceptable to the statutory agencies ruled out a critical reading of the data.

Although the volunteers had met with the professionals by the time the survey data had been processed, they did not take an active role in its interpretation. Several reasons for this absence were advanced in the interviews, for instance, it was felt that analysis and report writing were technical skills for which the professionals were best equipped. Perhaps more importantly, as noted above, the volunteers and the broader community had very little involvement in the research design, and it is therefore hardly surprising that they showed little interest in interpreting the results.

Responsibility for analysing the survey data and writing the report fell to me, and under the constraints outlined above, I felt that I could only give a description of the basic frequencies for each question, disaggregated into population sub-groups, and with some statistical correlation between variables. Inevitably, some interpretation was given, but I tried to keep this to a minimum, and did not include recommendations or plans for action in the report. My intention was to produce a fairly unmediated base-line of statistical information from which proposals for action could be deduced. However, despite the concerns, expressed above, about the ideological character of interpretation, many of the WHAP members regretted the absence of firm proposals for action:

> *I think it was emasculated really. I think it was presented as what was an acceptable academic community development piece of work, and in a way that was useful for references and for other, you know, used in libraries and by other academics. I think it missed out some of the vividness, you know, and perhaps the political points that could have been made out - there was a lot more that could have been implied from the findings, and never was. It was just presented as 'these are the findings' as if they were just objective reified facts, you know, and the link between them and the reality is sort of lost.*
> (Professional, October 1994)

We have already noted that the production of a political interpretation, and firm proposals for action, was limited by the failure to establish a partnership with local people and the injunction to produce information in a form acceptable to the statutory agencies. But these are not the only reasons. It was also felt that such an analysis would undermine the 'scientific' validity of the research, rendering it 'ideological'. The following quotation highlights the dilemma:

> ... *I would have quite liked some kind of key points. I mean like definite recommendations for action, highlighting some of the more striking findings that came out* [...] *like we could have come out and said that we think this clearly shows that this is what needs to be done,* [but] *that might not be the nature of an objective scientific presentation.*
> (Professional, February 1994)

It seems then, that there was a further contradiction in the communicative model of knowledge and action, between the need to produce findings which were scientifically objective, and the need to produce the type of analysis that would yield concrete proposals for action, but which would go beyond scientific objectivity and might, therefore, be construed as ideological. This tension does not in itself explain the lack of recommendations in the final report, which was also the product of the lack of cultural synthesis between the members of the group, which led to an inability to internally mediate the survey data, and construct a theoretical analysis capable of yielding concrete proposals for action.

Mediation of the research findings

The previous section examined the ways in which the members of WHAP went about designing and conducting their research, and the difficulties and contradictions they encountered in doing so. This section is concerned with the processes by which that body of knowledge was communicated, whether the 'message' was mediated effectively, and the extent to which the research and mediation process benefited the project. This distinction between the research process and the mediation of the knowledge produced is slightly misleading, as it implies two discrete processes, when

in fact the two are closely linked. The extent to which anticipation of the process of mediation influenced the research process is discussed above, for example, assumptions about what type of information would be acceptable to the statutory agencies influenced the research design and data analysis. Similarly, the failure to achieve a genuine partnership with either the volunteers or the broader population during the research process, meant that the findings of the survey were encountered as something alien, that is, as information *about* the community, that needed to be communicated to them, rather than information *by and for* the community, that they would already be conscious of and committed to.

The mediation process involved the publication of a 70 page report, a 27 page summary report, the production of a video, public meetings to which local residents and the press were invited, and presentations to statutory agencies and other local groups.

■ The report

Before considering the interview data concerning the report, it is important to note that when I conducted the interviews I was in effect asking the WHAP members to comment on a document that I had written. This is potentially a source of bias, in terms of the questions I chose to ask, the respondents' willingness to be critical, and also my selection of which quotations to include in this chapter. Whilst a degree of distortion is inevitable under these circumstances, I was consciously aware of these issues when conducting the interviews and analysing the findings, and attempted to reduce bias to a minimum. These issues are discussed in the appendix on methodology.

We noted above that according to the communicative model of knowledge and action, the primary audience for the survey findings was the local statutory agencies. This was reflected in the style and content of the full report and the summary:

> ... *I think it needed a short impact statement, written three or four sides, written very accessibly. I think our marketing's looked very clearly at agencies*

and the professional classes; we've done it better on the 'Guardian' reader's, the health and social services journals, than we have on local people.

(Professional, September 1994)

Whether or not the intended audience of 'Guardian readers' in the local statutory agencies actually read or understood the report, is a question that lies beyond the scope of this study. However, the interview transcripts do point out that the length of the report, its statistical content, and the type of language used, meant that many of the WHAP volunteers found it inaccessible. I also asked the interviewees if they thought that other local people would read and understand the report:

No! because you fuckin', excuse my language, but its like you open it up and there's [opens a copy of the summary report and chooses a word at random] this 'dissonance' [pronounced dishonoursance] you know you could use a different word.

(Volunteer, June 1994)

Whilst recognising the validity of the point that the length and linguistic style of the report made it largely inaccessible to many of the volunteers and possibly to certain sections of the local population, it does not automatically follow that a significantly shorter and less complex report would have been more widely read - a point made by one of the professionals in the following quotation:

...It's a classic none book culture in which we are. There are some people obviously who will read it, of course, but no, if it was a four page summary it would not be read by the majority of people around here.

(Professional, November 1994)

That a formal statistical report of survey findings, no matter how short, is unlikely to be read by members of a deprived community, is a valid point. There is also a danger that in summarising and simplifying survey findings, their explanatory power and epistemological status might be compromised. Whilst the summary of the report could have been more concise, it was also important that the full report gave a detailed account of the findings, the methodology, and the statistical analysis. This was

particularly so because of the need to convince the statutory agencies that the research had been conducted to 'scientific' standards.

It is also important to re-iterate the fact that the volunteers were largely alienated from the research design and the data analysis - the report was not *by* them or *for* them, it was *about* them, supposedly to enable the statutory agencies to act on their behalf. This alienation extended to the mediation of the report, for example, one of the volunteers I interviewed complained that WHAP had not engaged in extensive group discussion of the report. In other words, little attempt was made to explain the findings of the report to the volunteers, or to embed those findings in their consciousness. One of the reasons that this mediation did not occur is because the communicative model of knowledge and action assumes that the statutory institutions will be the main agent of change. According to this model the findings should be reported back to the local community, but this is merely a courtesy, it is assumed that there is no need for the findings to influence the conscious practical activity of local people, because they are not seen as the primary agents of change.

■ The Video

To complement the report, and to provide a medium for the survey findings that would be more accessible to the local population, the group decided to make a video, which would include footage of the locality, interviews with the WHAP members, and statistical data from the report. The community development worker was given responsibility for producing the video, and recruited two film students from the local college to assist her. Unfortunately, the finished product looked like a film school project, although aesthetically pleasing, it said little about the survey, or the broader project, and was not produced in a usable tape format until early in 1995. This meant that the video could not be used to support the public meetings and presentations to the statutory agencies, or to circulate amongst community groups. Given the difficulty of mediating the survey results to the local population in a written form, the failure to make use of this more accessible medium must be viewed as a missed opportunity.

The shortcomings of the 'official' video contrast strongly with a film made earlier in the project by the volunteers themselves, using a hand held camcorder:

... one of the first things they'd done was, on their own volition, was to take a video of all the things they didn't like around the estate. It was a very good video, much better than the one which is professionally produced, because it was real, it had an immediacy. It was amateurish, but it showed the rubbish, the dog mess - it was their eyes view, it was how they see it, and I think it was very good for that, very fresh.

(Professional, November 1993)

This contrast between the 'official' video and the one produced earlier by the volunteers, points again to a fundamental flaw in the way that WHAP went about producing and mediating knowledge, namely the volunteers alienation from the research process. Thus, the volunteers were able to produce a video which expressed their own subjective perspective on some of the problems confronting them in their everyday lives, but when it came to producing a video to illustrate the research findings, they were not considered to be competent partners, because the failure to achieve cultural synthesis during the earlier research process meant that the volunteers could not make the connection between their own subjective perspective and the findings of the research. If the video shows anything, it is the double alienation of the volunteers, first in the production of knowledge, then again in its mediation.

■ Public Meetings and Presentations to Statutory Agencies

Mediation of the research findings culminated in a series of public meetings and presentations to the statutory agencies. Press briefings were also given, resulting in some coverage in local newspapers and radio. Although the volunteers had very little involvement in the report writing and video making, several of them played an active role in the public meetings and presentations. However, their contributions tended to focus on personal experiences, including their involvement in administering the survey, and later on in the Drop-in, rather than on presenting the actual survey findings, which tended to be left to the professionals in the group.

Despite WHAP's best efforts to advertise them, the public meetings were poorly attended, and did not lead to popular campaigns to act on the survey findings, or to a

significant increase in recruitment to WHAP. Many of the interviewees blamed the poor attendance on situational factors like poor advertising, choice of venue, or as the following quotation suggests, public apathy:

> ... you need good speakers that people want to come and hear, or it's got to be an interesting subject. But on the whole people are more interested in watching the television or going to the pub. I mean, to be honest, there's no shortage of public meetings to go to, and I find that they can be very turgid and for a lot of people it's seen as an opportunity for people to pontificate. They actually feel right from the start that this is not for them, it's above their heads, unless it's something that particularly angers or motivates them.
> (Professional, February 1994)

There is some value in this viewpoint, and a more reactive issue, like opposition to a hospital closure, might have provoked a greater public response. However, as we have already noted, the difficulty that WHAP encountered in mediating the research findings cannot be divorced from the process by which the knowledge was produced. Thus, the local population were not interested in the findings of the research because they were alienated from its production, and because it was not designed to inform their conscious practical activity, but to guide the statutory agencies in the provision of services.

One of the benefits of presenting the research findings to the statutory agencies was that they were in many senses a captive audience. Thus the attendance and quality of debate were an improvement on the public meetings, enabling the WHAP members to engage directly with their target audience. But much more was expected from them; according to the communicative model of knowledge and action, the presentation of research findings to the statutory agencies should have provoked a whole series of concrete actions, including genuine improvements in the provision of health related services, and additional funding for WHAP. According to this criteria the success of the presentations was more questionable, as the following quotation suggests:

I think it was a reasonable attempt. It's the sort of thing that you would do with those sort of results, as a way of disseminating the information from that survey. Whether it was effective or not - I would have to say I thought it probably wasn't, cos apart from the ones I've mentioned I don't know of any great initiatives that have flowed from that...

(Professional, October 1994)

As the above quotation suggests, representatives of the statutory agencies may have listened attentively to WHAP's message, but they were under no obligation to actively address the issues raised by the survey. Again this refers to a problem with the communicative model of knowledge and action, which is based on the assumption that the state fails to address the needs of the population through lack of adequate knowledge, and that merely providing that information will be sufficient to prompt positive action. But without the popular support needed to enforce demands for change, the state can easily ignore them, and this appears to have been the case here.

WHAP's efforts to mediate the research findings to the local population and the statutory agencies were largely unsuccessful. The failure to achieve cultural synthesis with local people in conducting the research, meant that they were for the most part uninterested in the findings of the survey. The statutory agencies were prepared to give WHAP a hearing, but were reluctant to take significant action. These findings confirm the theoretical weakness of the communicative model of knowledge and action adopted by WHAP.

Re-thinking the agenda

As the following quotation suggests, many of WHAP's members were aware that their attempt to influence the statutory agencies had for the most part failed.

... I think we've had our day, we've said it, and having said it and everybody thinking it's been interesting for a month, it seems to have sort of become part

of the mire of previous reports, and I don't know what's happening to it, or
what good it's done us or anybody else...

(Professional, September 1994)

Not only had WHAP failed to significantly influence statutory service provision, they had also not obtained the funding required to expand the project. In effect, this amounts to recognition that the communicative model of knowledge and action was not a viable means of achieving WHAP's original aims of enabling local people to exercise greater influence over the social, economic and environmental influences on health. We have already noted that this original agenda was established by the professionals at the beginning of the project, before the volunteers became involved. Indeed, many of the volunteers never came to share this agenda, for example when I asked the volunteer quoted below if she thought that the survey was worth the time and resources invested in it, she replied:

Well I really don't know David. For me personally, I enjoy coming here I
enjoy doing this, I enjoy whatever bit of responsibility I'm getting, I like all
that. But I mean, as for what people who designed the questionnaire, what
they wanted out of it, I don't know if they've got it. But me personally, I mean I
got my kids bikes from doing that questionnaire, so for me, it's benefited me.
Now whether it's benefited anybody else, I think only time will tell.

(Volunteer, June 1994)

Thus, the benefit of the research is conceptualised in terms of personal financial gain and raised self-esteem. Partly, this might be expected from one of the volunteers, in that they did not instigate the research process, they did not share the professionals commitment to the communicative model of knowledge and action, and even those who participated in gathering the data did so in an alienated fashion, as paid workers. However, the failure to achieve change through the statutory agencies led the professionals to significantly re-think their original agenda, subordinating their aspirations for broader social change, to the more individualistic approach favoured by the volunteers:

... the survey confirmed to local people, and particularly the volunteers in WHAP, the [prevalence of] stress and mental illness; and their response of establishing a Drop-in, a talking shop for people, where they could have their nails manicured, and facials, and all that sort of thing, I think was their way of saying this is something concrete, this is something we can do, this fulfils our needs to actually be doing something, to be meeting the people, to be offering a service, [...] the amount of mental stress and distress that came out, and the consequent behaviours of heavy drinking and all the rest of it, was the top of the list really, it was the main issue - which I thought was quite a significant finding. And I think the Drop-in can be seen to have been WHAP's response to try and do something, you know to deal with, to offer a facility for people that were [at] their wits end.

(Professional, October 1994)

Whether the research findings inspired the Drop-in, or were simply used to legitimate it's continued existence is immaterial to the argument; the failure to use the findings of the survey to influence the statutory agencies led to the development of an individualised conceptualisation of the projects objectives, which in turn brought about a fundamental shift in the focus of the project away from the achievement of change at the social level, towards the establishment of a self-help ethos. These points are emphasised in the following quotation from one of the professionals:

I think that the information gathered.. has had a very limited impact on the local population. [...] I think what we've basically done is to focus in on stress, and we've homed in on the Drop-in. Not least because it's something we can actually do [...] I think it's had an impact in bringing about the Drop-in and the reduction of stress levels to people, calling in there perhaps. I think that it has energised and facilitated the people who conducted the survey, I'm thinking of the volunteers, and therefore Pauline say, will be emboldened, more than she was before, to speak up for people who are disabled. They're the only examples of how the research has had an impact, and I think that's tragic.

(Professional, November 1994)

By the end of the research and mediation process it was apparent to many of the professionals involved in WHAP that the original objectives had not been met and were unlikely to be so, however, rather than bringing the project to a close, this failure led to a re-definition of the project. Instead of intervening at the social level to improve the health of the local population as a whole, WHAP would increasingly focus on the direct provision of 'services' to a small number of individuals attending the Drop-in. Much of this work focused on the reduction of stress and depression by providing informal social support and counselling. This re-thinking of WHAP's agenda also signalled a change in the relationship between the professionals and volunteers; rather than being 'partners' in the pursuit of change, the volunteers were increasingly seen as 'clients', to be developed and guided by the professionals. This reflects a fundamental change in the nature of the project away from community development towards the new mode of empowerment examined in chapter five.

Provisional Conclusions

In chapter one I attempted to assess the emancipatory potential of five modes of empowerment, and found all but one to be constrained by a self-limiting internal logic that led to an uncritical acceptance of oppressive social relations, or, in the case of the 'self-help' category, to the adoption of a subjectivist approach to epistemology that denied the possibility of producing emancipatory knowledge.

The exception was the 'community development' category, which had no such self-limiting internal logic, even though in practice it's advocates would confront many of the structural, institutional, and epistemological constraints encountered by the other modes of empowerment. The lack of a self-limiting internal logic meant that the outcome of this confrontation could not be theoretically deduced, and that empirical enquiry was required to assess the emancipatory potential of community development. The description of WHAP presented in chapter two revealed that it had initially adopted an agenda that was characteristic of the community development perspective, thus enabling the above issue to be studied. This chapter is specifically concerned with the way in which WHAP produced and mediated a body of knowledge on local attitudes to health.

WHAP's decision to produce an alternative body of knowledge was taken by the professionals before the volunteer members had been recruited. Examination of the professionals' assumptions and expectations of the research process led to the construction of a model, referred to as 'the Communicative Model of Knowledge and Action', (CMKA). The model is based on the assumption that the statutory agencies offer the most viable means of addressing the main influences on the health of the local population. However, this potential was thought to be inhibited by inadequate knowledge of the health needs and preferences of the community. According to the model, WHAP would remedy this inadequacy by acting as a conduit through which the authentic views of local people could be communicated to the statutory agencies in a form that they would find intelligible and valid. It was assumed that the production of such knowledge would lead to provision of more appropriate services, closer regulation of the potentially health damaging and health enhancing activities of other groups, such as local industry, and continued financial support for WHAP in its role as mediator.

The first thing to note about the model is that although it rejects the use of existing institutional arrangements for community participation, such as the Community Health Councils, or non-executive membership of Health Authorities, it shares much of the internal logic of the 'community participation' category. Fundamental to this perspective is the assumption that the statutory agencies are the legitimate agents of change, and that the role of the local population is simply to clearly express its needs and preferences via representatives. As such the model is one of social reform, rather than radical transformation; seeking the amelioration of health and social problems via an extension of existing welfare state provision.

The study revealed that the CMKA was underpinned by a tacit acceptance of the alienation inherent in the state-form, with the result that even if the model had worked according to plan the outcome would have been the improved performance of existing statutory agencies rather than a re-distribution of social and economic power, therefore, it can be concluded that the model possesses a self-limiting internal logic. The most that the model could offer the local population was the opportunity to soften the impact of alienation rather than an opportunity to challenge it.

In the event even this modest objective could not be realised. Essentially the model overlooks the material basis of the contradiction between the local population and the statutory agencies, and assumes that the question of alienation can be addressed discursively within the project itself. There are two problems here, (or rather two aspects of the same problem), first, the assumption that the authentic health needs and preferences of the population can be identified by research and *presented to the* statutory agencies in a form that they will find intelligible and valid, secondly, that the statutory agencies will have any incentive to act on this information.

The reason these two factors are described as aspects of the same problem is that they both represent manifestations of the underlying problem of alienation. The second factor is relatively transparent and easy to grasp; the local statutory agencies are not obliged to act on the information they receive from the project, because, (despite the election of local councillors), they are ultimately accountable to the Treasury for the money they spend, (even that which is raised from local taxation). Whilst there may be some scope for making marginal changes in the distribution of resources, in the current economic situation it is unlikely that the overall level of funding will increase in real terms. This does not mean that the statutory agencies must inevitably reject every proposal put forward by a project like WHAP, for example, such proposals may coincide with the agencies objectives, particularly if they involve the possibility of an overall reduction in costs, such as the funding of voluntary services to lessen the demand for expensive statutory provision, or the recommendations may be implemented as a relatively inexpensive legitimation exercise. But the important thing to grasp is that the statutory agencies are not *obliged* to implement such recommendations, particularly in the current conjuncture when the traditional means of pursuing such claims, (for example, industrial action), have become less effective. The statutory agencies may choose to implement a recommendation, if it fits an existing agenda, and if it can be accomplished within the increasingly narrow parameters for change allowed by central government, but there is little incentive to act upon any but the smallest demands, no matter how authentically they represent the views of the local population, or how rationally they are articulated.

The first factor is more difficult to grasp, because it involves a transformation from the material basis of alienation to the discursive level. Put more simply, instead of addressing the fact that local people have virtually no control over the production and distribution of goods and services provided by the statutory agencies, the model re-defines this problem as one of communication, implying that all the local community needs to do in order to have its needs and preferences met is to rationally identify them and articulate them to the statutory agencies in an intelligible form. Of course, this transformation does not resolve the real material problem of alienation, because as we noted above, the statutory agencies have no obligation to act on the knowledge produced, but also because the alienated social relationship between the local population and the statutory agencies must inevitably re-surface within the process of producing and mediating knowledge. However, because the CMKA transposes alienation from material social relations to the level of discursivity, the phenomenon presents itself as a series of forms or appearances that are not immediately intelligible. Thus the problem faced by the local population of obtaining control over the production and distribution of goods and services, re-presented itself as a series of epistemological and methodological difficulties, namely: *(i)* the problem of creating cultural synthesis between the professionals involved in WHAP and representatives of the local population, *(ii)* the problem of developing a research design that was sensitive to the subjective views of the population, but also yielded 'objective' quantitative data, *(iii)* the problem of using 'scientific' data to inform an analysis and set of recommendations that might appear 'ideological', and therefore invalidate the claim to scientificity, and *(iv)* the problem of finding effective ways of mediating the knowledge back to the local population.

It could be argued that rather than being manifestations of alienation the above problems are simply technical difficulties that could be resolved within the parameters of the CMKA, for example, the difficulty of achieving cultural synthesis might have been reduced if the professionals had directly participated in the out-reach work at the beginning of the project, or if the volunteers had been brought into the steering group meetings earlier than they were. Similarly, it might have been possible to find a methodology that more adequately grasped the subjective beliefs of the local population, or to give more time for group discussion of the research findings and the development of concrete recommendations, or to draw more people into the public

meetings by better advertising. Whatever the merits of such arguments, it is worth noting the extent to which the political objective of enabling people to exercise greater control over the factors that influence their health, becomes de-politicised by adoption of the CMKA, which transforms the struggle for power into a series of technical difficulties. In this sense, the CMKA is ideological, even though the *intentions* of the professionals whose views it represents were relatively critical.

Returning to the four key themes mentioned above: cultural synthesis, subjectivity and objectivity, science and ideology, and, the mediation of knowledge; it was suggested above that the difficulties presented by each of these themes were in fact a manifestation of alienation, or more precisely, of the attempt to overcome alienation at a discursive level, rather than simply technical difficulties that could be remedied within the confines of the CMKA. The case study materials and interview transcripts analysed above, suggest that WHAP failed to arrive at a satisfactory solution to any of the above themes: there was little evidence of cultural synthesis between the professionals and volunteers either in the planning, conduct, analysis or mediation of the research, the tension between adopting a qualitative approach which would be sensitive to the subjective beliefs of the local population and adopting a quantitative approach which it was hoped would be acceptable to the statutory agencies was not resolved, similarly, the tension between 'scientific' objectivity and the production of the type of analysis from which firm recommendations and a plan of action could be derived was also not adequately addressed, and the attempts to communicate the findings of the survey to the broader population seem to have enjoyed only limited success.

The question is, were these failings specific to WHAP, either because of the incompetence of the people involved or because of other context specific factors, or were they the inevitable product of the CMKA's inability to address alienation, and therefore, generalisable to any situation where the model is applied. The first step in answering this question is to look more closely at the four themes.

The creation of a research partnership, between the professionals in the project and the local population, was considered to be essential to the success of the initiative. One of the defining goals of the CMKA was to produce knowledge that represented the

authentic views of the local population. This would entail the professionals adopting a close understanding of the experiences, concerns and opinions of local people, and by the same token, the active involvement of local people in the design conduct and analysis of the research. This partnership can more precisely be referred to as 'cultural synthesis', because it entails the professionals adopting the worldview of local people, and local people obtaining access to the skills and resources of the professionals. We noted above that this partnership or cultural synthesis failed to materialise, both in the planning of the research and in the analysis of the findings. We also noted some of the practical reasons for this: that the out-reach work was done by the community worker, rather than by all of the professionals, and that the volunteers were not brought into the steering group until after the research had been conducted. But the question remains; if these technical difficulties had been overcome, would cultural synthesis have occurred?

To answer this question we need to look at why it was considered so important in the first place. If we return to the CMKA it can be seen that cultural dissonance between professionals working in the statutory agencies and members of the local community plays a central explanatory role - in short the model assumes that the failure to adequately meet the health needs of the population results from a failure to adequately understand the nature of those needs and preferences, a deficiency that the CMKA aims to remedy. Thus, according to the model, the role of the professionals was to obtain a clearer understanding of local people's needs, in order that they could be reported back to the statutory agencies for action. But what was the basis of this cultural dissonance? There are a number of potential factors, including: income, educational attainment, ethnicity, and experience of adverse life experiences. However, even if the professionals involved in the project had been able to witness first hand what it means to live on a low income, or to live in poor quality housing, or to experience racism on a daily basis, and see for themselves the impact of those factors on people's health, they would still be incapable of adopting the perspective of the community members.

The reason for this inevitable failure to achieve cultural synthesis stems from the fact that the CMKA does not address the objective factors that limit the professionals' ability to adopt a community perspective, namely, their location within the statutory

agencies. No matter how closely welfare professionals observe the local population, or how sympathetic they are to their problems, or even, how critical they become of the statutory agencies, they are still in the last instance paid employees of the state and must conduct themselves accordingly. Several practical consequences flow from the objective location of the professionals within the state: first, is the injunction against becoming involved in overtly political activity, second, is what might be termed professional responsibility, this includes responsibility for ensuring that budgets and resources under their control are used lawfully and in accordance with the objectives of their organisation, and an obligation to perform professional duties. In some instances, for example, social work, this might entail responsibility for child protection, more generally it means that professionals have a job description and that they must be able to show that their time is spent on activities relating to that job description. There is, of course, some scope for flexibility, but for the most part the professionals are obliged to do the job they are paid for.

The extent to which the structural location of the professionals influenced their relationship with the volunteers is discussed in chapter four, for now it is sufficient to note that it created an insurmountable obstacle to cultural synthesis; while ever professionals retain their position in the statutory agencies, they must act within the constraints of a professional role. This effectively drives a wedge between welfare professionals and the community that no amount of direct contact and subjective empathy can eradicate. In this sense attempts at cultural synthesis can never amount to more than cultural reconnaissance - professionals may obtain an understanding of the perspective held by local people, but they cannot actively side with the community in opposition to the interests of the state.

In summary, the impulse to achieve cultural synthesis between local people and professionals working for statutory agencies represents a transformation from the objective level of material social relations, to the subjective level of discursivity - it is an attempt to resolve by talk the alienation that is embedded in the state-form. The extent to which professionals can obtain an understanding of the beliefs and experiences of local people is variable, depending on the extent of their exposure to, and interaction with, community groups. However, no matter how successful this process is, it can never lead to cultural synthesis, because the location of the

professionals within a statutory agency means that while ever their involvement in a community project is in a professional capacity they cannot objectively side with the community in opposition to their employer. Thus the CMKA is fundamentally flawed because it mistakes the structural basis of alienation for cultural dissonance, which it assumes can be resolved through interaction.

The second theme was the methodological tension between the use of qualitative methods to capture the subjective beliefs of the local population and the desire to produce objective quantitative data that would be acceptable to the statutory agencies. It would be possible to construct a vulgar reading of this tension, in which the attempt to use qualitative methods to gain an authentic grasp of the subjective beliefs of the local population was sacrificed in order to produce the type of quantitative data that would be acceptable to the statutory agencies. Indeed there is some truth in this argument, but again it fails to recognise the extent to which this methodological debate represents a transformation from the material basis of alienation. This becomes apparent when we look at the ambivalence to methodological issues exhibited by many of the WHAP members when interviewed. Many of the interviewees were aware of the epistemological strengths of quantitative data, in terms of generalisability, validity, and crucially as a basis for creating inter-subjectivity. At the same time, the strength of qualitative methods in obtaining a more in-depth understanding of subjective attitudes and beliefs was also recognised. But why was it considered so important that the research process should synthesise both approaches, and why was there so much concern that the movement from a qualitative approach in the out-reach work, to a quantitative approach in the actual survey would entail a movement from subjective to objective knowledge?

Again, the answer lies in the way in which the project addressed the problem of alienation. We noted above that the achievement of cultural synthesis was considered to be a key element of the approach, and that the out-reach work in the first six months of the project was meant to achieve this, by the application of qualitative methods. As we noted above, the process of achieving cultural synthesis failed, as it was inevitably bound to, given the structural location of the professionals. This meant that rather than having a research partnership in which the professionals and volunteers jointly designed, conducted and analysed the research, the project remained professionally

dominated, with the volunteers having very little input. However, professional dominance could not easily be accommodated within the CMKA, which cites the adoption of a community perspective as the key criteria of research validity. Thus in order to preserve the validity of the research the WHAP members sought to compensate for the lack of cultural synthesis by trying to embed a qualitative element into what was essentially a quantitative survey. This proved controversial because it came close to undermining the 'scientific' validity of the survey, which was considered equally important.

The quantitative/qualitative debate, therefore represented a further transposition of the objective alienation of the professionals from the local population. Initially, the professionals attempted to overcome their alienation by striving for cultural synthesis with the local population, when this attempt to form a genuine partnership with the volunteers failed, as it inevitably would, the professionals further transposed their alienation to a methodological level - having failed to access the subjectivity of the population by the adoption of a community perspective, they sought to compensate by making that subjectivity an object of the research process.

Again this attempt to overcome alienation was bound to fail. This becomes apparent if we consider what would have happened if the decision had been taken to abandon the quantitative research and adopt a qualitative approach instead, for instance, by conducting in-depth interviews with a sample of the population, in order to more adequately grasp their subjective experiences of health and illness. Whilst this might well have given the professionals a clearer insight into the everyday lives and experiences of local people, it would not have increased their ability to act on that information, indeed it may even have reduced their ability to act. As employees of the state the professionals would still be obliged to present their research findings to the statutory agencies, in the hope of encouraging reform, but with purely subjective data they would not have been able to conduct statistical tests of association between, for instance, socio-economic variables and self reported indicators of health status, nor would they be able to claim that the findings were representative of the population as a whole, such limitations would hardly have made the statutory agencies more likely to act. This is what lies behind the ambivalence expressed by the WHAP members, they wanted to preserve the benefits of the quantitative method, in terms of its statistical

rigour and the ability to totalise individual experiences as a basis for inter-subjectivity, but they also wanted to use the research process to overcome their alienation from the local population. The important point is, that even if they had sacrificed the former objective in an attempt to achieve the latter, they would inevitably have failed, because no matter how much they learned from the research about the subjective beliefs of the population, their structural location within the statutory agencies would have stopped them from adopting a community perspective in objective terms.

The third theme is the tension between the production of 'scientific' knowledge and 'ideology'. This problem had two facets: first, the extent to which the interpretation of the research findings had been distorted by ideology, and secondly, the difficulty of conducting a political analysis of the data capable of yielding concrete proposals for action, without compromising the 'scientificity' of the research. Again the interview transcripts revealed a degree of ambivalence on this issue; on one hand the findings of the research were criticised on the grounds of interpretive bias, and on the other hand, it was suggested that the analysis failed to draw conclusions or make recommendations.

It was noted above that analysis of the research data and the writing of the report were largely my responsibility, and that I had been reluctant to introduce analytical concepts that had not been derived from group discussion, or to draw firm conclusions for action. As neither the volunteers nor, (for the most part), the professionals, were actively involved in the analysis of the research data, it would seem reasonable to conclude that alienation was a key factor, however, it does not provide a full explanation of the difficulty. It could be argued that if the volunteers and professionals had played a greater role in the analysis of the research data they would have been less suspicious of the findings produced, and also that as a group we would have been able to produce a set of firm recommendations, but this would not have resolved the tension between science and ideology.

The question would still remain as to whether the analysis and recommendations represented an objective interpretation of the data or whether they were distorted by ideology. The answer must inevitably be the latter. The reason for this is that the production of knowledge intended to inform action must involve much more than the

objective presentation of research findings, it must also include a set of aspirations for change; it must reflect political will as well as rational inquiry. It is here that ideology is at its most apparent. For example, the epidemiological evidence linking tobacco consumption to lung cancer has a high degree of scientific validity, and is unlikely to be considered ideological. But, this research finding is of no intrinsic value, until we derive proposals for action which are based on it, and it is at this point that the ideological aspect of knowledge becomes apparent, because proposals for action must inevitably express assumptions about what it is possible to achieve using the research findings.

To continue with the example of smoking and lung cancer, a number of possible recommendations for action could be deduced from this observation: for instance, further biological research into the ways in which the chemical constituents of tobacco smoke effect changes in the reproduction of human cells, with a view to either preventing the development of cancer or finding a cure, or alternatively, the search for a harmless tobacco substitute. At a different level of intervention we might seek to stop people from smoking by making it illegal, or by banning advertising, or by conducting mass campaigns of health education. More critically, we might attempt to alleviate the social factors that lead some people to smoke, or we might conclude that a focus on smoking is a distraction from more important influences on health like poverty or powerlessness and that we should, therefore, concentrate on tackling these issues rather than smoking.

The point is that whichever course of action we choose the decision must inevitably be a political one, shaped by factors like our understanding of what is viable at a specific point in time, or estimates of who will benefit from the course of action and who will lose out. Knowledge which is orientated towards action must, therefore, comprise an element of political will as well as the distilled logic of rational inquiry, and to this extent it must inevitably be ideological.

Recognising that all action orientated knowledge is ideological does not entail the adoption of a relativist position in which all forms of analysis and sets of proposals are accorded equal status - there are still criteria by which the adequacy of action orientated knowledge can be judged. First is the extent to which analyses and

conclusions are logically consistent with the research data. Secondly, such knowledge can be judged by its emancipatory potential; this refers to the extent to which an analysis either challenges oppressive social and economic structures or accepts them as immutable. This criteria of emancipatory potential has both an objective and a subjective element, both of which are historically specific; the former refers to the material conditions effecting the viability of a set of proposals, for example, the level of development of productive forces, and the latter refers to the will to achieve change, (including the will to overcome the objective limitations on emancipation). The evaluation of action orientated knowledge must, therefore, comprise the following questions: are the recommendations for action logically consistent with the research data?, and what is their emancipatory potential, given existing objective conditions and the consciousness of the proposed agents of change?

Returning to the WHAP case study, the concerns expressed by the interviewees about whether the analysis was scientifically valid and whether it developed adequate recommendations can be re-conceptualised in the above terms, rather than as a tension between science and ideology. We noted above the conditions under which the findings of the survey were analysed and the extent to which this limited the process of interpretation and the production of recommendations for action, and that this may have given rise to the concerns expressed by the interviewees, but the question is, could these concerns have been adequately addressed under different circumstances? The first concern, about whether the research findings were logically consistent with the research data is perhaps the easier issue to address. The rules of formal logic are relatively transparent, and it is possible to imagine that if the professionals and volunteers entered into sufficiently detailed discussion they would be able to identify any instances where the findings of the analysis were not consistent with the research data.

The second criteria, relating to emancipatory potential, is more problematic, because it involves moving beyond the application of formal logic to the internal relationship between data and proposals for action, towards a consideration of the objective potential for change, and the articulation of the subjective will to bring about change. There are three factors limiting the emancipatory potential of the knowledge produced by WHAP, which would have prevailed even if the professionals and volunteers had

played a more substantial role in the analysis. First, as the professionals were structurally located within the statutory agencies they would have been obliged to articulate proposals that were acceptable to their employers, and indeed the CMKA explicitly states the need to produce knowledge in a form that is acceptable to the statutory agencies. Limiting the range of potential analyses to those which would be acceptable to the statutory agencies would of course be profoundly de-politicising, and is an example of the way in which the professionals' structural alienation from the volunteers and the broader local community serves to limit the emancipatory potential of the project.

Although alienation is an important limitation on the production of emancipatory knowledge, it is not the most important factor in this instance. Even if the professionals had resigned en masse from the statutory agencies and developed a genuine cultural synthesis with the local population there is no guarantee that the knowledge produced would have been more emancipatory. The second factor limiting the emancipatory potential of the knowledge produced by WHAP is that an adequate appraisal of the objective conditions for change is not automatically available either to unaided common sense, or to the model of social research employed by the project. A key problem here is that many of the things we might seek to change actually present themselves to experience as immutable natural laws, rather than as historically specific social relations that can be transformed. Identifying the social nature of phenomena can only be achieved by the application of critique. The constituent elements of social critique are examined in the discussion section below, but in very simple terms critique entails studying: the historical development of a phenomenon, its relationship to other phenomena, its internal assumptions and contradictions, and the conditions that must prevail for it to exist. Not only does the application of critique reveal phenomena to be socially constructed, it also demonstrates their historicity or tendency to change over time, and crucially, by revealing the dynamics of change, critique indicates where, when and how we can intervene to consciously direct the process of change.

Without the process of critique existing social and economic relations present themselves to experience as ahistorical and unchangeable, leading us to scale down our aspirations and seek minor reforms within the existing social and economic order,

rather than pursuing our interests by consciously intervening in the process of change. The absence of social critique must, therefore, act as an extreme limitation on the production of emancipatory knowledge. Clearly, the location of the professionals within the statutory agencies renders them incapable of engaging in social critique, or even of being involved in a project that does. The CMKA dictates that the knowledge produced by WHAP should be in a form acceptable to the statutory agencies, what this means in practice is that the knowledge must be produced according to the conventions of positivist social science, which excludes the application of social critique. But, even if the obstacle of alienation was removed, for instance, if the professionals resigned from the statutory agencies, there is no indication that they or their colleagues in the local population would engage in social critique, or be able to relate their experiences to the results of critique conducted by others. The assumption is that if the community employs the techniques of positivist social scientific enquiry to study its own experiences of health and illness emancipatory knowledge will result, however, without the yeast of social critique to leaven the analytical bread it is unlikely that the knowledge produced will amount to more than the call for minor reforms within the existing social order.

The third factor relating to emancipatory potential is the extent to which action orientated research is related to the political will of the population. It was suggested above that the emancipatory potential of research findings depended upon relating the results of empirical enquiry to an understanding of the objective conditions for change derived from social critique, however, this would amount to very little unless the recommendations for action stemming from such analysis were both constitutive of, *and* expressive of, the political aspirations of the agents of change. Put simply, the research process must begin from a position of the expressed concerns of the population, and use the intellectual resources of research and social critique to enable the population to obtain consciousness of the means by which those concerns can be addressed. This does not mean, identifying the communities concerns, doing the research, and presenting the community with a set of recommendations or proposals for action. Nor does it mean conducting the analysis and then drafting recommendations which reflect the communities current aspirations. Rather, political will must be incorporated into the analytical process in a much more interactive way; it must inform the analysis, but it must also be informed by it. Thus the assessment of

the objective conditions for change must also take account of the political will (or consciousness) of the community, but the political will of the community must also be informed by the assessment of the objective conditions for change.

The point is that the production of emancipatory knowledge cannot be a linear process in which the concerns of the community are identified, research is conducted and recommendations are made, rather it must be a dialectical process in which new recommendations for action are constantly being produced from the synthesis of empirical research, social critique and political will. Rather than the production of knowledge preceding action for change, it must be deeply integrated within it, constantly informing and being informed by the struggle to achieve change. In practice this means that the process of mediation between the producers of knowledge and the population must be constant, and on-going. However, despite WHAP's commitment to 'partnership' or cultural synthesis, the political will of the local population, (or even that of the volunteers), was not brought to bear on the analytical process. Instead, the production of knowledge was considered to be completed with the writing of the report, which was then presented to the community as 'the results' rather than as the basis for a mediated analysis capable of yielding a plan for action.

This brings us to the final theme, the problem of mediating the findings of the research to the local population and to the statutory agencies. When presenting the analysis of the interview transcripts above, it was noted that there was a conceptual difficulty in separating issues around the presentation of research findings to the local population, from earlier issues in the research process. Thus the failings of the mediation process are in many respects representative of the project as a whole. For instance, the mediation process was primarily focused on the statutory agencies rather than the local population, not just in terms of the greater number of presentations, but also in the style of the report and the type of language used. The failure to achieve cultural synthesis with the volunteers was reflected in their lack of participation in the production of the report and the video. But most importantly the mediation process reflected the adoption of a positivist research perspective, in terms of the absence of social critique and a failure to engage the political will of the local population. Rather than producing emancipatory knowledge which informs and is informed by community action, WHAP produced alienated knowledge designed to inform the

activities of the statutory agencies. In line with the positivist model of research the process of mediation was defined as the presentation of research findings, rather than an on-going process of dialectical interaction with the local population.

The provisional conclusions presented above are drawn from an analysis of the issues raised by consideration of the case study materials and interview transcripts. WHAP adopted a communicative model of knowledge and action that gave rise to four analytical themes: the principle of achieving partnership or cultural synthesis between the professionals involved in the project and representatives of the local population, the controversy over subjective and objective methods of inquiry, the tension between science and ideology, and the problem of effectively mediating the research findings. Analysis revealed that although there were situational, or, context specific factors associated with each of these themes, they also reflected more fundamental contradictions which are likely to be generalizable to other instances where a similar approach is applied. The two key contradictions were found to be alienation in the relationship between the professionals and the community, and the adoption of a positivist epistemology. The combination of these two factors served to limit the emancipatory potential of the project.

Thus, if community development is defined as the attempt to form a partnership between professionals from statutory agencies and representatives of a community, with the objective of using research to identify the needs and preferences of the population, and develop a strategy for meeting those needs, then it can be concluded that, as with the other modes of empowerment discussed in chapter one, community development has a self-limiting internal logic that blunts its emancipatory potential.

The analysis also showed that the failure to achieve change through the CMKA led WHAP to abandon community development in favour of a more individualistic mode of empowerment; which is examined in chapter five. Before that it is necessary to place these provisional conclusions in the context of other empirical studies and sociological theory, firstly to deepen the analysis, but also to test its validity by looking for alternative readings of the material.

Discussion

In the analysis presented above it was suggested that the approach adopted by WHAP was initially characterised by the adoption of a communicative model of knowledge and action. The model was operationalised under specific circumstances that gave the project its particular form and character. However, there are general characteristics of the model that might be found in other initiatives. These essential elements include: the attempt to establish a *partnership* between members of the local community and welfare professionals with particular expertise and access to resources, the attempt to produce a new body of *knowledge* based on a synthesis of lay experience and professional expertise, and the attempt to use that knowledge to inform *action* which benefits the local population.

Even in the broad terms listed above, the model adopted by WHAP cannot be viewed as a universal definition of community development. The category is a broad one, and despite several attempts to deduce a logical taxonomy (Checkoway 1995, Miller et al 1990), or examine changes to the category over time (Meekosha & Mowbray 1990, Miller & Bryant 1990, Craig et al 1990), there is no precise definition of what constitutes community development. Fortunately, the availability of a closely defined category is not essential to this analysis, it is sufficient to note that there are many other initiatives in which *partnership* (or solidarity), *knowledge* production, and *action* for change, figure strongly and are seen as part of an inter-dependent process. Not all initiatives adopting this approach describe themselves as community development, nor do all projects adopting the community development label practice the process described above. Even so, it is not difficult to identify a broad range of projects that do share the three characteristics of the approach adopted by WHAP, for example: the British Community Development Project of the 1970s (Green & Chapman 1992), the Alcohol and Substance Abuse Program in New Mexico (Wallerstein 1993), the Adult Education and Community Development Project in Nicaragua (Lammerink 1994), and the Exercise in Citizenship against Hunger and Absolute Poverty in Brazil (Schlaepfer et al 1994). All of these initiatives subscribed to a common process, even if the specific conditions under which they operated vary.

As well as descriptions of practical projects, attempts to develop the theoretical basis of the approach can also be found in the literature. Jnanabrata Bhattacharyya (1995) in his attempt to derive a universal theory of community development grasps the essence of the relationships between partnership, knowledge and action, even though he uses slightly different terminology. Thus for Bhattacharyya the key components of community development are solidarity and agency. Solidarity is used in the Durkheimian sense, (similar to the conservative definition of community discussed in chapter one), and refers to a shared identity and common code of conduct. Agency is defined as *'the ability of people to order their world'*, or to be able to act on the world directly without dependence on external agents. The process by which these objectives are to be brought about is, according to Bhattacharyya, characterised by three elements: self-help, felt-needs, and partnership. The three elements combine in a process that entails people working together to identify their needs and produce collective meanings or a shared body of knowledge capable of informing their self-activity. Bhattacharyya contrasts the knowledge produced by such a process with the 'agency-robbing knowledge' produced by positivist research which is characterised by a top down approach that imposes definitions and solutions onto a passive and dependent population.

There is much in Bhattacharyya's approach that fits with the communicative model of knowledge and action employed by WHAP, for example, the emphasis on establishing partnership with the local population in order to access their subjective knowledge and experiences, and the process of using this partnership to construct a shared body of knowledge capable of supporting action. Moreover, Bhattacharyya gives a detailed critique of positivist research methods, noting the extent to which they lead to forms of domination or dependence; this supports the conclusion that WHAP failed to produce emancipatory knowledge partly because of its inability to adopt a critical research methodology.

Unfortunately, there are also lacunae in Bhattacharyya's account, most notably concerning the relationship between community representatives and professional community development workers (or other statutory sector workers involved in community development work), and the relationship between a community development initiative and the state. Nor, having identified the problematic nature of

positivist research as a means of producing emancipatory knowledge, does Bhattacharyya offer a convincing account of how a more critical and agency affirming methodology might be arrived at - instead it is assumed that the adoption of a lay perspective will inevitably lead to agency enhancing knowledge, without the need to address epistemological problems of subjectivism / relativism, and without the need for social critique. As the analysis of WHAP demonstrates, these three issues are essential to an understanding of this type of community development work, particularly in societies where the state apparatus is well developed. As with the communicative model of knowledge and action adopted by WHAP, alienation is for Bhattacharyya, an issue that can be resolved at a discursive level through the adoption of an appropriate methodology, the problem of a projects relationship to the state and the location of many community workers within statutory agencies is not addressed as a material barrier to solidarity and self-activity. Whilst Bhattacharyya's account sheds some light on the theoretical assumptions of initiatives that strive to produce emancipatory knowledge through partnership with lay representatives, the omissions detailed above render his analysis unsatisfactory.

The process that Bhattacharyya attempts to describe, is underpinned by the theory and practice of the Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire, in fact Freire's name permeates the literature on community development, providing a rare point of reference in an otherwise intellectually diverse body of knowledge. Although the main texts (Freire 1972, Freire 1973) were published in the early 1970's, it is worth returning to his work, not just because of its influence on the field, but also because it addresses some of the issues that are overlooked by Bhattacharyya.

At the core of Freire's work lies a commitment to the emancipation of the oppressed masses of South America. Education was seen as a key element in the revolutionary struggle, however this did not refer to the 'banking concept' of education deployed by the ruling class to deposit alienated and disempowering knowledge in the mind of the student, but rather to the development of critical consciousness, in which the student would come to recognise obstacles to the fulfilment of human potential as historically specific and obtain the self-confidence to participate in their transformation:

A deepened consciousness of their situation leads men to apprehend that situation as a historical reality susceptible of transformation. Resignation gives way to the drive for transformation and inquiry, over which men feel themselves in control. (Freire, 1972, p.58)

For Freire the 'conscientisation' of the masses came neither as an inevitable result of social and economic contradictions, nor as a response to top down revolutionary leadership, but through the establishment of a dialectical relationship of 'cultural synthesis' between the masses and the educationalist or revolutionary leadership. Genuine cultural synthesis entailed an eradication of the traditional distinction between teacher and student, instead both parties were engaged in a learning process directed towards the identification of problems and the development of action strategies to overcome them. The students brought to the educational encounter their direct experiences of oppression, which were then explored and contextualised using 'problem posing' techniques and 'generative themes' introduced by the educationalist:

The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself in dialogue with the students, who in their turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on 'authority' are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be on the side of freedom, not against it. Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. Men teach each other, mediated by the world, by the cognizable objects which in banking education are 'owned' by the teacher. (Freire's emphasis). (Freire, 1972, p.53)

Freire's belief in the necessity of establishing cultural synthesis between the masses and revolutionary leaders does not entail subordinating political strategy to the immediate demands of the people. Following Lenin's critique of 'economic spontaneity in the Russian Social Democratic Party (Lenin 1902), Freire illustrates his argument by reference to the issue of pay claims:

...if at a given historical moment the basic aspiration of the people goes no further than a demand for salary increases, the leaders can commit one of two errors. They can limit their action to stimulating this one demand or they can

overrule this popular aspiration and substitute something more far reaching - but something which has not yet come to the forefront of the people's attention. In the first case, the revolutionary leaders follow a line of adaptation to the people's demands. In the second case, by not respecting the aspirations of the people, they fall into cultural invasion. The solution lies in synthesis: the leaders must on the one hand identify with the people's demand for higher salaries, whilst on the other they must set the meaning of that very demand as a problem. By doing this, the leaders pose as a problem a real, concrete, historical situation of which the salary demand is one dimension. It will thereby become clear that salary demands alone cannot comprise a definitive solution. (Freire, 1972, pp.149-50)

In short, Freire's work details a process by which critical consciousness can be developed as a prelude to revolutionary activity. His objective is to close the gap between the consciousness of the masses and that of the intellectual/revolutionary leadership by arriving at a form of mediation that allows individual subjective experiences of oppression to be synthesised with the analytical skills of social critique.

We noted above that Bhattacharyya's theory of community development left unanswered questions about the relationship between community work and the state, and the methodology needed to replace 'agency-robbing' positivism. By grounding the processes of cultural synthesis and conscientization in the historically specific context of revolutionary struggle Freire answers the above questions. First, the conscientization process is conceptualised as a process which is independent of the state, indeed its ultimate objective is the overthrow of the state. This oppositional stance towards the state also has consequences for the structural location of the community worker, (or educationalist, to use Freire's term). If the role of the community worker is to foment critical consciousness amongst the oppressed, it is unlikely that this process can be sponsored by the state, even in countries where the state is relatively under-developed and state employees have greater 'room to manoeuvre' than their counterparts in contemporary Britain. Finally, Freire's account of the relationship between the masses and a revolutionary leadership indicates the methodological perspective to be deployed in place of positivism. Reference is repeatedly made to the objective of revealing the transitoriness of existing social and

economic relations, (what Freire terms 'limit-situations'), by pointing to their historical and structural specificity, in order that such barriers to the fulfilment of human potential might be effectively challenged and over-thrown. Although this process is not examined in detail, it is recognisable as a form of social critique, or more specifically, as historical materialism.

Bhattacharyya's theorisation of community development comprises an attempt to extract the processes of cultural synthesis and conscientization from their social revolutionary context, in order to find a democratic means of stimulating solidarity and agency within the existing social order. But this intellectual sleight of hand leads to a contradiction. The rationale for community development is, according to Bhattacharyya, the pursuit of solidarity and agency in order that people might achieve satisfaction of their felt needs, but his failure to address the problematic relationship between community work and the state, or to articulate a clear methodological alternative to positivism, hides the structural and epistemological obstacles to achieving this aim. Without the intellectual resource of social critique how can the participants in community development initiatives recognise the historical and structural specificity of the barriers to needs satisfaction. If a community development initiative is funded or staffed by the state then how will it be able to push the demand for needs satisfaction beyond the limited confines of statutory provision? The answer to both questions must be that Bhattacharyya's model of community development is not concerned with transcending the structural constraints on needs fulfilment and emancipation, but with small scale self-help initiatives and minor reforms to the existing order. As such it is a means of adapting to alienation rather than a method for overcoming it.

Whatever the shortcomings of Bhattacharyya's approach, it is very close to the communicative model of knowledge and action adopted by WHAP. Both share a commitment to partnership, the articulation of felt needs, self-help, and a critical approach to existing knowledge. But, both approaches are also characterised by an absence of social critique in their methodology of knowledge production, and a failure to recognise the extent to which dependence on the state for professional input and resources limits the potential for cultural synthesis, or emancipatory praxis.

This tendency to de-politicise Freire's approach by borrowing some of the methods of cultural synthesis, but locating them in a different structural context can be found in a broad range of initiatives that claim a Freirian lineage whilst engaging in very different forms of practical activity. As noted in chapter one, this is often the case in state sponsored community health projects, for example, Freire is invoked as the inspiration for a programme teaching health promotion to Canadian schoolchildren (Kalnins et al, 1994) and an alcohol and substance abuse prevention programme in New Mexico (Wallerstein, 1993).

The co-option of community development by the state, often as a means of stimulating self-help and voluntarism in the name of 'welfare pluralism', has led to a re-assessment of its potential as a means of bringing about political change (Dixon, 1990). However, rather than focusing on the relationship between community development and the state, or the absence of social critique, such accounts tend to focus on external factors, for instance, citing the conservative political climate of the 1980s and 1990s (Miller & Bryant, 1990), or the demise of 'left-wing' Local Authorities (Diamond, 1993), as reasons for the failure to achieve progressive change. By contrast the 1970s are often invoked as a kind of 'golden age' of radical community work against which the current pragmatism can be contrasted (Meekosha & Mowbray, 1990). Undoubtedly, the changed political climate in which modern community development is situated might have diluted the resolve of politically committed community workers as it has so many other potential activists. But such factors do not offer a complete explanation of the political impotence of community development work. If we look back to the 'radical' community development projects of the 1960s and 1970s, we find that although they were characterised by radical aspirations and the pursuit of political transformation, they failed to achieve anything but the smallest local concessions or reforms. Despite this historical fact, the radical advocates of community development still cling to the notion that they are pursuing a form of emancipatory practice, based on sound Freirian principles, that might eventually deliver progressive social change if the broader political climate becomes more conducive.

Why is it then that the advocates of state sponsored community development in the West are able to delude themselves that they are engaged in essentially the same form

of practice as Freire's Latin American revolutionaries? It was suggested above, that structural alienation and absence of social critique did not operate as self-limiting factors in Paulo Freire's model of emancipatory activity. This stems from Freire's point of departure, his emancipatory subject, (the educationalist or community activist), rather than being integrated within the state, stands in open opposition to it, and is therefore able to side with the community in the struggle to transform it. By the same token, the oppositional stance adopted by Freire's educationalist, informs his/her epistemological stance - the objective is to create critical consciousness by revealing the historical specificity of the existing social order, this is facilitated not just by exploring the subjective experiences of community members, but also by exposure to the analytical techniques of a revolutionary leadership. The only obstacle to this process is reliance on traditional educational methods, which Freire rightly considers to be disempowering and uncritical. However, his/her location outside the state leaves the educationalist free to adopt the radical, emancipatory educational practices advocated by Freire.

Thus, the two factors which undermined the emancipatory potential of WHAP and other similar initiatives, are barely addressed by Freire, because writing in a context of social revolution, the autonomy and critical perspective of the educationalist could be taken for granted. However, the absence of any overt discussion of these themes in Freire's writings has led advocates of community development in the West to erroneously assume that his techniques of mediation can be applied effectively by people who are employed by the state and who may not have access to the methods of social critique.

As the need to establish a relationship between community workers and their constituency that is not impeded by structural constraints, is virtually absent from Freire's approach, we need to examine the work of other political theorists to deepen our understanding. This relationship is the main subject of chapter four, and is only addressed here in terms of its effect on the production of knowledge. Before that, we need to clarify the terminology employed. In the above discussion the terms 'professional', 'community worker', and 'educationalist' are used rather loosely, as if they refer to the same subject. Whilst in common usage the terms are far from synonymous, in the contexts in which they appear above they do refer to a common

social relation; what might be termed the relationship between the intellectual and society. The members of WHAP felt that the main benefit of having professionals involved in the project was their access to material resources and the 'official' status their involvement conferred. However, for an emancipatory model of community development the essential contribution of the 'professional', (or educationalist, or community worker), is an intellectual one, or more specifically, the ability to organise, mediate and analyse. Thus for the following discussion the terms 'intellectual', or, 'intelligentsia' will be substituted for community worker, professional or educationalist.

Many theorists have addressed the relationship between intellectuals, the production of knowledge and political activity; one of the more valuable contributions is made by Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* (1971). The key to Gramsci's perspective lies in the distinction he drew between intellectual activity and the socially constructed role and function of intellectuals as a specific group. The former was a competence available to all:

> *Each man, finally, outside his professional activity, carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a 'philosopher', an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is, to bring into being new modes of thought.* (Gramsci, 1971, p.9)

However, not everyone adopts the role and function of an intellectual. Gramsci drew a distinction between two types of intellectual, first was the 'traditional intellectual', for example the artist, philosopher, or cleric, who owes his position to the patronage of an earlier ruling class, but who now presents himself as above class relations and political conflict. 'Organic intellectuals' on the other hand, are characterised by their social and cultural proximity to a particular class, and the role that they play in articulating the collective consciousness of that group.

More specifically, Gramsci pointed to the way in which the organic intellectuals of the ruling class contributed to the subordination of other classes:

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The intellectuals are the dominant group's 'deputies' exercising the subaltern

functions of social hegemony and political government. (Gramsci, 1971, p.12)

The role of the intellectual is not simply to manage the coercive apparatus of the state in the interests of the ruling class, but also to win the consent of the majority of the population to what Gramsci describes as: *'the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group'* (Gramsci, 1971, p.12). Thus, the knowledge produced by the intelligentsia serves to subordinate the population to the ideas of the ruling class, a process that Gramsci refers to as hegemony. In order to attain the position of hegemonic dominance the organic intellectuals of the ruling class must supplant the traditional intellectuals, in order that the interests of their class can be identified as 'common sense' rather than political ideology.

From this perspective the production of knowledge is not the gradual unfolding of 'objective truth', nor is it a mechanistic expression of ruling class interests, rather it is the product of intellectual struggle structured by class interests. Gramsci refers to this struggle as the *war of position*, which forms an essential complement to the *war of manoeuvre* in which state-power is seized. For Gramsci, the emancipation of the working class depended upon its ability to generate its own organic intellectuals capable of producing a theoretical interpretation of working class experience to be used in counter-hegemonic activity as well as guiding the war of manoeuvre.

The WHAP case study, and other similar initiatives, can be read from a Gramscian perspective - the attempt to achieve cultural synthesis between professionals and lay volunteers could represent the production of organic intellectuals, and the desire to produce an alternative body of knowledge which expresses the interests of the local population could be viewed as anti-hegemonic struggle. However, the location of the professionals within the state must bring in to question their ability to objectively take the side of the local population even if this is their subjective aspiration. Gramsci has indicated the extent to which even the most remote employees of the state may be implicated in the hegemonic process:

The function of organising social hegemony and state domination certainly gives rise to a particular division of labour and therefore to a whole hierarchy of qualifications in some of which there is no apparent attribution of directive or organisational functions [...] Indeed, intellectual activity must also be distinguished in terms of its intrinsic characteristics, [...] at the highest level would be the creators the various sciences, philosophy, art, etc., at the lowest the most humble 'administrators' and divulgators of pre-existing, traditional, accumulated intellectual wealth. In the modern world the category of intellectuals, understood in this sense, has undergone an unprecedented expansion. The democratic-bureaucratic system has given rise to a great mass of functions which are not all justified by the social necessities of production, though they are justified by the political necessities of the dominant fundamental group. (Gramsci, 1971, pp.12-13)

The most overtly hegemonic aspect of professional knowledge, (evidenced in the WHAP case study), is the extent to which the needs of the population are transformed into problems to be resolved by the state, rather than by emancipatory activity. Nick Manning has noted this process and locates its origins in the transmission of ideological themes from their academic producers to welfare professionals:

The ultimate intellectual production of language is of course not by professional workers but by those upon whom their knowledge base rests: academics such as the authors of this book. If, as we have argued, economic and political conflicts become processed into social problems for the state to solve, and if it is also the key to understanding which issues become social problems, then to the extent that academics shape those processes, which they do, we must consider academic work also as ideological. (Manning, 1985, p.188)

Analysis of the WHAP case study reveals that the hegemonic function of state professionals is not simply a reflection of their dependence on academic knowledge - even when such professionals subjectively adopt a position in opposition to the academy, and strive to provide alternative and emancipatory forms of knowledge in partnership with the community, their efforts are severely constrained by their

professional role as agents of the state. To make such an observation, does not entail subscribing to a mechanistic model in which class location determines consciousness, which in turn determines knowledge production, but rather that the everyday experience of working for the state necessitates the acceptance of the rules (both formal and informal) of professional conduct, which include: fostering the appearance of political neutrality focusing on "social problems" for which the state has a technical solution, and fundamentally, when it comes to the production of knowledge, the adoption of a positivist methodology rather than one of social critique.

In short, Gramsci offers an account of the relationship between the intellectual and society, which unlike that of Freire, overtly problematises the project of producing emancipatory or counter hegemonic knowledge whilst operating in the role of a state employed professional. The consequences of this contradiction are explored at greater length in the next chapter.

The remaining piece of the jigsaw, constantly referred to in the analysis presented above, but not yet described in detail, is the methodology of critical social inquiry, or more specifically, social critique, the absence of which renders the production of emancipatory knowledge an illusion. The elements of critical inquiry are diverse and flexible and only take on a specific form when applied to the study of a particular phenomenon. Although the methodology of critical research is constantly developing the approach has several essential elements, and the intention here is to summarise them in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the approach and reveal the difficulty of adopting it whilst in the role of state employed welfare professional.

At the core of a genuinely critical methodology lies the application of dialectical logic. Dialectical reasoning is complex, and only a brief account can be given here. Essentially, the approach addresses the relationship between objects and events in the material world and their subjective representation in human consciousness. The dialectical character of this relationship had been addressed by GWF Hegel, but he took as his point of departure the realm of ideas, or human spirit, and was concerned with the way in which human thought became materialised through practical activity. From this perspective the individual's knowledge of the world was essentially knowledge of materialised, and therefore alienated, human thought. Through practical

activity the individual could overcome his alienation and re-appropriate the human spirit as it had been externalised by previous generations. Ilyenkov gives an eloquent account of Hegel's approach:

> *This world was the materialised thought of humanity, realised in the product, was alienated thought in general; and the individual had to de-objectify, and arrogate to himself, the modes of activity that were realised in it, and it was in that the process of his education properly consisted. In the trained mind categories actually functioned as active forms of thought activity, forms of processing the material of sense impressions into the form of a concept. When the individual had them in his experience, and made them forms of his own activity, he also possessed them, and knew and realised them, as thought-forms. Otherwise they remained only general forms of the things given in contemplation and representation, and counterposed to thought as a reality existing outside it and independently of it.* (Ilyenkov, 1977, p.208)

Thus Hegel shifted the focus of logic towards consideration of sensuous human activity, and indicated the extent to which the products of human thought and intervention in nature take on a naturalised and ahistorical appearance. Much of Hegel's logic is retained in modern dialectical thought, but for one fundamental difference. By starting in the realm of ideas and examining their impact on the material world, Hegel was unable to account for the origins of those thoughts, and was obliged to rely on an essentialist and metaphysical account of the 'human spirit'. Vulgar materialists, like Ludwig Feuerbach, noted that this amounted to little more than religious belief, and sought to ground human consciousness in experience of the material world. Thus for Feuerbach it was the real world that became imprinted on the physical human brain, rather than the unfolding of the human spirit that gave rise to the world.

Although Feuerbach's account of human consciousness dispenses with the idealism of Hegel's approach, it only does so at the cost of perceiving humanity as the passive recipient of data from the material world. It took Marx to combine the materialist basis of consciousness identified by Feuerbach, with the dialectical insights of Hegel. For Marx, consciousness came from the individual's experience of the real world, but

this experience was one of practical activity, of conscious intervention to adapt nature to meet human needs. From this perspective phenomena could still be identified as socially constructed, that is, as the product of human will, without resorting to a metaphysical account of 'human spirit'. Ilyenkov has noted the advance that this represents over vulgar materialism:

> *Materialism in this case does not consist at all in identifying the ideal with the material processes taking place in the head. Materialism is expressed here in understanding that the ideal, as a socially determined form of the activity of man creating an object in one form or another, is engendered and exists not in the head but with the help of the head in the real objective activity (activity on things) of man as the active agent of social production.* (Ilyenkov, 1977, p.261)

Importantly, the human head is not seen as a purely physical entity, but as a social head, full of socially constructed information on how to understand and act in the world, for example, language, concepts and categories. The focus on conscious human activity (production in its broadest sense), essential to the materialist conception of dialectics, re-introduces Hegel's problematic, but sets it on a materialist footing - effectively turning Hegel on his head, as Marx put it. The problem resides in the gap between socially constructed phenomena as they exist in the real world, and the equally socially constructed representations of those phenomena in the consciousness of the individual. The key to this problem is the continuing process of change over time. First, the world in which we find ourselves is in a constant state of flux, requiring us to constantly act upon it, and constantly represent that process in consciousness. Unfortunately, as we know from Hegel, the phenomenal forms through which we grasp reality are constructed over generations, and may therefore present themselves to the individual as static and immutable. The application of dialectical logic enables us to recognise the historical specificity and social construction of prevailing phenomenal forms, in order that we can act to consciously transform them, and better satisfy our needs and wants.

The dialectical logic revealed by Marx reflected the largely unconscious technique used by other scientists, for example, Darwin had been able to reveal an organic world in a constant state of flux, where minute quantitative changes over time led to the

qualitative transformation from one species to another. That we bother to assign fixed labels to things which are constantly changing is a matter of practicality rather than precision - we name things in order to understand them, so that we might use them to meet our needs. However, the fixity of meaning implied in the act of naming cannot keep up with a world that is constantly changing, leading us to continually revise our knowledge of the world. In this sense a body of knowledge is always historically specific. This does not imply the adoption of a relativist epistemology, because at any given moment some truth claims will grasp reality more adequately than others. The importance of dialectical logic is that it enables us to choose between alternative truth claims without losing sight of their historical specificity and transitoriness.

The adoption of dialectical logic has a series of methodological consequences for critical social research. First, it is essential to study the *historical* development of a phenomenon to reveal changes in the way it has been conceptualised over time. The purpose of studying a phenomenon over time is not simply to record changes in its *appearance* or *phenomenal form*, but to reveal the nature of the relationship between the phenomenon's appearance and its underlying *essence*. We noted above that the production of knowledge involves abstraction from the material world to the theoretical world, in order to better inform our practical activity. The dialectical approach problematises this relationship between objective reality and our attempts to represent it in knowledge. Part of the problem is that objective reality is in a constant state of flux and our attempts to grasp it through categorisation and definition must inevitably become out-dated or inadequate over time. The purpose of studying a phenomenon over time is, therefore, to reveal the historical specificity of phenomenal forms and the extent to which they are socially constructed.

The relationship between essence and appearance is not only problematic because phenomenal forms become outdated in the face of constant changes in the material world, but also because the historically specific categories through which we grasp the material world also have a political dimension in that they enable powerful groups to exercise domination over less powerful groups. Thus, the second element of social critique is the *deconstruction* of categories or phenomenal forms. This does not simply entail the production of a detailed description of the material contents of a given category, but an attempt to reveal the extent to which the existence of a category

depends upon a series of relationships with other phenomena in the social and economic totality. For example, an uncritical definition of the category 'working class' might produce a list of occupations, or an income band, or cultural characteristics such as educational attainment or 'lifestyle choices'. A critical account, by contrast, would attempt to locate the category in a series of social and economic relations.

Viewing a phenomenon as the product of a whole network of social and economic relations, does not mean that all of those social relations carry equal explanatory potential. It may be possible to find a key relationship or 'overriding moment'; for example, with the category 'working class' the key relationship might be that workers are obliged to sell their labour power to the private owners of capital, thereby forfeiting their right to exercise conscious control over the production and distribution of goods and services. This process of deconstructing a phenomenal form or explanatory category is fundamentally empirical; it is grounded in observation of phenomena in the real world at a specific location in time and space, and cannot be dogmatically generalised to a different context.

Critique of categories has a series of effects. First it shifts explanatory emphasis from the categories themselves to the social relations that underpin them. This makes the categories derived from such analysis more enduring over time, for example, if the working class is defined in terms of particular occupations or cultural attributes, then the term must inevitably become redundant as the labour market changes and different cultural patterns emerge, for instance, it is often remarked that the working class has declined as a result of the re-structuring of manufacturing industry (Gorz, 1982), however, if the category is defined in terms of the relationship between labour and capital, then the category continues to be of value while ever that relationship endures, even though its demographic content may change over time.

A second effect of deconstruction is that in laying bare the essence of a phenomenon by locating its conditions of existence in a specific network of social and economic relations it also reveals political factors that cannot be grasped from its surface appearance. The classic example is Marx's critique of the phenomenal forms of bourgeois political economy (Marx, 1887), which revealed the essentially exploitative

and coercive relations that lie behind the apparent freedom and equity of commodity production. The hidden political nature of phenomenal forms is not only to be found in class relations, but anywhere that knowledge is implicated in the domination of one group by another, for example, around gender and race. The objective of critical social research is to make such oppressive structures overt in order that they might be challenged.

This relationship between critical social research and political activity is two-fold. First, for the critical social researcher the distinction between the material world and its abstract representation in knowledge is not absolute. As well as having an existence as text or as ideas, knowledge is also externalised through our conscious manipulation of material objects, for example, even a very basic manufactured object like a spoon has more than a purely physical existence; as well as being a piece of metal it is also a consciously designed instrument that can be used in a specific way to solve a specific problem. This process of externalising conscious knowledge to give it a material existence extends beyond the production of basic tools to include the built environment, social and economic institutions, et cetera. Thus, the production of an alternative body of knowledge entails much more than abstract re-conceptualisation of the material world, or the production of a text, it entails the transformation of the phenomenal forms of knowledge, that is the material objects, institutions and processes in which previous knowledge is embedded. As Lee Harvey has noted:

> *Knowledge changes not simply as a result of reflection but as a result of activity too. Knowledge changes as a result of praxis. Similarly what we know informs praxis. Knowledge is dynamic, not because we uncover more grains of sand for the bucket but because of a process of fundamental reconceptualisation which is only possible as a result of direct engagement with the processes and structures which generate knowledge. (Harvey, 1990, p.23)*

This unity between the subjective and objective world underlines the political basis of critical social research. The point is not simply to reveal the oppressive aspects of existing phenomenal forms as an end in itself, the objective is to embed this

knowledge in the consciousness of the oppressed in order that they might engage in practical activity to emancipate themselves. Füredi suggests that:

The power of Marxist theory is derived, not from the elegance of its arguments, but from its capacity to make conscious the unconscious forces driving towards social change. (Füredi, 1990, p.xxiii)

We noted above that the relationship between theory and practice is not uni-linear. Whilst the objective of critical social research is to inform conscious activity, it also derives its validity from active involvement in political struggle. From this perspective the production of knowledge is deeply embedded in the process of social transformation; both informing, and derived from, the struggle to consciously change the material world.

To summarise, it is suggested that the production of emancipatory knowledge is dependent upon the adoption of a critical social research methodology. Although critical social research is diverse and constantly developing the following characteristics are essential to the approach: the application of dialectical logic which views the material and social world as in a constant state of flux, the study of phenomena over time to reveal their historical specificity, the critique or deconstruction of existing phenomenal forms and analytical categories that delves beneath the superficial appearances available to unaided common sense to reveal the network of social and economic relations that are the essential conditions of existence for a phenomenon, the exposure of previously hidden oppressive structures, and a praxiological orientation in which knowledge is considered to be inseparable from conscious practical activity.

What we have presented above as critical social research will be recognisable to many as historical materialism. But not everyone who considers themselves a critical social researcher would claim to be an historical materialist. Partly the problem resides in the identification of historical materialism with Marx's research agenda, which may lead some to conclude that the approach is not applicable to the concerns of, for example, a feminist or anti-racist researcher. But it is important to distinguish between the object of study and the methodology employed. Whilst Marx may have

focused on specific research questions, this does not negate the relevance of his methodology for studying other phenomena, or for studying the same phenomena from a different standpoint. It is one of the strengths, and one of the weaknesses, of critical social research that two different researchers can study the same phenomena, using ostensibly the same methodology, and arrive at different findings, both of which are valid and reliable. The reasons for this apparent paradox are examined in the appendix on method. Finally, there are critical social researchers who *consciously* reject not only Marx's research agenda, but also part or all of historical materialism; unfortunately, the emancipatory potential of such alternatives cannot be assessed in abstraction, and it remains for their proponents to demonstrate their critical potential.

In the analysis of the WHAP case study it was suggested that although the professionals involved in the project set out with radical objectives, they failed to adopt a critical social research methodology. There are many reasons for this failure, not least that critical social research is an extremely complex and time consuming process, requiring knowledge and skills that are not widely available even amongst professionals. More importantly, even if the professionals involved in WHAP had possessed the technical expertise needed for critical social research their location within the state would have stopped them from bringing it to bear for two reasons.

Most obviously, the professionals would not have been able to adopt a critical research methodology because the findings of such an inquiry would not have been acceptable to the state. Critical social research is orientated towards the development of critical consciousness amongst oppressed groups, in order that they might bring about radical transformation of existing social arrangements. This type of praxiological knowledge is totally inconsistent with the objectives of the state. Rather than enabling oppressed groups to emancipate themselves by engaging in transformatory activity the state is interested in knowledge *about* the local population that will enable the büreaucracy to bring about small incremental changes in service provision without fundamentally challenging the existing social and economic order. In the current political climate any departure from that objective is unlikely to be tolerated by the state.

More importantly, as we noted above, critical social research entails actively taking the side of the oppressed in objective terms, that is, its operational domain is the

consciousness of oppressed groups. Access to the consciousness of the oppressed can only be obtained by developing forms of organisation that support a high degree of mediation between the intelligentsia and oppressed groups. As the WHAP case study demonstrated the structural location of the professionals within the state blocked their ability to actively engage the consciousness of the local population - although the professionals could subjectively side with the volunteers, they were obliged to develop an organisational form that was consistent with their location in the state, that is, an organisational form that reflected their objective alienation from the local population.

Although the other points are important it is the final one that is key in determining the inability to adopt a critical research methodology from within the confines of the state. This is confirmed by consideration of the British Community Development Projects of the 1970s which were discussed in chapter one. The CDP workers enjoyed a high degree of autonomy from the state and were able to reject the social pathology perspective prescribed by the programme's instigators, in favour of their own model of critical social research. However, their structural location within the state obliged them to adopt an organisational form that reflected their alienation from the population, consequently they were not able to adequately engage the consciousness of oppressed groups. This resulted in the production of knowledge that had many of the characteristics of critical social research, for instance: the adoption of an historical perspective, critique of existing phenomenal forms, even an oppositional stance regarding the state, but which fundamentally failed to achieve praxiological status. For all its radical rhetoric the knowledge produced by the CDPs never amounted to anything more than text, it was never able to inform the conscious practical activity of oppressed groups.

From the analysis conducted earlier in this chapter it was concluded that the structural location of the professionals within the state, effectively alienated them from the local population, and that this, coupled with the inability to adopt a critical social research methodology, accounted for the failure to produce genuinely emancipatory knowledge. In this section I have attempted to examine the generalisability of the analysis by examining commentaries on other initiatives, and also to deepen the analysis by relating it to a broader body of social and political theory. In the remainder of this chapter I want to subject my analysis to critical scrutiny by examining a potential

alternative reading of the research data. The range of alternative readings is potentially infinite, and it is neither possible nor desirable to present a cross section here. With this in mind I have chosen to focus on some of the criticisms and alternative readings that might be produced by those adopting a post-modernist perspective. The rationale for focusing on post-modernism is that it fundamentally challenges the assumption that the production of emancipatory knowledge is a viable project, as such it promises to undermine not only the epistemological basis of WHAP and projects like it, but also that of my analysis. A collateral reason for examining post-modernism is that it begins to encroach on the field as the views of post-modernist academics filter down to the practitioners of community development and the new mode of empowerment discussed in chapter five.

An alternative reading

It was suggested above that WHAP and similar community development initiatives were characterised by the desire to achieve partnership or solidarity amongst a population in order that they might produce a body of knowledge about their needs and aspirations as a basis for collective action to meet those needs. Furthermore, it was concluded that dependence on the formal input of professionals employed by the state, and failure to adopt a critical social research methodology, severely limited the emancipatory potential of such initiatives. Although such an analysis is critical of community development in terms of its specific organisational form and methodological assumptions it leaves unscathed the claim that if such obstacles can be overcome then people *really will* be able to come together in solidarity to produce critical knowledge capable of informing collective emancipatory action.

Post-modernism brings into question the viability and validity of this putative series of relations between social solidarity, knowledge production, and emancipatory action. A key distinction between the way post-modernists conceptualise the social world and the way that they claim it was conceptualised by their modernist predecessors is that the former emphasise fragmentation and particularism where the latter were concerned with totalisation and universality. Thus the belief that people can join together to identify a common set of problems which they can collectively work to overcome, is

rejected in favour of a perspective which sees a multitude of small interest groups or 'micro-powers' struggling to impose their own version of 'truth' onto others in order to exercise power over them. The broad sweep of post-modernist ideas cannot be encapsulated in their attitudes towards solidarity, knowledge and action, however, our purpose here is not to précis post-modernist thought, but to examine the extent to which it provides an alternative reading of community development, and for this purpose the three 'headings' provide an adequate structure for organising the material.

Post-modernists adopt a sceptical position vis-à-vis social solidarity, on the grounds that it masks fundamental differences both in personal identity and in perceived interests. This position is not unique to the post-modernists; many commentators have noted the extent to which notions of community or the 'common good' mask fundamental divisions along lines of class, gender and ethnicity. But the post-modernists go beyond this to reject any totalising category that implies fixed membership of an objective interest group. Pauline Vaillancourt Rosenau claims that:

A post-modern individual is constantly torn by conflicting community loyalties so that unmitigated allegiance to any specific community is almost an impossibility. In the end, community affiliation is located in increasingly specific, local forms of subgroup identity. (Vaillancourt Rosenau, 1994, p.311)

Similarly, Caroline Ramazanoglu (1989) has illustrated the extent to which the emancipation of women has been undermined by divisions of class, ethnicity and sexuality, which mean that women often confront each other as oppressor and oppressed rather than uniting around a common emancipatory agenda.

This fragmentary approach to the problem of solidarity emanates from the post-modernist conceptualisation of power. It would be misleading to suggest that all post-modernists share a common understanding of power, however, one of the most overtly expressed, (and most relevant to our argument), is that found in the writings of Michel Foucault. Foucault's analysis of power is fundamentally empirical, he is concerned in the first instance with the exercise of power at an inter personal level. From this perspective power is not an entity in its own right, or even an independent relation, rather it is an inherent and inseparable quality of other social relations, for example,

economic, knowledge or sexual relations. Thus power is not something that can be possessed or won, nor is it a phenomenon that can be monopolised by an institution or group, rather it is exercised in everyday situations of inequality which are constantly changing and being re-structured.

This empirical focus on the micro-relations in which power inheres does not blind Foucault to the broader operations or strategies of power, but it does lead him to conclude that power emanates from below, that is, from microscopic encounters or relations that are constitutive of the broader social cleavages and operations of power:

> *Power comes from below; that is, there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a matrix - no such duality extending from the top down and reacting on more and more limited groups to the very depths of the social body. One must suppose rather that the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions, are the basis for wide-ranging effects of cleavage that run through the social body as a whole. These then form a general line of force that traverses the local oppositions and links them together; to be sure they also bring about redistributions, reallignments, homogenizations, serial arrangements, and convergences of the force relations. Major dominations are the hegemonic effects that are sustained by all these confrontations.*
> (Foucault, 1976, p.94)

Foucault draws a number of conclusions from his conceptualisation of power. First, he makes the apparently paradoxical claim that: "*power relations are both intentional and non-subjective*" (1976, p.94), by this he means that power is exercised *consciously* at a microscopic or inter-personal level according to specific aims and objectives, but that the processes in which power inheres and which make the operation of power patterned and observable at a macroscopic level owe their existence to the largely *unconscious* combination or aggregation of the micro-operations of power. Consequently the mechanisms by which power operates are not consciously designed or controlled by any powerful elite or ruling class.

Secondly, in the same way that the operation of power is dispersed as an innumerable series of points scattered across a network of social relations, so too is the operation of resistance to power, which again emanates from individual instances of opposition:

> *Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localised in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities. And it is doubtless the strategic codification of resistance that makes a revolution possible, somewhat similar to the way in which the state relies on the institutional integration of power relationships.* (Foucault, 1976, p.96)

Foucault's analysis of power undermines modernist assumptions about solidarity. If power is immanent to a complex network of social relations in which the individual actively participates, then there can be no clear cut or universal distinction between the oppressed and the oppressor, for example, an individual may be oppressed as a member of the working class but an oppressor in terms of his membership of the male gender. In the objective sense this means that there can never be solidarity around a universal emancipatory agenda, hence the tendency towards political fragmentation noted above.

It is in the second element of the solidarity-knowledge-action trinity that the post-modernist perspective diverges most sharply from what its advocates describe as modernist assumptions. Post-modernist approaches to knowledge are diverse and multi-faceted, however there are two broadly held assumptions about the nature of knowledge that are relevant to an alternative reading of WHAP and similar initiatives. First, the post-modernists adopt a relativist epistemology in which the products of rational inquiry are considered to have no greater validity than other forms of knowledge. Secondly, the enlightenment claim that the production of knowledge is potentially emancipatory, is rejected in favour of the pessimistic conclusion that the production of knowledge is inextricably embroiled in the 'will to power', and must inevitably lead to domination and coercion. Both points are summarised by Foucault when he states that:

... truth is no doubt a form of power. And in saying that, I am only taking up one of the fundamental problems of Western philosophy when it poses these questions: Why, in fact are we attached to the truth? Why the truth rather than lies? Why the truth rather than myth? Why the truth rather than illusion? And I think that, instead of trying to find out what truth, as opposed to error, is, it might be more interesting to take up the problem posed by Nietzsche: how is it that, in our societies, "the truth" has been given this value, thus placing us absolutely under its thrall? (Foucault, 1988, p.107)

Tracing the historical development of different forms of knowledge/power is a constant theme throughout Foucault's work, which charts the implication of knowledge in different regimes or technologies of power, including: psychiatry, the penal system and sexuality. Superficially it might appear that Foucault is simply describing the way in which powerful groups produce knowledge which legitimates the pursuit of their interests by its appearance of scientificity and universality. But, this would entail drawing a distinction between 'ideological' knowledge and knowledge which is not implicated in the operation of power; a distinction for which Foucault can find no empirical evidence. Thus, although Foucault's methodology resembles the account of critical social research given above, in terms of its focus on the historical specificity of knowledge and the critique of existing phenomenal forms and analytical categories, he is not suggesting that they can be replaced by an alternative body of knowledge that has greater epistemological validity or emancipatory potential. For Foucault knowledge can never be separated from the operation of power, hence the epistemologically neutral term 'discourse' is adopted in preference to 'ideology':

...like it or not, it [ideology] *always stands in opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth. Now I believe that the problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientificity or truth, and that which comes under some other category, but in seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false.* (Foucault, 1980, p.118)

Moving on to the third element of the solidarity-knowledge-action trinity, it is apparent from their perspective on the first two elements that post-modernists must take a pessimistic view concerning the viability of collective, emancipatory social action. If the potential for solidarity is inevitably undermined by the infinite fragmentation and diversity of personal identity, and if the rational production of knowledge amounts to nothing more than the means by which individuals exercise power over others, then the likelihood of taking collective action to achieve emancipation and the satisfaction of human needs must be very slim indeed. Thus rather than broad social groups struggling to construct their own forms of knowledge capable of informing collective action to bring about social transformation post-modernists expect to find small scale and short lived associations between individuals, often centring on a single issue, and seeking to destabilise the 'truth claims' of others rather than construct a discourse of their own. Thus Vaillancourt Rosenau concludes:

Post-modernists choose "life politics" over "emancipation." Emancipatory politics is rejected because so much of what the old social movements designated as emancipatory, (seeking justice and freedom from inequality and oppression) turned out to be misguided and misdirected, giving rise to unanticipated forms of oppression. Besides, any plan for emancipation implies a "general prescription, a coherent plan, a program." These post-modernists look rather to "life politics," defined in such admittedly vague terms as intimacy, globalisation, self-actualisation, and post-modern identity. (Vaillancourt Rosenau, 1994, p.317)

Vaillancourt Rosenau's description of post-modernist praxis fits well with the decline of traditional class based political activity and the rise of New Social Movements - she notes that the post-modernists' emphasis on the inter-personal nature of power and consequent rejection of belief in the accumulation of power within structural relations or institutions leads them to disregard the state as a political domain in favour of more localised concerns:

These post-modernists emphasise innovative conceptions of knowing and being which make for a politics where more conscious attention is given to language and discourse. This means less concern with the state, because they have no

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desire to "seize power," and more concern with the individual and the neighbourhood, with the local, regional, and community levels. (Vaillancourt Rosenau, 1994, p.318)

Post-modernism then, offers a fundamental critique of the claim that a population can work together to identify its needs and take collective action to meet them. The critique focuses on the three elements of the community development process, substituting fragmentation and personal identity for social solidarity, a relativist approach to knowledge for epistemological realism, and an emphasis on life politics and localism in place of collective emancipatory activity.

If a post-modernist perspective is applied to the WHAP case study it is possible to arrive at an alternative reading that is completely different to my analysis. Whilst both readings might conclude that WHAP had failed to meet its original objectives, they would offer different explanations of why this was so. In my analysis the communicative model of knowledge and action adopted by the WHAP professionals at the beginning of the project was criticised on a number of grounds, first, because it failed to address the alienation inherent in the state-form, (and consequently the problems arising from the professionals structural location within the state), and secondly, because it failed to specify the necessity of adopting a critical social research methodology. This double failure, it was argued, led to the production of a body of alienated knowledge which failed to inform, (or be informed by), the consciousness of local people, and therefore failed to provide a basis for collective emancipatory action. In the absence of a strategy for transformatory social action the project degenerated into a self-help initiative, and the professionals reverted to a role that reflected their position in the state.

From a post modernist perspective it is not simply the failure to address the structural and methodological constraints on the production of emancipatory knowledge that rendered the communicative model of knowledge and action invalid and unworkable, but the fundamental inadequacy of the modernist assumptions on which the model was based. For instance, the assumption that solidarity could be achieved between a local population that comprised a multitude of personal and political identities influenced not least by differences in ethnicity, class, and gender, as well as a multitude of other

social and cultural factors. More fundamentally, a post-modernist would question the assumption that this infinitely diverse group of people could weave their individual subjectivity into a single discourse capable of guiding their future activity. Instead of seeing the production of such knowledge as potentially emancipatory, the post-modernist would view it as an act of surveillance and control, in which the techniques of rationalism were used to exercise power over the population. Thus the key relationship would not be viewed as that between the project and the state, but the inter-personal relationship between the professionals and the other participants in the project.

For the post-modernist, it is not simply the case that project's like WHAP are likely to be derailed by historically specific structural constraints and methodological ignorance, but rather that the modernist belief in the production of knowledge as a means of creating solidarity and informing collective emancipatory activity is fundamentally flawed. To the extent to which emancipation is a valid project in the post-modernist imaginary, it inheres in the efforts of individuals or small groups to evade the effects of discursive technologies of power at the level of inter-personal relations, rather than in pursuing the modernist illusion of universal emancipation through the production of an alternative discourse.

Before examining the weaknesses of the post-modernist perspective, it is worth commenting on its broad explanatory range in the current conjuncture. The analysis of WHAP presented above focuses on a specific type of community development initiative that is concerned with enabling a local population to produce its own knowledge concerning its needs and preferences as a basis for collective emancipatory action. It was also noted that not all community development projects could be accommodated within this narrow definition, and that in its broadest sense the term community development covered a diverse variety of initiatives and activities which often had quite different objectives, organisational structures, and theoretical assumptions. Many such initiatives have turned away from the project of transforming, (or even influencing), the state and broader economic relations, in favour of small-scale activities located in 'civil society':

As the economic power of the state wanes and contractual obligations between the state and individuals weaken, the potential for growth of all elements of civil society increases. It is in this milieu that the next generation of community development practice will root and flower especially around environmental and social justice issues requiring community action. The author thinks that the new paradigm of community development will focus on participatory methodologies of research, on practical and generalist skills, on locally derived revenues in small businesses... (Robinson, 1995, p.29)

Many such initiatives entail the utilisation of strategies which might previously have been considered divisive or oppressive, for instance, the development of 'entrepreneurial spirit' either to create a black middle-class capable of investing in inner city ghettos (Handy, 1993), or as a means by which rural communities can compensate for the contraction of Federal funding (Butler Flora & Flora, 1993). Other initiatives have focused on the voluntarist aspect of self-help and mutual aid or on public advocacy (Checkoway, 1995).

As the discussion presented in chapter one and in this chapter demonstrated, community development has always been a broad church encompassing a wide range of approaches and forms of activity. However, many commentators claim that the movement as a whole has become more fragmented and less political since the 1970s, noting the extent to which community development has been co-opted by the state under the banner of 'welfare pluralism' as a means of encouraging local populations to provide voluntary self-help initiatives to compensate for reductions in statutory services. Although a historical/structural account of the tendency towards de-politicisation and fragmentation is given, the conclusion often drawn is that the process is irreversible and that lower expectations must be settled for:

... a more dynamic and just pluralism is perhaps the best outcome community workers can aspire to. This may lead to the strengthening rather than the weakening of social democracy. There is little evidence, however, that the existing commonly adopted community work practices can achieve more. (Dixon, 1990, p.99)

What the advocates of radical community development attribute to the increasingly conservative political climate, the post-modernists would presumably see as the abandonment of 'modernist' myths, and the adoption of a more realistic approach to the problem of power and political agency. Fragmentation into small pressure groups often organised around a single issue or personal identity represents an acknowledgement of the futility of the modernist discourse of universal emancipation. The inability to produce a theoretical critique of existing social and economic relations reflects the realisation that power operates at an interpersonal level and that structuralist meta-narratives are based on empirically insupportable totalisations. The abandonment of any general strategy for social transformation in favour of small scale initiatives which either seek to utilise existing institutional arrangements to obtain short-term benefits, or else, set up self-help initiatives to compensate for the shortcomings of the state, is presented as a profound political insight. Post-modernism offers a philosophical justification for the culture of low expectations and the politics of defeat and despair, as such it has tremendous explanatory range when applied to current forms of community development practice.

Post-modernism is in many respects a seductive paradigm; its focus on the micro-relations of power, and the ways in which discourse facilitates their operation, offers a flexible and accessible means by which people can understand their everyday experience of small scale struggles and oppositions, and the way in which professionals and 'experts' use knowledge to exercise power over their 'clients'. This seductiveness owes as much to what post-modernism rules out of an analysis as it does to what it includes; for example, the exercise of power by a social worker or psychiatrist need not (and indeed cannot) be understood in terms of a theoretical link to abstract totalities such as the state or the economy, nor need the post-modernist trouble himself with the distinction between truth and falsehood. It is through such assumptions that post-modernism distinguishes itself from (indeed defines itself in opposition to) earlier forms of social enquiry. However, it is precisely this process by which post-modernism constitutes itself as a distinct paradigm that reveals its fundamental inadequacy.

Put simply, post-modernism defines itself in terms of its hostility towards the assumptions and characteristics of 'Modernism', including: theoretical abstraction, the

construction of meta-narratives, universalism, epistemology and progressivism. However, as we shall see, post-modernism can only constitute itself as a paradigm by adopting the assumptions and characteristics to which it claims to be opposed. It is, therefore, difficult to read accounts of post-modernism without a sense of their self-refuting irony.

First, it is remarkable that a perspective defined by one of its leading exponents as: '*incredulity towards metanarratives,*' (Lyotard, 1985), should treat the rich diversity of western knowledge from the enlightenment onwards as a unified perspective capable of being dispatched by a common critique. James Heartfield has noted that for the post-modernist:

> *The quest for reason of the encyclopaedists in 1700s France in the face of the mystifications of church and crown becomes synonymous with the work of structuralist professors today. The Bolsheviks' attempt to plan society is equated with the Attlee government's attempt to plan Milton Keynes. The sublime and the ridiculous are joined without regard to context or goals: it is enough that they should presume to have goals. ... Further, all grand narratives, being interchangeable, must bear responsibility for any outcome of the folly of human agency. Every encyclopaedist has taken the first step to the gas chambers. Any challenge to capitalism will end in the gulag.* (Heartfield, 1990, p.46)

Noting the post-modernists construction of 'Modernism' amounts to much more than the accusation of inconsistency; it is not just that they have been caught using a metanarrative when they claim to have disavowed such techniques, but rather, as Heartfield suggests, that this false aggregation of differing perspectives allows every rationalising project to be undermined by criticisms that are only appropriate to a particular paradigm. This is particularly true of the post-modernist critique of epistemology, where the assumptions of positivism are generalised to any attempt to rationally produce knowledge. For example, Foucault presents a caricature of positivist epistemology in which scientists gradually compile more and more 'facts' which inevitably lead to the unfolding of absolute 'truths', independent of historical or structural context. Not surprisingly Foucault has little difficulty in demolishing such

claims, by pointing to the historical specificity of truth claims, and their origins in the will to exercise power. However, having identified the epistemological naiveté of positivism, Foucault generalises his conclusions to all rationalising projects, implying that the only epistemological choice is between a naïve scientism and his own pessimistic brand of relativism. In fact, as the account of critical social research given above demonstrates, the adoption of a dialectical conception of knowledge reveals its historical specificity and ideological function without abandoning the claim that some knowledge claims grasp reality more adequately, and offer greater emancipatory potential, than others.

A second irony emerges from the post-modernist conception of the historicity of discourse. Foucault suggests that his key concern is not with the truth or falsity of a discourse, but with the historical factors that enable it to be accepted as true. He also suggests that knowledge cannot be separated from the operation of power. Thus Foucault provides us with detailed historical accounts of the emergence of different discursive formations such as the modern penal system, psychiatry and sexuality, charting their historical conditions of existence, and their implication in the exercise of power. But what Foucault fails to provide is a reflexive account of his own discourse or the broader perspective of post-modernism. What were the historical conditions that gave rise to post-modernism? How is post-modernism itself implicated in the exercise of power? Foucault offers no answer to these questions. It is not difficult to trace the origins of post-modernism to the experiences of the Parisian intellectuals who first articulated it; Alex Callinicos for instance, describes post-modernism as a 'symptom' of:

.. the disillusioned aftermath of 1968 throughout the Western world and the opportunities for an 'over consumptionist' lifestyle offered upper white-collar strata by capitalism in the Reagan-Thatcher era. (Callinicos, 1989, p.7)

To this we might add the imperative of producing an alternative to the Stalinist politics of the French Communist Party, and the intellectual culs de sac of Western Marxism. The irony here lies not so much in the absence of any self-reflexive awareness of the origins of postmodernism on the part of its advocates, but in the extent to which the epistemological scepticism of the perspective renders it incapable

of defending itself against the accusation that it is merely a 'symptom' of political defeat and theoretical confusion. If knowledge is inseparable from the operation of power and if there is no epistemological basis for choosing between competing truth claims, then why should we accept the truth claims made by Foucault or the other post-modernists? The absolute abandonment of epistemology renders the products of postmodernist intellectual labour as ironic as a newspaper editorial advising us not to believe what we read in the papers.

Critical social research avoids the epistemological catch-22 of post-modernism because although knowledge is viewed as historically specific and implicated in the exercise of power, its orientation towards practical activity provides a means by which competing truth claims can be tested out in the material world, not in order to establish them as absolute or eternal truths, but to reveal which offers the more effective means of adapting the world to our needs at a specific point in time. Thus in answer to Foucault's question as to why reason should be privileged over myth or illusion the answer must be that rationally derived knowledge delivers more reliable solutions to practical problems than do fairy-tales and conjuring tricks.

In the same way that its praxiological orientation enables critical social research to identify the relative value of competing truth claims, the process of social critique enables it to identify their conditions of existence, and reveal who benefits and who loses out from existing knowledge and phenomenal forms. Thus although knowledge and power are inextricably intertwined, it is possible to judge which knowledge claims offer the greater emancipatory potential, again at a specific point in time and space. This ability to evaluate the relative utility and emancipatory potential of competing truth claims enables critical social research to defend the validity of its analyses in a way which post-modernism is not able to do.

A final irony of the post-modernist perspective lies in its hostility towards theoretical abstraction and universality. Foucault's views on the relationship between knowledge and power make him reluctant to engage in the practice of theory construction. As Mark Poster has noted:

Foucault refused to totalise his position, refuses to present a neat and closed theory of history, a formula that would explain the past. he doggedly takes each question separately, exploring its details and specificities, acknowledging that there are gaps in history, unmapped continents of experience. (Poster, 1984, p.146)

Foucault's theoretical reticence is used as another example of the break between post-modernism and the errors of 'modernist' social inquiry:

Foucault's theoretical diffidence is the consequence of his standpoint on the human sciences. He adamantly rejects the traditional strategy of theoretical development and empirical verification that is practised by liberal positivists and Marxists alike. (Poster, 1984, p.149)

Closely related to Foucault's anti-theoretical stance is the claim that he avoids the mistaken universalism of, for example, psychoanalysis, or Marxism. Again Foucault's position is defined in contrast to a hostile and inaccurate caricature of Marxism:

Marxism, which has represented itself as a universal discourse of emancipation, has been shown to speak with a very particular historical voice. Classical Marxism may have enabled bourgeois men to analyse society from the point of view of the industrial proletariat but it has subsequently been shown to have occupied a position that was both masculinist in content and Eurocentric in context. (Barrett, 1991, p.161)

The presentation of Marxism as an abstract social theory recklessly applied to all social phenomena irrespective of context, is a familiar one which is easily refuted. Marx himself emphasised the extent to which phenomena could only be understood through specific empirical study, and made clear his opposition to those who saw historical materialism as a: *'master key, a general historico-philosophical theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being supra-historical'*, (Marx, 1877, p.571). However, our purpose here is not to defend Marx, but to assess the claim that Foucault avoids theoretical abstraction or false universality. Certainly, Foucault's studies of Psychiatry, the penal system, and sexuality, are historically and geographically situated

and no attempt is made to suggest that, for example, the regulation of sexuality in contemporary Europe can be taken as a general theory applicable to all contexts. However, although Foucault avoids the construction of grand theories and universalist claims in reporting the findings of his empirical enquiry, they are very much present in the assumptions that underpin his approach. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Foucault's claims about the nature of knowledge and power, discussed above. When Foucault claims that: *'power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that someone holds onto or allows to slip away'*, or, *'relations of power are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships (economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations)'*, or, *power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective,* (Foucault, 1976, p.94), he is not simply reporting the findings of empirical enquiry without recourse to theoretical abstraction, nor is he limiting his observations to a specific context. Rather, Foucault is articulating what amounts to a general theory of knowledge and power, applicable to any discursive formation. Thus in spite of Foucault's alleged aversion to theory, his method of enquiry is still essentially based on the logic of deduction, and the concepts which inform that deductive process are essentially theoretical and universalist.

The purpose of revealing the layers of irony in the post-modernist, or more specifically, Foucauldian, perspective, is not simply to undermine it by showing the extent to which it relies on the very assumptions and techniques it sets out to criticise. But rather to demonstrate the inadequacy of a post-modernist reading of the WHAP case study and similar initiatives. To reiterate, four specific elements of a post-modernist critique of this form of community development were identified above:

i) social solidarity is not viable because the politics of personal identity must inevitably undermine group cohesion,

ii) there is no legitimate epistemological basis on which the diversity of subjective beliefs can be woven into a common 'objective' discourse,

iii) knowledge is inevitably implicated in the exercise of power, therefore, its production is likely to facilitate surveillance and control rather than emancipation,

iv) the location of power within micro-relations rather than in broader social totalities, coupled with the limited potential for solidarity and the absence of an epistemological basis for inter-subjectivity means that the project of collective emancipatory activity aimed at transforming society is not viable.

All four of the above criticisms are derived from the way in which post-modernists like Foucault conceptualise knowledge and power, and the relationship between the two. The adoption of a relativist conception of knowledge removes the rational basis for inter-subjectivity - if one truth claim cannot be demonstrated to be 'truer' or at least less erroneous than another, then what is the basis for agreement? And if there can be no agreement on what constitutes 'truth' at a specific point in time, then what basis is there for group solidarity or collective action? The post modernist conception of power is equally disempowering. If, as Foucault suggests, power inheres in micro-relations, rather than in totalities, such as social and economic institutions and oppressive structures, then the project of collective action to achieve emancipation through social transformation becomes a none starter - leaving the isolated individual to struggle against an infinite series of oppressive micro-relations of power, seemingly with little hope of overcoming his/her alienation. However, both the relativist conception of knowledge and the micro-relational approach to power were found to be contradictory and unsatisfactory in the above analysis.

Although the relativist approach to knowledge correctly identifies the historical specificity of knowledge (and of knowledge congealed into material phenomenal forms), and also reveals the extent to which knowledge is embroiled in the exercise of power, it fails to appreciate the extent to which the adequacy of truth claims can be 'tested out' to reveal their relative adequacy and emancipatory potential. Critical social research, on the other hand, adopts a praxiological approach to truth claims in order to test out their validity as problem solving techniques, and applies the methods of social critique or deconstruction to reveal their emancipatory potential, without losing sight of historical specificity and dialectical change.

The micro-relational conception of power is equally problematic. Although Foucault is justified in noting the extent to which inter-personal relationships are permeated by power, his assumption that the broader aggregations of power simply constitute

unconscious patterns generated by the micro-operations of power is theoretically and empirically insupportable. Superficially, Foucault's account of power appears to fit well with the current conjuncture in which broad emancipatory movements based on class or gender appear to be fragmenting into single issue and personal identity campaigns. But even here Foucault's approach is inadequate, not least because it excludes so many instances where power *really is* exercised consciously at a structural or institutional level, for instance when Western governments order air strikes against the third world, or a multi-national conglomerate closes a factory. Such examples amount to much more than the inter-personal exercise of power, they depend on the accumulation of power in specific institutions and structural forms; contrary to Foucault's pessimistic conclusions, they *do* represent power that can be seized, dismantled or transformed.

If the criticisms of Foucault's approach to knowledge and power are accepted then the post-modernist reading of community development is substantially undermined. But one point remains to be answered, namely the proposition that solidarity and collective action must inevitably be undermined by the infinite diversity of personal identity. Again, the tendency for political movements organised around class, gender or race to fragment into single issue campaigns, and the emergence of 'lifestyle politics' can be claimed as empirical support for this proposition, even though as Anthony Giddens (1991) has suggested, the narcissistic obsession with self-identity is specific to late capitalism. However, the claim that self-identity subverts solidarity and collective agency is posited as much more than a descriptive account of the current conjuncture, rather it implies that solidarity and collective action are themselves a form of oppression, because they entail the subordination of individual needs and aspirations to a common agenda. Hence the current tendency towards fragmentation is viewed as a positive abandonment of false meta-narratives of universal emancipation, such as Marxism.

Essentially then, this is a criticism of the way in which community development projects like WHAP, and emancipatory social movements in general, conceptualise the relationship between personal aspirations and collective political action. It implies that a specific political programme, for instance, the emancipation of the working class, is presented as a *universal* discourse of emancipation, when in fact it ignores the

legitimate demands of individuals constituted by the infinite diversity of personal characteristics, such as, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality. However, this implication is false, and it implies a false dichotomy, it suggests that collective emancipatory politics must produce a universal emancipatory programme capable of liberating everyone from every form of oppression, or else we must fragment into tiny single-issue campaigns to pursue our personal aspirations. That the former option is clearly absurd is used as evidence that the latter represents the *only* viable political option.

The above dichotomy is a false one because it confuses the goal of universal emancipation with the political practice of collective emancipatory activity. The content of an emancipatory political programme is itself historically specific and socially constructed, reflecting objective factors such as the level of development of productive forces, the strength of support for the movement, and the strength of its opponents, and also subjective factors relating to the ability of different groups to identify their objectives and articulate them in a way which leads to their incorporation in the political programme. It follows of course that no political programme can ever completely express *all* of the needs and aspirations of *all* of the people who support it. What it does represent is a set of specific solutions to specific problems, which supporters of the programme believe it is in their interests to support. Thus when Marx writes about class consciousness, he is not suggesting that the personal identity of everyone in a particular class is identical, or that the abolition of class will in itself bring to an end all forms of oppression, rather class consciousness refers to the point where those who are objectively located on one side of the relationship between labour and capital become conscious of a shared interest and take collective action to pursue that interest.

Whilst the goal is universal emancipation, the struggle to achieve it is always located in a specific conjuncture, in which some problems are prioritised and others are set aside. As such although universal emancipation exists as a goal, the process of achieving it is never complete, there are always new problems to be addressed, and new opportunities for the expression of human potential. The form that an emancipatory programme takes at a specific point in time can never be total or complete in terms of its potential to deliver universal emancipation - it is always something to be debated, argued and fought over. This process of consciously

identifying and subscribing to a collective political agenda, is based on self-interest, mutual dependence and empathy, but crucially it can also be informed by dialectical logic, social critique, and active engagement with the struggle to transform the material and social world.

In conclusion, the WHAP case study does not demonstrate that the process of joining together to identify common problems and a strategy for collectively overcoming them is a theoretical or practical none starter, as a post-modernist analysis would imply. But what it does show is that the viability of such a process is impeded by organisational, structural and methodological factors. Two such factors were identified in this chapter, the projects dependence upon the support and active involvement of professionals who were structurally located in the state, and the failure to adopt a critical social research methodology rather than a positivist approach. The following chapter looks more closely at the relationship between the professionals and the volunteers involved in WHAP, and what happened when the original emancipatory agenda had failed.

4. The Challenge to Professional Power

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past.

Marx

In the previous two chapters it was noted that initial impetus for the Waterfront Health Action Project came from local health and welfare workers who were discontented with the constraints of their professional role. This discontent comprised two elements, frustration at their apparent inability to address the social, economic and environmental influences on the health of their clients and the local population, and secondly, a desire to develop a genuine 'partnership' with local people, which would enable them to overcome the paternalism traditionally associated with professional practice.

The project set about tackling these problems of alienation by developing what it was hoped would be an alternative body of local health knowledge, capable of informing community action to address the broader influences on health, and by developing organisational forms and types of practical activity that would allow members of the local community to access the expertise and resources of professionals without entering into the type of relationship that would entail subordination to professional power or regulation. In practice, the two elements were intertwined; the production of emancipatory knowledge depended upon the development of a partnership between professionals and representatives of the local population, and the development of a new relationship between professionals and the population depended upon a critical understanding, (or knowledge), of the ways in which that might be achieved.

The previous chapter examined the ways in which the professionals' inability to overcome their structural alienation from the local population contributed to the project's failure to produce genuinely emancipatory knowledge. This chapter is

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concerned with the other side of the equation - the problem of professional power, and the ways in which the professionals attempted to find a less paternalistic way of relating to the local population. Unfortunately, this second objective was no more effectively resolved than the first. Despite the professionals' subjective commitment to dismantling the basis of their power, their structural location within the state coupled with the form of consciousness that it gave rise to, meant that the process of operationalising their skills and resources only led to greater subordination of the lay volunteers to professional regulation and supervision.

The analysis begins with an account of the contradictory nature of professional involvement in the project, that is, the benefits and disadvantages of their involvement. This is followed by a description of professional role conflict caused by the contradiction between the projects emancipatory objectives and the professionals' accountability to the state and subscription to professional norms and values. An account is then given of the ways in which the professionals attempted to overcome their alienation from the volunteers involved in the project by reducing cultural dissonance, providing informal access to professional skills and expertise, and by developing trust amongst the volunteers and Drop-in users. The analysis then addresses a series of issues or problems, the resolution of which entailed the re-emergence of professional power and regulation, namely: the need to develop effective forms of organisation and authority, regulation of smoking at the drop-in and during meetings, alleged racism amongst the volunteers, and the development of disciplinary procedures to control disruptive behaviour.

As well as trying to dilute the power of professionals WHAP also attempted to empower its volunteers by equipping them with some of the skills and expertise more usually associated with professional practitioners. Although closely related to the question of professional power the training and development of the volunteers has more to do with the process of empowerment, therefore, analysis of this important issue is presented in the final chapter.

The contradictions of professional involvement in WHAP:

During the interviews both professionals and volunteers were asked what they thought were the advantages and disadvantages of having professionals involved in the group. Both groups tended to give similar accounts of the benefits of professional involvement, but the volunteers seemed more reluctant to discuss the disadvantages. It may of course be that the volunteers were genuinely less aware of the disadvantages, but it should also be borne in mind that the interviewer was identified as one of the professionals, and that this might account for the volunteers' reluctance to criticise.

The perceived advantages of professional involvement are summarised in the following quotation from one of the professionals:

> *...they have certain skills, by virtue of the roles and professions that they are in, they do have certain resources that the group actually needs, to develop and survive. And I think unless you have professionals who are committed, who have an appropriate attitude and philosophy, who can bring their own skills, and their own networks of contacts to bear, I don't think WHAP could survive.*

(Professional, November 1993)

As the quotation suggests, the input of professional skills, access to resources, and the availability of a network of professional contacts, was not only seen as beneficial to the project, but essential to it's survival. The technical expertise possessed by professionals was referred to in connection with: research methodology, organisational skills, knowledge of how statutory agencies work, and fund raising. In addition to this, the professionals were also called upon to give 'expert advice' about welfare benefits or health issues, particularly during the Drop-in sessions. The following quotation from one of the volunteers describes an incident at the Drop-in where professional advice was sort to support the work of the volunteers:

> *... this morning with the old boy, he sat there and said how he wanted a phone, and I looked at him and straight away I thought I can't tell this man how to go about it cos I really don't know, so, Elaine, she's a professional, I mean as*

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Elaine said, there's not a lot that she could do, but at least she was there for

me to ask. So if it had have been just all us girls [...] the most we could do

maybe is make a few phone calls for him, but it's nice to know that there's

somebody there that we can run to...

(Volunteer, December 1993)

The above quotation reveals an interesting point, that even where referral to professional expertise only served to confirm the volunteers belief that little could be done, that input was still considered valuable. Thus, the technical expertise of the professionals was perceived to give the activities at the Drop-in a legitimacy that they would otherwise have lacked - even in cases where nothing could be done for a client, the volunteers could seek professional confirmation that 'officially' nothing could be done! This badge of official status that professional involvement brought to the project was explicitly referred to by one of the volunteers:

... professionals don't do nothing unless it's for real *[...]* it's *like when you see*

that little stamp on a bracelet, you know it's gold, and if you don't see it you

think mmmmm a bit iffy, [...] if you've got people who [are] *interested because*

of their job, then you know it's real.

(Volunteer, November 1993)

Thus, professional involvement was perceived to confer a hallmark of authenticity on the project and it's activities. As well as giving 'official' status to the advice handed out at the Drop-in, professional involvement was perceived almost as a magic key, capable of unlocking information and resources held by the state:

The advantage is that you can get things that we can't get. Information, [...]

being up in public offices, being on their pay role, [...] you can get into things

like, into files and that, we wouldn't get into. If we walked in they'd want to

know who we were. [...] And you could write letters to all the [...] top people,

like the Baroness [the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health] *and*

that. We couldn't do, [...] because we haven't got a name behind us.

(Volunteer, November 1993)

Professional involvement was, therefore, considered to be essential to the external legitimacy of the project, both in terms of accessing information and resources, and also, as the volunteer quoted above suggests, as a means of engaging 'top people like the Baroness'. As well as boosting the external legitimacy of the project professional involvement was also turned to as a source of authority to provide leadership and governance to the internal functioning of the group, again this point was emphasised by one of the volunteers:

... we might know about the everyday life, but the academic side of it, I think it's got to be a professional. [...] I mean you take Kate [one of the professionals], Kate's got that authority about her, and I think it's good and we've got to have someone like Kate. [...] I'm not saying we're stupid, but then none of us could take Kate's place [...] we've got to have a Chief. No matter what, you've got to have that one person, who can.. I'm not saying that she should have all the responsibility, but the figure head, the one that we know..

(Volunteer, December 1993)

To summarise, both the professionals and the volunteers were aware of the benefits that professional involvement brought to the project, not simply in terms of technical expertise and access to resources, but also as a source of external legitimacy and internal authority. It was noted above that the volunteers were more reluctant to comment on the disadvantages of professional involvement, either because they ascribed professional status to the interviewer, or perhaps because they were less aware of the contradictions than were the professionals themselves. Whatever the reason, most of the negative aspects of professional involvement were identified by the professionals. A key concern was that their involvement might lead to reproduction of the paternalistic relationship between professional and client. One of the professionals located the impetus for such reproduction in the expectations of the volunteers:

...Disadvantages are that the professionals tend to be looked at as experts, and in a sense deferred to. And also looked to for leadership. And that needs to be constantly watched really.

(Professional, January 1994)

Another professional felt that the development of a paternalistic relationship was more likely to come from the professionals themselves; partly because they were used to relating to 'clients' in that way, but also because their location in the state would limit their ability to challenge traditional modes of working:

Well if you're a professional in the Health Service, or any of the caring services, you see ordinary people as clients. You see people who are not a professional with you, as people that you do things to. I mean that is the nature of the professional role. Now unless you've really started to challenge that, as a professional, and even if you have started to challenge it as a professional, in order to survive the system you have.. you know, that's how it works.

(Professional , November 1993)

Whether due to the expectations of volunteers or the difficulty of abandoning an established role, the professionals were clearly aware that their involvement in the project might further reinforce lay dependence on their input, rather than the desired objective of challenging paternalism. Closely related to this was the belief that professional involvement might act as a constraint on action:

...certainly some of the volunteers I'm sure would say that they had wanted things to move faster than we've allowed them to move, and that they've been slowed down by the professionals not getting things moving quickly enough. [...] the volunteers are partly dependent on some of the professional's resources, and we have not supplied the resources to them in enough degree for them to move as fast as they would like.

(Professional, November 1993)

The above quotation attributes the tendency for the professionals to constrain the practical activity of the project to their inability to supply sufficient resources. A different professional saw this as a more fundamental contradiction stemming from the professionals' location within the state:

> *I'm also aware of the limitations that we have of working in a system that pays our wages, and it's a question of us doing the best we can within a lot of constraints. [...] It's almost a contradiction, by working in the community, you're trying to raise expectations, and then say hang on, you're going too far cock, because we can't deliver that, you're making impossible demands on me...*
>
> (Professional, February 1994)

The above quotation suggests that the involvement of the professionals served to limit the scope of the project to activities which could legitimately be supported by the state. However, as well as acting as a constraint on action, the professionals' location within the state meant that their role was also potentially one of surveillance and control. This point was picked up by one of the volunteers:

> *Kate and Elaine, if you think about it, they're the professional people, they talk about us, Elaine's actually talked about my personal problems with other people, and in fact, she actually spoke about somebody else's personal problem, with somebody else and it got out, and I felt that was wrong, you know what I mean. And like Tony and all them that are FSU* [Family Services Unit] *as well, and we've got personal problems, we've had social workers 'round. They're social workers, Margaret was an ex-social worker, I mean she was on my ex's case. So there were a lot of times when I was actually going to leave. [...] Professionals have got their own way of seeing it and their own way of doing it. So I thought they were two faced. They weren't being honest, just smiling but they weren't really being honest.*
>
> (Volunteer, November 1993)

What the volunteer quoted above refers to as two-facedness might more accurately be described as the contradictory nature of professional involvement in the project. On

one hand, the professionals were subjectively committed to challenging the traditional balance of power between the professional and his/her client, but on the other hand their location within the state and their formal acceptance of professional responsibilities meant that they could not objectively relinquish their role as agents of social control. This contradiction did not only apply to the relationship between the professionals and the volunteers, but also to that with the user's of the Drop-in. The volunteer quoted above went on to discuss the way in which the distrust and suspicion with which some of the Drop-in clients viewed the professionals, did not extend to the volunteers working at the Drop-in:

Some of them don't even want to talk to professionals cos they think it's going to get back to their families. They think social workers are going to take their kids away, [...] if one woman turned around and said I hate my kids I feel like killing them, some social worker's going to take her kids off her, because she said that, d'you know what I mean? One might say I'm going to jump off a building, they'll say oh you're suicidal, let's put you away. It's not right, they don't want to talk to them, if they see you [meaning the volunteers] *outside doing facials and they come and talk to you one to one, they think you're on their side. I've experienced that situation, so I know.*
(Volunteer, November 1993)

The above quotation is important not only because it reiterates the perception of the professionals as potential agents of social control, but also because it implies that the involvement of the volunteers might function as a 'front' for the project, drawing members of the local population within the purview of professional power by presenting an accessible non-professional face to the users of the Drop-in. This theme is revisited in the final chapter.

To summarise the analysis so far, professional involvement in the project was contradictory; on one hand their expertise, status, and resources were essential to the establishment and development of WHAP, but on the other hand, their formal location within the state coupled with other elements of the professional role meant that they must also act as a constraint on the practical activity of the project, reproducing the traditional relationship of dependence between professional and client, and ultimately

acting as potential agents of social control. This contradiction cuts right to the heart of the project's aims and objectives - subjectively the professionals were committed to using their skills and resources to enable the local population to exercise greater control over the factors that influenced their health, but their location within the state served to reinforce the constraints, dependence and powerlessness that they sought to challenge. Not surprisingly this fundamental contradiction generated a high degree of role conflict for the professionals involved in the project.

■ Professional Role Conflict

The role conflict experienced by the professionals as a consequence of their contradictory position congealed around three core themes: recognition of the need to challenge traditional professional roles and divisions, the problem of establishing relative autonomy from the state, and the persistence of what might be termed professional values. It was noted above that the desire to challenge traditional professional roles and develop a less alienated form of relationship with the local population was one of the key incentives for the professionals who established WHAP. Thus, many of the professionals expressed dissatisfaction with traditional professional roles, particularly regarding professions other than their own, as the following quotation from one of the social workers involved in the project illustrates:

> *I don't like the autonomy that the medical profession have, I think the medical profession is horribly hierarchical, horribly conceited, horribly arrogant, in a way that I think clearly stinks, quite frankly.*
>
> (Professional, November 1994)

The above quotation identifies the problem of professional arrogance, but what does professional arrogance mean? Another professional gave a more precise account of professional power, locating its origins in the tendency for the members of each profession to see their own discipline as omniscient:

> *What angers me is that each profession, you know I see it with Social Workers, I see it within teachers, I see it within health professionals, I see it within the whole range, that they kind of imagine, fondly, that they have the total field of*

knowledge. Much as my own profession did for a thousand years, or however many years, and that from that experience of my own cultural background, I know it to be false. And teachers think that they have the weltanschauung, the world view. Social Workers think that they have the same kind of God given revelation. Health Authorities come into a category of their own, they think that they're God, they play God, if God sent them a telegram, they'd say get back on the waiting list...

(Professional, November 1993)

Partly this reprises the perceived relationship between knowledge and professional power examined in the previous chapter, and again the incentive to produce an alternative body of emancipatory knowledge is apparent. However, the problem was perceived to lie not just in the dominance of particular forms of professional knowledge, but in the type of social relationships that accompanied them, namely, strictly enforced boundaries between different professions and a paternalistic relationship to the local population. Therefore, as well as producing an alternative body of local health knowledge, WHAP was also committed to the development of an organisational form that would challenge the traditional divisions between the professions and establish an unalienated relationship with the local population. This objective was noted in a further comment from the professional quoted above:

... we break down the walls that the professionals have erected around their own disciplines, and we make health professionals more aware of teachers values, social workers values, of you know right across the board, broaden them out. I think it has the advantage of giving all of us direct access to these Gods from on high - the health professionals - and the ability to tell you what we actually want for our well being.

(Professional, November 1993)

In this account WHAP is viewed as a 'melting pot' in which the divisions between the professions can be dissolved and accountability to the population forged. This amounts to a subjective commitment to fundamentally challenge traditional professional roles. As such it places the professionals involved in WHAP in a position of role conflict as they attempt to transform traditional forms of practice.

The second theme of professional role conflict, the problem of establishing relative autonomy from the state, presented itself in several forms; most directly, it raised the question of whether or not it was possible to play an active role in the project whilst remaining within the state. It should be remembered that many of the professionals had become involved in WHAP because of frustration at the constraints of working for the state. As the project developed these constraints continued, leading some of the professionals to further question their loyalties:

DW - HAVE YOU FELT ANY CONFLICT WITH YOUR PROFESSIONAL ROLE, OR HAS IT MADE YOU RE-EVALUATE YOUR PROFESSIONAL ROLE AT ALL?

[...] it has made me very, very, considerably evaluate my role and it has made me realign my personal direction at a time of a lot of change in one's professional practice anyway. So, if anything it has made me realign myself much more to community orientated thinking. I've become much more aware that there is a community perspective, which I've said before is omitted in a lot of the decision making.
(Professional, November 1993)

For the professional quoted above, the problem of autonomy posed by WHAP, coupled with other considerations, eventually led to resignation from a senior post in the statutory sector and the pursuit of 'independent' employment. However, this response was the exception, and although other professionals faced the problem of autonomy, not least in terms of pressure from their employers to reduce their involvement in WHAP, they responded by reducing their commitment to the project rather than by compromising their formal employment. This tendency was noted by the professional quoted above:

I think we are beginning to see changes where there will be some individuals who need to recede, or who will drop out, others who remain pillars of

strength, others who will recede because of external pressures, mainly from their own organizations ..

(Professional, November 1993)

Of course the dilemma about autonomy from the state operated at an organisational level for WHAP, as well as a personal level, but again this presented itself primarily as a dilemma for the professionals. The following quotation articulates the main factors of the dilemma; is it better to stay within the state, gaining access to resources, but losing the autonomy needed to bring about change, or is it better to opt out of the state, gaining independence, but being marginalised through lack of resources?:

...we need money out of the system, to help us do what we want to do. If we were doing things that we want to do, which actually challenge the very basis of that system then they're not going to give you any money, and we shouldn't expect them to. And I think this is one of the difficulties about having this approach. The alternative is to go all alternative, you know, basically living in wig-wam, co-operative type approaches, which are pretty nice and you know Proudhonist, but I think very limited in changing the system as well. So there's a variety of measures that you need to use, and I think you have to make compromises all over the place. So, if you get half of what you expect to achieve then you've gone forward, until the big one's been resolved.

(Professional, February 1994)

The main point here is that statutory funding does not come without strings attached, it entails a loss of autonomy and the acceptance of constraints that might compromise the initial objectives of the project, and crucially, undermine the very reason that many of the professionals became involved in WHAP in the first place. A practical example of the way in which financial dependence negates autonomy of action and leads to the adoption of the funding agency's agenda, is given in the following quotation:

I do think that there's a very real danger that [...] we will begin to respond to a managerial and political agenda, like getting into bed with the GPs, because I think one of the conditions of continued funding will be that we work with the local General Practitioners. Now whilst I would see that as a healthy

development, it would only be a healthy development if it were really truly in a
community basis, on what the community wants. But, of course already what
has been mentioned to me is well the local GPs are hoping it will cut down
their consultation rates.

(Professional, November 1993)

Financial dependence on the state was, therefore, a constant factor undermining the autonomy of the professionals, but the problem of autonomy was not purely an economic one, as the following quotation suggests, formal accountability to the state had a much more insidious influence on professional autonomy, amounting almost to a form of self-censorship:

...representing a statutory agency there are behaviour and expectations of you
that you have to perform. so if, for example, we did an away-day and then
afterwards we retired for a cup of tea or a pint, you know two people, I might
speak very, very differently, than I would in a kind of meeting scenario. Maybe
because you've got that sort of one to oneness that you can get away with
things. And I find it difficult especially when we're talking about the sort of
social policy aspects, where someone's going on in a particular vein about
equalities issues, to the extent where you think that's a load of bollocks. You
can't actually challenge it there and then without getting into a huge argument
about a theoretical thing; you know exactly where it's going to take you and
so therefore you keep quiet. [...] I mix with people socially who are very
different from the sort of people I mix with at work, and they behave, and the
dialogue is just as interesting, and you can actually get the points over, but it
means there are certain rules that you disregard, and language is one of them,
you know you tailor your language to meet that crowd.

(Professional, February 1994)

The above quotation refers to a set of professional role expectations, about what constitutes appropriate behaviour, language and styles of inter-action. As the quotation implies, this amounts to much more than the adoption of alternative linguistic codes, rather it entails the subordination of personal views, attitudes, modes of expression, to a much blander, more uniform identity, that is structured by, and

constituted in terms of, a bureaucratic role model. It goes almost without saying that this process is profoundly de-politicising, and yet it should be remembered that the adoption of this self-limiting bureaucratised identity was not externally imposed on the interactions that took place in WHAP. Although the professionals, and the organisation as a whole, may have lacked formal independence from the state, the social space in which the professionals and volunteers interacted lay outside the reach of formal bureaucratic regulation. There were no spies or informants present to 'report' the professionals for inappropriate behaviour or discourse, but even so, the professionals felt the need to behave and act in accordance with a traditional bureaucratic role model.

This leads on to the third theme of professional role conflict - the persistence of professional values. As with the problem of autonomy from the state, the question of professional values was not something which could be easily resolved, rather it existed as a constant contradiction, a continual tension between recognition of the ideological nature of many professional values, and the simultaneous imperative to maintain a professional role. This dilemma is illustrated in the two following quotations, the first identifies the ideological nature of the Health Promotion perspective:

> *...with Health Promotion, the lifestyles approach on health, you know - give up smoking, health is fun - personally I think health is naff, I think it's boring, people like doing dangerous things because it's a bit of a laugh. That might sound irresponsible, but that's how a lot of people approach it. And I have a Health For All concept in which the pub looms large. [...] I get irritated often by middle class values, whether they're dressed up as professional values or not [...] they want to correct working class behaviour, instead of letting it ride and trying to influence it...*
> (Professional, February 1994)

However, although the above quotation reveals an awareness of the extent to which professional values are embroiled in the exercise of power, the same professional was very much aware of the dangers of stepping outside of that value system:

I have to remember that I'm paid a reasonable salary by an organisation that has values, which I may or may not agree with, on the whole I tend to agree with the thrust of those values, and therefore I've got to ensure that I represent those values.

(Professional, February 1994)

Again the problem of autonomy from the state is invoked, this time to explain the difficulty of departing from professional values. However, the problem of autonomy does not entirely explain the persistence of professional values. As the following quotation shows, subscription to professional values reflects much more than a response to the formal demands made by an employer, it is also determined by the more deeply ingrained notion of professional responsibility:

DW - HAS YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH WHAP CAUSED YOU ANY PROBLEMS OR DIFFICULTIES?

[...] no I don't see it causing any problems. Maybe a few minor concerns; having to stand back and let it happen and not interfere professionally, that's potentially a little bit iffy.

DW - WHAT SORT OF THINGS ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT?

I think being involved in the drop-in, when people are dealing directly with people who have quite obviously got mental health problems, that worries me, you know people without a professional grounding are diving in where angels should fear to tread. [that is] potentially dangerous; making themselves a bit vulnerable. But I suppose that's why it's the idea to have professionals around, because at least you can have someone available. But I think that's the only real reservation, and only then on one or two occasions.

(Professional, December 1993)

What the above quotation provides an example of is the extent to which the possession of professional skills creates an imperative, or responsibility, to intervene in a given situation, to provide expert knowledge, to manage a crisis. However, the observance

of professional responsibilities also entails reproduction of professional dominance and the perpetuation of professional values, both of which were considered problematic in terms of the development of emancipatory practice. The professionals were committed to transforming their traditional role into something much less paternalistic; into something which would enable them to use their expertise and access to resources as a means of empowering the local population, but the very possession of that expertise and the values inherent in it obliged them to intervene in ways that reinforced traditional ways of working.

To summarise the analysis up to here, professional involvement in WHAP was essentially contradictory, on one hand the professionals brought resources, status, credibility and expertise, but on the other hand their involvement threatened to reproduce lay dependence on their input, to constrain the scope of practical activity within the narrow parameters acceptable to the state, and also potentially to act as a means of surveillance and social control. This contradiction generated a sense of role conflict amongst the professionals, between their desire to transform their traditional role, and the constraints placed upon that transformation by their lack of autonomy from the state and their subscription to professional values which included notions of professional responsibility.

Elements of role conflict existed throughout the early stages of the project when the survey was being designed and conducted, but they deepened considerably with the establishment of the Drop-in. The reason for this intensification of role conflict is perhaps attributable to the shift from the relatively abstract process of gathering information, which was quite remote from the everyday practice of the professionals, to the provision of services at the Drop-in, which was much closer to the type of case-work that many of the professionals were familiar with. The professionals attempted to overcome their role conflict by adapting their traditional forms of practice in ways that they hoped would provide a more equitable balance of power between 'service provider' and 'client'.

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■ Adapting the professional role

The means by which the professionals went about resolving their role conflict involved a significant transposition. Objectively, the contradictory nature of professional involvement in the project stemmed from a conflict between their formal location within the state, with all the constraints and imperatives that that entails, and the objectives of the project, which were essentially emancipatory, and entailed enabling local people to obtain control over the social and economic influences on health. In short, the professionals were struggling to overcome the alienation engendered by their formal location within the state. However, although the material basis of that alienation was grounded in the relationship between the professionals and the state, it was subjectively experienced as a problem associated with the relationship between the professionals and the volunteers/local population. Even though, as the quotations analysed above indicate, many of the professionals were acutely aware of the extent to which their employment by the state served to structure their professional role and determine their activities, their efforts to overcome the consequent role conflict focused on overcoming cultural dissonance in their relationship with the volunteers and local population, rather than on challenging the nature of their relationship to the state.

■ Cultural dissonance

Cultural dissonance refers to significant variations in the knowledge-base, norms, values, linguistic codes and modes of self presentation available to different social groups. The attempt to overcome this division between the professionals involved in WHAP and the members of the local population, by engaging in a process of 'cultural synthesis', was discussed in the previous chapter, where the focus was on the production of knowledge which adequately reflected the views and experiences of the population. However, the need to overcome cultural dissonance extended beyond the production of knowledge, to include every encounter between professionals and lay people, and therefore, constituted a major element of the attempt to adapt the professional role. The reason why cultural dissonance was viewed as such a significant obstacle to practical activity is multi-faceted. First, as the following quotation suggests, it was felt that if the professionals failed to adequately grasp the

experiences of working class people, they would be unable to understand the structural nature of the problems confronting them and might, therefore, engage in inappropriate forms of activity:

There's a gulf [between professionals and volunteers] *based around different experiences of education, different experiences of work. Even those that went to college and spent a year working in industry, you know, still haven't known what its like to have to get up at five in the morning and do really mind numbing work, for a pittance, and why it is that the compensations in those conditions might often be substance misuse as a recreational activity to blot out the experience. And the fact that that's often regarded as an inappropriate way to deal with leisure, fails to take into consideration the brutalising effect of existence, both at work and at home. I'm not suggesting that people should go native and live like it, although it would probably do some of them some good, but for heavens sake just try and understand where it is these people are coming from, and don't have at the back of your mind values that you want to give them, if they come up with things that are important for them.*

(Professional, February 1994)

The above quotation makes an important point - that in order to establish an effective partnership with members of the local population, the professionals needed to obtain an understanding of their everyday life. However, the topic of cultural dissonance is by no means exhausted by this insight. Another example of cultural dissonance concerns variations in techniques of self-presentation and inter-personal styles; again this is multi-faceted, and includes a whole range of linguistic codes, and conventions, as well as shared knowledge and assumptions. This point is illustrated in the following quotation from one of the professionals, in which he describes the comparative ease of talking to 'one of us':

DW - HOW DO YOU GET ON WITH THE VOLUNTEERS IN THE GROUP?

In a different way to the way in which I relate to professionals, because there's that nice sort of smoothy thing, you know we're comfortable, you're one of us.

In a different way to relating to professionals, I'd like to think that I get on well with the volunteers too. I've spent less time with them, I'm more used to clicking into professional dialogues... errm now is that true, because I have a sort of curious job, because I'm on one level able to deal with professionals, but a lot of my time is spent with local people.

(Professional, November 1993)

It is worth noting that cultural dissonance persisted even though the professional quoted above spent a greater amount of time with members of the local population than with his fellow professionals, suggesting that it was too deeply ingrained to be overcome by greater familiarity. An equally intractable aspect of cultural dissonance is related to fundamental value conflicts, for example, concerning equal opportunities and discrimination:

I think there are attitudes by some of the people in WHAP that I don't agree with .... and I don't think can run it on equal opportunities, anti-discriminatory practices and there is for me a real problem with that, which you would expect and you have to find ways of working with.

(Professional, February 1994)

That some of the volunteers held views that were considered to be 'politically incorrect', or at least unacceptable to the professionals involved in the project, is a theme which is returned to later in the chapter, for now it is sufficient to note that this constituted another form of cultural dissonance between the two groups. The above examples concern cultural dissonance as it was experienced by the professionals. The following quotation from one of the volunteers, reveals an awareness of cultural dissonance, but also reveals the way in which it is embroiled in the operation of power, or more specifically, in the adoption of a deferential attitude on the part of the volunteers towards the professionals:

Half of us don't understand what you're talking about anyway. I mean some of the ifs and bys and wherefores and whatever, some of it goes a little bit beyond. [...] but that's the way you're brought up. It's hard for you to come down to our level, because that's where you're taught, but it's even harder for

us to come up to your level, because we weren't taught that way. We were
always taught, and it goes back to early childhood, taught to look up, not to
look down.

(Volunteer, November 1993)

To summarise, many of the professionals participating in WHAP experienced role conflict and sought to overcome this contradiction by adapting their professional role, however, rather than addressing the alienation caused by their location within the state, the professionals focused on their relationship with the volunteers and local population, or more specifically, on the perceived problem of cultural dissonance. Four elements of the problem are identified in the above quotations: professional ignorance of working class experiences, difficulties with inter-personal communication, value conflict, and culturally patterned attitudes of deference.

WHAP attempted to overcome the problem of cultural dissonance by adapting the professional role in a number of ways. First, the amount of contact time between the professionals and volunteers involved in the project, was much greater than that associated with traditional forms of professional practice, at least for the core members, allowing the development of much closer relationships between members of the two groups. The context in which the two groups were brought together was also much more informal than the traditional way in which members of the local population gain access to professionals. Thus, the encounter took place on neutral ground, rather than in a GP surgery or community clinic. Rather than patients or clients seeking professional advice on a personal problem, the volunteers were treated as partners in the project of improving local health, this extended to the constitution and committee structure which at least formally gave the volunteers equal say in the decision making process. The combination of these factors allowed the two groups to develop a much greater degree of familiarity with each other than would be likely to occur in a traditional professional/client relationship, and this had some effect in reducing the deferential attitudes of the volunteers, as the following quotation suggests:

At first I looked up to 'em [the professionals], *you know like everyone else. But*
I have been used to working with professionals, before, on different things. So

I more or less acted as if they were part of the family (laughter) and I find that
a better way to get on with people, [...] They were kind of toffee nosed, but
they've come off their high horses now.

(Volunteer, November 1993)

This relaxed and informal relationship also provided a model for the relationship between the professionals attending the Drop-in and the local people who used it. The professionals attempted to blend in with the volunteers, often engaging in the group discussions or craft activities, but being available to give advice when requested to do so:

...Kate [one of the professionals], for instance, you know, if people come in
and they've got a problem, she'll sit for hours on end explaining it so they'll
understand it. I mean not being over-bearing, being on the same level, and
talking straight to them, never wandering her eyes or showing boredom, or
clicking her feet or anything like that, giving her whole attention. And this is
somebody who's a professional, and who's not [just] giving them five
minutes...

(Volunteer, September 1994)

Although the Drop-in provided an informal context in which members could seek the advice of professionals, the brevity of the encounter meant that it was difficult to develop the type of relationship that had been built up between the professionals and the volunteers over a longer period of time. The difficulty of establishing a trusting relationship between the professionals and the Drop-in users was countered by the fact that the Drop-in sessions were significantly dominated by the presence of the volunteers, and the type of activities they conducted, such as, craft work, facials, and manicures. This in effect provided an accessible, non-professional, front for the Drop-in, that substantially disguised the presence of professionals, and challenged the tendency for professionals to adopt a 'judgmental' approach to their clients:

...the drop-in volunteers have developed, and I think it is they who have
developed this philosophy, that every person who comes in is unconditionally,

and unjudgmentally accepted, and I think one of the features of a professional relationship is that it isn't unconditional and it is judgmental, and stereotypes may be made and enforced. And in fact when one of the professionals in the drop-in centre did become judgmental the volunteers made a complaint about it. And the fault was rectified (laughter).

(Professional November 1993)

Thus the Drop-in provided an informal and relaxed context, in which members of the local population could gain access to the skills and expertise of professionals, apparently without having to enter into a paternalistic or judgmental relationship. One of the social workers involved in the project commented on the way in which this alternative approach to professional practice was significantly less antagonistic and coercive than other models of service delivery:

...after being for twenty years very much professional client based, [...] working in this more parallel way, I've gained a lot of understanding, from that point of view, that I'm not the power and they're not a participant. Because home working with clients has been a very new experience for me. Being in statutory agencies, particularly in child protection work, was very much, if there was therapy at all it was fairly coercive, I had to be there. This idea of working with people on this level, in a much more participatory way, has been very good for me and I've enjoyed that.

(Professional, December 1993)

As the above quotation suggests, the Drop-in not only provided a more accessible form of health and welfare advice for members of the local population, but also a means by which professionals could overcome their subjective sense of role conflict, at least during the brief periods of their attendance at the Drop-in, enabling them to adopt a less coercive and more supportive form of practice. Over time, this also led to the development of a less polarised relationship between the professionals and the volunteers, many of whom had previously had negative experiences of welfare provision:

I think there's been a bit of suspicion with some of the volunteers that the professionals would take over, if they didn't cling to their role and to their corner tenaciously. And from that point of view they've maybe blocked some of their own development by looking at professionals in their corner and themselves... it's not true of all of them, in some people. But I think that's gradually relaxing and this sort of 'we don't need the professionals', (which is almost sort of an insulting title), that feeling has certainly been around. It's a bit less, recently. But I think it's been there all along. And I think some of them have had historic involvement with professionals, social workers etc. and maybe have not had wonderfully good experiences. So their perception of how anybody could be working beside them and not at them or for them has taken a bit of time.. to give them confidence really, whether that's been a health professional or a social worker, or whoever. They've had experiences and histories that have maybe not been very enabling.

(Professional, December 1993)

What the above quotation refers to is the development of trust between the professionals and the volunteers, some of whom had previously had extremely antagonistic encounters with welfare professionals. The extent, and perceived value of this trust, is indicated in the following quotation from one of the volunteers:

...they [the volunteers] *look up to the professionals, and they appreciate what they're doing and they know they're not doing anything against them, and they need somebody they can trust. Their whole life is riddled with things they can't trust, like the Council, and their doctors and everything else. They trust you, and that trust, you know, it's worth a fortune.*

(Volunteer, November 1993)

Superficially then, it appears that WHAP's attempts to overcome cultural dissonance between the professionals and the volunteers/users of the Drop-in was successful. An informal setting was developed in which issues and concerns could be discussed in depth, the cautious and deferential attitude of some of the volunteers was at least partially eroded, a form of practice was developed which apparently facilitated the

utilisation of professional skills without the paternalism associated with traditional professional/client relationships, and, over time, a bond of trust developed between the professionals and the volunteers. However, despite this apparent success, the view that a more fundamental divide persisted could still be found, for instance in the following quotation from one of the professionals:

I felt there was a gulf between, [...] what the professionals were about and what the locals were about. I wasn't sure despite away days, although on a personal and friendship basis, you know bonds were made. But whether that sort of like.. the dialogue and the perceptions of things were still sort of separate...

(Professional, February 1994)

This belief that WHAP had succeeded in creating a relatively close and more relaxed inter personal relationship between the professionals and the volunteers, whilst leaving the more deeply ingrained aspects of cultural dissonance virtually intact, is borne out by the following quotation from one of the volunteers:

You can't just shove someone's full life of education out the window, just to be somebody on the street. So, you just can't be somebody different over night. You can be nicer, you can be sweet, but you can't be nothing else really. You can try, but WHAP has tried, I mean, the professionals, I talk to them now, like I talk to the girls, so they don't hit on me as much as they did.

(Volunteer, November 1993)

The above quotation, and the previous one, express a nagging doubt about the extent to which WHAP managed to overcome cultural dissonance, which appears to contradict, or at least qualify, the account given by others. This can be explained in at least two ways. First, it might be that the cultural synthesis described in the earlier account, did not extend to all of WHAP's participants; that perhaps the volunteers and professionals whose involvement was more peripheral had less opportunity to overcome their cultural dissonance. Given the variable degree of integration within the project, particularly amongst the volunteer group whose composition constantly changed over time, this explanation may well be valid. However, there is a second

theory which carries even greater explanatory weight, it entails reconceptualising WHAP's challenge to cultural dissonance as an attempt to circumvent the traditional professional role rather than to fundamentally restructure or adapt it. Rather than changing what it means to be a professional, WHAP provided a space in which the professional role could be briefly set aside in order to reveal the personal characteristics of the people who inhabit such roles.

In this sense the experience provided by WHAP was similar, for example, to meeting an off-duty Police Officer at a dinner party - the setting is informal, views can be exchanged, 'off the record' legal advice can be sought. In this way the dinner guests may get to know the person behind the Police Officer role, and may even benefit from his/her expertise without having to meet in a professional capacity. However, although the formal trappings of a professional role may be set aside for the duration of a dinner party, the role itself remains unchanged. In addition, there are limits to the 'off-duty' status - thus the dinner party host may be reluctant to discuss the origins of the smoked salmon, and fellow guests might refrain from their preferred after dinner smoke. Whilst a blind eye might be turned, the possibility remains that it will not.

WHAP created a similar kind of 'off-duty' status for its professional participants, (even for those who were technically there on their employer's time), allowing them to dispense with many of the formal trappings associated with their professional role, and relate to the other participants in a much more relaxed and informal fashion than would ordinarily be the case. However, although this facilitated a closer inter-personal relationship between some of the professionals and some of the volunteers, it constituted a circumvention of the professional role rather than genuine adaptation or re-structuring. Thus, in their ordinary working activity outside of WHAP the professionals could reactivate their traditional role. Moreover, as with the fictitious Police Officer, the 'off-duty' status of the WHAP professionals had very real limits, in terms of what they could turn a blind eye to, and what they felt obliged to regulate.

It is here that the dinner party metaphor becomes exhausted, because although, like a dinner party, WHAP undoubtedly had a social dimension, its primary purpose was the practical activity of bringing about change. Crucially, as the testimony of the WHAP members presented above indicates, the success of the project was perceived to be

dependent upon the effective utilisation of the skills, expertise and resources brought by the professional members. Rather than being relatively passive observers at a social function, the WHAP professionals were obliged to actively intervene in the project, using their skills and resources to advance its objectives. As the following analysis reveals, it was through this active intervention that the elements of the traditional professional role, that the project had sought to circumvent by challenging cultural dissonance, re-emerged. In using their skills and expertise the professionals inadvertently recreated the problems of paternalism, lay dependence, regulation and control that they had initially sought to challenge.

The re-emergence of professional power

Professional power re-emerged through a broad series of practical activities and issues addressed by the group, however, four major themes have been selected from the interview transcripts and case study materials to illustrate the characteristics of this re-emergence - they are: the development of an effective organisational form, the regulation of smoking at the Drop-in and at meetings, combating alleged racism within the group, and the development of disciplinary procedures following an incident with a WHAP member who engaged in disruptive behaviour. Before looking at these themes in detail, it is important to establish a number of points about the process they illustrate. Generally, it will be argued that the four themes listed above provided the media through which traditional forms of professional power re-emerged.

Superficially, this might appear to be a crude conspiracy theory in which the professionals, as agents of the state, consciously conspired to exercise control over a resistant group of volunteers. But, as the evidence presented below illustrates, such a hypothesis cannot be supported. First, at a subjective level, many of the professionals involved in the project were acutely sensitive to issues of power and were committed to dismantling its operational form. Nor were the volunteers uniformly opposed to the exercise of professional power; in fact many were more insistent about the need to establish rules and regulations than were the professionals.

Moreover, recognition that the four themes listed above provided opportunities for professional power to re-emerge does not mean that the issues themselves were antithetical to the interests of the volunteers; on the contrary the establishment of a disciplined organisational form may be essential to the effectiveness of any group with political objectives, and the desire to tackle racism and encourage smoking cessation are not in themselves automatically oppressive. The last point is important because it posits a different relationship between knowledge and power than that suggested by some approaches to discourse or ideology. Rather than seeing power as immanent in knowledge, the suggestion here is that even politically neutral knowledge can act as the carrier of professional power - to invert Marshall McCluhans famous maxim, it is not that the medium is the message, but rather that the message is the medium, that is, the medium through which professional power is transmitted and re-constituted.

The above qualifications of the original hypothesis create a theoretical gap or lacuna; if the imperative towards the re-emergence of professional power cannot be located either in the subjective aspirations of the professionals, or, in the ideological/discursive content of their activities, then where do its origins reside, and what evidence do we have that the alleged re-emergence of professional power actually occurred. These questions can only be answered by analysis of the four themes identified above.

■ **Organisation & Authority**

From the outset WHAP adopted a loose and informal organisational structure. Although, as the case study materials presented in chapter two demonstrate, meetings were chaired and minuted and a Constitution drafted, it was felt to be important that the formality of traditional bureaucratic administration was kept to a minimum. However, as the project progressed and a greater number of lay volunteers joined the group, it became apparent that a greater degree of regulation was required. It is important to note that the impetus for such regulation did not come exclusively from the professionals, as the following quotation from one of the volunteers indicates:

From the meetings that we have had, the little ones here, I find them very confusing. They make me stressed, cos nobody listens, everybody speaks over

everybody else. No decisions are made [...] I feel that even though we're every day people, we're coming together to make an organisation, right? So we need to put a bit of a professional side to it. [...] Because it's like we're all chickens with our heads cut off running round don't know what's happening, the way it's going. We need to have a little bit of organisation.

(Volunteer, November 1993)

As the quotation suggests, what had begun as orderly discussion between professionals became much more boisterous as the volunteers gained the opportunity and the confidence to express themselves. Hence the need for a more formal approach to rules and regulations was increasingly articulated, and the transcripts of interviews conducted at this time reflect the growing concern amongst professionals and volunteers. Although the need for organisational discipline was recognised by the volunteers, many considered the production and enforcement of such rules and regulations to be a responsibility of the professionals, as the following quotation emphasises:

...a few rules and regulations never hurt no one. It puts people, you know ... in order. Everybody has gone to school, and everybody is used to regulation, and when there's no regulations you just have mayhem. And that's what's wrong with WHAP. [...] we need some rules and regulations, and you professionals have all the upstairs for that. Do you understand me, you know all the rights and wrongs of what it has to say. I could write out rules and regulations, but I wouldn't know the two words to go together...

(Volunteer, November 1993)

Thus the professionals involved in the project were perceived to have the knowledge and experience needed to produce and implement a series of rules and regulations that would ensure the effectiveness and smooth running of the project. This expertise in the techniques of bureaucratic regulation was felt to extend far beyond the realm of organising effective meetings, to include a much broader range of administrative tasks. These three factors, the need for organisational regulation, the belief that only the professionals were competent in this area, and the broad field over which administrative expertise was required, created a fundamental problem for the

professionals involved in the project, many of whom were eager to avoid the reproduction of traditional forms of bureaucratic domination. The following quotation from one of the professionals lists the range of administrative activities perceived to be necessary, and the means by which it was hoped that the danger of professional dominance could be avoided:

I see a core organisation which does, and I know it sounds dreadfully bureaucratic, but undertakes things like community networking, recruiting, accounting, personnel functions, we've got to have all of those to underpin an effective WHAP, and publicity, media relations, in which professionals and residents share it half and half, so whatever tasks are undertaken by a professional worker is mirrored by the tasks which are being learned by residents, who would in that capacity be paid. Though quite what model for that we've still got to work out. So I see a professional input which is mirrored by residents who wish to have either work experience or training, and who then by definition, therefore, are at least able to take on some of the skills and resources that the professionals bring in, because one of the whole ideas is to transfer the professional resources over to the residents. But then as I said before I then see a whole repertoire of activities some of which can have a life of their own, only returning to the central core to get core services, like being paid expenses, or whatever, or having their budgets accounted for.

(Professional, November 1993)

As the quotation suggests, it was hoped that the need for organisational regulation could be met by utilising the knowledge of bureaucratic procedures possessed by the professionals, and that the consequent danger of professional domination could be overcome by educating and training some of the volunteers to play an equal part in the administrative process. However, although it is feasible that volunteers could be trained in the methods of bureaucratic administration, thereby avoiding the need for a professional monopoly of the administrative process, it is surely wrong to conclude that this in any way constitutes a diminution or circumvention of professional power. The problem lies in the fact that professional power does not inhere in a given group of individuals but in the role or structural position that they occupy. Training volunteers to occupy professional 'shoes' may give the impression of

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deprofessionalisation, but the fundamental aspects of professional power remain unchallenged. When the professional quoted above was interviewed again a year later, the contradictory nature of bureaucratic regulation had become more apparent:

> ...there does seem to be a need to create boundaries in an organisation such as WHAP, for instance, at the moment we're going through the development process of drawing up a volunteer's charter and recruitment policy, a grievance procedure, and how people get in and out of WHAP, and that sort of thing. And at first glance they do seem to me to be quite formalised and ritualised, but the volunteers and the people who are coming into the Drop-in who are expressing the wish to be volunteers are asking for that. I tend to set out with a very informal stance, but there does seem to be the need for these ritualistic processes. But if you are not careful they can turn from formal procedures which are simply meant to give some order and structure, in order to facilitate people's actions, to something that does become authoritarian and controlling, and since we're only in the process of developing that I think we're too early to see, but you can obviously see that if you were too formal and too structured, those kinds of procedures really would be controlling, they would be excluding certain.. for instance [we are] already getting into the debate: 'well if we have a volunteer working with children, entertaining children we are duty bound under the law to ask about previous criminal offences, because that's exempted from the Offender's Act from 1974. Now obviously we have one or two volunteers who have obviously had criminal backgrounds, so it means then they've got to be vetted. So you get into a very grey area then of what's control, and what's necessary to protect a so called vulnerable group. I think it is quite a fine line that you can only work through by grim experience actually.
>
> (Professional, November 1994)

Of course, utilisation of bureaucratic techniques need not entail acceptance of employment legislation as in the above example, but it does entail an acceptance of, and a legitimation of, the constraints on individual autonomy and innovation that are characteristic of bureaucratic regulation. As the following quotation suggests, this legitimation of traditional bureaucratic forms of organisation not only influenced

WHAPs internal affairs, but also hindered the development of a critical approach to external bureaucratic agencies:

> ...*the continual deference to professionals and the acceptance by the professionals to organise things in fairly bureaucratic ways, I think the acceptance by the workers that that's okay, has perpetuated the myth of the need for bureaucracy and a myth in the sense that they don't necessarily understand the whys and wherefores, but that's how you professionals work. And I think that's affected the relationship between, the volunteers and other professionals in other statutory agencies. So I think that WHAP hasn't demystified how bureaucracies work really for those people. It hasn't given them the autonomy or, hasn't empowered them to take on bureaucracies at all.*
> (Professional, November 1993)

In short then, the need to develop organisational discipline led to the utilisation of professional expertise in bureaucratic forms of administration. It was hoped that the danger of professional domination would be avoided by training some of the volunteers to participate in the administrative process. However, professional power inheres not in the individuals who occupy bureaucratic positions but in the techniques, assumptions, expectations and practices that collectively constitute bureaucratic forms of organisation. In failing to arrive at an adequate critique of bureaucracy WHAP facilitated the re-emergence of professional power within its internal relations, and legitimated the practice of external bureaucratic agencies.

■ Smoking

It might be anticipated that the issue of whether people should be allowed to smoke either at the Drop-in or during WHAP meetings might provide an opportunity for the professionals to impose their views on the volunteers and Drop-in users; smoking is generally less prevalent amongst middle class professionals than it is amongst working class groups, and smoking cessation is often a central plank of the health promotion strategies of statutory agencies in the health sector. However, analysis of the interview transcripts reveals that although the smoking issue produced heated debate amongst

the members of WHAP, it cannot simply be read as an instance of the health sector professionals imposing their will upon, or exercising power over, the other parties.

First, support for the opposing sides of the argument did not divide between the professionals and the volunteers, or between smokers and non-smokers - there were volunteers and smokers who supported a ban on smoking, and professionals and non-smokers who supported its continuance. Nor was the issue resolved in favour of the anti-smoking lobby; rather than banning smoking altogether, separate smoking and non-smoking areas were designated. Superficially then, it might be concluded that the smoking issue is evidence of a failure to exercise professional power or hegemony, resulting either from lack of consensus amongst the professionals, or from the effective resistance of the pro-smokers. However, such a conclusion misses the point. In terms of an analysis of the exercise of professional power, the objective merits of banning or tolerating smoking, and the details of the compromise reached by WHAP, are more or less irrelevant. What really matters, is the way in which both sides of the debate were structured and constituted by professional perspectives, and the consequences of the debate for the relationship between the professionals and the volunteers/Drop-in users.

The arguments put forward by the opponents of smoking were straight forward, reflecting the growing body of epidemiological evidence supporting an association between the inhalation of tobacco smoke, (both directly and passively), and the incidence of heart disease, lung cancer and respiratory illness. As well as concern for the health of WHAP members, it was also felt that, as an organisation whose main aim was to improve the health of local people, WHAP would not be taken seriously by external agencies, if it were seen to condone smoking. This point was emphasised by one of the professionals:

> ...certainly people like me were coming from the view that if WHAP was going to take a view on good health issues to Cory [a local industrial developer] or to other people, then it had to be seen to be clear within it's own structures and organisations. You can't have an organisation which is seen to not be good on

health issues, if you're going to tell other people what to do, because it really does make it very easy for them to disregard what you're saying.

(Professional, September 1994)

This concern with the way external agencies perceived WHAP, reflects the belief, expressed above, that professional involvement had given the project a hallmark of credibility, which should not be tarnished by tolerance of unhealthy behaviour amongst the members. Although the anti-smoking position was not exclusively held by the professionals, it does mirror the concerns of statutory agencies and is legitimated by reference to 'official' health knowledge. Surprisingly though, the counter position was *also* structured by themes which are redolent of a welfarist perspective. Thus, as the following quotation indicates, it was felt that a strong anti-smoking stance might render the services provided at the Drop-in inaccessible to those in greatest need:

[that] *it's better to have an organisation where nobody smokes because it's better for health, is clear; if you're aiming that service at people who are very stressed and who do smoke, [...] then you have a conflict between those two situations. If you take your holier than thou view, then you reject certain people from that service, and that may be the people you were originally aiming for.*

(Professional, September 1994)

Mention of the word 'stress' in the above quotation is essential to an understanding of the pro-smoking position. It was not simply the case that the pro-smokers feared a loss of custom at the Drop-in if smoking were banned, (in the same sense that a night-club might lose trade through the adoption of a strict dress code), but that smoking was considered to be a consequence of the stress encountered in everyday life, and that it was, therefore, something to be understood, sympathised with, and *treated*, rather than simply proscribed. This point appears more clearly in the following quotation from a different professional:

Well I think it was a conflict between the medical model which quite clearly says 'people shouldn't smoke because it's damaging to their health', and the

more social caring approach that the women have adopted, which is, 'these

people are stressed, we're here to deal with the root cause and help them and

talk to them, and if smoking is the only thing they can do to keep themselves

sane then so be it'. So I think there's sort of a clash of outlooks really.

(Professional, October 1994)

Although both the anti-smoking and pro-smoking positions reflect different elements of the same professional/welfarist perspective, it is important to recognise the transformation that occurs in the passage from the former to the latter. From the anti-smoking perspective smoking is viewed as a form of anti-social behaviour, likely to damage the health of the smoker and others, from the pro-smoking perspective, however, the smoker is viewed as a victim, someone who cannot cope with the stresses and strains of life, someone requiring psychological support rather than censure. In short, the relationship between smokers and non-smokers that was posited or brought into being by the 'smoking' debate, bore many of the characteristics of the traditional relationship between welfare professional and client, although as the following quotation from one of the volunteers indicates, the impetus for establishing this relationship did not come exclusively from the professionals:

... some of the people who come in here are totally stressed out, I mean the

man with AIDS and the boyfriend problem, I mean he smoked continually

when he was here, for four solid hours, he didn't give up. I mean how can you

stop a man who's actually really stressed out? I mean he's smoked less, I must

admit, as he's gone on, but in the beginning he was actually lighting one after

another, so how can you stop that? You know, there's no cure is there? I

couldn't give him a pill, and say it'll go away in a half-hour if you're a good

boy, slap on the wrist or whatever, he's not here for that.

(Volunteer, September 1994)

As well as indicating the extent to which one of the volunteers had embraced the stress/smoking perspective, the above quotation sheds further light on the image or identity of 'the smoker' that such a perspective gives rise to - in this example it is the HIV victim, too 'stressed out' to regulate his tobacco consumption, but the image of the smoker as a passive, helpless victim of stress is generalised to all those who have

endured adverse experiences. Thus, the activity of smoking is inscribed with a new symbolic value, one of helplessness and passivity. Contrast this, for example, with Paul Willis' (1977) account of schoolboy smoking which he describes as an act of rebellion against the middle class values of the school. In the welfare professionalised context of WHAP the symbolisation of smoking as bravado or rebellion becomes unthinkable, rather than a refusal to be disciplined by middle class values, smoking is transformed into the inability either to exercise self-discipline, or to bear the weight of even relatively mild negative sanctions.

The belief that a total ban on smoking could not be imposed because of the psychological fragility of those it would affect, did not go unchallenged, as the following quotation indicates:

> *They* [the pro-smoking lobby] *would argue that some people are so stressed that they've got to do this that and the other. As I said at the time, the people who come to the WHAP Drop-in are nowhere near as stressed as some of the people who come in to use our neutral ground facility, you know marriage break-ups, kids perhaps not been seen for however long, large amounts of stress; they don't smoke though, or if they do they pop outside and have a puff.*
> (Professional, November 1994)

However, despite the assertion that a total smoking ban would be far from unbearable, even for those experiencing considerable stress, the perception persisted that such a policy would further victimise an already oppressed group who were incapable of modifying their behaviour. As well as the compromise of creating separate smoking and non-smoking areas, the perception of the smoker as helpless victim also influenced the activities of Health Promotion professionals involved in the project; the following quotation, illustrates the limited extent of their work:

> *I have gone and done smokelisers and various things, and chatted to people, but I'm not doing that to sort of lecture them, or to harangue them about smoking. I mean basically that really is to raise awareness and if they are interested in giving up smoking to suggest ways to help them, but on the two or three occasions that I've done it, it was in association with the visits from*

important people, and it was something to be seen to be doing. I mean we've not spent time and effort in working on the smoking issue with them because we don't think it would really benefit them or us. I mean we tend to work with people who've made a decision to give up smoking and we run stop smoking groups. You know we don't waste their time, or alienate people, or make them feel guilty by haranguing them all the time saying you shouldn't be smoking, you know what's the point. It's like any addiction, if they've not decided to change their behaviour, we're wasting our time and wasting theirs.

(Professional, October 1994)

The above quotation conveys the sense in which the smokers were perceived to be largely beyond help in terms of smoking cessation, leading to a relatively low level of health promotion input around this issue. Interestingly, the issue of WHAP's public image re-surfaces in the claim that much of the professional anti-smoking health promotion activity was done to impress important visitors to the project. This pessimism about the likely effectiveness of health promotion initiatives may be justified; it may well be that smoking is too deeply ingrained in the culture of deprived groups to be easily eradicated either by health promotion initiatives or by attempts to proscribe it. However, as was suggested above, the point is not whether the solution arrived at by WHAP was justifiable, but the way in which the professionalised context structured the terms of the debate. In this sense the outcome of the debate is immaterial, if the professionals had insisted on a complete smoking ban, or had alternatively imposed no regulation on smoking behaviour, the conclusion would remain the same.

Superficially, this may appear to be theoretically convenient, allowing a direct ban on smoking to be identified as an example of coercive professional power, and an apparent compromise to be deconstructed as the assertion of professional power by other means! However, this apparent theoretical convenience reflects the Catch-22 created by professional involvement, rather than an analytical sleight of hand. Thus, professional dominance *really does* create a 'no-win' situation, in which even an apparently tolerant, non-coercive resolution to a dispute must re-constitute a relationship of power.

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The key to understanding this Catch-22 lies in the way in which professional involvement structures the terms of debate - instead of opposing the proposed smoking ban on the grounds that, for example, it restricted individual choice, the pro-smoking lobby constructed its argument in terms which reflected a professional discourse about the debilitating effects of stress. Rather than challenging the intellectual dominance of professional frames of reference, the pro-smokers actively re-reinforced it, allowing the traditional relationship between welfare professional and 'dependent casualty of social circumstances' to be reaffirmed.

What the example of the smoking debate shows us is *not* the ability of the professionals to use their position to impose their will on a resistant laity, but rather the extent to which professional power asserts itself *independently* of the consciousness of the individual professional, indeed, that one need not even be a professional in order to exercise professional power. As many of the quotations cited earlier in this chapter indicate, many of the professionals involved in WHAP were uneasy about the professional power they possessed, were largely reluctant to impose their will, and were keen to enable the volunteers to articulate their own views and make their own decisions. However, despite this subjective commitment to unravel the exercise of professional power, the professionals also brought with them a set of conventions about what constitutes a 'proper' or 'acceptable' frame of reference from which a line of argument can be constructed. These frames of reference historically developed, and continue to exist, within the institutions and intellectual tradition of welfarism, and are heavily patterned with themes of, for example, the dependent poor, or the helpless victim of social circumstances, whose ills can only be ameliorated by professional support, within the confines of the welfare state.

Acceptance of this frame of reference is imperative to continued professional involvement in projects like WHAP, because its absence would rapidly give rise to conclusions and activities that would bring the professionals into conflict with their employers. But, acquiescence in those frames of reference necessarily entails tacit acceptance of the paternalistic relations that underpin them, with the consequence that no matter how a debate is resolved within their confines, the outcome must inevitably be a reinforcement of lay dependence and the discrete re-emergence of professional power.

■ Racism

Whereas the issue of smoking provides an example of the way in which professional power asserts itself even where the professionals themselves are opposed to its re-emergence, the problem of racism, and the way it was addressed in WHAP, demonstrates the extent to which an element of emancipatory politics can be adapted to serve the *conscious* exercise of professional power. The issue of racism was a central concern of WHAP from the beginning of the project, and the professionals were eager to ensure that the project avoided racism in its own practice, and actively campaigned to give a voice to people from black and minority ethnic groups, for example, a concerted effort was made to make contact with minority ethnic groups and recruit them into the project, and the specific needs and concerns of such groups were reflected in the survey design and analysis.

As noted in the case study presented in chapter two, concern about racism was intensified by the occurrence of two racially motivated murders in the Thamesmead area, and the public campaign against the British National Party's 'bookshop' in nearby Welling, all of which were constantly referred to in local and national media throughout 1992 and 1993. However, the issue only became a point of controversy amongst the members of WHAP when the recruitment of volunteers from the local population began. The volunteers were an ethnically diverse group and issues to do with racism often arose both in group discussions and in general interaction at the Drop-in and during meetings. During this interaction attitudes were expressed, and forms of language used, which could be interpreted as racist; this triggered concern amongst some of the professionals, which as the following quotation illustrates, was often linked to a belief in the endemic nature of racism:

> *... people do have attitudes and they don't like uncovering the attitudes. I have found, for example, when I'm trying to talk to the volunteers about racism, which is quite up front in the drop-in, people come in and they've got racist attitudes...*

DW - IS THIS THE VOLUNTEERS, OR THE PEOPLE WHO COME IN TO
USE IT?

*Both, both. You see, and I can't say that in that group. I can't say it in the
main group, because that would be incredibly destructive. But I don't expect
them not to have racist attitudes, we all have. We're all a product of what's
out there. We're a product of what we take in. We're a product of the media.
And you know, it has to be talked about, and it is talked about in the volunteer
group, but what I find is it can't go very far because people's defences come
up, as they will do, you know: "I don't, I'm not guilty of racism", you can't go
beyond that. The only thing you can do is still keep talking about it, and hope
the penny drops.*
(Professional, November 1993)

As the above quotation suggests, many of the volunteers were reluctant to accept the
accusation of racism, particularly from white middle-class professionals. Matters
came to a head when two of the professionals wrote a letter to all of the WHAP
members stressing the need to address racism in the group, referred to in the following
quotation from one of the volunteers:

...It said something about we have to be less racist, you know?

DW - WHERE DID THAT LETTER COME FROM?

I think it was Elaine who wrote it, and [she should be] *the last person to write
a letter like that to me - my family's made up of different races. [...] My sister
Margaret's married to an African and has three half-caste children. My niece
is married to an Indian and has six Indian children. So we are such a mixed ..
I don't even look at somebody* [as] *of a different colour or a different creed.
When I go to my son's, they speak Portuguese and English together, my
grandkids speak Portuguese. So the racist value is not there. That doesn't
apply, I don't even think about it. And when that came up .. I .. I couldn't cope.*
(Volunteer, November 1993)

As with the smoking issue, it is important not to be side-tracked by the rights or wrongs of the matter in question; whether or not the members of WHAP were racist, or, if the measures taken in response to the perception of racism were justified, are not our concern here, rather we are interested in the extent to which the issue of racism provided a medium through which the exercise of professional power could re-emerge, and if so, the process by which that re-emergence occurred. Not all of the professionals interviewed, were uncritical of the way in which the racism issue was handled, and the following quotation is insightful:

> *There was one particular instance where I felt there was an over reaction to what was being said by the voluntary workers, professional values [were] being imposed upon what are mainly working class [...] voluntary workers, and I thought those values, to do with racism particularly, were being imposed in far too dogmatic a way, that could ultimately be negative and destructive. In the event the issues were raised with sensitivity and there were no untoward outcomes.*
>
> (Professional, November 1993)

The above quotation suggests that the problem of racism might have represented the imposition of professional values, rather than a rational response to a genuine problem. Certainly, the belief that the response to the racism issue was an over-reaction on the part of 'politically correct' professionals, appears more than once in the interview transcripts, particularly amongst the volunteers. However, although this reading of the incident is instructive, it fails to grasp the extent to which the issue of racism was manipulated to facilitate the conscious exercise of power - this only becomes apparent when the issue which gave rise to the letter, mentioned above, is considered.

Ostensibly the letter was written because one of the volunteers had produced a leaflet to advertise the Drop-in, which at least two of the professionals felt failed to represent WHAP as a multi-cultural organisation, because it did not contain information in minority ethnic languages. The two professionals intervened to stop the leaflet being produced. However, the following quotation from an interview with one of the

professionals concerned, reveals that there was an ulterior motive for stopping the leaflet being issued:

> *...this is how I saw it: one of the volunteers, desperately keen to publicise WHAP and bring loads of people in; which at that time without any structure would have been very counter productive. What were we going to do with that number of people? I could not get this point of view across. Some of the professionals, were saying 'okay give them their head, let them get on with it and make a leaflet'. And the leaflet was going to be prepared, but it was going to be prepared presenting WHAP as a totally white organisation. No thought to any other language, no thought to what are we actually going to do with people when they come in. If you're going to stand in public and advertise your organisation you have to know what your organisation is going to do. And that was why I had to stop that leaflet being made. But I had to do it the way I did it, cos nobody else was seeing my point of view, apart from one other person in the group.*
>
> (Professional, November 1993)

Although the need to promote multi-culturalism is again referred to as a reason for stopping the leaflets being issued, a second reason is also explicitly referred to, namely the objective of blocking further recruitment to the group on the grounds that the professionals involved would not be able to cope with a rapid influx of volunteers or Drop-in users. One need not question the sincerity of the commitment to multi-culturalism, or even the need to limit the rate of recruitment and activity at the Drop-in, to recognise that the issue of racism was manipulated in order to exercise control over the organisation, and win support for a decision that otherwise had little support amongst the members. As the following quotation suggests, the volunteer who originally produced the leaflet was left in little doubt that the issue was used to subordinate the volunteers to professional authority:

> *It just makes me wonder how far the professionals want the volunteers to go, because one minute we were told we could use our own initiative and do things, then as soon as we do that we're jumped on. It happened to me with that leaflet [I had] Paul's say so, Kate's say so, [but] next minute Elaine and*

Deepak were jumping on [...] the leaflet. I was only going to go and give a few

leaflets out, which is nothing, but they all made such a big deal out of it, 'cos

we were told we could do something. So I just knocked it on the head.

(Volunteer, November 1993)

Following the leaflet incident it was agreed that all publicity materials should be vetted by the community development worker, or the steering group, prior to publication. What this decision represents, is the belief that multi-culturalism or anti-racism is dependent upon a set of skills, or expertise, which the professionals were perceived to posses in abundance, but which the volunteers were felt to lack. This point is made clear in the following quotation, again from the professional who intervened to block publication of the leaflet:

... if you are going to be a multi-racial group, you have to present yourself as a

multi-racial group, because if anybody from any other culture had picked up

that leaflet, no other language in it, no reference to any other language, "oh

it's a white group". But working in a multi-racial way takes a lot of

knowledge, skills, experiences, and making mistakes, you know. Maybe I

should have done, but I couldn't let them do it, because I couldn't be involved

in a group that called itself multi-racial, that did something that was not multi-

racial.

(Professional, November 1993)

It is important to note the way in which the conceptualisation of anti-racism or multi-culturalism as a set of skills required to produce a politically correct discourse serves to rob the issue of its political content. Instead of being a social and economic relationship in which powerful groups actively exploit and oppress people by reference to the false legitimating ideology of racial difference, racism is transformed into working class ignorance and intolerance, to be remedied by applying the 'knowledge' and 'skills' of middle-class welfare professionals. According to this interpretation, rather than working together to challenge the social and economic basis of racial oppression, the WHAP volunteers should subordinate themselves to professional expertise until they can learn the complex codes and conventions of politically correct behaviour and discourse. In the meantime, the professional quoted above was

prepared to lay down a few ground rules to regulate any future tendencies towards 'racism':

> *...one of the things that I can give to the group before I go, is working out some things which are going to put some lines, some limits out, some containment's out; and in a way take the load off the volunteers, or the professionals, of deciding what is and what isn't racist...*
>
> (Professional, November 1993)

Thus, the transformation is complete - instead of comprising an emancipatory struggle against oppression, opposition to racism becomes a means by which professionals can impose rules and regulations to police the behaviour of volunteers. This is a further example of the way in which professional power re-emerged through the practical and discursive activity of the project. As with the examples cited earlier of 'organisational structure' and 'smoking', the racism issue served to reinforce the passivity of the volunteers and reinforce their subordination to, and dependence upon, the professionals. However, unlike the two earlier issues, the 'racism' incident had a more consciously manipulative element, in that although professional power re-emerged as a consequence of the adoption of a traditional welfarist frame of reference (multi-culturalism), this reference was made at least partially with the conscious intention of misleading the group and winning support for an action that would otherwise have been questioned. But this conscious intention to exercise professional power as a means of control, is not essential to the process under scrutiny; even if the incident *really had* only been motivated by the desire to combat racism, rather than also being a means of regulating recruitment to the group, the conclusion would remain the same, that professional involvement in WHAP had led to the issue of racism being addressed within a welfarist frame of reference, which ultimately facilitated the re-emergence of professional power.

■ Disruptive Behaviour

The three examples, presented above, are concerned with practical problems and dilemmas faced by WHAP as it progressed - the difficulty of developing an effective organisational form, the question of whether smoking should be tolerated in a project

concerned with health, and how the group should tackle allegations of racism amongst its membership. It was suggested that professional involvement in the project led to these problems being resolved in a way which facilitated the re-emergence of professional power, even though the professionals themselves were subjectively committed to dismantling that form of relationship. However, although the three examples illustrate the legitimation of bureaucratic forms of power, the reinforcement of lay dependence and passivity, and subordination to professional expertise, they are all characterised by the virtual absence of direct coercive power. Instead, the process of regulation and control emerges through agenda setting, fixing the range of legitimate frames of reference, and winning consent for what appear to be 'reasonable' conclusions.

The final example departs briefly from this focus on the subtle technologies of power to consider an incident in which one of the volunteers experienced the sharp end of professional intervention. However, even here, it is not primarily the coercive treatment of the individual concerned that is of interest, but the way in which the incident triggered the demand for a set of disciplinary procedures applicable to the organisation as a whole.

The incident centred on an outburst of disruptive behaviour from one of the volunteers, 'Denise', which occurred over the August bank holiday weekend in 1994. Denise had taken it upon herself to organise a party for children living in the Thamesmead area, under the auspices of WHAP, and taking place in the building used for the Drop-in. Preparation for the party coincided with a turbulent episode in Denise's personal life, involving the unwanted return of a previously estranged husband. This, coupled with the stress of organising the event, caused Denise to engage in increasingly irrational behaviour. As the bank holiday drew nearer, plans for the party grew ever more grandiose, (including, for instance, a guest appearance by Michael Jackson!), despite attempts by the other WHAP members to encourage restraint, and calm Denise's increasingly disruptive behaviour.

As matters progressed, Denise visited local statutory agencies, using WHAP's name to procure resources for the party. Other WHAP volunteers were visited by Denise in the middle of the night and subjected to verbal abuse. Eventually, Denise's behaviour, (by

this time also under the influence of amphetamines), became manic. Busses were flagged down in the street in an attempt to commandeer them for the party. Phone calls were made, in the middle of the night, to the Chief Inspector of Police, requesting the closure of roads.

Some of the WHAP volunteers took Denise and her children into their home and tried to calm her, without success. Unfortunately, Denise's behaviour had become unmanageable, and it was felt, posed a threat to her own safety and that of her children. Unable to reason with her, and exhausted from their efforts, the volunteers called one of the professionals involved in WHAP, to request help. The professional also tried to defuse the situation but was eventually obliged to use statutory powers to have Denise 'sectioned', that is, forcibly admitted to a mental hospital under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act.

When eventually released from the mental hospital, Denise returned to WHAP to face disciplinary proceedings. A mixed panel of volunteers and professionals heard 'evidence' from those involved in the incident. A number of options were discussed, but it was eventually agreed that Denise should be excluded from the project for one month, after which she could return to the project, but would not be given access to financial resources. After the months exclusion Denise returned to the project, but there were further disciplinary incidents and she was eventually excluded on a permanent basis.

In terms of the re-emergence of professional power there are two important aspects to the incident, first, is the way in which the exhaustion of alternative approaches obliged one of the professionals to return to a traditional professional role and exercise statutory powers to have Denise admitted to a mental hospital against her will, the second aspect concerns the way in which the incident gave rise to formal disciplinary proceedings orchestrated by the professionals. Again, it is important to stress that in terms of an analysis of the re-emergence of professional power, the question of whether the decision to have Denise sectioned was justified or not is largely irrelevant, as is the question of whether organisations need to have formal disciplinary arrangements for dealing with disruptive behaviour. The important point is that

professional involvement in the project meant that the incident itself, and more particularly its aftermath, took a form in which professional power re-emerged.

When asked to describe the incident, the professional who had been involved in the sectioning, replied in a way that underlined the extent to which a traditional role and frame of reference had been re-activated:

The person concerned, I suppose from my clinical point of view, had an amphetamine induced psychosis, in which she took a unilateral decision to organise a vast children's party, which involved all the children from Greenwich and Bexley, at WHAP's expense. And over a period of five or six days we tried to reason with her, we hoped that she would burn herself out. A number of the volunteers looked after her children at periods of time when she clearly was not looking after them herself, and eventually the point came where she didn't burn herself out. The two volunteers who had taken the brunt of the care, namely direct contact with her and her children, reached the point of exhaustion, and they told me that they were giving up, they could no longer cope, and by that time, she and the children were staying in one of the volunteer's houses. And it wasn't just disruption, there was physical damage to the house, and the volunteers said that they were at the point of exhaustion [and] asked me to have her removed and that's what happened.

DW - AND WHAT DID THAT ENTAIL?

She was 'sectioned' under 136.
(Professional, November 1994)

As well as indicating the extent to which a 'clinical perspective' was adopted by the professional concerned, the above quotation also reveals the pressures that led to its adoption, and ultimately to the decision to 'section' Denise. The principle of professional duty, discussed earlier in the chapter, is applicable here, as is the account of the very limited sense in which some welfare professionals can be 'off duty'. Clearly, faced by an individual who was extremely distressed, and in the absence or exhaustion of other alternatives, the professional felt obliged to utilise the available

statutory powers, for the good of the individual and the others involved in the incident, not least Denise's children. However, by re-invoking the traditional professional role and the sanctions which accompany it, traditional power relations are also reconstituted. Instead of working in a partnership with local people to address the social influences on mental and physical health, the incident forced the adoption of a different type of relationship in which the behaviour of a 'client' is coercively regulated and repressed without reference to the underlying causes of that behaviour. Ironically, this is precisely the type of relationship that WHAP set out to dismantle or transcend, but no matter how deeply these emancipatory objectives are subjectively held, the stronger imperative of professional duty necessitates a return to the traditional role, at least when other alternatives appear to be unavailable.

Given the nature of the dilemma faced by the professional concerned, one might have expected the other professionals to be generally supportive, but instead the incident drove a wedge between those who supported the outcome, and those who saw it as a betrayal of WHAP's original objectives; the following quotation reflects the latter view:

> *...the professionals response originally was trying to calm her and deal with it on a human level and help her and do a little bit of what she wanted, but at the same time try and make her realise that she was going over the top. But subsequently when that didn't work.. to have her sectioned, was a little bit of an over reaction, and I think was a bit unfortunate. So when the humanitarian response didn't work there was a definite authoritarian response. And that carried through then to the way that WHAP dealt with it. [...] it was a convergence of the volunteers, (having been upset by what went on), wanting to see fair play and justice done, and the professionals wanting to punish her for being disruptive. I think it was the professionals that suggested a sort of adjudication panel which smacked of a Court, a kangaroo Court. And the volunteers originally didn't want that and wanted to deal with it in a full meeting, in a fairly unstructured way, which would inevitably have resulted in them shouting at each other and losing their temper, but might have dealt with it much better, because it would have enabled people's feelings to come out.*

The professionals persuaded the volunteers to go through this rather stylised, formalised, structured process of collecting evidence, the facts not the feelings, and making recommendations on those facts - punitive recommendations.

(Professional, October 1994)

The above quotation reveals the way in which Denise's identity within the group was transformed by the incident, and the way in which that transition was contested. Initially, Denise was involved in the group in the capacity of a volunteer; sharing all of the rights, privileges and expectations that are part of that role. Her disruptive behaviour led to the suspension of her volunteer status, and the enforcement of an alternative identity, that of 'client' or 'patient' - someone suffering a psychosis, who needed to be cared for and supported. But the transition did not end there, because Denise's behaviour was so disruptive that it could not be contained within a therapeutic domain. This forced a further re-definition of Denise's identity, as a wilful deviant who's behaviour must be regulated and punished. It was this transition from 'client' to 'offender' that provoked the disagreement amongst the professionals. But it should be borne in mind that in terms of the re-emergence of professional power the consequences would have remained virtually the same no matter how that disagreement had been resolved - whether a 'client' or an 'offender' Denise would still have been a passive object of professional regulation; the only difference residing in the enforcement of a therapeutic or punitive regime.

The forced admission to a mental hospital occupies a space between the two domains, entailing the suspension of some of the individuals civil rights, but with at least the veneer of 'therapeutic' justification. As such, the 'sectioning' operated as a switching point in the transition between the identities of 'client' and 'offender', raising, as it does, questions about the social control of disruptive behaviour, as well as questions about caring for an impaired individual. The disciplinary proceedings instigated by WHAP should be interpreted in this context, as they represent the final stage of the transition, focusing on the need for discipline within the organisation, and the virtual abandonment of a therapeutic imperative.

Although the transition from 'client' to 'offender' was implied by the sectioning, dissent amongst the other professionals meant that the shift from a therapeutic to a

disciplinary domain had to be justified or legitimated. The following quotation from the professional involved in sectioning Denise, illustrates some of the themes employed in the legitimation process:

I feel that the volunteers concerned who supported her, and myself, have been very damaged by it and are continuing to be damaged by her behaviour which has continued to be disruptive. [...] The other volunteers are beginning to feel very exploited and used by this particular person, and I certainly sympathise with them because I feel the same way. And I don't actually feel that the professional members of WHAP, who were not directly involved actually have dealt with it adequately. I am very, very angry about the whole episode.

DW - WHAT SPECIFICALLY IS IT THAT YOU'RE ANGRY ABOUT?

I'm angry that we've been hurt and damaged and no one has actually recognised it. And I feel that the volunteer concerned has had far too much rope, and far too much understanding, that we bent over backwards to help her, and all we've been is actually abused and used.
(Professional, November 1994)

There are two noteworthy elements here, first, identification of the 'damage' caused by Denise to the other WHAP members involved in the incident, and secondly, the implication of Denise's culpability; that she has had 'too much rope', that she has wilfully abused and exploited her former colleagues. Put together, these two elements constitute a juridical argument, they imply notions of guilt, punishment and redress for the injured parties. Hence the perceived need for disciplinary proceedings, or a 'Kangaroo Court', as it was described by one of the professionals quoted earlier. This belief in the need for 'Justice to be done' extended beyond the professionals involved, as indicated by the following quotation from one of the volunteers, complaining that the outcome of the disciplinary proceedings was not sufficiently punitive:

... I'm not happy about the outcome of it, 'cos I feel what she did was bad, and what should have been done, is have six months, and then come back, and go through the [formal] procedure of [becoming] a volunteer. Because we have

not done that, we've never gone through those things as volunteers, and I've said to Kate, perhaps we should, you know what I mean. Not a big one, I mean cos we've done nothing wrong. But I think for six months she should be kept away, cos all that time she came to the Drop-in and upset the volunteers who were here and had done no wrong. Because what it looks like, David you see, what she's done is nothing, and that is bad, because it means she hasn't really been punished or whatever word you want to use. And if you did that in your job what would've happened?

DW - YEAH, BUT IT ISN'T A JOB IS IT? IT'S A VOLUNTEER THING.

Aaaah, In a sense you're wrong, because we get paid in a sense, I mean we get ten pounds for like four hours, and we get our expenses paid. And perhaps it isn't a job, but we have a job to do. And if she's not able to do the job with the public she shouldn't be around here. This is not drugs and alcohol, and she misused WHAP's name. But what does it make us look like. But we're on the same level as her, and we've done nothing wrong, and it just looks like it didn't really matter. So it's all right to go on an alcoholic binge in the Drop-in, cos all I'm going to get is four weeks away. And she did harm, do you understand that? But don't get me wrong, there's a change between a volunteer and a friend. For a friend I would have done that, but because she misused WHAP there is a slight difference.
(Volunteer, September 1994)

The second half of the quotation is significant, because it introduces an element that goes beyond the call for 'justice' - namely, the suggestion that Denise's behaviour amounted to a failure to do the 'job' of being a volunteer. The comparison with paid employment is made explicitly and it is a significant one; it implies that the relationship between volunteer and voluntary agency should be governed by the same responsibilities and behavioural expectations as the relationship between employer and employee, and, crucially, that infringement of the terms of that relationship should invoke disciplinary proceedings similar to those found in formal employment. The view that the behaviour expected of a volunteer should mirror that expected of a paid

employee was not unique to the volunteer quoted above, as the following quotation from one of the professionals indicates:

I think you expect high standards of anybody providing a kind of public service and working within an organisation. I don't think that's just professionals, I think you expect high standards also of volunteers, certainly volunteers working with people, [...] because I think the effects of the behaviour of the individual in this instance had a lot of damaging effects on other people socially within that group, so there's a responsibility in that way, and I don't think we can not take that seriously, and I think that's what we've done.
(Professional, October 1994)

Thus, the domain in which WHAP's disciplining of Denise is located, can be characterised as juridical, in that it is concerned with issues of justice, such as, the punishment of a culpable offender, and rights of redress for injured parties, but more importantly it is grounded in the contractual obligations associated with wage labour. The disciplinary proceedings instigated against Denise by WHAP bear greater resemblance to the process by which a private company, or public organisation, exercises control over a recalcitrant employee, than to a court of law. This conclusion is supported by the flurry of administrative procedures and protocols developed in the wake of the incident to formalise the rules, regulations and entitlements of WHAP membership, including documents entitled: *'Equal Opportunities'*, *'Different Roles of Members, Volunteers & Workers'*, *'Volunteer Recruitment'*, *'Volunteer Recruiter's Charter'*, and *'Volunteer's Charter'* - none of which, in terms of style or suzerainty, would disgrace the most assiduous of personnel departments.

There is a clear irony here. Many of the professionals became involved in WHAP as a means of overcoming the constraints imposed upon them by employment within a statutory agency, yet as a consequence of the incident discussed above, WHAP earnestly began reproducing the forms of bureaucratic domination by which public and private sector employers regulate the behaviour of their workforce. But was the adoption of bureaucratic/managerial forms of organisational authority the product of professional involvement, or would similar methods have been adopted by an exclusively lay organisation? One of the professionals subscribed to the former view:

...I think it was typical of the professional approach, you know, 'lets get the facts, lets get this cut and dried', and not enough time in the proceedings was given to allowing people to express their feelings. It was professional dominance I think. They wanted it dealt with in a fairly authoritarian way and structured way, that would be punitive. I think if they'd agreed to an open meeting to discuss it, arms would have been waved, voices would have been raised, punches may have been thrown, but at the end of the day people would have kissed and made up and that would have been the end of it.
(Professional, October 1994)

Whatever, the validity of this view, it is important to recognise that even if an exclusively lay organisation did posses the inclination and the knowledge to develop bureaucratic/managerial forms of organisational authority, the conclusion that professional power had re-emerged would still be valid, because the adoption of such forms necessarily posits a subordinate relationship to welfare professionals, even if there are none within the organisation - to prescribe the role of volunteer service provider, and to police it with a disciplinary mechanism, is to locate the organisation within the domain of the welfare state, albeit its informal arm, and thus to accept professional dominance. In the same way that the establishment of a neighbourhood watch scheme constitutes subordination to the rule of law and the power of the Police, (even if no direct contact with the Police is made), so too does the establishment of bureaucratic/managerial forms of organisational authority constitute subordination to, in this case, the welfare agencies, and the power of the professionals who run them. However, in this instance professionals *were* involved in the organisation and appear to have played a leading role in the implementation of bureaucratic forms of organisational authority.

It is important to clarify the point that is being made. It is not suggested that emancipatory organisations must adopt an anarchic approach to organisational authority, on the contrary, to be effective they must be rigorously disciplined. Nor is it suggested that the professionals conspired to exercise bureaucratic regulation over resistant volunteers, because the analysis presented above clearly indicates that some of the professionals felt uneasy about the disciplinary proceedings, and some of the

volunteers would have preferred more Draconian measures. What is suggested, is that professional involvement in WHAP meant that when a problem of organisational authority did arise, it was resolved by recourse to bureaucratic or managerial forms of domination, which grew up under, and are indelibly stamped with, the wage labour nexus. In the same way that a wage labourer enters into a contract with an employer that entails relinquishing control over productive activity in exchange for a wage, the WHAP volunteer is obliged to become a virtual, (though formally unpaid), employee of WHAP. Rather than a free association of individuals subjectively pursuing a common set of goals, WHAP becomes an institution with prescribed roles, the contents of which are policed by the threat of disciplinary proceedings.

As we shall see in the final chapter, by this time WHAP had become little more than a provider of voluntary services, and in that sense it might be argued that the formal articulation of managerial forms of organisational authority only put in writing what already existed in practice, however, it might also be argued that once such organisational forms congeal, or become institutionalised, they actively shape future expectations and behaviour, and thus become increasingly resistant to reform. In short, the incident involving Denise caused WHAP to examine the ways in which it regulated disruptive behaviour amongst its members. The involvement of professionals in the project meant that this 'problem' was resolved by reference to, and adoption of, managerial/bureaucratic forms of organisational authority, which entailed formal prescription of the role of a volunteer, and the adoption of a disciplinary mechanism to ensure that it was adhered to. At this point, the already slim possibility of WHAP evolving into an emancipatory organisation was extinguished. This is another example of the re-emergence of professional power.

Provisional Conclusions

This chapter is concerned with the contradictory position of the professionals involved in WHAP. Objectively, the professionals brought intellectual and material resources to the project, and their involvement conferred a hallmark of authenticity that made WHAP appear legitimate to its lay participants and external agencies. However, they also brought with them the constraints, conventions and imperatives associated with

formal employment by the state; indeed many of the professionals explained their involvement in WHAP as an attempt to overcome the limitations imposed by their traditional role.

At the subjective level this contradiction manifested itself as role conflict. The professionals were subjectively committed to an emancipatory agenda which sought to challenge the paternalistic and individualising tendencies of the traditional professional role, but at the same time were aware of: their lack of autonomy from the state, the requirement to act as responsible representatives of the agencies that employed them, and the necessity of subscribing to professional values.

In order to overcome this sense of role conflict, the professionals set about adapting their traditional role; focusing in particular on the attempt to close the cultural dissonance between themselves and the members of the local population whom they came into contact with via WHAP. According to the testimony of those involved, the attempt to overcome cultural dissonance was at least partially successful - WHAP provided a forum in which professionals could mix with members of the local population over a longer period of time and in a more informal context than would have been likely in a traditional professional encounter. This enabled the professionals to gain more of an insight into the lives and experiences of local people, and to establish a degree of trust, primarily amongst the volunteers, but also to a lesser degree amongst some of the Drop-in users. However, despite the professionals' subjective commitment to changing the nature of the relationship between themselves and the local community, and their limited success in overcoming cultural dissonance, they were unable to prevent the re-emergence of professional power, consequently, as the project progressed the lay participants became increasingly subordinated to professional regulation and control.

Crucially, the re-emergence of professional power did not stem from the conscious volition of the professionals, nor was it, (as a Foucauldian analysis might imply), an inescapable consequence of the production of discourse - there is nothing intrinsic to the discursive topics of: organisation, smoking, racism, or discipline, that automatically entails the re-emergence of professional power. Again, this creates a theoretical lacuna - what provoked the re-emergence of professional power if it was

not the volition of the professionals themselves, and if professional regulation and control was not immanent in the topics they engaged?

The answer to this conundrum lies in the professionals' objective location within the state. It was noted at the beginning of the chapter that professional involvement in WHAP was contradictory, bringing skills and resources, but also the threat of professional dominance and control. The professionals attempted to resolve this contradiction by changing the nature of their relationship with the volunteers and the local community; more specifically they attempted to overcome their alienation from local people. However, this alienation originated, not in the relationship between the professionals and local people, but in the relationship between the professionals and the state; and the nature of this relationship went unchallenged by WHAP. Thus, although the professionals brought skills and resources to the project, those skills and resources were constituted by, and dependent upon, their position as agents of the state, and their utilisation, even for what were perceived to be emancipatory ends, necessarily legitimated and reconstituted the type of paternalistic relationship that exists between welfare professionals and their 'clients'. For example, professional expertise regarding the development of effective forms of organisation, only exceeded that of the volunteers, because of their familiarity with bureaucratic forms of management and administration, therefore, in activating that expertise they were obliged to resort to bureaucratic frames of reference, with the consequence that the oppressive structures they subjectively sought to overcome were both legitimated and re-constituted in a community setting.

This pattern duplicated itself whenever the professionals attempted to use their expertise or intellectual resources to resolve a problem or dilemma facing the project - the problem of smoking at the Drop-in was transformed into a debate between two elements of a welfarist frame of reference, smoking as a health hazard, and the smoker as victim of stress; no matter how this debate had been resolved, the traditional, paternalistic relationship between welfare professional and powerless 'client' would inevitably have been reinstated. The incident with the leaflets and the accusation of racism, illustrates the way in which a welfarist frame of reference can be activated with the conscious intention of manipulation and control, but, as far as WHAP is concerned, this appears to have been the exception rather than the rule. More often the

professionals involved in WHAP hoped to use their skills and resources to pursue what they believed was a genuinely emancipatory agenda, but in utilising those skills and resources they were obliged to utilise bureaucratic/welfarist frames of reference which necessarily led to the re-emergence of professional power.

As well as the external constraints imposed upon the activity of professionals by their objective location in the state, their potential for engaging in emancipatory activity is also limited by their subjective internalisation of bureaucratic/welfarist frames of reference. Whilst 'radical' professionals might consider themselves to be 'in and against the state', it is equally the case that the state is in and against the radical professional. As well as equipping the professional with bureaucratic/welfarist frames of reference, this 'colonisation' of professional consciousness also creates a strong imperative to activate those frames of reference, and to utilise external structures of professional power - that imperative inheres in subscription to professional values and notions of professional responsibility. Thus, the incident with Denise illustrates the way in which when other alternatives are exhausted, commitment to professional values and the concomitant sense of responsibility, obliges even a progressively minded professional to activate a welfarist frame of reference and invoke the repressive apparatus of the state.

Finally, a question remains as to the extent to which the professionals were conscious of the re-emergence of professional power. Towards the end of the final round of interviews this issue was partially addressed by asking some of the professionals if they felt that WHAP provided a means by which health and welfare professionals could exercise surveillance and social control over marginalised groups. Despite the incidents analysed above, many of the professionals felt that this was not the case, the following quotation being characteristic of the view generally held:

> *I don't think anybody's ever kind of exercising control on people through WHAP. I think other people would have to come up with an example of how that happens. I don't think it does that. If it did I wouldn't want to be part of it. I accept some of the other dilemmas, I mean you can say that all kinds of social services are a kind of sop for people's experiences, and that's been the*

case for a long time, and will go on being the case for a time. If you accept
that argument I think it ends up with you saying 'I'm not going to do anything'.
(Professional, October 1994)

The above quotation clearly denies the re-emergence of professional power in WHAP, although, even here, there is a slight unease, or a suspicion that *'all kinds of social services'* might unwittingly constrain emancipatory activity. The implication is, that by this point in the project WHAP had become a 'social service', much like any other, and that its objective was now to provide a useful service, rather than to address an emancipatory agenda.

Another professional answered the same question in a way which was more critical of the professionals involved in WHAP:

> *I think the people involved in WHAP are controlled. I don't think it's*
> *consciously used as a tool for that by the statutory agencies, because I don't*
> *think it's a sufficiently high priority to get that sort of attention to it, but*
> *certainly for those professionals involved, it is both a way of picking up issues*
> *and keeping an eye on the situation, and also controlling the behaviour of*
> *individuals, which they have done. You know, you can't be much more*
> *controlling than Sectioning somebody.(laughter).*
> (Professional, October 1994)

Superficially, this appears to be a complete contradiction of the view expressed in the previous quotation. Where the first professional began by denying the re-emergence of professional power, but conceded that WHAP was constrained by the limitations facing *all social services*, the second professional appears to suggest that WHAP *really is* a means of controlling people, and goes on to imply that the origins of the tendency to control lie in the consciousness of the professionals involved, rather than being structurally determined. However, although the two accounts appear to contradict each other on every point, they both grasp different elements of the actual process. As the analysis presented above suggests, professional power did re-emerge as WHAP developed, despite the conscious commitment of the professionals to stopping that re-emergence. It is also the case that the re-emergence of professional

power resulted from engagement with frames of reference which belong to the welfare state tradition and institutional structure. Essentially though, an adequate understanding of the re-emergence of professional power cannot be arrived at by focusing exclusively upon the consciousness of the professionals, *or*, by an analysis of the structural and ideological imperatives of the state, but rather by considering the relationship that exists between the two. For the most part professional power re-emerged in WHAP, not because the professionals consciously betrayed the emancipatory agenda to which they had originally subscribed, nor because of direct regulation by the state, but because, (rather like a Trojan horse), what appeared to be the 'gift' of professional expertise and resources, contained an unpleasant secret; namely the adoption of welfarist frames of reference, the utilisation of which entailed subordination to professional power.

Discussion

In the analysis presented above I have tried to interpret the empirical data directly, without detailed theoretical exposition, or, the courtesy of acknowledging intellectual debts. This section attempts to allay accusations of superficiality and plagiarism by deepening the analysis and giving explicit references. To begin with, I have used the terms: 'professional', 'power', and 'welfarist frames of reference', rather glibly, without explaining their content or theoretical significance. A detailed account of any one of these terms would, of course, constitute a thesis in itself, so what follows is, by necessity, merely a summary of the sociological insights most relevant to the analysis presented above.

■ What is a professional?

The term 'professional' is the most empirically grounded of the categories listed above, appearing repeatedly in the interview transcripts as the means of differentiating the group of WHAP members who were neither 'volunteers' nor 'clients'. Of course, the category of 'professional' has also been the subject of extensive sociological inquiry throughout the twentieth century; a coincidence that is by no means entirely fortuitous. Although lay usage of the term might be seen as justification for applying

the 'sociology of the professions' to deduce insights into the current study, there is a danger of mistaking a common word for a common meaning, and wrongfully generalising from the sociological category of 'professional' to a group which shares the label, but not the characteristics. To avoid this danger it is, therefore, important to compare the WHAP 'professional' with the 'professional' in sociological discourse.

The range of 'professionals' involved in WHAP, (though more stable than the 'volunteer' group), changed over time, and there were variations in their degree of involvement. However, during the course of the study I interviewed most of the professionals involved at that time, and certainly all of those with a high degree of involvement. This group comprised ten people:

Public Health Physician - originally Director of Public Health for Bexley Health
      Authority, but resigned in order to become an independent consultant,

Health Promotion Officer - Director of Health Promotion at Bexley Health
      Authority,

Health Advisor - to Greenwich Local Authority,

Social Worker (with responsibility for ethnic minority issues) - at Bexley local
      Authority,

Ethnic Minorities Worker - employed by Bexley Council for Racial Equality,

Social Worker - Director of Thamesmead Family Services Unit, a charitable
      organisation, largely funded by the Local Authority,

Social Worker - employed by the Family Services Unit on a research project,

Community Development Worker - employed by WHAP,

Social Worker (retired) - who formerly worked in Thamesmead,

Vicar - from the local Anglican church.

Collectively, the group might be characterised as 'welfare professionals'; with the majority employed in community or social work. Three of the professionals had a background in health, but none were practising clinicians. Four members of the group were directly employed by the statutory agencies, and the majority of the remainder were employed by organisations that relied on state funding. At the beginning of the project three of the professionals had relatively senior managerial roles within their organisations, (one later resigned in order to do more community based work), the

remainder were not involved in the management of junior staff, but worked directly with their own 'clients'. Most seem to have had some freedom in managing their work activity, compared to say an office or factory worker, although at least two professionals were instructed to reduce their involvement in WHAP by their employer. Details of income and educational attainment were not recorded, but it seems likely that the majority of the professionals were educated to graduate level, and had a broadly similar income.

It seems reasonable to conclude that the WHAP 'professionals' were a relatively homogeneous group, engaged in similar work, with a similar degree of autonomy, and a similar relationship to the state. But, how does this group compare with the sociological definition of a profession? The first thing to note is that although defining the category is perhaps the central question addressed by the sociology of the professions, the literature reveals no consensus on how it might be answered. A common approach has been to identify the 'traits' by which a profession can be differentiated from other occupational groups. Millerson (1964), having surveyed the literature, identified 23 traits claimed to be characteristic of the professions. The range of traits and their relative values varied from one account to another; Millerson lists the six most common as: i) skill based on theoretical knowledge, ii) provision of training, iii) testing the competence of members, iv) organisation, v) adherence to a code of conduct, and vi) altruistic service.

Leaving aside the difficulty of distinguishing altruistic service from that which is motivated by personal gain, and the unlikely existence of skills which are *not* based on some form of theoretical knowledge, Millerson's list, and trait theory generally, are still far from satisfactory. Essentially the problem lies in reducing a diverse and constantly changing range of professions to a small number of traits; either the model must be so widely applicable that occupations not normally thought of as professions, for example plumbing or car maintenance, are included, or else so specific that it only includes the well established professions, such as medicine, the law, or, the clergy, relegating other occupations such as, social work, or, teaching, to the status of quasi, or, aspiring professions.

The trait approach has spawned a broad debate about whether progressive 'professionalisation' has increased the membership of this elite 'club', or whether 'proletarianization' has reduced their number. Such concerns have prompted historical inquiry into the origins of the 'established' professions, revealing the extent to which their content has changed over time (Prest (ed.) 1987, Burrage & Torstendahl (eds.) 1990, Larson 1977). The adoption of an historical perspective may also lead to a consideration of the professions in terms of external social relations, rather than inherent traits. Bryan Turner (1987), for example, has analysed the way in which the development of the medical profession during the nineteenth century was shaped by: the rise of an affluent middle-class clientele, the emergence of germ theory, state support through legislation, and technical advances making medical intervention less dangerous. Turner's model suggests that the possession of an increasingly extensive and reliable body of knowledge and clinical expertise enabled doctors to demand that the state grant them a virtual monopoly over health care or at least the right to regulate other workers in the field.

This relationship between the medical profession and the state can be generalised to other welfare professions, offering insights that are very pertinent to an understanding of WHAP. But what is the nature of this relationship, and how does it differ from that which other occupational groups have with the state? Again there is no shortage of answers to these questions. Many have focused on the knowledge and expertise possessed by professionals, suggesting that the state intervenes to ensure that these resources are used for the common good rather than being distorted by the market. Durkheim (1957), for instance, claims that the professions are 'moral millieux' working to restore social cohesion in the face of a traditional moral order that is collapsing. RH Tawney (1921) takes up this theme, suggesting that the professions manage to place the needs of the community before the 'rampant individualism' that characterises modern society.

Certainly, the professions' relationship with the state does grant them a degree of what Eliot Freidson (1986) describes as 'shelter from the market'. Rather than open competition in the labour market, many professional organisations have obtained a state sanctioned monopoly, as well as a high degree of autonomy and self-regulation, in terms of training, conferring credentials, disciplining members, and setting rates of

remuneration. Again there is a danger of making broad, ahistorical generalisations which may not be applicable to those involved in WHAP. Many of the WHAP professionals owed their 'shelter from the market' to the fact that they were directly, or indirectly, employed by the state, rather than to their membership of a professional organisation. It was not that the WHAP professionals were able to use privileges conferred by the state to improve their position in the market, but that the market mechanism had been removed from their relationship with their 'clients'.

Clearly then, welfare professionals like those involved in WHAP have a different relationship to the state than professions like architecture or engineering where the market mechanism still prevails, albeit in a modified form. Even so, welfare professionals still retain enough in common with their more independent colleagues to distinguish them from other state employees, for instance, the degree of autonomy in their day to day working, which enables them to become involved in projects like WHAP. But what is it that accounts for the distinct position occupied by welfare professionals of being brought under the auspices of the state, but being granted a relatively high degree of autonomy in their practical activity?

From a functionalist perspective it might be argued that the welfare professions are located within the state to ensure that they are not diverted from their 'altruism' and 'selfless service to the community' by the need to drum up trade; whilst their relative autonomy might be accounted for in terms of the freedom to respond to the specific needs of their clients, and the inability of non-professional managers to regulate those in possession of specialist knowledge. More specifically, as Turner has noted, it is not the possession of specialist knowledge that guarantees the relative autonomy of the welfare professional, but the fact that it cannot be systematised or routinised in a way that facilitates more direct managerial control:

> *... professions need a barrier to protect themselves from such routinization and this barrier is constituted by the indetermination of knowledge; the knowledge of the profession has to have a distinctive mystique which suggests that there is a certain professional attitude and competence which cannot be reduced merely to systematic and routinized knowledge.* (Turner, 1987, p.136)

Whilst we might question the validity of the specialist knowledge possessed by social workers and other community workers, Turner is surely correct in observing its role in legitimating professional autonomy, although in practical terms it may be the intimacy of the professional/client relationship that limits the extent to which that claim can be contested by managers. But even if we accept Turner's account of the basis of professional autonomy, there remains the question of why certain professions are located within the state. The functionalist argument made by Parsons (1954) and others, that it is to ensure that their skills are used 'in the service of man', rather than personal gain, hardly seems convincing. Why should some occupational groups whose practice is based on esoteric knowledge be taken out of the market-place, when plumbers, car mechanics, estate agents, financial advisors et cetera, are left to exploit us?

One answer is that welfare professionals are brought under the auspices of the state, not to ensure that they serve the interests of their clients, but to ensure that they serve the interests of the state. There are two closely related lines of argument here, differing mainly in how they conceptualise the relationship between the state and the economy.

For liberals like Hayek (1944), the modern state represents a conspiracy between politicians, bureaucrats and professionals, to deny the freedom conferred by an unrestricted market in favour of top down social planning and regulation. In the same vein DS Lees (1966) suggests that the monopolistic rights and restrictive practices enjoyed by the professions represent a barrier to competition which is against the interests of the client. This is particularly so where the professional is a full time employee of the welfare state. Harris and Seldon (1979) point out that the suspension of the market mechanism removes the essential means by which clients can exercise control over professionals, resulting in escalating and inefficient expenditure, and the subordination of the client's wishes to professional diktat. To counter this the New Right proposes separating the professions from the state, and re-introducing the market mechanism to regulate the relationship between professional and client (Green 1988).

Although the libertarian rhetoric of Hayek and his disciples at the Institute of Economic Affairs is seductive, the analysis on which it is based is ahistorical and theoretically flawed. Thus the increasingly interventionist state is presented as the product of universal suffrage and parliamentary democracy, when in fact it predates both. This act of historical revisionism allows liberal commentators to paint a picture of an economically autonomous political class, responding to the electorate's demands for the resolution of social problems, by ever greater state intervention and welfare provision, at the expense of the market and personal freedom (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987).

Historical analysis reveals that the origins of the state-form lie not in parliamentary democracy, but in the subordination of one class by another. As Engels noted, and Lenin (1917) re-iterated, rather than being a response to the demands of the masses, the state was brought into being as a means of their oppression by a 'public force':

> *This public force exists in every state; it consists not merely of armed men, but also of material appendages, prisons and coercive institutions of all kinds..*
> (Engels, 1894, p.163)

This body of 'armed men' and 'coercive institutions' was constituted by the ruling class as a means of establishing social order and reproducing the conditions for economic exploitation. Before looking more closely at Marxist theories of the state it is important to explain what is meant by the term 'ruling class'.

Marxism is often described, (by both admirers and detractors), as 'class analysis'. The image evoked is that of an early to mid nineteenth-century mill owner or coal baron mercilessly exploiting and oppressing a penniless workforce, and using his economic resources to dominate the political sphere. Not surprisingly this caricature appears inadequate as a means of describing modern society. Whilst early capitalism may have been characterised by individual entrepreneurs who directly owned and controlled their businesses, this elite group of families "by and large failed to consolidate their positions as the dominant class in the society." (Parsons & Smelser, 1957, p.254). Instead the emergence of the joint stock company during the second half of the nineteenth-century has led to the separation of ownership and control (Drucker,

1971) with ownership effectively dispersed amongst shareholders (including trade unions and pension-funds), and corporate control in the hands of meritocratically appointed professional managers, rather than the sons and daughters of entrepreneurial capitalists. If ordinary workers are able to 'own' the company that employs them (either through direct share ownership, or by participating in a pension fund), and if the sons and daughters of those workers are able to work their way up the corporate ladder by gaining appropriate managerial qualifications, then surely Marx's account of a capitalist ruling class is an anachronism.

However, when we turn to Marx's actual writings we find no universal account of a ruling class under capitalism. Whilst Marx constantly uses the term he makes very little attempt to say who its membership might comprise. This apparent omission stems not from negligence or theoretical incompleteness, but from a fundamental difference between the way in which class was conceptualised by Marx and the way the category is employed by many modern social scientists. For example, the Registrar General uses an occupational classification system to provide a demographic description of the British population, but Marx had no such intention. Rather than seeking to describe demographic groups, Marx was concerned with conceptualising social relations, or more precisely, production relations, (i.e. production in the broad sense of human consciousness transforming, and being transformed by, the material world). Under the capitalist mode of production the key relationship is that between labour and capital, but this relationship is not just expressed in the consciousness of individuals but in historically specific and socially constructed institutions and the apparatus of production - it is the ways in which things are done, as well as the people who do them.

This historically specific socio-economic totality places people in specific class locations, and ascribes them different roles in the production process, for example, machine worker, senior manager, financier, entrepreneur et cetera. At the level of abstraction it is possible to describe the capitalist mode of production as one in which capital exploits labour by appropriating surplus value. More concretely, it is possible to identify groups in the production process who are exploited, i.e. who do not receive the full fruits of their labour, and those who benefit from this exploitation, but this can only serve as a rough guide to the formation of classes. First, because class is dynamic

and constantly changing according to specific circumstances. And secondly, because it is class-consciousness rather than class location that is the key determinant of social and political change. In political terms it matters less whether someone is a manager or a shop-floor worker, than whether they consciously side with or against capitalism.

The project of establishing class-consciousness is important for both labour and capital, but more so for the former, because the transformation of capitalism into socialism requires a greater degree of conscious collective activity than does the relatively individualistic pursuit of profit. Those who benefit from the capitalist mode of production and have an interest in its reproduction are a diverse and fragmented class, and in civil society they may confront each other as hostile rivals pursuing apparently opposing interests, for example, industrial versus finance capital, or political versus military leadership. As we shall see below, the capitalist state emerged as a means of resolving these conflicts in the interests of capitalism as a whole, but this is not a project that can be completed; what constitutes 'ruling class interests' will always be contested and negotiated. More specifically, the homogeneity of the ruling class waxes and wanes according to the perceived threat posed by organised labour. Thus, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the labour movement has left the British state facing tremendous difficulty in orchestrating a homogeneous line in ruling class politics, for example, over European Monetary Union. In short, the ruling class is an amorphous constantly changing category that cannot be precisely defined in demographic terms, but it is a constant reality which inheres in the relationship between labour and capital, and more precisely in the state-form.

To possess legitimacy and operate effectively, the state must appear to be above society rather than a product of class conflict; it must be presented as an impartial arbiter between different factions. Thus, it would be wrong to characterise the state as a direct form of class rule. Rather, the state is the 'executive arm' of the ruling class, existing as a formally independent set of institutions. This apparent independence is necessitated by the fragmentary nature of the ruling class. Rather than being a tightly homogeneous group with an identical set of objectives, the ruling class exists as a series of divided, and often competing, factions, united by their common interest in oppressing the subordinate classes. For example, under capitalism, the power of the ruling class is derived from its exploitation of labour power in the production process.

Individual capitalists, therefore, have a common interest in subordinating the working class to wage-labour. But, because capitalist production comprises a multitude of competing enterprises, class rule must take the form of a relatively autonomous set of institutions, i.e. the state-apparatus, capable of advancing the interests of capital as a whole (Altvater 1978, Hirsch, 1978).

The state can, therefore, be conceptualised in two ways: first, as a set of social relations, unifying the interests of the ruling class in the process of oppressing the subordinate classes - the 'state-form'; and secondly, as a set of institutions through which this class power is exercised - the 'state-apparatus'. Both the state-form and the essential elements of the state-apparatus, (those 'special bodies of armed men'), were established prior to the emergence of parliamentary democracy and universal suffrage. Thus , where liberals like Hayek and his disciples at the Institute of Economic Affairs would have us believe that the oppressive nature of the state is indirectly the result of universal suffrage, which has led to greater state intervention in the economy and consequently reduced the freedom of the individual, historical analysis reveals that the state-form and key elements of the state-apparatus were in place well before the advent of universal suffrage, and that their primary function is to maintain the market rather than negate it.

Historical analysis of the origins of the state may reveal that its form and character pre-date universal suffrage, but this tells us little of the extent to which the parliamentary system might transform the state and subordinate it to the needs of the masses. Lenin was dismissive of such a notion: *'To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament - this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism..'* (1917, p.46). For Lenin, even under universal suffrage, parliaments were *'mere talking shops'*, incapable of influencing the *'real business of 'state'* [which] *is performed behind the scenes and is carried on by the departments, chancelleries and general staffs'* (1917, p.47).

But why is it that democratically elected representatives are unable to wrench the state-apparatus from the hands of the ruling class. Ernest Mandel (1969) points to two important factors. First, the state is tied to the ruling class by the *'golden chains'* of

national debt, which oblige government to go cap in hand to the banks. The International Monetary Fund's intervention in the policies of the last Labour government is just one example of the way in which economic dependence subordinates the state to the interests of capital. Secondly, Mandel notes the extent to which the hierarchy in capitalist society is mirrored in the state:

> *The state apparatus is not a homogeneous instrument. It involves a structure that rather closely corresponds to the structure of bourgeois society, with a hierarchy of classes and identical differences between them.* (Mandel, 1969, p.18)

Thus, for Mandel, the higher echelons of the civil service, the military and the other institutions of the state are largely recruited from, and have common cause with, the bourgeoisie. Whilst those further down the hierarchy, who receive relatively minor financial rewards are closer to the petty bourgeoisie or the proletariat.

To return to our original problem of understanding the category of 'professional', we can see that the term is only really meaningful when considered in relationship to the state, particularly for welfare professionals like those participating in WHAP. Moreover, historical and structural analysis of the state leads us to conclude that professionals are to some degree embroiled in the exercise of class domination. The value of this analysis lies in the fact that it enables us to adopt a critical perspective towards the altruistic and ethical basis of professionalism claimed by the professions themselves, (and by a generation of functionalist sociologists). It also exposes the inadequacy of the argument that the discipline of the market would resolve the 'problem' of the professions. If, in the last instance, the state is no more than 'a special body of armed men' defending the interests of capital, then the market can offer no escape from professional coercion, because the very survival of the market is dependent upon that coercion.

There remains a problem with the analysis, or more precisely, questions about the nature of professionalism that are left unanswered. We have defined the welfare professional as an agent of the state, serving the interests of capital, and using the indeterminacy of professional expertise and direct contact with clients to obtain a

degree of autonomy and other benefits. But this cosy relationship between professional and state does not fit well with the testimony of the WHAP professionals, many of whom expressed ambivalence about their relationship to the state, and a subjective commitment to an emancipatory agenda. Perhaps the answer lies in Mandel's argument about the hierarchy of capitalism being reproduced in the hierarchy of the state? There is certainly evidence to suggest that membership of a profession may be drawn from different classes, for instance, Navarro quotes (with obvious relish) the Chairman of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1958:

... there has always been a nucleus in medical schools of students from cultured homes... This nucleus has been responsible for the continued high social prestige of the profession as a whole and for the maintenance of medicine as a learned profession. Medicine would lose immeasurably if the proportion of such students in the future were to be reduced in favour of the precocious children who qualify for subsidies from the Local Authorities and state purely on examination results. (Navarro, 1978, p.76)

It may be that the senior positions in a profession are occupied by people from 'cultured homes' and that they exercise control over members of the lower ranks who are closer to the proletariat. If this were the case, then the category of 'professional' would be of little theoretical value in terms of the consciousness and practical activity of those to whom it is ascribed. And indeed many theorists have attempted to re-formulate the category in terms of social class. But there are problems with any simplistic model which posits the existence of bourgeois-professionals who share the interests of the ruling class and exercise control over proletarian-professionals. First, rather than being subordinated to the interests of capital, a profession may, as Klein notes, act independently, even in opposition to the state, for example:

The history of the British health service is the history of political power, Ministers, Civil Servants, Parliament, accommodating itself to professional power. (Klein, 1973, p.7)

Moreover, there is a problem with defining the lower ranks of the professions as proletarian, not least because although they are wage-labourers they do not produce

surplus value. Thus, Poulantzas defines civil servants employed by the state apparatuses as part of the 'new petty bourgeoisie', because:

> *These workers do not produce surplus value. Like others, they sell their labour-power, and their wage is determined by the price of reproducing their labour-power, but they are exploited by the direct extortion of surplus labour, not by the production of surplus value.* (Poulantzas, 1973, p.107)

However, 'class place' is not determined exclusively by economic factors, but also by political and ideological elements. Moreover, 'class position', that is, how a class will act and the affiliations it will make, varies according to specific historical circumstances. Superficially, Poulantzas's approach appears to be an advance on the more crass interpretations of Marxism in which consciousness and practical activity are seen as a direct function of production relations. However, as RW Connell (1979, p.107) has pointed out, the result is far from satisfactory. Whilst Poulantzas includes political and ideological factors in his account of class, as well as purely economic relations, the consciousness of the subject is still seen as the product of his/her location within a structure, that is, as an automatic function of a set of structural factors. There is no conceptual room in Poulantzas's model for people to gain a critical consciousness of these structural factors and struggle against them. And yet, this is precisely the process that was observed in WHAP - rather than simply accepting the role of professional as it is defined by structural factors the WHAP professionals were at least partially aware of its contradictions and inadequacies, and attempted to transform it. Whilst their attempts failed, the conscious impulse was observably there.

In his adaptation of Poulantzas's model, Erik Olin Wright (1978) recognises that due to developments such as the separation of ownership and control, loss of control over the labour process by workers, and the development of bureaucratic/managerial hierarchies in industrial organisations, some workers may find themselves in a doubly contradictory class location, which after Braverman (1974), Wright describes as having *'one foot in the bourgeoisie and one in the proletariat'*. It is easy to speculate how a contradictory class location might lead to the development of contradictory consciousness, or even consciousness of the contradiction, but Wright offers no

account of this process, preferring to leave us with a set of 'pigeon-holes' which those who do not fit must straddle.

What both Poulantzas and Wright fail to provide is a convincing account of the way in which a persons structural location impacts upon their consciousness and behaviour. More specifically, for our purposes, why is it that welfare professionals employed by the state end up serving the interests of the ruling class even though they themselves are not part of that class? Is it simply fear of being sacked, or is there more to it? This is largely an empirical question, but there are two strands of thought in the sociology of the professions that shed some light on the process. The first is concerned with the extent to which welfare professionals employed by the state are increasingly subordinated to managerial control; the second addresses the way in which members of professional groups willingly adopt an identity and an ideology that serves the interests of the state.

The first theme, with its emphasis on the increasing subordination of individual discretion and autonomy to the logic of instrumental rationality and bureaucratic forms of regulation is essentially a Weberian perspective, which surfaces in various forms throughout the sociology of the professions. In his account of the way in which the techniques of scientific management are employed to subordinate healthcare professionals to managerial 'structures of control', Rob Flynn offers an empirically grounded account of Weber's theory, based on changes in NHS management introduced since the early 1980's. He concludes that:

> *An unprecedented battery of measures and techniques for audit, evaluation, monitoring and surveillance now exists. These constitute the principal devices through which the structure of control in health is accomplished. They also represent a radical departure from previous arrangements concerning professional autonomy, because they entail managerial encroachment on the determination of work content, productivity, resource use and quality standards.* (Flynn, 1992, p.183)

Flynn's account of healthcare professionals tied up in a web of managerial surveillance and regulation is persuasive, first because it can be demonstrated by

reference to actual changes in NHS administration, such as: the implementation of general management, clinical budgeting, cost controls, performance evaluation, and quality assurance, and also because it offers an account of professional resistance to managerial control:

> *... the dynamics and means of control are multiple and contradictory, they are variable, and subject to social conflict. Collectively, all those practices and policies which attempt to specify rules and norms for tasks and productivity, the division of labour, the assessment of performance and accountability, are regarded here as comprising a complex structure of control. This structure of control will inevitably be contested because it embodies relations of authority and power which are themselves negotiated and contractual.* (Flynn, 1992, p.184)

There is some evidence to suggest that Flynn's analysis might be relevant to the WHAP case study; for example, some of the professional members of WHAP were instructed to reduce their involvement in the project by their managers, and more generally, the activities of WHAP were constrained by self-limiting beliefs about what would be acceptable to the statutory agencies. There was also evidence that the WHAP professionals were conscious of an on-going struggle with the organisations by which they were employed. But Flynn's analysis only offers a partial explanation of why welfare professionals who are not members of the ruling class should conduct their practice in a way which serves the interests of the state. There are both theoretical and empirical problems.

Theoretically Flynn's argument of an historically evolving structure of control, implies the existence of relatively autonomous professions, prior to the recent imposition of managerialism. Whilst we recognise that professional autonomy is historically variable, this autonomy can never have been absolute, because as we noted above the historical development of the state-form and the social relations that it embodies, determine that those employed in the state-apparatuses must in the last instance serve the interests of the ruling class. Therefore, there must be some factor other than the relatively recent development of managerial structures of control that accounts for professionals' willingness to serve the interests of the state.

Empirical evidence from the WHAP case study also suggests that something other than managerial regulation accounts for the tendency for WHAP professionals to conduct their practical activity in ways which served the interests of the state. Rather than close managerial scrutiny and regulation the WHAP initiative was characterised by the high degree of formal autonomy enjoyed by its professional members. As the analysis presented in the first half of this chapter indicates, it was not direct managerial control that led to the re-emergence of professional power in WHAP, but the persistence of professional values and the utilisation of welfarist frames of reference.

This leads into the second theme in the sociology of the professions that accounts for the professionals' subordination to the interests of the state, namely the extent to which they willingly subscribe to a professional ideology that shapes their identity and guides their practical activity. Here all the ideological baggage espoused by the professions themselves and by functionalist sociologists attempting to list the traits of professionalism can be re-appropriated. Whilst claims to public service, ethical standards, and the use of specialist knowledge for altruistic purposes, tell us little about the real nature of professionalism, they tell us a great deal about how that reality is mystified, not just for lay consumption, but also for the professionals themselves. Not only does this ideology legitimate professional practice to the outside world, it also exercises control over the identity and practical activity of professionals themselves. For example, until recently members of the Royal College of Nurses refused to go on strike, despite low income and poor working conditions, because they felt that such action would be unprofessional. Further examples of what professionals 'do and don't do' can be drawn from the WHAP case study, for instance the notion of a professional responsibility to intervene in the management of crises, the necessity of using one's professional expertise to resolve problems, and the obligation to activate more coercive methods of social control when one's personal professional resources are exhausted, are all described in the first half of this chapter.

W.E. Moore (1970) has studied the processes by which an individual comes to adopt the identity of a professional. In the well established professions like medicine or the law, where future professionals often have parents in the same profession, this process

of socialisation can begin almost from birth, with the emulation of a particular set of attitudes and beliefs. However, the main elements of professional socialisation occur during education and training. Moore outlines the characteristics of professional education, which include: social isolation in a total institution, the internalisation of an esoteric body of knowledge heavily laden with jargon, and meaningless and irrelevant training. According to Moore, those who survive the ordeal of professional education emerge with a strong commitment to their fellow professionals and a deeply ingrained occupational identity:

> *The person who successfully learns the language and skills of a trade, and survives the ordeals that punished him and his fellows will emerge, we are arguing, not only with an internalised occupational commitment but also with an identification with the collectivity, the brotherhood.* (Moore, 1970, pp.78-79)

Again, there is danger in generalising from the experiences of Moore's American professionals in the 1960s to the welfare professionals involved in WHAP. It is unlikely that most of those involved in WHAP would have undergone such arduous and intensive training. But the main conclusion, that the formation of a professional entails the adoption of a specific identity as well as the acquisition of expertise, may still be applicable. Moore suggests that this intensive socialisation leads to '*déformation professionelle*', or distortions in character produced by the adoption of a professional role, these include: inability to detach oneself from work, a narrow *worldview* (produced by specialisation), and over commitment to occupational norms and values.

Moore suggests that the internalisation of professional norms is its own reinforcement, with any infringement of standards or poor performance leading to a loss of self-respect. This is reinforced throughout the professional career by peer review. The perspective of the WHAP professionals is, therefore, an unusual one, because many of them entered the project with a critical perspective on the traditional professional role, and a desire to reform it. However, as the analysis presented in the first half of this chapter indicates, although superficial changes to the professional/client relationship were achieved, the fundamental commitment to professional values and professional

responsibility remained largely intact. The reasons for this are examined below, but for now it is sufficient to note that the internalisation of a professional identity entails a form of self-policing in which any radical departure from professional norms and values is experienced as a negation of the self and a betrayal of one's fellow professionals.

It will be argued below that the professional identity is itself an ideological category, structured by, and serving the interests of, the state. Subscription to a professional identity, therefore, serves to bind the professional to serving the interests of the state, even in situations which lie beyond the reach of managerial structures of control. As Johnson (1972) suggests, a profession is not an occupation, but a means of controlling an occupation.

To summarise the discussion so far; 'professional' is an empirically grounded category appearing frequently in the interview transcripts. After describing the characteristics of the professionals involved in WHAP, comparison was made with the professional category as it appears in sociological discourse. The 'key trait' approach to defining the professions was briefly examined and found wanting, in terms of its theoretical adequacy and its applicability to the WHAP professionals. Approaches which sought to place the professions in a specific historical and structural context were found to be more satisfactory. A fundamental element in understanding the professions was their relationship to the state. Professionals were found to enjoy a degree of autonomy in their day to day practice which distinguished them from other occupational groups employed by the state. The possession of indeterminate knowledge and the intimacy of the professional/client relationship, were felt to contribute to this autonomy. Functionalist and liberal/New Right accounts of the relationship between the state and professionals were examined and found to be unsatisfactory. Historical analysis of the origins of the modern state-form revealed it to be an instrument of class domination that was resistant to transformation by universal suffrage and parliamentary democracy. Welfare professionals employed by the state were likely to be embroiled in the exercise of class power, even though they were not formally part of the ruling class. Attempts to define professionals as a new class were found to be problematic and inadequate as a guide to professional consciousness and practical activity. The development of a managerial structure of control and the internalisation of an

ideological professional identity were felt to offer a more likely account of why professionals should serve the interests of the state.

At the end of this it is not possible to offer a concise and all encompassing definition of 'profession', nor to claim a close fit between lay usage of the term by WHAP members and the various accounts offered in the sociology of the professions. In many respects 'professional' is an imprecise category, varying across time, structural location, and occupational group, but there are specific observations we can make about the professionals involved in WHAP, and these observations are illuminated and deepened by consideration of the sociology of the professions. Thus the WHAP professionals can be described in terms of their relationship to the state and their adoption of a professional identity. For the most part they are employees of the state, often working directly with 'clients', but in any case at some distance from the upper echelons of bureaucratic office. On a day to day basis the nature of their work and their possession of indeterminate knowledge ensures a relatively high degree of control over their practical activity. But this relative autonomy exists within sharply defined limits which are policed by the managerial structure of control, and by the internalisation of a professional identity which comprises ideologically structured norms, values and responsibilities. In combination these factors ensure that the practical activity of the WHAP professionals is subordinated to the interests of the state. But this process of subordination is never complete, never total; the professional's class location and day to day experiences are powerful countervailing tendencies, which may lead to role conflict and active attempts to bring about change.

Of course this leaves many questions unanswered. When we say that welfare professionals are embroiled in class domination, that their activities serve the interests of the state, what does this mean in terms of their daily practice? What do we mean when we say that the professional role is structured by ideology? If the professionals' class location and everyday experiences give rise to role conflict and the desire to bring about progressive change, will this lead to a transformation of the professions? These issues are addressed below when we consider the nature of professional power, and what is meant by welfarist frames of reference.

■ What is professional power?

As with the term 'professional', the transition from a lay or common sense understanding of 'power' to a theoretically consistent and universally applicable sociological definition of the category, has proven problematic (Lukes (ed.), 1986) Again, this difficulty will be addressed by focusing on theoretical insights that deepen our understanding of professional power in WHAP; leaving the 'sociology of power' to look after itself.

The analysis of professional power in WHAP, presented in the first half of this chapter, raised the following questions: What is professional power? What are its effects? Whose interests does it serve? Does it originate in the conscious volition of the professional, or is it structurally determined? Can professional power operate independently of professionals? Can it be dismantled? A first step towards answering these questions is to find a basic definition of power; Steven Lukes offers the following:

> *A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to Bs interests.* (Lukes, 1974, p.27)

Superficially, this definition may appear unsatisfactory because it fails to take account of the paternalistic exercise of power, for example, the WHAP professionals responsible for 'sectioning' one of the volunteers, had a strong argument in claiming that it was in her best interests, and yet the lack of consent and the use of physical coercion clearly mark this incident as an exercise of power. In response, Lukes might argue that denying someone's freedom can never be in their long-term interests, even if it removes them from immediate danger. Whilst this argument props up Lukes' original definition it points to a fundamental problem with its practical application - how do we decide what is in *B's* best interests? We can always ask *B's* opinion, but this assumes that *B* is aware of those interests, what if *B* has been misled or deceived? For instance, the WHAP volunteers not only acquiesced in the exercise of professional power they actively demanded the articulation of organisational rules and regulations.

Lukes has an answer to this. He suggests that rather than confining our analysis of power to instances where A imposes his/her will on B in an observable contest (a one dimensional view), or by excluding B's view from the decision-making agenda (a two dimensional view), we should adopt a three dimensional view which recognises that A can exercise power over B by getting B to want things that are not in B's best interests, thereby obviating the need for observable conflict.

There remains the problem of intentionality on the part of A. In the analysis of WHAP we noted that the professionals were not only largely unaware of the power they exercised over the volunteers, but were consciously committed to emancipating, or as they would have it 'empowering', them. Lukes has something interesting to say on this as well, but before examining the structural aspect of power it is important to look at the specific characteristics of professional-power. Paul Wilding (1982) suggests that there are five aspects of the power exercised by welfare professionals: power in policy-making & administration, power to define needs & problems, power in resource allocation, power over people, and, control over the area of work.

The danger of assuming that professionals constitute a homogeneous group, in which all members are equally able to exercise power, was noted above. Therefore, despite the evidence presented by Wilding in support of his analysis, it is important to test its applicability to the WHAP professionals. Thus, although Wilding can demonstrate the influence that the medical, social work, and teaching professions have had over policy in their respective fields, it should be remembered that the professions are hierarchical, and that the ability to influence national policy may be a privilege that does not extend below the upper echelons of a profession. It will be argued that the experiences of grass-roots welfare professionals do feed into the formal policy making process, but this is quite different to consciously participating in the authorship of specific policies.

Similarly, the claim that professionals have power over resource allocation cannot be applied to WHAP without some clarification. Wilding notes that professionals are able to influence resource allocation at the macro and micro level, for example hospital consultants have historically resisted the shift of resources from the acute sector to priority services, and GPs and social workers act as gate-keepers to a range of benefits and services. WHAP's professionals had a much more tenuous grasp on the

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allocation of resources. Even so, WHAP's ability to attract statutory funding was largely dependent upon professional involvement, and the distribution of those resources to the volunteers, in the form of 'expenses', was controlled by the professionals. Although the sums distributed were small, many of the volunteers were very deprived, and the ability to withhold payment did provide the professionals with a source of power, particularly in disciplinary matters.

Wilding's claim that 'control of the area of work' is a form of professional power, is also problematic. He sights self-regulation, control of training and entry to the profession, and control over meetings with clients, in support of his argument. Again the hierarchical nature of the professions is overlooked. Thus, although their location within professionalised structures of regulation, training and credentialisation may have given the WHAP professionals a marginally greater degree of autonomy than other state employees, relative autonomy for oneself is not synonymous with the exercise of power over others.

The claim that professionals are able to exercise control over their meetings with clients is more convincing, and Wilding cites the GP/patient encounter as an example of professional dominance. But this is precisely the aspect of professional dominance that WHAP was most effective in challenging. WHAP's 'clients' had a much greater degree of control over whether they consulted the professionals involved in the project, and over the time, duration and (to a certain degree) the content of the consultation.

It is only when he considers 'power over people' and 'power to define needs & problems' that Wilding's analysis has any real resonance with the exercise of professional power in WHAP. 'Power over people' is defined mainly in terms of the formal and in some cases coercive powers granted to welfare professionals by the state; powers conferred by the Mental Health Act, and the regulation of abortion by the medical profession, are given as examples of the way in which the expertise of professionals is used to legitimate the usurpation of the rights of the individual. This relates to Lukes' one dimensional view of power, where a professional is able to exercise control over an individual even though opposition has been consciously articulated. Wilding also notes that 'power over people' can take subtler forms, such

as the ability to influence someone's self-concept and society's reaction to them by using professional expertise to enforce a label of deviancy. Whilst the coercive exercise of professional power over people is observable in WHAP, in the 'sectioning' of one of the volunteers, it is the ability to influence the individual's self-concept, that is the key to understanding the exercise of professional power in WHAP.

This is a theme that Wilding expands upon when he discusses the 'power to define needs & problems':

> *...professionals show a tendency to define problems in ways which seem to bring them with surprising frequency within the legitimate bounds of their professional concerns - alcoholism and addiction as diseases, pregnancy as illness, delinquency as maladjustment, the needs of the disabled as being for services rather than cash or work...*(Wilding, 1982, p.32)

Wilding's point is that professionals tend to overlook the social and economic causes of their clients' problems and channel them towards ameliorative welfare provision. Again this is a conclusion that can only be applied to WHAP with some caution. Whilst it may well be true that, for example, many welfare professionals see alcoholism as a disease rather than a social phenomenon, this tendency is not generally observable in the perspective adopted by WHAP. Indeed, many of the professionals described the objectives of WHAP in terms of addressing the social, economic and environmental influences on health, and the need to go beyond the bio-medical model.

However, despite the apparently critical stance adopted by the WHAP professionals their actual practical activity, and their very involvement in the project, meant that the problems facing the volunteers both as a group and individually were defined in a way that did not serve their objective interests. First, the radical rhetoric about addressing the social and economic influences on health quickly degenerated into a hotchpotch of individualistic measures to enable the individual to survive those adverse conditions rather than take collective action to overcome them , for instance: stress management, counselling, social support, and health education. Secondly, and more damagingly, WHAP reproduced the relationship between client and professional, and by extension the relationship between client and state. As the analysis presented in the first half of

this chapter reveals, that relationship is often characterised by dependency, powerlessness, surveillance and control. Ivan Illich observes that it is this capacity to establish a disabling social relationship with clients that is the key characteristic of the welfare professional:

> *Neither income, long training, delicate tasks nor social standing is the mark of the professional. Rather it is his authority to define a person as client, to determine that person's need and to hand the person a prescription.* (Illich et al, 1977, p.17)

Many of WHAP's volunteers and clients had previously had bad experiences of welfare professionals and were understandably wary of further involvement. By creating a more informal context, WHAP succeeded in bringing this previously marginalised group back within the fold of professional power.

Wilding offers a useful account of the different elements of the power exercised by welfare professionals, which with a little pruning and adaptation is applicable to WHAP. But what purpose does professional power serve, and are professionals conscious of the fact that they exercise it? There are several potential answers to the first part of this question. The most obvious answer is that welfare professionals exercise power over their clients for personal gain or self-aggrandisement. We have noted above, the extent to which a profession can act collectively to further the interests of its members at the expense of others. Perhaps a similar motive affects the individual relationship between professional and client. For example, community empowerment projects, like WHAP, are perceived to be 'the latest thing' in welfare provision, possibly improving the status and career prospects of professionals who participate in them. But this does not explain why such schemes are characterised by the exercise of professional power; surely if such initiatives are concerned with empowerment, then greater prestige would accrue to those initiatives which overcame professional dominance?

A second answer might be that the exercise of professional power is it's own reward. Foucault argues not only that exercising power over others is a pleasurable activity, but that being on the receiving end of power may also be rewarding:

The pleasure that comes of exercising a power that questions, monitors, watches, spies, palpates, brings to light; and on the other hand, the pleasure that kindles at having to evade this power, flee from it, fool it, or travesty it. The power that lets itself be invaded by the pleasure it is pursuing; and opposite it, power asserting itself in the pleasure of showing off, scandalising, or resisting. Capture and seduction, confrontation and mutual reinforcement: parents and children, adults and adolescents, educator and students, doctors and patients, the psychiatrist with his hysteric and his perverts, all have played this game continually since the nineteenth century. These attractions, these evasions, these circular incitements have traced around bodies and sexes, not boundaries not to be crossed, but perpetual spirals of power and pleasure.
(Foucault, 1976, p.45)

If Foucault's account of the 'perpetual spirals of power and pleasure' can be taken seriously, its application to WHAP paints an entertaining tableau of professional and lay participants exploring the 'pleasures' of dominance and submission at the tax payers expense. But of course it cannot be taken seriously. Whilst pleasure may (or may not) be implicated in the exercise of power, it does not offer a convincing account of its origins and effects. Why should the state indulge such pleasures, if their only purpose is recreational?

This leads us back into a consideration of the professional's location within the state. We know from the analysis presented above that the state is fundamentally an instrument of class domination, that its institutional and ideological structures were brought into being for this purpose. Furthermore, the role of welfare professional is only understandable in terms of its relationship to these institutional and ideological structures. Therefore, as well as asking how the exercise of professional power benefits the professional, we must also ask how it benefits the state.

The conduit linking the exercise of professional power to the objectives of the state, is the process of social reproduction, or more specifically, the reproduction of labour power. For the capitalist mode of production to continue, resources used up in the production process must be continuously reproduced. Obviously this entails replacing

raw materials, machinery, and buildings, but also the reproduction of a reasonably healthy and technically competent workforce. This is achieved partly by the payment of wages, which enable workers to buy many of the goods and services needed for survival, but also by development of the coercive and ideological apparatus's of the state. Unlike other resources used in the production process labour power possesses a unique quality - consciousness. Therefore, capitalist accumulation depends not only on the physical reproduction of labour power, but also on the reproduction of compliance and submission amongst the working class. Louis Althusser notes that:

> *... the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they too will provide for the domination of the ruling class 'in words'.* (Althusser, 1969a, pp.127-8)

Whilst the theory of social reproduction reveals the state's interest in perpetuating the exercise of professional power, as it stands it tells us little about the professionals' consciousness of the power they exercise, or the viability of them transforming their role in social reproduction. For instance, we know that the WHAP professionals were at least partially conscious of the nature of professional power, that they were committed to an emancipatory agenda that entailed transforming the traditional professional role, and that despite their efforts, they were unable to stop the re-emergence of professional power. This returns us to a question raised in our earlier discussion of Steven Lukes analysis of power - is the exercise of power determined by the conscious volition of those who exercise it, or is it determined by their place in the social and economic structure?

For Althusser power is so deeply ingrained in the social structure that even those professionals who are consciously committed to an emancipatory agenda are unable to resist its operation:

I ask the pardon of those teachers who, in dreadful conditions, attempt to turn the few weapons they can find in the history and learning they 'teach' against the ideology, the system and the practices in which they are trapped. They are a kind of hero. But they are rare and how many (the majority) do not even begin to suspect the 'work' the system (which is bigger than they are and crushes them) forces them to do, or worse, put all their heart and ingenuity into performing it with the most advanced awareness (the famous new methods!). So little do they suspect it that their own devotion contributes to the maintenance and nourishment of this ideological representation of the school, which makes the school today as 'natural', indispensable-useful and even beneficial for our own contemporaries as the Church was 'natural', indispensable and generous for our ancestors a few centuries ago. (Althusser, 1969a, p.148)

This belief, also subscribed to by Poulantzas, that the power of social structure automatically overrides the consciousness and agency of those embroiled in it, superficially appears to offer a plausible explanation of what happened in WHAP. But the approach has been contested by those who lay much greater emphasis on the conscious exercise of power. For instance, Milliband (1970) suggests that the emphasis on objective structures and objective relations underestimates the role of the ruling class in consciously exercising power. Moreover, as Connell has suggested, the Althusserian emphasis on structural determinism excludes the role played *by '.. living, sweating, bleeding human beings in their own history'* (1979, p.146). What remains is a bland and ahistorical functionalism, portraying the state as a monolithic set of institutions, impervious to the conscious resistance of those it affects.

Not surprisingly the Althusserian approach has proven unattractive to those seeking practical ways of transforming the state from within. The London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group whilst accepting the role of the state in social reproduction, has challenged the conceptualisation of the state as a monolithic set of institutions, arguing instead that the state-apparatus's and the relations that underpin them also need to be continually reproduced. This reproduction of the means of social reproduction offers an opportunity for those working within the state to consciously intervene to transform it:

> *There is always a tendency for a break or disjuncture to exist between the state apparatus and the way it is trying to form our actions. The state apparatus, the network of rules and controls to which we are subject is a fossil, the outcome of past struggles to channel activity into the 'proper' form, but it also has a certain hollowness and, if we are strong enough, brittleness. The rules are constantly being resisted and broken: the problem for us is how do we bend and break them in a politically effective way, in a way which would strengthen the struggle for socialism?* (London-Edinburgh Weekend Return Group, 1980, p.60)

The failure of previous attempts to transform the state is explained by reference to the way in which the labour movement has historically sought to use the institutions of the state for short term gains, rather than seeking to transform them, for example:

> *To win a degree of control over the operations of the local authority, Labour leftists felt they had to fight elections. Yet once elected they found themselves involved in a management situation, employer to low-paid workers. Advice centre workers wanted to obtain legal rights for their 'clients', but to do so they and the people they were helping had to observe the stifling forms of the law, submit to legal procedures, take on the role of the plaintiff.* (London-Edinburgh Weekend Return Group, 1980, p.42)

This active participation in the institutions of the state serves to legitimate and reproduce the status quo rather than challenge it, whilst more confrontational measures, such as public sector strikes, tend to harm the working class more than the state. In contrast to this, new forms of *'material opposition'* need to be developed, such as: *'rejecting individualisation in favour of collective organisation and action'*, *'rejecting misleading categories used by the state, such as community, in favour of class definitions'*, *'re-defining social problems in structural terms rather than victim blaming'*, *'refusing official procedures'*, and, *'rejecting managerial priorities'*.

The analysis offered by the London-Edinburgh Weekend Return Group acknowledges the structural basis of power, and the way in which involvement in the institutions of

the state conditions our consciousness and practical activity, but also restores the role of the conscious political agent actively engaging in the struggle to transform the state. However, the inadequacy of the proposals for action derived from such an analysis only serves to reinforce the Althusserian view that political agency is ineffective in the face of structural power. Partly the problem lies in an overestimation of the state employees room to manoeuvre. We noted above the extent of managerial structures of control that serve to police the activity of welfare professionals. In the current conjuncture any radical departure from the managerial agenda is more likely to lead to disciplinary proceedings than to a transformation of the state. What remains, as the WHAP example demonstrates, is merely reformist tinkering which may even extend the grip of state power.

Are we to conclude then, that Althusser was right; that power resides in social structures and that state employees are simply its reluctant bearers, often dissatisfied with their role, but unable to effectively transform it? Certainly the WHAP case study would appear to support this view. However, before reaching a hasty conclusion it is worth bearing in mind Steven Lukes observation that the structural determinism versus individual agency dichotomy may be false; professional power may reside in the relationship between structural conditions and the consciousness of professionals:

> *It is not a question of sociological research 'leading finally' either to the study of 'objective co-ordinates' or to that of 'motivations of conduct of the individual actors'. Such research must clearly examine the complex interrelations between the two, and allow for the obvious fact that individuals act together and upon one another within groups and organisations, and that the exploration of their behaviour and interaction is unlikely to be reducible merely to their individual motivations.* (Lukes, 1974, p.54)

The umbilical cord tying the consciousness of the welfare professional to the structural imperatives of state power is ideology, or what was referred to in the first half of this chapter as 'welfarist frames of reference'. The character of these welfarist frames of reference, and the process by which they impact on the consciousness of the professional are explored below. But first it is important to summarise the discussion of professional power so far.

We began this section with a series of questions, some of which can now be answered. First, we asked 'what is professional power?' Power was defined as *'when A affects B in a manner contrary to Bs interests'*, either by open coercion, agenda-setting, or by manipulating *Bs* wants and preferences. Professional-power was defined by reference to five categories, only two of which were felt to be substantially relevant to WHAP, these being, 'power to define needs and problems', and, 'power over people'.

A second question asked 'what are the effects of power?' This was answered in terms of the social reproduction of labour-power, and more specifically, the reproduction of dependence and powerlessness amongst the welfare professional's clients, and their subordination to surveillance and control. Thirdly, we asked, 'whose interests are served by the exercise of professional power?' Whilst it was possible for professionals to benefit from the exercise of power, the main beneficiary was felt to be the state and the class that it represents. In this sense the power exercised by professionals is in the last instance state power. The fourth question asked if professional power was structurally determined, or whether it resided in the conscious volition of the professional. It was decided that neither option was adequate, but that professional power resided in the relationship between professional consciousness and the objective structures of the state. This meant that the final two questions: 'can professional power operate independently of professionals?' and, 'can professional power be dismantled?', could not be answered without considering the processes that mediate between the consciousness of the professional and the structures of the state. The key process here is ideology or 'welfarist frames of reference', and it is to this that we now turn.

■ Understanding 'welfarist frames of reference'

Ideology is a term that comes heavily freighted with theoretical assumptions and consequences, and, as Foucault (1980, p.118) has noted, cannot be used without circumspection. To overcome this difficulty I have focused on 'welfarist frames of reference'. This is partly a semantic sleight of hand, because it will be argued that these frames of reference are fundamentally ideological phenomena. But the point of departure is different. I will look at observable institutions, practices and beliefs, and

bring in theoretical constructs to explain them. The validity of the theoretical constructs can then be assessed in relation to the empirical phenomena. Hopefully this is more circumspect than starting from an exposition and defence of a general theory of ideology, which in any case is not feasible here.

By welfarist frames of reference I mean the knowledge, beliefs, practices, institutions and structures that collectively constitute the welfare state. Rather than simply being a discourse or text, welfarist frames of reference also have a material existence; they are tangible resources as well as sets of ideas. Welfarist frames of reference therefore have a dual nature in that they are both material and ideational; the synthesis of these elements constitutes a cultural pattern of expectations - they are what one expects to do in response to social problems. If we are ill we expect to see a doctor, and perhaps receive a prescription or a referral to hospital. If we become unemployed we expect to receive a (diminishing) range of benefits and/or social services. But the reach of welfarist frames of reference is not total, for example, when ill we might rather seek the services of a herbalist, or struggle on without treatment of any kind, but such alternatives are marginal as a means of resolving social problems, compared with the resources wielded by the state.

The content of welfarist frames of reference is not historically fixed, but varies over time. It is, therefore, possible to trace their historical development, as Foucault has for psychiatry (1961), and Jewson (1974, 1976) has for medicine. But here we are concerned with the form taken by welfarist frames of reference in the current conjuncture, and with the general characteristics of the phenomenon rather than the precise contents of its constituent elements.

Some of these characteristics have already been identified in the empirical material presented in the first half of this chapter, and in the subsequent discussion - reliance on bureaucratic forms of organisation, dependence on professional expertise, intervention at the level of the individual rather than at a social or economic level, and utilisation of the resources offered by the state, were all characteristic of the welfarist frames of reference utilised by WHAP. As we noted above, these frames of reference have a dual nature, at a material level they exist as institutions and procedures (apparatuses) that are available to welfare professionals and their clients, but they also have an

ideational existence, and it is at this level, the level of ideas, that their systematic nature is revealed. The ideational aspect of the welfarist frames of reference that prevail in the current conjuncture has been described as 'social administration' (Walker, 1984).

Broadly speaking, the main tenets of social administration are: that social problems can be understood by social scientific enquiry, that their resolution is largely a technical issue, requiring the intervention of the state via bureaucratic institutions, and that a more radical social and economic transformation is not essential to their amelioration. Social administration is, of course, constantly changing, for instance the perceived efficacy of incorporating quasi-market mechanisms to improve the efficiency of bureaucratic institutions is a relatively recent development, as is the lowered expectation of what social policy might achieve, but the fundamental assumptions of the approach still prevail.

It is also important to recognise that the ideational aspect of welfarist frames of reference, that we are describing as social administration, can only be distinguished from their material manifestation, institutions et cetera, at the level of theoretical abstraction - in the concrete world the two are inseparable. It is erroneous to assume that social administration gave rise to the development of the institutions of the welfare state, or conversely that it developed as a post hoc justification. For example, the idea of psychiatry is a meaningless abstraction until its material existence as a set of buildings, implements, pharmaceutical compounds, therapeutic procedures, practices, roles and relationships is also considered. And by the same token, the material apparatus of psychiatry is just so much junk without the ideas that give it meaning. To describe psychiatry at any point in its chequered history is to describe a frame of reference that is simultaneously and irreducibly both material and ideational.

Grasping the dual nature of welfarist frames of reference, that is, that they are inseparably both material and ideational, is essential to an understanding of the way in which they impact upon the consciousness of the professionals and 'clients' that utilise them. It is not possible to operate within the material structures of welfarist frames of reference whilst maintaining an objectively critical approach to their ideational content. This does not mean that critical views cannot be subjectively held whilst

operating within welfarist frames of reference, for example, one can be subjectively critical of psychiatry whilst practising as a psychiatrist. But one cannot transform those subjective criticisms into practical activity without departing from, or stepping outside of, psychiatric practice. As we shall see, this 'stepping outside' remains a possibility, but there are substantial disincentives for welfare professionals to do so. First, we noted the extent to which managerial structures of control are able to police the boundaries of professional practice. Thus anyone who radically departs from a 'legitimate' professional role is likely to incur disciplinary penalties and the opprobrium of his/her peers. Secondly, we noted the extent to which notions of responsibility and professional values permeate the identity of the welfare professional. It is not simply the case that professionals make use of welfarist frames of reference, the professional identity is itself a part of those frames of reference - to adopt the role and identity of a professional is largely to accept the legitimacy of welfarist frames of reference.

It is worth looking more closely at the way in which the adoption of a professional identity shapes consciousness. We have already noted the process of professional socialisation, in which the norms, values and worldview of a profession are transmitted to new recruits in the educational and training process. But there is a more fundamental process at work by which everyday experience of professional practice tends to reinforce the boundaries of the professional identity and legitimate welfarist frames of reference. The process has been identified by Althusser, who refers to it as 'interpellation' (Althusser, 1969a).

Interpellation is the process by which ideology, (or in this case welfarist frames of reference), transform the individual into a subject. Althusser offers two metaphors to explain the process, first he suggests that ideology holds up a mirror in which the individual recognises him/herself; it says 'this is you, this what you think, what you believe and how you act'. But of course the image in the mirror is socially constructed, it reflects an identity which ultimately serves ruling class interests. Althusser's second metaphor is about hailing someone in the street. If someone calls out to us and we acknowledge them, then we accept the identity by which they hail us:

> *... ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects amongst the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by the very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'* (Althusser, 1969a, pp. 162-3)

Althusser goes on to point out the limitations of the hailing metaphor - whereas it implies a temporal process, with a before and after, in the case of ideology there can be no before and after; the interpellation process is continual, and we are always 'in' ideology. As we shall see, the generalisation that we are always 'in' ideology, though formally correct, is misleading, and serves to mystify the potential for critical consciousness and emancipatory activity. This problem is addressed below, but first it is important to go beyond the metaphor and examine the concrete ways in which welfarist frames of reference interpellate the professional subject.

Rather than actually calling out to the professional, welfarist frames of reference interpellate the individual by shaping his/her options for practical activity. Thus, to become a professional is to position oneself in a specific relationship to one's 'clients' and to the resources of the state. It is to say, for example: 'I am someone who is responsible for dealing with the psychotic episodes of the mentally ill'. Not only that, but also to accept the prescribed options for action, for example, the administration of counselling, psychotropic drugs, or ultimately coercive restraint. To accept the identity of welfare professional is to legitimate the validity of welfarist frames of reference; indeed it entails actively internalising and becoming a part of those frames of reference.

The process by which welfarist frames of reference interpellate the professional subject is so binding that one need not formally be a paid employee of the state in order to be interpellated. Amongst the WHAP 'professionals' were individuals who were not formally paid employees of the state, one was retired, one was a priest, others were employed by voluntary agencies. But despite their formal autonomy, they still placed themselves in the same relationship to 'clients' and the state, they still accessed welfarist frames of reference, and in so doing were interpellated as welfare

professionals. We shall see in the next chapter that the same process began to happen with some of the 'volunteers'. This is what was meant when in the first half of this chapter we claimed that one need not be a professional to exercise professional power.

So welfarist frames of reference are not simply a set of ideas, they are also a set of material institutions, procedures, skills and resources. By entering a relationship between the state and 'clients' which entails utilisation of those frames of reference the professional is obliged to internalise them, that is to use them as a means of constituting his/her subjective identity. This has consequences for emancipatory practice, because to radically depart from one's prescribed professional role, is not only to provoke the managerial structure of control, but also to do violence to one's subjective identity. This is clearly observable in WHAP. The 'sectioning' of Denise is the most extreme example of the extent to which an alternative course of action would not only have left the professionals concerned open to criticism/disciplining by their employers, but would also have damaged their subjective identity as a caring and responsible professional.

The other examples, where the WHAP professionals resorted to welfarist frames of reference to solve the problems of: organisational structure, smoking at the drop-in, and racism, may be less extreme, but they are even more a product of interpellation. The social space in which these issues were addressed was largely beyond the reach of managerial structures of control, but the professionals still resorted to welfarist frames of reference, because not to do so would not only be to say 'social work is no good, or health promotion is no good', it would have meant saying: 'I am no good, my knowledge is worthless, my skills are irrelevant'. Although many of the professionals involved in WHAP were subjectively critical of the state-power manifest in welfarist frames of reference they were not able to convert this critique into concrete emancipatory activity because to do so would have done violence to their subjective identity - an identity which they had struggled to attain, and on which their status, prestige and livelihood depended.

Althusser's claim that we are always 'in' ideology, was noted above, and it leaves two questions unanswered: What are the origins of ideology (or welfarist frames of

reference)?, and, If we are always the bearers of ideology, how does one account for human agency?

Searching for the origins of ideology is a false pursuit. Ideology does not represent the results of a conspiracy in which members of the ruling class consciously 'author' an ideological theme that serves their interests, and then impose it on professionals and their clients. Rather, as Althusser notes, ideology is always already in existence, we are all born into ideology. However, the content of ideology is constantly changing, constantly being modified. Thus, specific ideological phenomena, for example welfarist frames of reference, have an observable history, even though no absolute point of origin can be identified.

What then, are the forces that drive ideological change? With welfarist frames of reference, we have seen that they ultimately serve the interests of the ruling class as a means of intellectual domination, and of regulating the behaviour of subordinate classes - for example by providing a means of managing social and economic problems within the capitalist mode of production. But the social and economic world is itself in a constant state of flux, constantly creating new problems to be managed - thus ideology must be constantly transformed, because the problems it addresses change over time.

The need to reproduce the economic dominance of the ruling class is a fundamental determinant of the changing composition of welfarist frames of reference, not least because it ultimately defines the resources available to the ideological apparatuses of the state. But again, in the concrete empirical world 'the economic' cannot be abstracted from the totality of social relations; it can never be differentiated as a discrete causal variable. Moreover, the domain of ideology comprises much more than the ruling class struggling to maintain economic domination, many other interests are pursued and contested in ideology.

Rather than being exclusively authored by the ruling class, welfarist frames of reference are also the product of other determinants, for example, Manning has attempted to provide an empirical description of the way in which 'social problems' are constructed:

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... the promotion of social conditions as social problems typically occurs
through perceived grievances being organised into claims which various
groups bring to the state. The legitimacy of these claims is heavily influenced
by mass media interpretations of public opinion, and the priorities and
interests of government departments in terms of existing policies, perceived
voter preferences, and major power blocks such as the Labour movement and
the business community. (Manning (ed.), 1985, p.22)

It is important to recognise that the apparent pluralism of this process, is only
superficial; social problems may be constructed by the interaction of a range of actors,
but they are shaped within the rigid parameters imposed by economic scarcity and the
weight of already existing ideological forms. The value of Manning's analysis is that
it points to the way in which welfare professionals and their clients can unwittingly
collude in their own ideological subordination. We noted above, that the WHAP
professionals resorted to welfarist frames of reference to address the problems faced
by the group, and that in so doing they became the bearers of state-power. But this is
by no means a one way process. WHAP's professionals may ultimately have 'played
by the rules', but many of the problems they confronted were novel, and required a
degree of innovation, or 'policy entrepreneurship'. Again this innovation took place
within fixed parameters, but it can still be concluded that whilst acting within the
rules, the WHAP professionals also began articulating new rules and new solutions.
This observation provides a crucial insight into the process by which welfarist frames
of reference are modified, particularly in the realm of community empowerment. The
'new methods' of counselling, stress management, social support, and community
organising, were not contrived by the ruling class as a means of extending their
ideological domination, they were developed by the community workers, health
promoters, and social workers, as they went about managing the problems that
confronted them, but because they developed within existing welfarist frames of
reference they were inevitably incorporated into the project of ideological domination
and the exercise of state-power.

At the level of theoretical abstraction it is possible to refer to ideology as a totality, as
a structured whole, with common themes, processes and outcomes. But in concrete

empirical terms there is never *an* ideology to be studied, only ideologies. The network of ideological structures, (which includes welfarist frames of reference), has a systematic character, determined by material constraints and the unequal distribution of power, but the constituent elements of this network are diverse and fragmentary; rather than the product of ruling class 'authorship' they are complex social constructions.

This leads us some way from Althusser's theory of ideology; rather than tightly sutured mechanisms of social reproduction, welfarist frames of reference represent a dis-jointed and opportunistic struggle to impose ideological closure on a continually changing world. Laclau and Mouffe refer to this struggle as hegemonic suturing:

> *Hegemonic practices are suturing in so far as their field of operation is determined by the openness of the social, by the ultimately unfixed character of every signifier. This original lack is precisely what the hegemonic practices try to fill in.* (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.88)

Whilst Laclau and Mouffe are correct in noting the struggle for ideological closure, they fail to recognise the dual nature of ideology as both ideational and material, for them ideology is simply about the struggle to impose a dominant interpretation of reality; what they fail to perceive is the extent to which ideology is embodied in institutions, apparatus, procedures et cetera, and the extent to which direct experience of this material embodiment of ideology necessarily brings about acceptance of its ideational content. Ideology can be characterised as a messy battleground in which competing interest groups struggle to impose their interpretation on reality. But this is an unfair contest, in which the material structures through which the individual encounters reality are the product of ruling class domination. These material structures cannot be accessed without activating their ideational content, and this serves to interpellate the individual as a subject, in two senses of the word, as a self-identity, and as a subordinate.

Where does this leave political will and human agency? So far we have argued that welfarist frames of reference have both an ideational and a material aspect, that accessing the material resources embodied in welfarist frames of reference necessarily

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entails activation of their ideational content, that this process interpellates the individual as a subject, and that overall, welfarist frames of reference serve the interests of the ruling class. However, we have also noted that although ideology exists as a theoretical totality with common determinants, themes, and outcomes, at the empirical level it is always fragmentary and constantly changing, that it is socially constructed rather than authored, and that those involved in welfarist frames of reference can contribute to their content, but that this contribution can only strengthen their ideological effectiveness.

Superficially it might appear that having made some concessions to those who stress the role played by human consciousness in the exercise of power, we have still come down firmly on the side of structural determinism. Whereas the London-Edinburgh Weekend Return Group claimed that it was possible to be 'in and against the state', to pursue an emancipatory agenda by transforming the institutions of the state from within, we have argued that such attempts are likely to fail, that despite the conscious desire to bring about progressive change, those efforts can only lead to the marginalisation or disciplining of the individual, or, to the extension of the state's ideological dominance. This argument that the consciousness of the subject tends to be subordinated to welfarist frames of reference would appear to put our analysis firmly in the Althusserian/structuralist camp, and make it vulnerable to the criticisms that have been made of that approach. For instance, we have already noted Connel's criticism that Althusser overlooks the role played by humans in consciously making their own history.

The implication is that Althusser saw the individual as a tableau raza that the ideological state apparatus's write upon. He describes the individual as the bearer (träger) of ideology, suggesting a passive acceptance of ideology, rather than an active process of assimilation, thus he describes ideologies as:

> ... *perceived-accepted-suffered cultural objects and they act functionally on men via a process that escapes them.* (Althusser, 1969b, p.233)

However, it is possible to subscribe to the belief that welfarist frames of reference interpellate the individual as a subject, and that this process cannot be effectively

opposed from within those welfarist frames of reference, without accepting Althusser's pessimistic theory of the subject and human agency. First, as Barrett (1991), amongst others, has noted, Althusser is virulently anti-essentialist. This hostility towards the notion of essential human attributes stems from the concern to refute the claims of bourgeois humanism with its tendency to assume that socially constructed and historically specific aspects of the self were in fact universal and innate characteristics. In place of the universal humanist subject, Althusser argues for the socially constructed subject. But this leads to a theoretical cul-de-sac; if subjectivity is simply 'written' onto the individual by society, then where does the political will to transform society come from? The problem of human agency is not unique to Althusser, as Giddens points out, Foucault's anti-essentialism leads him to a similarly pessimistic conclusion:

Foucault's history tends to have no active subjects at all. It is history with the agency removed. The individuals who appear in Foucault's analyses seem impotent to determine their own destinies. Moreover, that reflexive appropriation of history basic to history in modern culture does not appear at the level of the agents themselves. The historian is a reflective being, aware of the influence of the writing of history upon the determination of the present. But this quality of self-understanding is seemingly not extended to historical agents themselves. (Giddens, 1987, p.98)

Much of the debate on human agency oscillates between essentialist notions of a pre-social self and the apparently agency robbing notions expounded by Althusser or Foucault which view consciousness as exclusively the product of socially constructed discourse or ideology. Neither approach is satisfactory, but as Michèle Barrett has noted, we are not obliged to accept either:

One does not need, having seen the errors of an overly universalistic and essentialist view of human nature, to say that there is 'thus' nothing recognisable or distinct about humans - this should be a matter for further investigation. (Barrett, 1991, p.89)

One route out of the impasse is to define what is distinct about humans not in terms of pre-social attributes, but as the necessity of creating meaning in order to act in the world. From this perspective there is no pre-social self, indeed consciousness results from the dialectical interplay of the individual and the objective world; consciousness is always consciousness of something, and that something is the objective world.

Sartre (1943) explains this process by reference to two aspects of being - the *en-soi* and the *pour soi*. The *en-soi* is the raw material of consciousness; the *pour-soi* is active reflection upon it. It is important to note that these two categories are inseparable aspects of being; there is no pre-social *pour-soi* waiting to appropriate the world, and the concrete world only exists as a set of meanings to the extent that it is the object of conscious reflection.

Moreover, human consciousness is itself simultaneously being in itself (*l'etre en soi*) and being for itself (*l'etre pour soi*); my self-identity, i.e. who I am, what I believe, is contained in the *en-soi*, but I also reflect on my self-identity, and this process of reflection comprises the *pour soi*. Crucially the *pour-soi* can never be an object of reflection in itself, it is always experienced as 'nothingness', as an awareness that has no ideational content, our consciousness of it is always as a negation of the *en-soi*, i.e. as 'I am not that'. The unbridgeable duality of consciousness, the fact that it is simultaneously *en-soi* and *pour-soi*, creates a tension, I am aware of myself as an *en-soi*, i.e. as the sum of my experiences, knowledge and biographical data, but this very act of reflection suggests to me that I am something more than my self-identity. Thus, we experience our self-identity as something incomplete, as a project to be worked on.

In attempting to achieve that sense of completeness, that unattainable unity between *en soi* and *pour soi*, we are driven to act in the world, to experience it, produce knowledge of it, and bring it under our control. Thus without resorting to essentialist theories of a pre-social self it is possible to deduce a distinctly human mode of being, which disposes us to act in and on the world; this mode of being is not characterised by a set of pre-social attributes, but by 'nothingness'.

This conception of the nature of human consciousness can not only be distinguished from the essentialist and ahistorical Cartesian subject of bourgeois humanism, but also

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from Althusser's conception of the ideologically constituted or interpellated subject. Whilst there is no pre-social self, neither is it the case that the individual is simply a blank page on which subjectivity is written by society. According to Sartrean existentialism the self continuously reconstitutes itself, but it does so by incorporating experiences from the objective world. However, we know from Althusser's account of ideology, that the objective world can be structured to present itself to experience in a way that gives rise to particular forms of consciousness. To paraphrase Marx, we constitute our own self identity, but not under conditions of our own choosing.

So where does this leave us in terms of the human agency versus structural determinism debate? Is the subject interpellated by ideology negated by the *pour soi*? And if so, then what is the material from which a revised *en-soi* is formulated? First, it is important to note that whatever the influence of ideology on the *en-soi* it is always historically specific, and vulnerable to negation. Ideology cannot interpellate the subject in a fixed or absolute form, not only because the world it refers to is constantly changing, but also because its domain is the *en-soi* the self-identity it gives rise to must always be perceived as incomplete, for example, the adoption of a professional role may play a significant part in the formation of self-identity, but because that identity must also be an object of reflection, it is always open to negation - the process of reflection (the *pour-soi*) always gives the awareness that 'that object is not me'.

Superficially then, it might be concluded that the best efforts of the ideological apparatuses to interpellate the individual as a subject must inevitably end in failure. But the process is not that simple, because although the *pour-soi* continuously negates self-identity, the means by which a revised self-identity is forged, what Foucault (1988) refers to as *'technologies of the self'*, reside in ideology, rather than in the *pour-soi* which we have already observed can have no content. Thus we might reject a professional identity, because we experience it as inauthentic, but then seek to revise our self-identity by utilisation of technologies of the self which are themselves ideological, for example, welfarist frames of reference. It is possible to envisage a circular Promethean nightmare in which an ideologically interpellated subjectivity is negated only to be replaced by an equally subordinate subjectivity produced by ideological technologies of the self.

Recognition that the technologies of the self are themselves ideological appears to imply that despite the continual negation of the *en-soi* the structure must always strike back as the ultimate determinant of self-identity. Certainly this seems to have been the case in WHAP, where the professionals actively struggled to overcome the alienation inherent in their self identity, only to create an equally oppressive identity through their reference to welfarist frames of reference. But is this process inevitable, or, is it a product of the structural and historical location that the WHAP professionals occupied?

We noted above that the ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) were never able to achieve total closure, because of the continual changes occurring in the social formation. As well as struggling to keep up with a changing world, the ISAs also have a contradictory nature and a limited range. They are contradictory because the reproduction of labour power entails the development of intellectual skills in the worker, as well as subordination to the process of accumulation. These intellectual skills include the capacity to create new meanings from our experiences by a process of assimilation and synthesis; a capacity that can be turned towards a critical appraisal of prevailing social relations, as well as being an essential requirement of modern production.

The limited range of the ISAs refers to their inability to eradicate alternative ideologies, for example, communism, or, religious fundamentalism. Clearly the threat that such alternative ideologies pose is historically specific, depending upon their perceived adequacy, and the extent to which they are supported by effective political organisation. For example, the ideological threat posed by revolutionary communism is now virtually extinct, because of the degeneration and collapse of the Soviet Union and the co-option or marginalisation of working class political institutions. Even so, because of their contradictory nature, limited range, and the constantly changing social formation, the ISAs are not able to *totally* determine consciousness and self-identity. Despite the extent to which the ISAs (including welfarist frames of reference) are able to structure the experiences of those who encounter them, and in so doing force the acceptance of their ideational content, the possibility remains for the adoption of an alternative and oppositional self-identity.

But what are the conditions under which an oppositional self-identity can be adopted? The analysis of WHAP reveals that dissatisfaction with an existing role is unlikely to be sufficient to guarantee the adoption of a genuinely oppositional self-identity. Even though the WHAP professionals were subjectively committed to an emancipatory agenda their embroilment in welfarist frames of reference constantly interpellated them as welfare professionals, and they were consequently unable to shake off their role as the bearers of state-power. Thus, the adoption of a genuinely oppositional self-identity appears to depend upon the individual rejecting, or 'stepping outside of', the ideological state apparatuses. This 'stepping outside' refers to something other than formal employment; we noted in WHAP that many of the 'professionals' were not formally employed by the state, but were still interpellated as welfare professionals by their referral to welfarist frames of reference. The adoption of an oppositional self-identity entails recognising that welfarist frames of reference are a mechanism for the exercise of state-power, and defining one's emancipatory activity in opposition to, *and outside the range of,* these and other ideological state apparatuses - it means relinquishing the myth that one can pursue an emancipatory agenda from *within* a professional identity.

Just as one need not be formally employed by the state in order to be interpellated by welfarist frames of reference, the welfare professional need not resign his/her position in order to adopt an oppositional self-identity. It is not formal employment as a professional that must be rejected, but the definition of one's emancipatory practice in terms of the professional role - this means recognising that one's professional role is always likely to be oppressive, that it cannot be significantly reformed from within. Of course this is a contradictory position for someone pursuing an emancipatory agenda, because it means acting as an agent of social control during 'office hours' whilst struggling to negate that role through autonomous emancipatory activity. This is an uncomfortable contradiction to maintain for any length of time and is likely to be resolved either by resignation of the professional post, abandonment of the emancipatory agenda, or as the following quotation from the London-Edinburgh Weekend Return Group (LEWRG) indicates, adoption of the ideological belief that one can pursue an emancipatory agenda from within a professional role:

We spend our evenings and weekends struggling against capitalism, and our days working diligently as agents of the capitalist state to reproduce the capitalist system. Like Penelope, in the Greek myth, we stitch the tapestry of bourgeois society every day and attempt each night to unravel it before dawn. Is there any way out of this hopeless dilemma? Can we shape our daily activity in such a way as to avoid stitching capital's tapestry, can we hinder rather than promote the reproduction of capitalist social relations? Does the fact that our work is situated in the state give us special opportunities in this respect, or is that merely a reformist illusion? (London-Edinburgh Weekend Return Group, 1980, p.5)

LEWRG hope that they will be able to find a way of pursuing an emancipatory agenda from within the professional role, but our analysis suggests that they are mistaken - that their belief in the emancipatory potential of the professional role *really is* a 'reformist illusion'. But recognition of this does not mean that the welfare professional must resign his/her post in order to pursue an emancipatory agenda, in fact their position is no more contradictory than any other worker who chooses to challenge oppression whilst occupying a post that contributes to its reproduction. For example, employment in a munitions factory does not debar the worker from struggling for peace, but one cannot struggle for peace in one's capacity as a munitions worker.

If the adoption of an oppositional self-identity depends upon stepping outside of welfarist frames of reference, then what does an emancipatory agenda entail? Put another way, if the oppressive nature of the state cannot be significantly reformed from within by attempting to modify welfarist frames of reference, then how can it be opposed? The answer lies in the dual nature of the state, as both state-form and state apparatus. We noted above that the state exists as a set of social relations, most notably the relation between capital and labour, as well as a set of institutions. Our analysis suggests that attempting to challenge the oppressive character of the state apparatus whilst leaving the state-form intact is unlikely to be successful. While the state-apparatus continues to be the executive arm of capitalism any attempt to make it less oppressive is likely to be constrained. For this reason an authentically

emancipatory agenda must also entail an assault on the state-form as a necessary precursor to transforming the state-apparatus.

To express this metaphorically, the state apparatus can be conceptualised as a machine that shapes the subjectivity of anyone who comes near it. Any attempt to dismantle the machine from within is obviously bound to fail, because to draw near it is to have one's subjectivity shaped by it. Rather than approaching the machine directly, a more effective strategy is to first disconnect it from it's power supply, thereby rendering it inoperative as a means of interpellation, and therefore vulnerable to change. The 'power supply' of the state apparatus is its relation to capital, and it is this relationship that must be broken before it can be transformed.

In the first half of this chapter empirical evidence was presented of the ways in which members of the Waterfront Health Action Project attempted to challenge the operation of professional power. The impetus for this challenge came from the contradictory nature of professional involvement in the project. On one hand the professionals brought expertise and access to resources, but on the other hand the traditional professional role was associated with paternalism and the exercise of social control. In order to overcome this contradiction WHAP set about changing the professional role, by providing informal access to professional skills, and by reducing cultural dissonance and building trust between the professionals and the volunteers.

Although these efforts were partly successful, professional power re-emerged when the professionals attempted to use their expertise to resolve problems facing the group, such as: organisation, smoking at the Drop-in, racism, and discipline. It was provisionally concluded that professional power re-emerged in spite of the professionals subjective commitment to an emancipatory agenda, because their formal location within the state and their subscription to a professionalised self-identity obliged them to access welfarist frames of reference as a means of resolving the problems faced by the project; these welfarist frames of reference were dependent upon and constitutive of professional power.

In the second half of the chapter we attempted to deepen the analysis by examining sociological approaches to understanding the categories of 'professional', 'power', and

'welfarist frames of reference'. The key characteristic of professionals (and welfare professionals in particular) was found to be their relationship to the state. It was suggested that the state could best be understood as an instrument of class domination. Professionals were implicated in the process of domination, not because they were members of the ruling class, but because of their subordination to a managerial structure of control, and more importantly because of their interpellation into a professional self-identity. From this perspective, professional power could be recognised as a manifestation of state-power. By defining social problems in terms of the need for services offered by the welfare state, professionals facilitated the social reproduction of labour power, and posited the individual in a dependent and subordinate relationship to the state.

Welfarist frames of reference were described in terms of their ideational and material nature. The professional's reliance on welfarist frames of reference led to his/her interpellation as a subject, that is, as someone with a professionalised self-identity. The process of interpellation accounts for the professionals' participation in the exercise of state-power, even when they are subjectively committed to an emancipatory agenda. But the tendency for human consciousness to continually negate a 'fixed' self-identity, coupled with the contradictory and incomplete nature of ideological structures, means that the interpellation process can never be absolute. The possibility of adopting an alternative, or even oppositional, identity always remains, but it seems unlikely that this can be achieved within a professional role. Effective emancipatory practice appears to depend upon the individual standing outside of welfarist frames of reference.

WHAP's attempt to produce emancipatory knowledge and to overcome the exercise of professional power was embarked upon as a means of empowering members of the local population. In this and the previous chapter we have identified and analysed the failure to achieve either objective. The final chapter examines the effects that this failed attempt had on the consciousness of WHAP's lay participants, before drawing general conclusions about the viability of 'community empowerment' as an effective emancipatory strategy.

5. The Myth of Community Empowerment

The Waterfront Health Action Project took as its point of departure the belief that health and welfare professionals could form a partnership with local people that would enable them to exercise greater control over the social, economic and environmental influences on health. Achievement of this aim was felt to rest upon the production of emancipatory knowledge and on dismantling the exercise of professional power, both of which are examined above. However, the fundamental strand of WHAP's strategy remains to be considered, namely, whether WHAP enabled its lay participants and members of the wider community to become more competent social actors and more effective agents of change, or, more concisely, whether it 'empowered' them. So central was this objective to WHAP's overall goal that the extent to which it was achieved can be taken as a proxy indicator of the success of the project as a whole, making it an appropriate topic for this the concluding chapter.

In the previous chapter it was noted that the category of 'professional' could be found amongst the interview transcripts and within sociological discourse, and that this coincidence was a mixed blessing. 'Empowerment' also has both a lay and an academic usage, which also cannot be assumed to be consistent with each other. As before this difficulty will be addressed first by presenting the category as it emerged from the empirical data, and then examining the extent to which academic accounts of empowerment are pertinent to the analysis. Three closely intertwined strands of empowerment can be derived from the accounts given in the interviews with WHAP members: 'empowerment of the WHAP volunteers', 'empowerment of the Drop-in users', and 'community empowerment'.

Empowering the Volunteers

WHAP's volunteers received a greater input of professional time and financial resources than the Drop-in users or the broader population, and it might be anticipated that they would, therefore, exhibit a greater degree of empowerment. We begin the analysis by looking at why the volunteers became involved in WHAP.

■ The Voluntarist Impulse

One reason for becoming a WHAP volunteer was the desire to help others, particularly *'people less fortunate than myself'*; a group which was felt to comprise the elderly, the house-bound, handicapped people, or more generally, the under-dog. Thus, participation as a WHAP volunteer was viewed by some as a charitable or altruistic act, akin to giving money to a beggar:

> *I don't think that I'm going to be able to do enough in my life time to change things, that much, do you know what I mean? There's too much going on in this world that's too wrong, that whatever little bit we can do.. It's like when you go out... erm, I've been to London, been through the railways, underground or whatever, [...] I saw a boy down there with his dog, only a young fellow, [...] I gave him what change I had, which was sixty pence [...] But I felt good, because I was giving him.. and as I say, maybe he's making a lot of money, but maybe he's not, maybe he really is homeless, [...] So even if I only help one person. Like I felt good this morning, with that old man, that's made me feel good.*
>
> (Volunteer, December 1993)

As the above quotation implies, the charitable impulse can reflect both scepticism about the viability of more ambitious methods of achieving change, and the satisfaction obtained from small acts of kindness. The Drop-in centre provided access to some of the more needy people in the Thamesmead area, and the provision of social support and welfare information was seen as a tangible and achievable way of helping them.

■ A Route into Paid Employment

A second motive was the hope that voluntary participation might eventually lead to. paid employment. The significance of this aspiration only becomes intelligible when the class location of the volunteers is considered. These were not members of the affluent middle-classes seeking self-aggrandisement through charity work, but were

for the most part extremely deprived people, marginalised from full employment and dependent on welfare benefits. The possibility of finding a route into paid employment, no matter how tenuous, was therefore an important consideration for many of the volunteers:

> *There's quite a few volunteer places that they don't get paid, you know they are volunteers, and we've been involved this far, we stayed involved, to be honest, because there was promises or half promises of work, of proper jobs, because at first I thought yeah, both my kids are at school I want to actually go out and earn some money.* Elaine [one of the professionals] *was saying, 'If you hang on you could get a good job out of this,' this is what she was saying. I think this is what made us stay on, but like Angela she's left, because she felt like that just wasn't happening, and she was getting very frustrated with it, and then she got on her social work course.*
> (Volunteer, November 1993)

That WHAP could be viewed as a potential route into paid employment may appear overly optimistic given the limited financial resources available to the project, but the possibility of obtaining further funding remained, and it is not unheard of for community development projects to recruit paid workers from amongst their voluntary participants. Moreover, WHAP was seen as a means of acquiring work experience, skills and personal qualities that might be of value in seeking employment elsewhere. Before examining the skills and competencies obtained by the volunteers, it is important to note the significance of the voluntarist impulse and the pursuit of paid employment as motives for their involvement.

In previous chapters we examined the reasons that the professionals gave for their involvement in WHAP; many were frustrated with the constraints of their professional role, particularly that they were only able to support individual clients rather than addressing the social, economic and environmental influences on health and well-being. There is a clear paradox here; whereas the volunteers saw WHAP as a means. of helping needy individuals and possibly entering paid employment, the professionals initially saw it as a means of transcending the constraints of such a role. For the volunteers empowerment meant taking on precisely the role that the professionals

were so eager to transcend. Our purpose here is not to condemn either party for their different aspirations, but simply to note the extent to which different social and economic positions give rise to different forms of consciousness.

Given the professionals' dominant position in WHAP it might be assumed that their emancipatory agenda would take precedence over the aspirations of the volunteers, but this was not the case. There are at least three reasons for this. First, the professionals were genuinely committed to listening to the views of the volunteers and following their wishes, so long as this did not contradict their professional values and responsibilities. Secondly, we saw in chapter three that WHAP failed to produce emancipatory knowledge capable of either influencing the statutory agencies or developing critical consciousness amongst the local population, thus despite the professionals' subjective commitment to a broader emancipatory agenda, the means of operationalising such aspirations were not forthcoming. And thirdly, in the absence of critical consciousness WHAP was unable to transcend traditional professional roles and welfarist frames of reference, (see chapter four), which in practice meant a reversion to 'case-work' with individual 'clients'. Thus, when the volunteers proposed the establishment of a Drop-in centre where they could provide 'services' to individual 'clients' and develop skills and opportunities for themselves, the professionals were unable to offer a more emancipatory alternative. For these reasons the 'empowerment' of the WHAP volunteers took the form of equipping them with the quasi-professional skills and competencies that would enable them to address the needs of Drop-in users, and possibly find a route into paid employment.

■ Developing self-esteem & confidence

The professionalisation of the WHAP volunteers did not simply entail the acquisition of knowledge and techniques. We noted above that many of the volunteers were economically marginalised, to this we might add that many had also encountered adverse social circumstances, the combined result of which was perceived to be low self-esteem. So a fundamental part of the empowerment process was raising the self-. confidence of the volunteers. Simply participating in WHAP was felt to counter the effects of loneliness and isolation, not only because it brought contact with others, but

also, as the following quotations suggest, because it provided a project - quite literally a reason to get out of bed:

> *I belong .. do you know what I mean? It's a really strange feeling, it's like people believe [...] that you actually exist. When you're in a house on your own you're a non-existent. [...] You give people a goal, something to do, you know apart from I think unemployment as well, but you're employed if you're doing community work. You've got something to do even if it's not cash, it's something to do, and I think that's important.*
> (Volunteer, November 1993)

And again from the same volunteer:

> *... you have to get up and get dressed, and look presentable. And I know that sounds strange, but when all you've got is to sit in bed and do nothing, then you think to yourself well where's the point getting dressed. At first it became, oh do I have to, but now it's like you can't wait to go.*
> (Volunteer, November 1993)

Merely being involved in WHAP conferred feelings of self-worth, and led to the acquisition of personal skills that others might take for granted, for instance, getting out of bed in order to attend, and wearing appropriate dress. As well as these informal gains WHAP also offered the volunteers formal tuition in personal skills and self-management:

> *... when I first came here I was depressed, suffering from panic attacks. My panic attacks are virtually gone now. Having a self-assertion and the stress management thing, like little courses, helps me to be aware of how I'm feeling, how other people are, how to conduct myself in a more positive way. [...] with the little sessions that we've had, self-assertion and that, it makes you identify the things, how to control what you're trying to put across, without getting. aggressive. I think it's very good, it's helped me a lot.*
> (Volunteer, June 1994)

As well as stress management and assertiveness training, the volunteers also gained experience of public speaking, participating in meetings, and interacting with welfare professionals as fellow providers, rather than merely being the recipients of services. There is little doubt that these experiences improved the self-esteem and inter-personal competence of many of the volunteers, at least for the duration of their involvement in the project. Nor would I wish to denigrate the value of such skills. But the point is that although the acquisition of such skills maybe worthwhile, in the absence of critical consciousness and an agenda for structural change, they cannot be considered emancipatory. The reason for this being that alienation and oppression do not reside in the consciousness of the individual, but in social and economic relationships.

As we shall see, the most that WHAP could offer its newly 'empowered' volunteers was a marginally improved chance of finding paid employment, and failing that, the opportunity to live out the fantasy of empowerment by playing at being a professional. And it is here that the main emphasis of WHAP's attempt to empower the volunteers lies; although the pursuit of paid employment was acknowledged, the primary concern was to enable them to become quasi-professionals, offering a range of 'services' to other local people.

■ **Overcoming deference to professionals and 'de-bunking' bio-medicine**

The acquisition of a quasi-professional identity by the volunteers was accompanied by, or perhaps even dependent upon, reduced deference to professionals. In some respects this was a progressive development, for example, the volunteer quoted below felt more able to question those in authority:

> [...] *I've always looked on Authorities like they're the ones in control - I have no power. But then being in WHAP makes me feel that, or tells me that, I have got power. They're just another person, alright they're a doctor or whatever, above me, I haven't got that knowledge, but I have got a right to stand up and say well I don't agree with that. Before I used to think that I wasn't allowed to..*
> (Volunteer, June 1994)

Similarly, another volunteer felt more able to fend off an overly intrusive doctor:

[...] it's made me much more confident. I went in to see a doctor, because I wanted something, and it's like she was trying to tell me something completely different. Again, the doctor is getting like the social services. I mean I'll tell you the truth, I went in for the morning after pill, right. I've never had it before, and she's talking about which relationship, and this relationship, and its none of her fuckin' business, right? And I'm trying to cover up and say 'well its the children's father' or something like that - 'you're not supposed to be with the children's father', and so and so. So I said to her, 'I did not come in here to discuss family planning and what family I intend to have, I came in here to get this tablet, that is all I want, right'. And she gave it to me, [...] I don't know whether I would have done that before. I don't think I would have done, I wouldn't have had that sort of confidence [...]

(Volunteer, June 1994)

Telling nosy General Practitioners to mind their own business is an action that can only be applauded. However, it is important to examine the basis of this newly found confidence. Rather than stemming from a conscious critique of the professional's location in the state, as an agent of social control, (as we identified in the previous chapter), the criticism was based largely on dissatisfaction with the personal attributes of the practitioner, or the therapeutic encounter. Thus, doctors were criticised for being aloof, or for not giving sufficient time to their patients. More importantly, this dissatisfaction was often linked to a belief that bio-medicine only offers a partial solution to health problems, as the following quotation indicates:

[...] a doctor will just give you a tablet. A tablet, alright it might relieve the pain, but the pain will still come back. You have to look inside yourself, to deal with [it] instead of keep taking these tablets. So it depends on how you put yourself across, you might be curing that person, but it might be a longer term, do you know what I mean? For them to actually look at their selves.

(Volunteer, November 1993)

This belief, that bio-medicine tends to treat symptoms rather than addressing the underlying causes of ill health, has a radical ring to it. Indeed, many on the left have

argued for 'social medicine' that would address economic and social influences on health as well as curing sick individuals. However, in this instance the de-bunking of bio-medicine did not engender a commitment to challenge the structural influences on health, but rather the need for WHAP to complement existing health services by providing various forms of psychological and social support, as the following quotation indicates:

> [...] *when you go to see a doctor you feel intimidated a little bit anyway, and you don't always feel as though you can talk to a doctor, really pour your heart out. But when you come in here, and you get to know people, some people will start to talk, just in an ordinary conversation. It's like the girls are all sitting around the table nattering now, they're doing this little patch-work, but as they're getting relaxed, they're starting to talk, so that's going to get them, that's going to get it off their chests.*
>
> (Volunteer, December 1993)

It is important to note the consequences that this critique had for the consciousness of the WHAP volunteers. First, it led the volunteers to question their deference to the medical profession, which may be no bad thing. But more importantly, the perception that general practitioners are incapable of fully meeting their patients needs for psychological and social support, opened up a route for the professionalisation of the volunteers, by creating an unmet need that they as quasi-professionals could address. Rather than being the passive objects of professional intervention the volunteers could become 'fellow professionals' helping to address the health needs of the local population.

■ **Professionalisation of the volunteers**

Despite their increasingly critical stance towards the merits of bio-medicine the volunteers did not think of themselves as a replacement for the medical profession or the professions allied to medicine, although they did feel that they had a role to play: .

> ... *what can one person do, [...] especially people like* [us] *we're not trained in health, we're not Health Visitors, we're not doctors, we're not midwives, not*

nothing like that. [...] but there is a thing called stress, and anxiety and boredom, upset and all that sort of thing. So I think we can do something about that. I feel that I can do something about that.

(Volunteer, November 1993)

Moreover, this role was conceived of in quasi-professional terms:

... they've actually said quite overtly, 'the difference between us and you is that you get paid and we don't.' You know, and they realise that they're trying to do something very similar in a caring sort of one to one way. They're not being paid, but they're playing a role that isn't that dissimilar to a professional role and I think they realise that.

(Professional, November 1993)

In fact the professional role model for the volunteers was closer to social work, community development and health promotion, than it was to the medical profession. This was reflected in the kind of 'work experience' and 'professional training' that WHAP offered its would be professionals:

... one volunteer is now involved with the Family Services Unit in supporting one of their clients, and I hope that that sort of interface between other services and WHAP might continue. WHAP at the moment is beginning to offer the volunteers structured training in health issues of their choice. So three people have just been on a child accident day, and we've got a couple of days coming up on stress management, and we're going to look at a selection of health education videos. So we're beginning the long process of being able to offer something in terms of training, and of course Elaine is continuing her training on committee processes, counselling, budgeting and basic administrative skills ...

(Professional, November 1993)

To summarise the argument so far, volunteer involvement in WHAP was at least partially motivated by the charitable desire to help others and the hope of finding a route into paid employment. The project's failure to create critical consciousness

through the production of emancipatory knowledge, coupled with the resilience of professional values and welfarist frames of reference meant that no alternative could be offered to the volunteers desire to become quasi-professional welfare workers. Before the quasi-professional identity could be adopted the volunteers needed to be 'empowered' in a number of ways. First their self-esteem and inter-personal skills were raised, this was largely a by product of their participation in a collective project, although more formal training in assertiveness and stress management were also provided. Secondly, the volunteers came to adopt an increasingly critical stance towards bio-medicine, this had the effect of reducing their deference to doctors and other professionals, and also implied an unmet need for social and psychological support amongst the local population, that they could address as quasi-professionals. Thirdly, the volunteers were given work experience and training in professional skills that would supposedly make them into competent quasi-professionals.

We have already noted that this form of 'empowerment' has very little emancipatory potential because it fails to address the structural basis of oppression and alienation. However, even if we evaluate it on its own terms, as a means of improving the self-esteem and competence of the volunteers, its efficacy is still questionable. First, the so called training in professional skills amounted to little more than exposure to occasional health promotion workshops and videos, which could hardly be considered the equivalent of professional qualifications, thus one of the professionals remarked:

[...] *the down side is that it might raise unrealistic expectations on their part; they're not particularly well educated, they are not used to formal, educated ways of thinking, and I think that if they think that they can achieve great things, they're going to come.. I'm not saying that they can't, but they've got to realise how difficult that's going to be for them. On the other hand, there are lots and lots of courses, return to learning, Open University, community education courses, NVQs, that they can build up over years, that actually would enable them to achieve, and maybe to acquire some skills, some vocational qualifications, so it is realistic for them, but at the moment it's not being provided. And when it is provided it will have to be made clear what the*

requirements are, what the implications are, what they might be getting out of it.

(Professional, October 1994)

I would not wish to diminish the academic potential of the volunteers; with the right opportunities and lots of hard work they might well have been able to achieve professional qualifications; indeed one of the volunteers left the project to train as a social worker. But the point is that even social work qualifications are hard won, and to suggest that a handful of 'training days' are their equivalent is a fantasy. And yet this fantasy, that the volunteers had somehow qualified as quasi-professionals, was essential to the project's claims to empowerment, because the volunteers' newly acquired self-esteem depended largely upon their status as quasi-professionals, and the belief that they were providing a vital service to needy people. If their quasi-professional status was merely a pretence, and the WHAP volunteers were really no more competent than their 'clients', then the fragile basis of their self-esteem is undermined.

Yet despite the absence of any genuine basis for their quasi-professional status, the myth that the volunteers were providing a viable alternative to statutory services was deeply ingrained, as the following quotation suggests:

> *... the Drop-in can provide people with very high degrees of need with something very important and very crucial in their lives, and I think you need to evaluate it in line with other experiences of services that are provided professionally. [...] You could say it's on the cheap, but I think what we ought to know is that the old methods of social care are financially not going to be able to be afforded. And so in fact what WHAP is partly doing is trying to experiment in other forms and other methods of care. What we therefore don't want to do is to undermine social work as a profession, or other people, or develop work with volunteers that uses them on the cheap as another kind of form of cheap labour. And you could argue very much that that is exactly what it is doing...*

(Professional, October 1994)

It is easy to dismiss the claim made in the above quotation that WHAP's quasi-professionals might provide a cheap alternative to, or even undermine, the role of social workers, for instance, where were their statutory powers, either to coerce their 'clients', or to distribute benefits? Yet despite this, there is a glimmer of truth in the quotation, but it relates to the extent to which the volunteers served to append the services offered by the real professionals in WHAP, rather than their capacity to offer a viable alternative. Although the volunteers could never have replaced the welfare professionals, they did provide a means of extending the reach of professional power. This extension of professional power was possible because the volunteers became co-opted into, and therefore served to legitimatise, welfarist frames of reference and the traditional professional role, with two consequences. First, they provided an informal 'front-end' for professional services that was capable of drawing previously reticent members of the local community within the purview of professional power. Secondly, their adoption of a quasi-professional identity reinforced the volunteers' passivity by reducing their resistance to the exercise of professional power, a tendency noted by one of the professionals:

> *... the volunteers are becoming more professionalised, and therefore, I think we've already lost something in terms of the abrasive interface between the professionals and volunteers, because we're all becoming professionalised more, and therefore, are learning how to pose questions, and make challenges and everything else, and that's actually taking out the abrasiveness of the encounter. I think that's a loss as well as a gain.*
> (Professional, November 1993)

At first glance this may appear to contradict the evidence of reduced deference to professionals presented above. However, although there is evidence that some of the volunteers became increasingly critical of the traditional professional-client relationship, their belief that they had attained quasi-professional status led them to accept welfarist frames of reference, albeit in a revised form. Thus, although WHAP set out to empower the volunteers by encouraging them to adopt a quasi-professional identity, the claimed empowerment was for the most part a myth; rather than enabling the volunteers to exercise greater control over the social, economic and environmental

influences on their health, WHAP only succeeded in co-opting them more thoroughly into welfarist frames of reference.

Empowering the Drop-in users

As well as seeking to 'empower' the volunteers, WHAP also sought to address the health needs of the Drop-in users. We have already noted the way in which the de-bunking of bio-medicine contributed to the identification of an 'unmet' mental health need amongst the local population that WHAP could address. This perception was reinforced by the belief that the local population was particularly needy.

■ The damaged community

The mental health needs of local people were perceived to originate in a lack of social solidarity or community spirit. We noted in chapter one that loss of community is a common theme in other modes of empowerment. It has particular resonance in Thamesmead where as a 'New Town' the built environment and the composition of the population were the result of social planning rather than organic development. One of the volunteers noted that:

> *Thamesmead itself is a peculiar place, made up of all kinds of people. The concept of Thamesmead in the beginning was good. You know, like working people working together in a community, but this community wasn't a community. It still isn't a community, because you need all the people to get together. It's like I said to one of the Councillors the other day, it's like in war time, we had an object, to bring us all together, so we were part of a whole. Do you understand me. We don't have a project do we? So the community cannot get together as a whole can they?*
> (Volunteer, November 1993)

The lack of community spirit was felt to lead to isolation and behavioural irregularities:

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... some of their [Thamesmead residents] *behaviour is way out of kink, it's like they've been closed out of society, and so their little society is in the house, and that comes like on incest. There is a lot of that on Thamesmead, people don't really know about. I was surprised when I found out, I nearly fell through the floor. You know because community's enclose themselves in, and they don't get involved in the community, they become like a community inside their house.*

(Volunteer, November 1993)

In short, the local population was perceived to have special needs resulting from its atomised and fragmentary structure. We noted above that local health and welfare services were perceived to be unresponsive to these special needs. When the two themes are combined they provide a rationale for the Drop-in centre, as a means of re-integrating the community and addressing the psychological consequences of isolation.

■ The need for social support

The Drop-in responded to this perceived need by providing a venue for people to discuss their problems, mix with others with similar difficulties, and receive informal welfare advice, along with cups of coffee, massage, and facials. Again, we would not wish to contest the claim that lonely, isolated people might obtain some benefit from belonging to a group where they can socialise and quite literally have their troubles 'massaged'. However, what is noteworthy is the extent to which the provision of 'tea and sympathy' took on the appearance of a quasi-professional 'service', for instance one of the professionals commented that:

... the amount of mental stress and distress that came out [of the survey], *and the consequent behaviours of heavy drinking and all the rest of it, was the top of the list really, it was the main issue - which I thought was quite a significant . finding, and I think the Drop-in can be seen to have been WHAP's response to try and do something, you know to deal with* [it], *to offer a facility for people that were at their wits end.* [...] *I think the purpose is to provide that facility, a*

listening ear, a friendly ear, a cup of tea, a fag, you know a bit of pampering,
work on their self-esteem.

(Professional, October 1994)

Not only was the Drop-in centre seen as a form of service provision, it was also felt to offer a means of 'curing', or at least ameliorating, the health and welfare problems of local people. Thus, one of the volunteers suggested that:

These people [the Drop-in users] *are all people from different walks of life,*
and by just listening to them, and showing them some craft or whatever, doing
their nails to help them relax, you know, and things like that, you're actually
curing a lot of the problems that are on Thamesmead, like loneliness,
depression, isolation...

(Volunteer, September 1994)

As a means of resolving or 'curing' the health needs of local people the 'services' offered by the Drop-in were barely significant, they may have stimulated a temporary improvement in their clients' sense of well-being, but they were hardly likely to meet WHAP's original objective of enabling people to obtain greater control over the social, economic and environmental influences on health. Rather than enabling people to challenge the structural causes of their problems the Drop-in simply encouraged people to endure adverse social circumstances - to learn how to survive.

The real significance of the Drop-in is that it provided the final ingredient for the professionalisation of the WHAP volunteers, namely, a needy clientele for their quasi-professional 'expertise'. That this 'expertise' amounted to little more than the ability to engage in empathic chit-chat is less significant than the series of relationships it established between Drop-in user, quasi-professional, welfare professional, and the state.

We have already suggested that the Drop-in provided an informal 'front-end' for the welfare professionals, enabling them to exercise surveillance and regulation over sections of the population that might otherwise evade them. Although the Drop-in presented an informal voluntarist face to its users, the quasi-professional perspective

adopted by the volunteers (which included tacit acceptance of welfarist frames of reference), coupled with the continued presence of the real welfare professionals, meant that the Drop-in users were always likely to be 'referred' to one of the real professionals if the need arose. The 'informal' context of the Drop-in simply disguised the fact that such a referral had been made. Speaking from her own experiences, one of the volunteers identified the way in which the informality of the Drop-in had reduced her reluctance to seek professional advice:

... I've never been a doctor person, but I feel like with Kate [one of the professionals at the Drop-in], *I can come to her and talk to her about anything because she takes her time to explain everything to me. She gives me a one to one, so I feel comfortable in that, and I think that's what's needed. And like the Drop-in is a link with health, and the fact that a lot of people are stressed out, depressed, for all sorts of reasons, and here is a place that's giving a service that makes them feel special. Somebody's there to sit and listen to them if they want to talk. The massage is a relaxing aspect. So all of them things breaks down the stress a little bit, that'll probably bring them back on their feet. Cos stress is a main cause of depression that leads to other illness, I believe.*

(Volunteer, June 1994)

In effect the volunteers became a conduit through which marginalised (hard-to-reach) sections of the population could be brought within the purview of welfarist frames of reference and the direct exercise of professional power. Rather than a transformation of the relationship between the local population and the state, the Drop-in represented a re-assertion and reinforcement of the traditional relationship between welfare professional and client, albeit in a heavily disguised and superficially less threatening form. Rather than promoting the development of critical consciousness or emancipatory activity, adopting the identity of quasi-professional led the volunteers into even greater passivity and dependence on the real professionals. For example the following quotation from one of the volunteers reveals the extent to which her involvement in WHAP not only led her to reassess her own capacity to cope with stress independently of professional intervention, but also produced lowered expectations about the psychological resilience of others:

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... when we had that stress thing, that was brilliant, and hopefully we're going to go and do a few more on that. So that's helping me as well, cos don't forget, I'm your ordinary Joe Bloggs, I've got all the stress and problems, you know what I mean? I know that can't go away over night, but it's great to have done that, because for all the stress that I've had, I've never had the bottle to go and see my doctor and say I'm stressed out and I want some help. So I want to get all them things, and plus to help me understand things a little bit more and understand people a little bit more, cos I'm a very impatient person. [...] I haven't got a lot of time for what I would call a weak person. I may be wrong in labelling them weak. But when I see somebody who for instance, is continuously drinking, because I've lived amongst that, I know the problems of it, I've got no time for 'em. It may be wrong, but I think to myself 'no you don't need a drink', I don't think it solves the problem. So I'm a bit impatient. I look a bit hard in that way and I think I'm a buck yourself up.. you know, cos I think about what I've gone through and I've survived and I've not needed a Drop-in, do you know what I mean? We're not all the same, so I've got to learn to understand that, that we're all different, we've all got different personalities, breaking points.

(Volunteer, December 1993)

Superficially it might be concluded that recognition of her own psychological needs and the development of a more sympathetic approach to the needs of others, was a valuable lesson for the volunteer quoted above, perhaps even a form of empowerment. But, the opposite can also be argued. Rather than thinking of herself as an emotionally competent individual, capable of managing her own mental life in the face of adverse personal circumstances without resort to either medical or welfare professionals, the volunteer quoted above came to think of herself as a *victim* of stress who had been 'empowered' to seek professional help. Where she previously had high expectations of the behaviour and mental resilience of others, for example, dismissing drunkards as ' 'weak', she now 'understands' that such behaviour is only evidence of personality differences. The net result is a lowered expectation both of her own competence and the behaviour of others; drunkenness and the inability to cope are no longer viewed as

individual weakness, but are valorised as a normal response to hardship. Rather than congratulating herself on her earlier strength of character in coping with hardships that had led others to drink, she upbraids herself for her insensitivity and lack of understanding. This represents a bizarre reversal where independence and mental competence become symbols of weakness, and the inability to cope without professional care becomes an emblem of self-knowledge.

WHAP did little to empower the Drop-in users, beyond offering short-term relief from social isolation and depression. Rather than developing critical consciousness and the self-possession required for emancipatory activity, the Drop-in users were duped into entering a subordinate relationship to welfarist frames of reference and the exercise of professional power.

Community empowerment

When the survey had been completed and WHAP had presented the findings to various statutory agencies, the project increasingly focused on the development of the Drop-in centre and the professionalisation of the volunteers. However, several of the professionals felt that WHAP was failing to address the original agenda of enabling local people to have greater control over the social, economic and environmental influences on health. The following quotation reflects a widely held view:

> ... *the Drop-ins are a natural and obvious way for the women to develop WHAP, because they're working with people that they can talk to, that they know, [...] they can make them feel better, they can feel that they're being valuable on a day to day basis, they can feel that they're providing much needed social support, and it's not challenging for them to do that. It would be challenging for them to have to take on a big bureaucracy, but they've avoided that. I mean in a sense, self-help, I'm not saying its not necessary, because it is, as I said earlier on, but it's not sufficient in itself to get things changed and I think it's diverted them into something which they feel comfortable and easy*

with, and it's diverted them away from challenging an authority that they don't

understand, and have not really been empowered to understand ...

(Professional, November 1993)

The desire to go beyond the constraints of the self-help model may have been widely held, at least amongst the professionals, but there was little awareness of what an alternative strategy might entail. Again, this may have reflected the failure to produce an emancipatory body of knowledge, coupled with the fact that the professionals' relationship to the state ruled out the development of overtly political forms of organisation. In chapter four we noted that the professionals involved in WHAP failed to 'step outside' of welfarist frames of reference, or, relinquish their professional identity, and that, therefore, the problems facing WHAP tended to be articulated and addressed within the parameters of these ideological structures. Perhaps for these reasons the aspiration of empowering the community also tended to be articulated in a form that could be legitimately incorporated within a professional role. Two themes stand out: 'giving a voice to local people' and 'community participation in the decision-making process of local statutory agencies'.

■ Giving a voice to local people

In chapter three we examined the communicative model of knowledge and action that was felt to underpin WHAP's original agenda, particularly prior to and during the attitudes to health survey. The main assumption of the model was that statutory agencies were unresponsive to the needs of the local population, and that this problem could be resolved by enabling the community to identify and articulate its health needs. Giving local people a voice was, therefore, a key objective of the project from the beginning:

> *... we were going to find out what people were feeling within the community,*
> *and difficulties they were having related to their health, and the effects they*
> *had, and actually going ahead and doing.. giving them a voice. That's what*

WHAP to me was about - giving people the power... and doing something about .. what would they like to see, and making the link for them.

(Professional, January 1994)

Despite the pre-occupation with the Drop-in, the broader objective of giving people a voice was still subscribed to later in the project, as the following comment from one of the volunteers indicates:

Well at first I didn't really know what it was all about. I just knew it was a Drop-in. You could sit and talk, have a cup of tea, a massage and a facial. But sort of being there week after week, and helping out and coming to the meetings, I understand it's like voices, it's doing something for the community. And it gives people a chance to open their mouths, speak their mind, in public, with the higher people.

(Volunteer, November 1993)

As with the other aspects of empowerment, giving local people a voice was felt to depend upon equipping the volunteers with the type of skills that many of the professionals already had:

I would like through the infrastructure of the organisation various skills and resources being available to residents that can be used to lobby, for example, video making skills, public speaking skills, debating skills, publicity skills, media skills, that there could be again a repertoire of those resources that residents can call on when they wish to make some sort of lobbying debate or argument about a particular issue, and I think that that's got infinite potential.

(Professional, November 1993)

Equipping local people with better communication skills may be a desirable objective, but again it does not in itself constitute empowerment, because the ability to express one's needs does not confer the power to ensure that they are met. Nor did WHAP see the acquisition of such skills as the basis for organising the population into an effective force capable of taking such power - the aim was not to create competent activists, but more articulate supplicants to the statutory agencies. As the following

quotation suggests, as far as WHAP was concerned 'campaigning' was a synonym for influencing the local state:

> *... their main motive at the moment is to get more of those* [Drop-in] *centres dotted over the whole area, and I wouldn't disagree with that being necessary. But it is not sufficient to fulfil what I perceive to be the total aims of WHAP. Which is this business about lobbying and influencing the statutory agencies and campaigning, which is just a different way of influencing statutory agencies.*
>
> (Professional, November 1993)

Thus, although many of the WHAP professionals were dissatisfied with the individualistic, self-help orientation of the Drop-in, their preferred alternative entailed a more concerted attempt to lobby the statutory agencies, rather than the development of an autonomous emancipatory movement. To the extent that WHAP looked beyond the individualistic project of empowering the volunteers and Drop-in users, towards the broader goal of empowering the community, it concentrated almost exclusively on influencing the local state, particularly by seeking greater community participation in the decision making processes of statutory agencies.

■ **Community participation in statutory sector decision-making**

Although WHAP was committed to facilitating community participation in statutory sector decision making, many of its members were ambivalent about the process, and openly sceptical about what might be achieved. Partly this stemmed from recognition that no matter how effectively WHAP presented the 'voice of the community' the statutory agencies were by no means obliged to listen. The following quotation from one of the professionals expresses this point:

> *I would also like to see gradually more volunteers sitting effectively on decision making committees in the statutory agencies, but I think we are quite a long.. although we've done one or two examples of that, not through WHAP,*

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but through other means, they're not entirely successful and I think we're quite a long way [from] *where residents can actually make an effective contribution, and that's not because of the residents, I think it's because of the resistance from the statutory agencies. You know it's what you would call tokenism ...*

(Professional, November 1993)

The suspicion that statutory agencies would be reluctant to act upon the advice given by community participants was borne out by the practical experiences of one of the volunteers who via WHAP had become involved with two local decision making bodies. As the following quotation indicates the volunteer was pessimistic about the chances of achieving change by such means:

... being in WHAP there's opportunities of being on different boards, and I think that by being on them boards you are able to voice your opinion, in a strong positive way, that should be listened to. [...]   Thamesmead Race Equality Forum, and Bexley Council for Race Equality, which I enjoy being on, because it's issues that is dear to my heart.... and I've got the opportunity to say what I feel, for the community, even though no one's asking me to, but I'm hoping that they'll see things in a different light, because I've never done this before, but when I went to the first meeting of TREF, it was like Police, Council officials, blah, blah, and them sitting 'round a table making decisions which had no result at the end. And they're not even looking on the people on Thamesmead or involving them or nothing. Well how can they sit and make a decision about something, and you're not even inviting the people to say their part? So I spoke up about that, and they said that they're going to let the public come in for half an hour before their meetings, to say what they want to say, but its if they put it into practice. Because they always put everything down in the minutes, and when it comes back to the next meeting, nothing was done ...

(Volunteer, June 1994)

Despite widespread scepticism about the likely outcome of community participation in statutory sector decision making, WHAP continued to identify and pursue community issues that were appropriate to this strategy. We have already noted the persistence of

welfarist frames of reference and the ways in which they structured WHAP's internal affairs. The same process can also be identified in the community campaigns organised by WHAP. For instance, in the incident described below WHAP volunteers were sensitised to an 'appropriate' issue as a result of their participation in a training day. From this a campaign was developed by the volunteers to influence the Local Authority; a strategy that was welcomed by the organisers of the training day:

> ... a couple of the volunteer workers went to a training day on accident prevention and were quite impressed by it. And one of the things they came out with was the dangerous state of playgrounds in the Thamesmead area. [...] the voluntary workers in discussion with the people who'd undertaken the training realised that one of the things they could do would be to campaign publicly about the dangers on those playgrounds. [...] they were talking in terms of writing to the newspaper, taking a video of the playgrounds and showing it at public meetings, and that sort of thing, and [...] applying public pressure to the Local Authority to get them to change the playgrounds. And they were advised by the people who organised the training session that there was every chance that that would be successful.
>
> (Professional, November 1993)

It is important to note the way in which the volunteers' involvement in a health promotion training day stimulated an issue, and a means of addressing it, that were contained within the strategy of community participation. The acceptance by the volunteers that they should acquire professional skills and professional training served to limit the agenda for action to issues and strategies that were appropriate for negotiation with the local state. This emphasis on going through the 'proper' channels in order to win minor concessions from the statutory agencies is indicated by the professional quoted above, in reference to the same issue:

> ... I think if they went to the Local Authority and said look we're local residents, we've got a legitimate grievance, that they wouldn't have to push that hard, they could influence the Local Authority to change those playgrounds, without having to mount a sort of populist mass campaign, [...] they could be effective in lobbying Councillors for example. Going through

the establishment machinery, I think they would get somewhere. And saving the threat of a campaign if that didn't work. But they don't have the knowledge, the sophistication, to think through the ways that they're going to play it. Their immediate response was 'we'll get a campaign going on this and we'll show 'em' (laughter).

(Professional, November 1993)

Not only is the importance of using the *'establishment machinery'* reiterated, but the desire to step outside of the community participation perspective and adopt a more adversarial approach is dismissed as a lack of sophistication on the part of the volunteers. It is as if the only viable strategy for achieving change at the community level is to seek the intervention of the local statutory agencies, even though, as we noted above, many WHAP members were pessimistic about the likely outcome of such a strategy.

The strategy of seeking to empower the local community by embroiling its representatives in the decision making processes of statutory agencies is not only contradictory because the achievement of worthwhile gains is so unlikely, but also because it may lead to an extension of repressive state intervention in the community. For example, the attitudes to health survey raised a number of concerns about public safety and the fear of crime, and it was suggested by the professional quoted below, that such concerns might form the basis of a community campaign to *increase* the level of surveillance and policing by the state:

... I think there is a general fear for safety in parts of that area, and a community based campaign that addressed that would be popularly supported. [...] I was impressed by a woman I work with who told me, I think it's by the boiler house in Thamesmead, something like four deaths occurred, and road accidents occurred, within a year and a half. And a community based campaign to put pressure on the council and say should there be a couple of crossings or a bridge would be good. So I think that sort of thing, safety and anti-crime, and that would possibly mean links with the Police, actually forming an alliance with some of those local beat coppers, and the groups they're involved in - Neighbourhood Watch for example, I think that might

yield some good things, even though as a professional I have some misgivings about which other professionals I sit down with. [...] from your survey, there were fears about crime, drug-taking, and no one, including the police, or maybe especially the police, seemed to be doing anything about it. And I think that's got great scope for community action, and WHAP might want to consider how it can look at that.

(Professional, February 1994)

This is one of the problems of using the *'establishment machinery'*- genuine concessions are unlikely to be forthcoming, unless the use of 'proper channels' is backed up by some external means of enforcing the community's demands; but in the absence of such external pressure, the only successful demands are likely to be those which comply with the state's own agenda of cost containment, the material and ideological reproduction of labour power, and crucially, the maintenance of social order by extending surveillance and regulation of working class communities (see chapter three for a more detailed account of the role of the state under capitalism.. But why was it that, despite their reservations about the likely outcome, the WHAP professionals continued to advocate community participation in statutory sector decision making as a means of achieving community empowerment? One possible explanation is that the possibility of achieving progressive change by any other means was felt to be even more remote.

■ **Low expectations of the capacity for achieving change**

WHAP began with high aspirations for change, more specifically, it was hoped that the project would enable local people to obtain greater control over the social, economic and environmental factors that influenced their health. However, ideas about how this change would be brought about were initially vague, perhaps even naïve. When the findings of the survey failed to provoke action from either the statutory agencies or the local population, it became apparent that WHAP's original objectives were unlikely to be met. Rather than seeking alternative forms of action · many of the professionals involved in WHAP resigned themselves to the fact that structural change was beyond their reach:

Well there's no way that we've done anything about people's poor housing, there's no way we've done anything about pollution, there's no way we can do anything about that. You know, we can't do anything about that. We can't change the system that's out there..

DW - WHY NOT?

Well you know because a small group of people's actually going to get good housing?, a small group of people's actually going to change the pollution levels?

(Professional, November 1993)

As the above quotation suggests, the small scale of the project was perceived to be one cause of its political impotence; although this begs the question of why a broader, population based strategy was not pursued. The point is that localism lies at the heart of community action. From the outset WHAP was determined to find local solutions to community health problems, indeed, the project's *modus operandi* was based on a micro-analysis of local people's needs and concerns, and no attempt to broaden this out either in terms of social critique, or, political organisation was ever seriously considered. Although some of the more radical professionals expressed the need for a broader political campaign to complement the localist perspective:

... you actually get into some very wide political questions, you know like, 'we cannot have good health until we abolish capitalism' type arguments, which may well be something that we believe, but are we going to, therefore, ignore the very immediate health needs of people - 'I'm sorry I'm not going to operate on you because I'm going to my revolutionary meeting'. You know there are certain issues there that are unattainable, and I.. I don't have an answer for that I'm afraid. I think one has to do both. I think you need to move, you must take local action, you must address short term issues, but there should also be space to consider long term implications and how one influences public policy, to help that along. And part of that public policy is that you want ownership of

that process by people, so you want them to have a greater knowledge and awareness of the things that influence their health...

(Professional, February 1994)

Although the professional quoted above is reluctant to relinquish the possibility of a broader emancipatory project, it is conceded that this may be 'unattainable', or at least that it should not take preference over more pressing local issues. It is important to note that the desire to *'do both'* remains an aspiration rather than an actual activity. The belief that local empowerment initiatives might lead into a broader emancipatory struggle is a common theme in the literature on empowerment, but as we shall see in the discussion section below there are several factors that make this an extremely unlikely prospect in the current conjuncture. WHAP's adoption of such a short-term localist approach, is perhaps only explicable in the context of broader historical and political factors. In many senses the project itself can be seen as a response to the *decline of traditional forms of political activity*, like the labour and trade union movement. That WHAP chose to pursue its objectives at a local level, reflects the *absence of a viable political* force capable of furthering those objectives at a national or international level. Lobbying the local statutory agencies for a few meagre concessions was felt to be the only viable form of 'political' activity, and even here the scope for change was perceived to be small:

I was thrilled [...] to hear that Galleon's Reach, which is a fundholding practice, had an arrangement with Thamesmead Pools so that if they had one of their patients come in suffering from stress, they wouldn't automatically reach for the prescription pad, they would give them free, for I think it was three months, swims once a week, then having established the habit they're likely to continue after the three months. If that is a cheaper way than putting them on drugs, [if] it actually has a way of making them healthier, as well as reducing their stress, I think that's wonderful. And to say that we ought to not go soft on what we expect from the state is naïve - we're all Thatcherites now.

(Professional, November 1994)

Thus, WHAP's low expectation of what might be achieved politically, reflects a broader malaise, that incorporates a diminished expectation of what can be afforded by the state, as well as a pessimistic assessment of the scope for autonomous emancipatory activity. WHAP may have been established in the hope of enabling people to obtain greater control over the social, economic and environmental influences on health, but these aspirations were short lived, in their place, a more pessimistic agenda developed, focusing on individual 'case-work' and the pursuit of minimal concessions from the local state.

In terms of the volunteers, we have seen that although their involvement in WHAP may have raised their self-esteem and improved their inter-personal skills, their capacity to act as autonomous agents of social change may actually have been diminished by their participation in the project. First, their newly found self-esteem was largely based upon the fantasy of obtaining quasi-professional status. In reality, this quasi-professional status conferred little in the way of expertise, formal powers, financial rewards or opportunities for paid employment. Rather like special constables or weekend members of the territorial army, the volunteers conducted menial services for the state, and in return were allowed to indulge in the fantasy that they had become 'one of the professionals'. Secondly, whilst this new found status offered little in the way of improved life chances, it did integrate the volunteers into a structure of professional surveillance and regulation, not just by bringing them into regular contact with professionals, but by leading them to internalise the logic of welfarist frames of reference, and seek welfarist solutions to their problems. Thirdly, the emphasis on mental health and the need for professionalised models of stress management may have led the volunteers to conceive of themselves and their 'clients' as mentally unstable victims of hardship, rather than as competent agents of social change. Rather than empowering the volunteers WHAP embroiled them in a myth - they became fantasy professionals, pretending to meet the health needs of local people, whilst in reality their consciousness became steeped in welfarist frames of reference and subordinated to the exercise of professional power.

The 'empowerment' of the Drop-in users was even more illusory than that of the volunteers. Rather than being armed with critical consciousness and organised into an effective group of activists, the Drop-in users were constituted as mentally unbalanced

'clients' in need of social support and quasi-professional care. WHAP's informal ambience may have reduced the cultural dissonance between the Drop-in users and welfare professionals, but the failure to step outside of welfarist frames of reference and the broad parameters of the professional role, meant that the encounter only served to bring a previously reluctant and largely inaccessible section of the community within the purview of professional surveillance and regulation.

Finally, as a means of empowering the community, WHAP achieved very little. The survey of attitudes to health identified a number of issues, but the failure to develop a critical analysis from the findings, coupled with the inability to adequately engage the population, meant that the knowledge produced was not a basis for critical consciousness or emancipatory activity. Instead WHAP directed its activities towards the statutory agencies, embroiling some of the volunteers in fruitless participatory exercises and reinforcing the belief that the pursuit of small incremental concessions from the local state was the only viable form of political activity.

Discussion

Amongst the articles and books that comprise the literature on empowerment, a common opening lament is that the category is applied promiscuously, without due regard for theoretical exposition or clarity of definition. A concern that is often followed by a promise to remedy the deficiency by presenting *the* definitive theory of empowerment - as if the diverse range of professionals, academics and volunteers who claim to practice empowerment would thereafter confine themselves to the usage laid down in the theoretical framework. Unfortunately, the proponents of empowerment have spurned the theoreticians' exhortations and the field remains diverse and fragmented.

Given such intransigence, a more modest goal is pursued here. Rather than expounding *another* general theory of empowerment a distinct strand is identified within the broader field, by reference to a shared series of characteristics, or more precisely, social relations. Conclusions from the subsequent analysis cannot, therefore, be automatically generalised to all phenomena to which the empowerment

label has been applied, but only to those that share the same series of social relations. This may be inconvenient, but it is perhaps the most robust way to proceed.

Of course, it might be argued that the critical social research methodology employed here is nothing more than Marxism, and that as such it is based upon assumptions that *really do* comprise a grand theory of empowerment. However, there are two problems with this line of argument. First, it can only be sustained by conflating the methodology of critical social research, (or more specifically, historical materialism, admittedly developed and employed by Marx), with the historically specific political conclusions drawn by Marx and his followers as a result of applying that methodology. Secondly, it confuses the object of study, in this case 'empowerment', with the method of studying it, i.e. critical social research. We have already noted (in chapter 3) Marx's hostility to those who ignored the necessity of specific empirical enquiry and converted his approach into a *'master key a general historico-philosophical theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being supra-historical'* (Marx, 1877, p.571). Thus, in order to be valid it is not only desirable but essential that a critical appraisal of empowerment is based upon the type of methodology outlined in chapter three rather than on a dogmatic imposition of a 'Marxist' political programme. It is precisely the need for specific empirical enquiry that necessitates the rejection of the general theories of empowerment alluded to above. Empowerment is a very vague and amorphous category, varying over time and place; the intention here is to empirically derive a specific form of empowerment in order to assess its emancipatory potential, rather than developing a generally applicable Marxist theory of empowerment based on the emancipation of the working class.

■ **Unpacking empowerment**

Empowerment has been described as both a process and an outcome, but it can more profitably be conceptualised as a set of social relations, or more specifically, as a mythical way of conceptualising a set of social relations. It is the central contention of this thesis that empowerment is a mythical way of conceptualising the social relations ·
that prevail between the state, welfare professionals, and members of the community. Put simply the myth of empowerment is that welfare professionals can use the resources at their disposal to enable people to gain greater control over their lives. In

fact, as we have argued above, the emancipatory claims of empowerment only serve to mask a process that increases the individual's subordination to the state, by extending surveillance and regulation, and by engendering the development of an oppressive self-identity.

It is a characteristic of myths that their proponents often believe them to be true, and that is the case here. Thus, the welfare professionals engaged in empowerment do not think of themselves primarily as agents of social control, but rather as radical political activists striving to emancipate the oppressed. The key point is that the ideology of empowerment enables them to adopt this self-identity in good faith. Rather than a conscious act of deceit practised by welfare professionals on their gullible clients, empowerment is a process of mutual delusion, determined by the location of both parties within a materially and ideologically structured set of social relations.

The character of the state, and the role of the welfare professional within it, were examined at length in the previous chapter. Here we begin from the other end, looking at the claims of empowerment and the political theory that underpins them, before returning to the structural processes that both engender and negate such claims.

A central claim made for empowerment is that it enables people to obtain greater control over their lives, and emancipate themselves from oppression, thus Wallerstein defines empowerment as:

> ... a social action process that promotes participation of people, organisations, and communities in gaining control over their lives in their community and larger society. (Wallerstein, 1988, p.380)

Empowerment is seen as a way of equipping the individual, or group, with the skills and competence required to bring about emancipatory social change. It is worth examining the assumptions that underpin this claim. First, it is implied that prior to the empowerment process, the individual is unable to take social action because of some personal deficiency. Secondly, that empowerment will lead to emancipatory social change. And finally, although not referred to directly, there is an implied role for an 'empowerer' who equips the individual with the skills and competence to bring

about change. As we shall see below, the role of empowerer often falls to the welfare professional, who uses the resources at his/her disposal to empower a 'client'. Although a distinction can be drawn between individual/psychological empowerment, and the broader process of community action, it is important to note that the two aspects are seen as essential elements of emancipatory social change:

> *Community empowerment includes a raised level of psychological empowerment amongst its members, a political action component in which members have actively participated, and the achievement of some redistribution of resources or decision-making favourable to the community or group in question.* (Rissel, 1994, p.41.)

The discourse of empowerment posits a relationship between two subjects: the impaired individual and the welfare professional. The concept of individual impairment is applied very loosely in the literature on empowerment and is often theoretically confused or combined with powerlessness. For example, Bryant-Soloman defines powerlessness as:
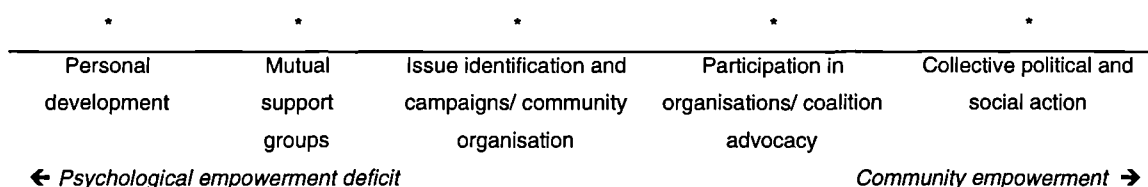
> *... the inability to manage emotion, skills, knowledge and/or material resources in a way that effective performance of valued social roles will lead to personal gratification.* (Bryant-Soloman, 1976, p.16)

The equation of impairment with powerlessness, means that a very broad and diverse range of people can be included as legitimate targets of empowerment, for example: the clients of community care, such as, the physically disabled, the mentally ill, people with learning difficulties, and elderly people, (Stevenson & Parsloe, 1993), as well as oppressed or marginalised groups, such as, women, blacks, adolescents, and the poor. The important thing to note is that from the perspective of empowerment, individual impairment and powerlessness become closely linked. Whilst individual impairment becomes politicised by this putative association, by the same token powerlessness becomes a form of impairment warranting the intervention of the welfare professional. ·

It could be argued, with some validity, that the equation of powerlessness with impairment depoliticises emancipatory struggle by focusing on the deficiencies of the

individual rather than the structural basis of powerlessness. However, this is an unsatisfactory critique; rather than ignoring structural factors, the discourse of empowerment ascribes them a key explanatory role both in the impairment of the individual and as obstacles to emancipatory practice. The claim made by empowerment is that the individual's everyday experience of oppressive social and economic circumstances robs him/her of the subjective capacity to engage in emancipatory social action. Thus, the emphasis on changing the consciousness of the individual is presented as an essential pre-requisite of a broader challenge to the structural basis of powerlessness. This is a valid and logical argument; if the consciousness of the powerless individual does not derive from experience of oppressive social and economic conditions then where does it come from? And, is a radical challenge to oppressive social relations viable without developing critical consciousness amongst the agents of social change? In fact, the advocates of empowerment are correct when they note the relationship between individual consciousness and broader political struggle, and in the current conjuncture their decision to focus on the former is more than justifiable, but only if their claim that it will eventually lead to broader structural change can be supported.

Many theorists and practitioners of empowerment describe it as a linear model of three or four stages, which include: the development of personal competence, group-work and consciousness raising, and collective social action (Kieffer 1984, Swift & Levin 1987). It is claimed that the individual will proceed through the different stages of the model, and in so doing be transformed from an impaired client into an autonomous political actor. Referring specifically to health related initiatives Rissel (1994), after Jackson et al (1989) and Labonte (1989), represents this process as a 'community health development continuum':

Personal development	Mutual support groups	Issue identification and campaigns/ community organisation	Participation in organisations/ coalition advocacy	Collective political and social action
← Psychological empowerment deficit				Community empowerment →

The proponents of an empowerment continuum point out that progress through the various stages may not be sequential, for instance an initiative may begin as a mutual support group, but then regress to personal development work before conducting

community campaigns. Even so, the assumption is that all the points on the continuum are viable within the empowerment framework, and that the process is generally emancipatory. One criticism might be that empowerment initiatives are skewed towards the personal development/mutual support end of the continuum; that the model has no detailed proposals for effective political organisation and radical social action, for example, Page hints at this when he suggests that:

> *The tangible achievements of this technique may turn out to be extremely modest unless some attempt is made to translate the diverse perspectives of the groups concerned into realisable demands of a more unified kind. Without such a strategy it is likely that social work techniques of this kind may prove to be more beneficial to facilitators and educators who wish to cling on to the vestiges of a personally rewarding form of 'radical' practice rather than to those disadvantaged members of the community for whom the promise of a better tomorrow appears to be as far away as ever.* (Page, 1992, p.2)

Page is very much to the point when he suggests that empowerment is a means by which welfare professionals can delude themselves that their work is radical or progressive, however, the broader complaint that empowerment lacks a detailed strategy for change is an unfair criticism. Whilst progressive social change depends upon moving from the development of critical consciousness in the individual to the creation of effective forms of political organisation and a radical agenda for action, this transition cannot be planned in advance and then imposed on the potential agents of change. The advocates of empowerment are correct in realising that a radical agenda and effective organisational forms must be developed by the people themselves in response to a specific set of circumstances - the welfare professionals see their role as facilitating this development rather than imposing a pre-defined programme.

The real problem with empowerment is not the tendency to focus on the individual, nor is it the absence of a prescriptive strategy for social change, but rather the extent to which the model is based upon mediation by welfare professionals, who as we saw in the previous chapter, are essentially agents of the state, whether employed by it or not. We shall see below, that the intervention of the state via the welfare professional

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effectively transforms empowerment from a form of emancipatory activity into a means of social control: rather than developing critical consciousness through debate and emancipatory activity, the individual becomes a 'case' or 'client' *to be empowered* by the socio-psychological techniques of the welfare professional. Group-work and 'consciousness raising' become 'mutual-aid' or 'self-help', rather than the development of effective political organisation. And social-action becomes supplication to the state rather than an effective challenge to oppressive social and economic relations. Rather than the absence of a political agenda, it is the professional's location within welfarist frames of reference that blocks the path from psychological empowerment to emancipatory social action, and gives the lie to claims of an empowerment continuum. But this is to anticipate the conclusions of our analysis. First, it is important to ask why the welfare professionals who advocate empowerment are so convinced of its emancipatory potential. To understand this we need to look at the political theory from which empowerment is derived.

■ The politics of empowerment

The discourse of empowerment did not develop in an intellectual and ideological vacuum; as well as being a response to the welfare professional's location within the state, empowerment also reflects a specific set of 'radical' beliefs. Many of these beliefs have a long history, and their antecedents can be found in the different modes of empowerment examined in chapter one, (as well as in the discourse of post-modernity discussed in the alternative reading section of chapter three). Essentially the politics of empowerment is characterised by idealism and utopianism; rather than addressing the material basis of domination, empowerment is primarily concerned with the subjective aspects of inter-personal relations. This is reflected in a pluralistic and micro-analytical understanding of the operation of power and oppression.

Again, it is important to note that the advocates of empowerment are a diverse group, and their subjective political beliefs are presumably equally varied, however, here we are concerned with the political theories and assumptions that logically inform the practice of empowerment, and which necessarily possess greater unity. Importantly, the political domain of empowerment is defined as 'civil society' rather than the economy or the state, Friedmann defines civil society as:

> *... those associations beyond the reach of the state and corporate economy which have the capacity for becoming autonomous centres for action.* (Friedmann, 1992, p.vii)

As we shall see, empowerment initiatives do not ignore the state or the economy, nor are they uncritical of them as a basis for the exercise of power, but the primary unit of oppositional organisation is perceived to be the local 'community group' if not the individual household. This focus on civil society is accompanied by a pluralistic theory of domination in which the exercise of economic and state power is ascribed a minor role within a broader network of oppressive social relations:

> *British society is saturated in oppression ... An empowering social work practice derived from such an understanding addresses itself to the powerlessness and loss which results from the material and ideological oppression of black people by white people; working class people by middle class people; women by men; children and old people by 'adults'; disabled people by 'able' people; and gay people by 'straight' people. This social work practice recognises oppression not simply in the behaviours, values and attitudes of individuals and groups, but in institutions, structures and common-sense assumptions.* (Mitchell, 1989, p.14).

The adoption of a pluralist model of domination not only broadens the number of 'victims', it also renders virtually everyone an oppressor. Ward and Mullender (1992) point out that such a model rejects any notion of a hierarchy of oppression, instead all forms of oppression are afforded equal priority. But such an approach targets all forms of oppression and understands none of them - the subjective experience of hardship is substituted for an understanding of the structural basis of power. Thus, the disabled person's inability to get on a bus is elevated to the same explanatory weight as society's inability to exercise rational control over the production and distribution of goods and services under capitalism. Subjectively, for the individual concerned, the former may be of greater importance, but the capacity to explain the nature of exploitation and oppression is vastly different.

The theory that power is equally immanent in all social relations has a number of consequences for practical activity. First, it shifts the focus of emancipatory activity from the structural basis of power to the superficial level of inter-personal relations; rather than challenging the state-form or the capitalist mode of production, emancipatory activity is transformed into the elusive ideal of mutual tolerance and respect. Secondly, a pluralist conception of oppression tends to mystify the specific nature of state-power; we shall see below that the advocates of empowerment are not uncritical of the state, but they criticise it in the same way that they criticise civil society, that is, as a domain in which inter-personal acts of oppression are committed, rather than as a structural and ideological expression of the oppressive relationship between capital and labour. Consequently, the state becomes just another place to pursue non-oppressive inter-personal relations; it becomes something to be reformed rather than overthrown.

A third consequence of the pluralist model of domination is that it enables the welfare professional to pose as a champion of the oppressed, using the techniques of empowerment to 'emancipate' them, whilst simultaneously discouraging oppressive behaviour. According to the pluralist model, candidates for empowerment may also be oppressors, for example Mullender and Ward describe, with thinly veiled contempt, participants in an empowerment initiative called 'the Ainsley Teenage Action Group':

> *In terms of gender, the boys frequently dominated the girls through ridicule, the loudness of their voices, and pushiness. Implicitly the boys believed they had the right to behave in this way - that their interests prevailed over the girls'. The boys also behaved in 'Macho' ways towards each other, using humiliation to establish and maintain a pecking order. They would react to the male workers not joining in with their views about women with mistrust and accusations that they were 'homos'. Similar views existed amongst the white members about race, although it seemed less acceptable to express these openly.* (Mullender and Ward, 1991, p.117)

As the above quotation implies, oppression is transformed from a structurally existent social relation into a form of unacceptable personal conduct, akin to bad manners or vulgarity, but rather more extreme. The role of the progressive welfare professional is

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to discourage such oppressive behaviour in the name of empowerment - a role reminiscent of the parish priest, safeguarding the souls of his flock by discouraging sinful behaviour. When the WHAP professional quoted in the previous chapter offered to *'take the load off the volunteers, or the professionals, of deciding what is and what isn't racist'*, she was performing just such a function. The need for the empowering welfare professional to police the oppressive behaviour of his/her 'clients', throws up a contradiction that even the enthusiasts of empowerment can spot. It stems from the second aspect of the politics of empowerment - the theory of knowledge.

Like good post-modernists the advocates of empowerment recognise that knowledge is power, and that the process of empowerment entails discarding the oppressive knowledge of others in favour of one's personal truth (Hill-Collins, 1990). We saw in chapter two that WHAP placed a great deal of importance on giving the local community a voice, and enabling it to produce its own body of knowledge via the attitudes to health survey. The more extreme advocates of empowerment suggest that this 'self-knowledge' resides within the individual and that the empowerment process enables it to emerge, for example, in her empirical study of women's attitudes to empowerment Shields suggests that:

> *Intuition played a central role in the process of self-knowledge and self-truth for the women in the study. They spoke of using their intuition more, trusting it more, and using it differently.* (Sheilds, 1995, p.25)

Not all advocates of empowerment adopt such an essentialist approach, but many emphasise the oppressive nature of existing knowledge and the importance of producing an alternative as part of the empowerment process. As the following quotation suggests, this incitement to discourse stems from a subjectivist conception of knowledge:

> *Epidemiological studies are useful and important, but direct practice must be built on local knowledge, on the particular, on attention to difference and, most vital, on multiple voices.* (Hartman, 1992, p.484)

As with the self-help model discussed in chapter one, the advocates of empowerment prioritise the subjective experiences of the individual over scientific and 'official' knowledge. Not only this, but the production of alternative truth claims is viewed as an emancipatory act. The adoption of a subjectivist theory of knowledge also entails a critique of the 'expertise' of welfare professionals, which again is reminiscent of the self-help movement discussed in chapter one, for example Bernstein et al, (after Rappaport, 1985), suggest that professional knowledge:

> *... unwittingly encourages dependence on professionals, creates the view that people are clients in need of help, may limit the discovery of indigenous resources and reduces the likelihood of people helping each other.* (Bernstein et al, 1994, p.284)

This is the contradiction referred to above. The pluralistic model of domination, on which empowerment practice is based, places the welfare professional in the position of a referee responsible for ensuring that the infinitely fragmented series of interest groups do not engage in oppressive behaviour. However, the subjectivist conception of knowledge that accompanies the pluralist model of domination, brings into question the knowledge base of professional practice. Put simply, how can the welfare professional effectively counter oppression, if his/her professional expertise is politically questionable, and if oppression itself can only be defined by the subjective claims of the individual?

The advocates of empowerment extract themselves from the above dilemma by a piece of deft theoretical footwork. First, there is recognition that professional knowledge is embroiled in the exercise of power and domination, for example, Holmes and Saleebey suggest that the relationship between welfare professional and client is based upon the 'medical model' and that this places the client in a passive and subordinate role:

> *The unspoken assumption of the medical model is that clienthood and autonomous selfhood are mutually exclusive concepts, an idea which has far reaching effects on clients, their families, and society as a whole. The professional comes to 'own' the client, giving or withholding services*

according to how well the client plays the role of client in terms of dependence and acquiescence. (Holmes and Saleebey, 1993, p.64)

At first glance Holmes and Saleebey's account appears similar to the discussion of welfarist frames of reference presented in the last chapter, but closer inspection reveals it to be less insightful. We noted that welfarist frames of reference are simultaneously ideational *and material*, that is, they comprise both a set of ideas and a structural apparatus - we gave the example of psychiatry, and noted that it exists both as a set of ideas and as a material set of buildings, implements, pharmaceutical compounds, therapeutic procedures, practices, roles and relationships. We went on to note that the adoption of a professional self-identity necessitated a willingness to work within the ideational and material confines of welfarist frames of reference, and that this was reinforced by the managerial structure of control. However, Holmes and Saleebey overlook the material existence of welfarist frames of reference, suggesting that the ideational content is autonomous of structural constraints.

If welfarist frames of reference can be conceived of in purely ideational terms then the oppressive aspects of professional knowledge can apparently be reformed without having to address the state-form, or the professional's location within the state apparatus; this is where the deft theoretical footwork comes in. Language is considered to be a major factor here, for example Bernstein et al (1994) recommend replacing oppressive terms such as 'client' and 'expert' with the more empowering 'participant' and 'collaborator'. Holmes and Saleebey elaborate on this theme, suggesting that the adoption of a new lexicon will overcome the alienation between professional and client:

> *...consider how using the labels in the following descending order of separateness might change the relationship between a helper and a client: (1) patient, (2) client, (3) consumer, (4) customer, (5) partner, (6) neighbour, and, (7) friend. Each label carries its own value-laden connotation, so that persons wanting help can be located on such a scale according to their <u>degree of</u> <u>belonging</u> to the professional's world. Autonomy increases with belongingness.* (Holmes & Saleebey, 1993, pp.71-72)

Unfortunately, as the study of WHAP indicates, the adoption of euphemistic phrases cannot dilute the coercive powers conferred on the welfare professional by the state, nor does it enable them to step outside of welfarist frames of reference. Changing the lexicon of professional knowledge empowers the welfare recipient to the same degree that consumption of a re-named 'plough-persons lunch' empowers a female diner.

The proposition is patently absurd, but the belief that the oppressive aspects of professional practice can be conjured away by the adoption of an 'alternative model,' or a handful of euphemistic nouns, is a convenient fiction for the advocates of empowerment. In effect it transforms professional power from a structural relationship into a moral choice on the part of the individual practitioner. Rather than being an agent of state-power the welfare professional becomes an autonomous actor able to freely choose whether or not to oppress or empower his/her clients. This transformation serves a number of purposes. First, it enables the progressive welfare professional to distance him/herself from colleagues who have not adopted empowering forms of practice - 'they may have oppressed you, but I am different'. Secondly, it allows the 'authentic' knowledge produced by the client to be appropriated by the professional as a basis for future practice - 'my actions cannot be oppressive because they are determined by the knowledge of the client'. Ward and Mullender express the latter point when they suggest that:

> The challenge to the white majority and particularly to white professionals is to join the fight against racism without altering its terms. Only the black experience of oppression can give the lead. (Ward and Mullender, 1992, p.27.)

That welfare professionals have difficulty meeting this challenge was demonstrated in the study of WHAP, where despite the best intentions of the professionals involved, the problems encountered by the project were invariably incorporated within welfarist frames of reference. Finally, the belief that professional knowledge can be purged of its oppressive aspects, in favour of the experiential knowledge derived from clients, implies that what remains of professional knowledge can be rehabilitated as oppression free. Thus, Hartman concludes:

Must we discard our knowledge, our accumulated professional wisdom? This would leave us adrift without anchor or compass. We need not discard our knowledge, but we must be open to local knowledge, to the narratives and truths of our clients. (Hartman, 1992, p.484)

We have seen that the adoption of a pluralistic model of domination enables the welfare professional to pose as the arbiter of oppressive behaviour. However, the pluralist model of domination necessarily entails a subjectivist approach to knowledge, which gives primacy to the subjective experiences of the client and points to the oppressive character of professional knowledge. This presents a contradiction for the empowering professional that can only be resolved by conceptualising welfarist frames of reference purely in terms of their ideational content, and overlooking their material and structural basis. This allows the oppressive aspects of professional knowledge to be discarded, and the subjective experiences of the client to be appropriated into a seemingly emancipatory body of professional expertise. Deft theoretical footwork indeed, but a problem still remains - how is the welfare professional to respond if the subjective experiences of clients lead them to adopt oppressive behaviour? This question cannot be answered without addressing the fourth aspect of the politics of empowerment; its moral dimension.

That the work of welfare professionals is often legitimated by reference to 'core values' or a moral code is hardly a novel insight, but the moral dimension of empowerment takes a specific form that is worth examining more closely. As with other aspects of the politics of empowerment the moral dimension is a product of wider social and ideological forces as well as the specific relationships on which empowerment is based. A key factor is the belief that power resides in immediate inter-personal relationships, rather than in broader social relations like the state or the economy. From this perspective emancipatory practice is transformed from a political assault on oppressive structures, for instance the seizure of state power, or socialisation of the means of production, into the moral regulation of personal behaviour. There is a strong utopian flavour to the politics of empowerment, as if emancipation only depends upon us learning mutual respect and tolerance. Mullender and Ward illustrate the utopian tendency when they suggest that:

Just as oppression is experienced through personal and everyday events so, equally, an empowering practice can offer people the chance to try out and experience new ways of being involved in those events at the everyday level. This is the overall aim of our model of action. It looks to share power between workers and participants and to challenge them both to use it non-oppressively. Together they can construct tentative models for more human forms of social relations which provide in microcosm what is ultimately aspired to at the level of total society. (Mullender & Ward, 1991, p.6)

The strong emphasis on learning not to oppress each other means that the structural relations of power go unchallenged, (at least in terms of practical activity). Moreover, the adoption of a subjectivist conception of knowledge distorts the internal relations of empowerment initiatives and hampers the development of critical consciousness. Superficially, empowerment is concerned with 'giving a voice' to oppressed people, but the belief that knowledge is essentially a personal affair means that genuinely critical discussion is discouraged. Any critical engagement with the personal testimony of a group member becomes an act of oppression. Instead, group members sit around exchanging personal anecdotes about the hardships they have encountered, and the various accounts of the causes of that hardship, no matter how trite or banal, are accorded equal 'respect' in terms of immunity from criticism (Repo, 1977). The result is to stifle rational debate and limit the group's capacity to theorise the objective nature of oppression. The injunction not to oppress others places sharp constraints on personal testimony, for example, prejudiced or discriminatory views are considered taboo, as Mullender & Ward point out:

The result will be that some potential answers to 'how' [questions] are favoured over others. Thus we do not accept solutions which empower one group at the expense of the oppression of another, as is alleged in some community work practice with working class white people. (Mullender & Ward, 1991, p.104)

When Ward and Mullender write that '*we do not accept...*' it is important to note that the personal pronoun refers to welfare professionals, who according to the theory of empowerment, are posited as the arbiters of oppressive behaviour - in effect: you (the

oppressed) can say anything you want as long as it is not oppressive, but we (the welfare professionals) will decide what is and is not oppressive. It is this assumed sovereignty that comprises the core of empowerment. The welfare professional engaged in empowerment is assumed to possess the anti-oppressive values, that their clients (and traditional welfare professionals) cannot be trusted to have, because such values are deemed to be deeply embedded in the philosophy and techniques of empowerment, which are perceived to be accessible only to like minded professionals or quasi-professionals.

Paradoxically, the transformation of anti-oppressive values into a set of technical skills, re-instates the welfare professional in a position of ascendancy over his/her clients. Empowerment may be critical of professional knowledge, it may prioritise the subjective experiences of the client, but the empowering professional always has the trump-card of anti-oppressive values to bolster his/her authority and ensure that clients toe-the-line. Although articulated in technical terms, the primacy ascribed to anti-oppressive values is essentially based on the assumption that inter-personal relations amongst the masses need to be regulated by middle-class morality. The assumption is that the various strata and sub-sets of the working classes are incapable of autonomously regulating their inter-personal relations, instead the welfare professional must intervene to stamp out oppressive behaviour. There is then, a strong moral imperative for the client to submit to empowerment, and for the welfare professional to do the empowering (Baistow, 1994).

In summary, the political theory that underpins empowerment comprises four interwoven elements: a pluralistic and micro-analytical understanding of oppression, a subjectivist approach to knowledge, a purely ideational understanding of welfarist frames of reference, and a moral imperative towards the regulation of working class life by external agents. In combination these themes mystify the social relations that prevail between the state, the welfare professional, and the client - they conceal the exercise of state-power behind a radical mask, enabling the welfare professional to adopt a progressive self-identity, and to genuinely believe that clients are being emancipated from oppression, when in reality they are only being more thoroughly subordinated to state-power. The following section looks more closely at what lies

beneath the radical appearance of empowerment, in terms of the effects it has on the consciousness and autonomy of the 'empowered'.

■ Empowerment and the new authoritarianism

The previous section demonstrated the way in which the ideology of empowerment enables agents of the state to adopt a professional self-identity based on emancipatory practical activity. It was concluded that this self-identity is nothing more than a mask for the continued exercise of state-power and domination. Here we look more closely at what lies behind the mask, at the practical activity of empowerment and the effects it has on the consciousness and autonomy of the 'empowered'. It is concluded that although empowerment serves to perpetuate an existing relationship of dominance between the state, welfare professional and client, it achieves this in an innovative and more effective way, by embracing a new form of authoritarianism. First, it is important to explain what is meant by the 'new authoritarianism'.

The concept of authoritarianism has a long, if heterogeneous, history in the social sciences. In the 1930s Wilhelm Reich employed the term to account for the mass appeal of fascism in Germany. According to Reich (1933), it was the strongly patriarchal character of the family under German capitalism, which led to sexual repression, and in turn to the development of an authoritarian personality. This authoritarianism was expressed not simply as conservatism or passive submission, but as active support for authoritarian rule. After the 1930s Reich's intellectual project lapsed into mysticism, and the credibility of his early work declined along with that of its author. However, the concept of authoritarianism was taken up by Reich's colleagues at the Frankfurt Institute, particularly by the 'Berkley Group' of émigrés to the United States, including: Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson and Sanford.

A key text in this tradition is Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*, (1941). Like Reich, Fromm attempted to synthesise a broadly Marxist analysis with insights drawn from Freudian psychoanalysis. Again, the family is viewed as the means by which society moulds the 'character' of the individual, but Fromm's emphasis lies more on inter-personal relations than on the project of political transformation.

This shift of emphasis is even more pronounced in: *The Authoritarian Personality*, (Adorno et al, 1950). Here, fostered by the context of growing cold-war anti-communism, authoritarianism is transformed from a Marxist-Freudian critique of fascism, into a liberal account of the psychological characteristics of a right-wing personality type, to be calibrated and measured using the ubiquitous 'F-Scale', which was employed in countless empirical follow-up studies until the late 1960s. Not only did this psychologisation of authoritarianism rob the category of its historical and political specificity, it also stimulated immediate and convincing criticism, (Shils 1954, Eysenck 1954). First, it was argued that the theory conveniently overlooked the left-wing authoritarianism of the Stalinists, by focusing exclusively on ideological themes which appealed to right-wingers, and over-looking the equally authoritarian, but qualitatively different, beliefs of the 'Communists'. Secondly, criticism came from empiricists who argued that because the F-Scale comprised a series of right-wing statements which respondents were asked to either agree or disagree with, it therefore only measured people's willingness to agree.

Samelson has pointed out the extent to which the concept of authoritarianism has been transformed and in effect robbed of its critical content:

> *The movement of the nuclear idea proceeded from the far left, in the revolutionary and 'extreme' formulation by a Communist- Freudian activist, to the milder Marxist-Socialist, and incipiently empirical, versions of Fromm and the institute, on to the liberal American social-scientists at Berkley and their epigoni, to end up eventually in the neo-conservative camp and in the value-free empirical data-crunching of the late 1950s. Retreating from broad theory and increasingly encapsulated, research interests moved from the events of the outside world toward laboratory-generated problems, a process justified as the way of true science. Yet although the approach became progressively less politically 'engaged', as well as more 'empirical', it would be hard to argue that this improvement in the objectivity of methods succeeded in solving the problem; instead it defined the problem away.* (Samelson, 1986, p.p. 203-4)

To the extent that the concept of authoritarianism has survived the late 1960's it has done so largely in the hands of right-wing commentators. Interestingly, this has often

entailed a shift away from the psychological perspective towards consideration of the ways in which 'totalitarian' regimes exercise domination. Many such accounts are ahistorical and reductionist, for example, suggesting that fascism and Stalinism are essentially the same phenomenon. A more comparative version of this approach is adopted by Perlmutter (1981), who examines the differences as well as the similarities in the mechanisms employed by different authoritarian regimes. However, the assumption is still that authoritarianism is a phenomenon that resides exclusively outside Western democracy; rather it is to be found amongst fascist and communist regimes, and in developing countries, *"practically all of which are authoritarian states"*(Perlmutter, 1981, p.xii).

The belief that authoritarianism was not a problem faced by western democracies may have had some currency in the period between the mid 1960s and the late 1980s when first the 'hippy' counter-culture, and then the free-market libertarians (at least rhetorically), argued for the freedom of the individual and curtailment of the state's power to intervene in everyday life. However, times change, and more recently the dominant theme of political discourse in British society has not been to limit state intervention in everyday life, but to call for ever greater surveillance and regulation of inter-personal relations.

The monetarist economics and individualistic social policies pursued by Government over the last twenty have undermined collective institutions and social cohesion to such a degree that solidarity and trust have been replaced by a widespread, and often grossly exaggerated, fear of others, and to calls for state intervention to regulate bad behaviour, promote public safety, and reduce personal risk. Child protection, crime prevention, equal opportunities, CCTV surveillance cameras, paedophile registers, censorship, anti-harassment policies, and gun control, are all based on the assumption that we are at extreme risk from each other, and that this risk can only be ameliorated by the imposition of authoritarian measures either by the state or employers. As Hume has noted, calls for greater social regulation are no longer confined to the middle-classes:

> *What distinguishes this new authoritarianism most clearly from old forms of overt social control is that it is not seen as a problem. Indeed the new*

authoritarianism has often been invited in as a solution to society's problems. Moves to regulate more and more areas of our lives are not greeted with mass demonstrations or protests about the loss of civil liberties, but are generally welcomed or at least accepted as a fact of modern life. (Hume, 1996, p.117).

An important aspect of the new authoritarianism is the extent to which the concept of 'rights' has been transformed from the principle that the individual requires constitutional protection from the arbitrary power of the state into calls for the state to have even greater powers over the individual. The assumption is that we are incapable of regulating our own behaviour or relationships and that the agents of the state must be granted sufficient powers to intervene on our behalf:

> *The rights on offer today are not rights that can be borne by a sovereign individual, free from state interference. Rather, they are the rights of the victim: the victim of abuse, discrimination, a faulty product, a noisy neighbour, or a colleague's sexist joke. A victim cannot exercise his rights without help from somebody with more clout - the state and its agencies. So a child who is abused will turn to the authorities to exercise his rights. A consumer who has been ripped off will turn to a lawyer to help him out. A woman who is being harassed will turn to the equal opportunities committee at her workplace in an attempt to punish her colleague. In order to have their rights exercised, victims bestow on the authorities extra power to act on their behalf.* (Hume, 1996, p. 128)

It is not that abuse of the individual is unimportant, (although the prevalence of such abuse may be exaggerated), but that the most viable means of combating it is so often deemed to entail an extension of authoritarian powers. The widespread assumption appears to be that we are at constant risk of abuse even in our most intimate relationships with family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues, and that the only means of protecting ourselves is by calling for statutory or professional regulation of those relationships.

The emergence of the new authoritarianism is such a recent phenomenon that it has not yet been extensively researched or theorised, so we must use the concept

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cautiously. However, the WHAP case-study took place against the backdrop of this emerging phenomenon, and the ethnographic data presented above suggest that the regulation of inter-personal relationships by welfare professionals was a key theme. It is, therefore, appropriate to consider the extent to which community empowerment projects like WHAP can become a forum for the new authoritarianism. It was noted above, that the empowerment process could be conceptualised as a continuum with three key points on it: psychological empowerment, group wok/consciousness raising, and social action. We will argue that each of these levels of practice is shot through with elements of the new authoritarianism, that this denies the possibility of emancipatory practice, and creates an internalised culture of victimhood and self-limitation.

Psychological empowerment starts from the assumption that people are psychologically damaged by their experiences of hardship and oppression, and that this impedes their capacity to act. Barber (1995) describes this as 'learned helplessness'; a process by which people who are denied control over their lives lose faith in their ability to bring about change. Barber's argument is derived from a psychological experiment in which dogs were chained to a platform and administered an electric shock each time a light was lit. It was assumed that when the dogs were unharnessed they would have learned to associate the light with the electric-shock, and would, therefore, leave the platform whenever the light came on, even if a shock was not administered. However, when the dogs were unharnessed the experimenters found that they failed to leave the platform, even if a shock was administered; it was concluded that the dogs had learned that they were powerless to escape

Barber argues that humans exhibit similar behaviour when confronted by adverse social experiences, and suggests that social workers can counter this learned helplessness by enabling clients to exercise control over some aspects of their lives, so that they re-learn the relationship between their actions and valued outcomes:

> ... the helpless client must be exposed to as many controllable events as is possible, thus helping the client to understand that some valued outcomes can be attained and some negative ones avoided. (Barber, 1995, p.32).

But there is a flaw in Barber's logic. The dog experiment is remarkable because it shows the dog's reluctance to move *after* the restraining harness has been removed; while the dog remains harnessed it's recognition that it is helpless is astute rather than pathological. In the real world the external constraints that render the client powerless cannot be so easily removed, so the empowering welfare professional is obliged to engineer artificial situations where the client can 'play' at exercising control, in order to raise the individual's self-esteem and sense of potency.

In WHAP this process entailed setting up the Drop-in centre and enabling the volunteers to 'play-act' the role of quasi-professional. In other projects even more mundane activities have been used to raise the clients' self-esteem, for example, a participant in the Ainsley Teenage Action Group, (referred to above), notes that: *'We organised a jumble-sale to gain our respect back'* (Mullender & Ward, 1991, p.114). It is easy to scoff at such 'emancipatory' activities, and in fairness they do appear to confer an improvement in the participants' self-esteem, even if this is perhaps ill-founded and transitory. But the point is that this type of psychological empowerment does nothing to loosen the social and economic constraints that render people *genuinely* 'helpless'. Moreover, the application of psychological techniques to the process of empowerment gives the impression of value neutrality, that is, that the client is simply enabled to identify personal choices for change and act upon them. However, the welfare professional's location within welfarist frames of reference, means that there is always a hidden agenda, for instance, the health promotion officer engaged in an empowerment initiative may claim that s/he is simply enabling clients to make informed choices, even if those choices are unhealthy, but the objectives of reduced smoking or alcohol consumption are always presented as the preferred outcome (Brown & Piper, 1995).

This hidden-agenda is not a product of contingency, but a product of the professionals location within the state and welfarist frames of reference, as Grace suggests:

> *Although the discourse attempts to position the community as being 'in control', being the initiator, there is still an external agent in a background role that has controlling implications. The use of concepts such as 'enabling' and 'empowering' serves as a way of disguising this role. It appears as*

though the professional is facilitating what already exists in the community. On closer inspection, it is possible to see the existence of a priori concepts of the professional that are directive and strongly implicated in the succeeding action. (Grace, 1991, p.331)

The politics of empowerment constitute a specific welfarist frame of reference, which serves to interpellate the individual into a fixed range of self-identities. These identities lie on the points of intersection between two continua: victim-oppressor and client-professional. The continua can intersect at any point, giving an infinitely nuanced range of identities, but consideration of the extreme points of each continua gives four ideal types represented in the following diagram:

	Victim	*Oppressor*
Client	A	B
(Quasi) Professional	C	D

Each of the cells A-D represents a different potential self-identity for the participants in an empowerment initiative to inhabit: client/victim, client/oppressor, professional/victim, professional/oppressor. As we saw earlier, the 'professional' identities are nominally available to lay participants, as quasi-professionals. The identities are not fixed, and a client may switch identities over time or in different contexts. The important thing to note is that the identities are intersection points on two continua. Thus, to become less of a client one must become more of a professional, primarily by internalising professional skills and knowledge, (welfarist frames of reference), but also by becoming one who acts on others, (for example, by empowering them or relieving their stress), rather than one who is acted upon. Similarly, becoming less of a victim entails becoming more of an oppressor, because the individual moves from being someone whose interests are subordinated to the will of others, to being someone who subordinates other people's interests to his/her own will.

The different self-identities can be freely adopted by the individual, or forcibly imposed on others. The moral desirability of each identity is not fixed, but varies

depending on the context. With WHAP this can be seen in the points of conflict described in the previous chapter, for example, the smoking issue was characterised by an unseemly scramble to appropriate the identity of client/victim, and impose the identity of professional/oppressor on the others. For the anti-smoking lobby the smokers were client/oppressors, harming themselves and others by their unhealthy (and therefore unprofessional) behaviour. However, for the pro-smoking lobby, the smokers were client/victims, requiring help to enable them to cope with the stress caused by their oppression, whilst the anti-smokers were professional/oppressors, using their professional knowledge (about the association between passive smoking and ill health) to dominate others. In this instance the day was won by the professional/victims, whose willingness to go against their professional judgement and risk their health in order not to 'oppress' the smokers, enabled them to seize the high moral ground.

Conversely, with the racism issue the professional/oppressors were able to use their putative anti-racism skills to exercise control over group members allegedly on behalf of ethnic minority client/victims. It is important to note the way in which every issue is reduced to one of interpersonal relations rather than structural change. Each issue can be vehemently contested, but the grounds for that contest are always subjective knowledge versus professional expertise, victimhood versus the oppression of others. It is never possible to be neither professional nor client, or to be neither victim nor oppressor. Moving beyond one's subjective beliefs must always entail the acquisition of professional knowledge; to reject the label of victim must always be to risk oppressing others.

As with any belief system the occasional heretic must be burned to shore up the faith of the true believers. With empowerment it is those who refuse to define their self-identity in terms of the victim-oppressor client-professional continua, who are likely to be excommunicated. WHAP's disciplining of Denise is an example of this process. Initially her psychotic behaviour clearly identified her as a potential client/victim, however, her reluctance to accept this label and willingly undergo treatment meant that her actions had adverse consequences for the other volunteers, for whom she became a client/oppressor. This transition is vital because it provides a moral justification for the full coercive powers of the state to be deployed against the

individual, which in this case entailed forced admission to a psychiatric hospital. However, on her release Denise refused to comply with the identity that she had been ascribed; rather than displaying contrition for the sin of oppressing her fellow volunteers, she protested her innocence, and claimed that the project members had treated her unfairly. This direct challenge to the legitimacy of the project could not go unanswered, and WHAP had 'no choice' but to expel her. It is dangerous to speculate, but had Denise accepted the identity she was ascribed, apologised to her colleagues for 'oppressing' them, and laid claim to the identity of client/victim, by emphasising the social causes of her psychosis and her willingness to comply with a treatment regimen, then the outcome might have been different.

That the process of empowerment tends to interpellate people into specific identities can be observed in other initiatives. For instance, Stevenson & Parsloe report the following finding from their study of community care staff engaged in empowerment practice:

Some staff we met appeared to think that involving others required a passive stance on the workers' part, in which they listened and then did what the user requested. In fact this is not at all what empowerment entails. It requires an active worker ready to share ideas and thoughts and to ensure that the other has the advantage of hearing different points of view. It may also mean being almost brutally clear, as one carer we met told us. He told us he could not look at his own needs until one day his social worker said 'you daft bugger, the penny still hasn't dropped. You are the patient. We can't do anything for your wife - it's you we've got to look after.' This carer saw this 'levelling' as a turning point in a process which led to his growth in confidence which found expression in his joining the local Alzheimer Society (he is now its president). (Stevenson & Parsloe, 1993, p.11)

Thus the empowerment process begins when the client 'recognises' himself as a client/victim, and is completed when he achieves the quasi-professional status of · president of the Alzheimer Society. A second example comes from Holland et al (1991) in their study of women's attitudes towards safer sex. It is suggested that women are often unable to negotiate 'safe' sexual practices because of oppression by

their male partners. The focus on condom use in traditional health promotion campaigns is claimed to reflect a compromise with *'patriarchal demands for penetrative sex'*, whilst use of the contraceptive pill *'allows women to meet men's needs without challenging the power dimension of the sexual situation'*. Unfortunately, such women fail to recognise the 'oppressive' nature of 'male' sexuality, and may even see it as emancipatory:

> *The male model* [of sexuality] *stresses the freedom of the individual to engage in sexual relationships without personal obligation. This disguises inequalities of power and control in sexual relationships with a liberal discourse of personal choice. It is an attractive model of sexual empowerment for young women who are trying to take control of their own lives and are resisting a passive model of female sexuality, but it does not allow women to recognise or challenge male power.* (Holland et al, 1991, p.12)

Again there is the moral assumption that women are incapable of regulating their own inter-personal (in this case sexual) relations without the intervention of an external agent. In order to be empowered the women must 'recognise' themselves as oppressed; the contraceptive pill (arguably the greatest guarantor of female emancipation in the post-war period) must be recognised as a sop to men's sexual needs, and promiscuous sex must be recognised as a form of patriarchal oppression. Rather than campaigning for free abortion on demand or an end to the dual standard that condemns women for promiscuity but rewards men, the pursuit of reproductive rights is transformed into the need to recognise one's lover as an oppressor, and either exercise self-restraint or regulate the terms of the sexual act:

> *...empowering women could mean: not engaging in sexual activity; not engaging in sexual activity without informed consent; getting men to consent to safer practices; negotiating sexual practices that are pleasurable to women as well as to men.* (Holland et al, 1991, p.6)

The middle-class desire to regulate working class sexuality is hardly a novel phenomenon, but the way that empowerment aims to achieve that objective is new. Rather than imposing external constraints on women's sexual activity, for example, by

confining women to the domestic sphere, or by the imposition of repressive moral or religious sanctions, empowerment encourages women to internalise the moral imperative and become self-regulating. This is achieved by facilitating the adoption of a client/victim self-identity - sexual freedom becomes a risk, sexual partners become oppressors, welfare professionals become allies enabling the 'victim' to be more assertive in her sexual denial. Of course there is no guarantee that women will accept this self-identity, but the fact that sexual temperance can be presented as a form of emancipation indicates the way in which psychological empowerment is bound up with the new authoritarianism.

Increased consciousness of personal risk appears to be a common theme amongst empowerment initiatives, particularly those concerned with health. In such cases empowerment tends to be couched in terms of risk-avoidance, risk-management, or the acquisition of 'survival' skills. This gives rise to a very conservative form of consciousness that emphasises: the fragility of the individual, the threat posed by active engagement with society or the environment, the need to exercise self-discipline to avoid harm, and the need to contain the 'dangerous' behaviour of others, either by personal persuasion, or by calling for state intervention. Even one's most intimate social contacts become potential threats, potential oppressors, and one's only ally is the empowering welfare professional. Rather than providing the basis for collective struggle against the state-form and other social and economic structures of oppression, empowerment entails the mis-recognition that social relations are inevitably oppressive and damaging, and that our best hope for survival is individual self-defence, facilitated by the empowering welfare professional and backed up by the repressive apparatus of the state. The process of empowerment entails active internalisation of this new authoritarianism.

We have already noted that although empowerment is often defined as a continuum that proceeds from developing the psychological competence of the individual, through group work and consciousness raising, to social action, there is a tendency to concentrate on the individual end of the continuum, and overlook the broader project of collective social action. But, this is not exclusively so, and even WHAP made tentative steps to bring about change beyond the immediate confines of the group. However, because empowerment operates within the parameters of welfarist frames of

reference the scope for genuinely emancipatory activity is extremely limited, creating a tendency for collective social action to be re-defined as the pursuit of minor objectives.

WHAP's failure to achieve change through the communicative model of knowledge and action, contributed to the belief that any attempt to obtain control over the social, economic and environmental influences on health was likely to fail. Although WHAP continued to send representatives to participate in local statutory bodies, such efforts were often felt to be tokenistic and ineffective, leading to the conclusion that the local state was either unwilling or unable to bring about significant social change. This culture of low expectations is evident in other empowerment initiatives, and it creates a tendency to exaggerate the significance of quite minor gains. In this climate 'achievements' like: blocking the construction of a new by-pass or industrial development, or the acquisition of additional service provision by the state, or the granting of minor sums of money for community projects, take on the appearance of major political victories, for example, Mullender & Ward (1991), write of the Ainsley Teenage Action Group's successful five year struggle to have a 'youth-hut' built on local waste ground.

The tendency to present minor gains as major achievements can be found elsewhere in the empowerment literature, and it is often claimed that such gains are the beginning of something much bigger. For example, Friedman (1992) discusses empowerment in the context of 'alternative development' in the third world, and writes of the way in which the most deprived sections of the urban poor manage to survive on the margins of the formal economy by developing 'popular economic organisations'. For example, the 'ollas communes' where food is collectively produced and cooked. For Friedman these informal organisations provide an empowering experience that may eventually lead to collective political struggle:

> *In addition to solving a major problem of malnutrition, especially amongst children, participation in an Olla also teaches about the values of organisation, joint decision-making and leadership.* (Friedman, 1992, p.23)

Capitalism oppresses people in different ways, and whilst the capacity to scrape a living on the margins of the formal economy might be considered laudable, it is surely a mistake to confuse such activity with the seeds of emancipatory practice. Recognising the value of collective organisation may be an essential ingredient of social action, but it relates to the project of social transformation in the same way that learning to tie one's shoe-laces relates to running a marathon - it may be a necessary first step, but realisation of one's ultimate goal depends upon much more, and the road to success is littered with obstacles.

This is one of the main failings of empowerment as a model of emancipatory practice; as we saw above, the process is based upon a completist logic in which individuals endowed with a basic degree of psychological competence identify their collective needs through group-work and consciousness raising, and ensure that they are met through specific forms of social action. Perhaps because of the need to demonstrate tangible success to statutory or charitable funding agencies, the long haul from the collective identification of 'needs', to the achievement of genuine social change, becomes ridiculously compressed, giving the impression that one need only establish a small community group to be on the verge of genuine political power.

Of course, this theoretical 'compression' is impossible to sustain within its own terms. In the current historical conjuncture, when the traditional forms of oppositional political organisation are all but defunct, the development of a powerful emancipatory social movement must be viewed as a long-term project. But empowerment initiatives have neither the time, nor the autonomy, to commence the drawn out process of building such a movement - they need demonstrable results and they need them quickly, hence the elevation of minor gains to the status of political victories. The completist logic of empowerment has two consequences. First, it lowers expectations of the potential for change through autonomous social action by focusing on short-term pragmatic campaigns. Secondly, the perceived impotence of direct action, coupled with frustrated attempts at achieving change through community participation in the statutory agencies, leads to calls for a stronger and more interventionist state. Thus Friedman, perhaps in anticipation of the limited emancipatory potential of collective cookery, reluctantly admits the need for a strong state:

Although an alternative development must begin locally, it cannot end there. Like it or not, the state continues to be a major player. It may need to be more accountable to poor people and more responsive to their claims. But without the state's collaboration, the lot of the poor cannot be significantly improved. Local empowering action requires a strong state. (Friedman, 1992, p.7)

Note, empowerment depends not just on the state, but on the action of a *strong* state; and here lies one of the main contradictions of the approach. For all their radical rhetoric about changing the balance of power between the state and civil society, for all their claims about combating oppression, the advocates of empowerment are ultimately obliged to call for a strengthening of the state's powers. As we have already noted, this contradiction is reinforced by the politics of empowerment; more specifically, the pluralistic conception of oppression gives rise to the belief that inter-personal relations must be regulated by an external agent. As new striations of oppression are discovered, (according to the pluralist model the number is infinite), the policing function of the state must increase commensurately. From this perspective the chief problem with the state is not its oppressive character, but its inability to expand rapidly enough to protect the individual from harm and oppression. Rather than challenging the coercive powers of the state, empowerment initiatives are more likely to help shore-up its powers of surveillance and control, ensuring that they are used effectively, and shouldering the burden themselves where possible.

We have already noted that the politics of empowerment tends to give rise to an increased consciousness of personal risk and anxiety, encouraging the individual to modify their own 'risky' behaviour and police the behaviour of oppressive others. This tendency is reinforced by the broader ideology of health promotion, as Lupton (after Armstrong, 1993) has noted:

To deal with the complexity of disease causation in modern societies and the need to maintain continuing surveillance of all members of the population, health promotion has engendered a 'vast network of observation and caution' throughout society, involving the participation of all citizens in the generation and regulation of anxieties around public health. (Lupton, 1995, pp.51-52)

This self-policing of behaviour and inter-personal relations is complemented by an equally strong imperative towards greater state intervention. The perception is of a major threat lurking behind every bush, and whatever the threat, be it: unsafe food, mini-buses without seat-belts, the abduction of babies from hospital maternity wards, domestic violence, joy-riding, air-pollution, (the list is endless), the response is always the same - the state must implement new regulations and tighter controls. Community empowerment takes place within, and contributes to, this broader climate of fear and social regulation. As well as providing a conduit through which calls for greater statutory regulation can be articulated, empowerment also provides the welfare professional with both reason and opportunity to become yet more involved in the surveillance and control of everyday life, either to administer survival techniques, like stress counselling, or to promote anti-oppressive values, as Baistow suggests:

> *...far from being left robeless, or less powerful, by the process of user empowerment, professionals are increasingly being seen as being central to it in a number of ways which extend rather than reduce their involvement and intervention in the everyday life of citizens. Furthermore, whilst professionals are becoming an essential ingredient of empowerment, empowerment is increasingly being seen as central to their professional raison d'être and legitimacy.* (Baistow, 1994, p.39)

We began this concluding chapter by posing the question of whether WHAP succeeded in empowering its lay participants and members of the wider community. If empowerment is defined as the process by which people become more competent social actors and more effective agents of social change, then the conclusion must be that WHAP failed to achieve this aim. The volunteers may have gained in terms of self-esteem, some may even have marginally improved their chances of gaining paid employment, but as a means of obtaining greater control over the social and economic influences on health WHAP could offer very little beyond the mythical fantasy of quasi-professionalism and a tokenistic participation in the affairs of local statutory agencies. The broader population appear to have gained even less from WHAP, although the small number of local residents who attended the Drop-in centre may have gained some benefit from the 'services' on offer there, at least in terms of momentary relief from loneliness and isolation.

Generally, the form of consciousness that WHAP gave rise to was one of low expectations, first, of the psychological competence of the individual, and secondly, of the possibility of social change. To the extent that WHAP retained its commitment to social action, this entailed little more than the provision of services at the Drop-in and lobbying local statutory agencies to obtain additional funding for the project and for the implementation of minor reforms to existing local services. It was concluded that WHAP's model of community empowerment amounted to little more than a myth, promising to give greater control over the social and economic influences on health, but delivering only a meagre boost to self-esteem, tokenistic participation in local statutory agencies, low expectations of the possibility of social change, and greater surveillance and regulation by welfare professionals.

The conclusions drawn from WHAP can be generalised to other initiatives where the same social relations prevail between the state, welfare professionals, and clients/members of the community. The politics of empowerment were found to comprise: a pluralist model of oppression in which virtually anyone could occupy the identity of victim or oppressor, a subjectivist approach to knowledge that prioritised personal experience and problematised professional expertise, a purely ideational conception of welfarist frames of reference that ignored their material basis and suggested that the oppressive aspects of professional practice could be dismantled without challenging the professional's location within the state, and a moral imperative suggesting that the consciousness and inter-personal relations of 'clients' require regulation by an external agent.

The politics of empowerment were found to provide a 'mask' for the practice of welfare professionals, enabling them to adopt and believe in the self-identity of a progressive political activist, claiming to confer upon their clients the psychological competence, critical consciousness, and organisational capacity, to engage in emancipatory social action. Each of these claims was found to be false. Instead community empowerment was found to be a welfarist frame of reference that interpellated individuals into a fixed range of self-identities, the ideal types of which were: client/victim, client/oppressor, professional/victim, and professional/oppressor. Rather than empowering the individual, such identities were consistent with an

increased consciousness of risk, a focus on inter-personal relations rather than the structural basis of oppression, internalisation of professionally determined behavioural norms, and calls for professional/statutory intervention to regulate the behaviour of others. The forms of consciousness that community empowerment gives rise to were found to be consistent with and contribute to a broader ideology, referred to as the new authoritarianism.

It was concluded that community empowerment is nothing more than a mask concealing the exercise of state power. Adoption of this bogus self-identity enables welfare professionals who might otherwise be reluctant to engage in the social control of their clients to believe that they are engaged in progressive political activity. Lay participants are also caught up in the myth, mistaking the exercise of surveillance and regulation by the state for the beginnings of emancipation. Grace (1991) has noted the ironic character of such initiatives in the health promotion field:

It is ironic that a discourse articulating a concern to promote health in the name of freedom and 'wholeness' functions to alienate people from their capacity to engage in protest, and effectively operates to subordinate them further to the political and economic order. (Grace, 1991, p.341)

The contradictory character of community empowerment comes from the professional's location within the state, or more specifically his/her interpellation within welfarist frames of reference. Subjectively the welfare professional might side with the oppressed and be consciously committed to their emancipation, but while ever this aim is pursued through professional practice it cannot be realised; the welfare professional cannot objectively take the side of the oppressed until s/he steps outside of welfarist frames of reference and the professional self-identity, but such activity is qualitatively different to community empowerment.

Summary of Conclusions

Chapter 1: Five Modes of Empowerment

In chapter one we found that in its broadest sense empowerment was a politically ambiguous and contested category. Generally, empowerment could be described as the attempt to overcome alienation, to obtain greater control over the extraneous influences on life, not via traditional forms of political organisation such as the political party or the trade union, but by a varied and constantly changing series of activities - empowerment was found to be politics by 'other' means.

It was also concluded that as a form of emancipatory activity empowerment lacked a clearly discernible history prior to the early 1970s. Forms of empowering practice were found to exist before this time, but were not labelled as such. Five such 'modes of empowerment were considered, in order to trace the diverse origins of modern empowerment and predict its emancipatory potential, they were: consumerism, citizenship, self-help, community participation, and community development. An historical-logical analysis was conducted to identify the changing conditions of existence and internal logic of each model.

The analysis revealed that the emancipatory potential of the first four modes of empowerment was constrained by their self-limiting internal logic. Consumerism provided scientific knowledge about the quality and value for money of different commodities, empowering the shopper to make more informed purchases. But the models dependence upon the market mechanism and state regulation meant that consumerism could never confer the right to participate in planning or decision-making about the production and distribution of goods and services, and was, therefore, extremely limited as an emancipatory strategy.

Citizenship had more ambitious emancipatory objectives, aiming to achieve universal civil, political, and welfare rights, recognised and enforced by the state. However, the granting of equal rights before the law masked the persistence of social and economic divisions that led to inequalities of power. The state's inability to address the

structural basis of inequality meant that citizenship also had a self-limiting internal logic.

Unlike consumerism or citizenship, self-help was found to have a critical perspective on the state. Rather than calling for state intervention, either to regulate the market or safeguard rights, self-help focused on the inner resources of the individual and advocated autonomous self-advancement either through personal improvement or mutual aid. However, in its modern form self-help had evolved into a deeply fragmented series of support groups, critical of the paternalism and insensitivity of existing welfare provision. In place of scientific knowledge and professional service provision, self-help initiatives gave primacy to the subjective knowledge of the individual 'victim' and the provision of mutual support by fellow sufferers. Whilst the anti-professional stance of some self-help initiatives gave the movement a radical appearance, the adoption of a subjectivist epistemology denied the possibility of collective social action, and again it was concluded that this mode of empowerment had a self-limiting internal logic.

'Community Participation' aimed to empower representatives of the community by enabling them to directly participate in statutory sector planning and decision-making. Again it was felt that this represented a self-limiting internal logic that was not consistent with emancipatory activity, first, because it entailed the assumption that the solution of social problems was the sole preserve of the state, and therefore, overlooked the structural basis of inequality and powerlessness, and secondly, because the powers conferred on lay participants were extremely marginal.

As with the other modes of empowerment, community development faced a contradictory relationship to prevailing economic relations, the state-form, statutory services and the production of knowledge. However, unlike the other modes of empowerment community development confronted these potential constraints as external phenomena, rather than incorporating them into its internal logic. Whilst the possibility remained that community development initiatives would be co-opted by the state, or dominated by welfare professionals, or slide into a politically impotent subjectivism, there remained the theoretical possibility that such initiatives might also adopt a critical perspective, collectively identifying needs, and engaging in

emancipatory political activity to ensure that they were met. Whereas the emancipatory potential of the other modes of empowerment could be dismissed because of their self-limiting internal logic, community development required empirical study in a specific context. It was concluded that the Waterfront Health Action Project provided an opportunity to compile a case study of community development, focusing on its relationship with the state, the production of knowledge, and the consciousness it engenders in lay participants, to ascertain the model's emancipatory potential in the current conjuncture.

Chapter 2: Case Study - The Waterfront Health Action Project

The purpose of the second chapter was descriptive rather than analytical, however, the process of describing WHAP's aims and objectives, the people involved, the changing activities conducted over the course of the project, and the contradictions and conflicts that occurred along the way, did yield a number of conclusions. First, WHAP's point of departure was clearly close to the community development model described in chapter one; the intention was to form a partnership with local people to enable them to identify their health needs and take collective action to meet them. However, the case study revealed that as WHAP progressed it moved further away from community development, towards what we have described as 'community empowerment' where the focus was much more upon developing the self-esteem and interpersonal competence of the volunteers, providing 'services' to other local residents, and influencing the decision making of local statutory agencies.

As well as indicating the above transformation, the case study also revealed the form in which some of the issues raised in chapter one presented themselves in the context of WHAP. For instance, the contradictory relationship between empowerment and the state presented itself as a questioning of professional power and the traditional professional role. Similarly, the question of epistemology arose as WHAP attempted to produce a body of knowledge that was acceptable to the statutory agencies, but which also articulated the authentic 'voice' of the community. It was concluded that the production of knowledge, the attempt to dismantle professional power, and the pursuit of community empowerment, were the key themes of the WHAP case study, and that they should be examined at length in the remaining chapters.

From the case study materials and interview transcripts it was found that the decision to produce an emancipatory body of knowledge was taken by WHAP's professionals before members of the community became involved in the project. The process was based on a 'communicative model of knowledge and action', the characteristics of which were found to be: first, that local statutory agencies were likely to be the primary agents of change, in terms of improving the health of local people, secondly, that local statutory agencies had previously failed to act on the community's needs and preferences because they lacked authentic knowledge of those needs, and thirdly, that WHAP would be able to articulate the authentic 'voice' of the local community in a form that was acceptable to the statutory agencies, thereby enabling them to act in the community's interests.

Critique of the communicative model of knowledge and action revealed that it overlooked the fact that the local state and welfare professionals were structurally alienated from the local population. Rather than recognising the structural constraints limiting the statutory agencies' capacity to act in the community's interests, WHAP transposed the problem of alienation to a discursive level, to be addressed via the production of knowledge. However, it was concluded that the problem of alienation resurfaced during the production and dissemination of knowledge, giving rise to the conflictual issues of cultural synthesis, subjectivity/objectivity, science/ideology, and mediation.

Essentially the professionals attempted to overcome their structural alienation by forming a partnership, or cultural synthesis, with local people, however, their location within the state meant that they were obliged to produce knowledge in a suitable form to influence the statutory agencies, rather than to inform autonomous action by the local population. This contradiction was transposed into a methodological and epistemological debate about whether the research process should aim to capture the subjective beliefs of local people, or produce objective data about, for instance, their health status. It also led to a debate about whether the research report should simply

articulate the 'scientific' findings of the survey, or whether it should also include ideological analysis and proposals for change.

It was found that the problem of alienation was not, and indeed could not be, resolved at the discursive level. This became apparent when WHAP attempted to mediate the findings of the survey. The local community had simply been the object of study, and the report aimed to provoke the statutory agencies to act on their behalf rather than involving them in an active process of change, consequently the public meetings held to report the findings of the survey were poorly attended and the findings were ignored by the majority of Thamesmead residents. Similarly, although the statutory agencies were more attentive to the presentation of results, they were unable, or unwilling, to act on them, beyond the provision of a minimal amount of funding to enable WHAP to continue. It was concluded that, in terms of enabling the local community to obtain greater control over the social and economic factors affecting health, the WHAP survey had failed.

The failure of the survey contributed to a transformation in the character of the project. WHAP had begun as a community development project, aiming to: form a partnership with local people, enable them to identify their needs, and develop a process of social action. However, the failure of the survey to bring about change led to a lowering of expectations, and the project increasingly focused on individual psychological empowerment of the volunteers and the provision of self-help services at the Drop-in centre.

It was found that the communicative model of knowledge and action was characteristic of other community development initiatives that attempted to adapt techniques developed in a context of revolutionary struggle in the third world to the de-politicised practice of welfare professionals in the west. The result was a failure to conceptualise the extent to which the relationship of alienation between the state and the community limited the prospects of emancipatory activity. The welfare professionals' location within the state also contributed to a second problem, the failure to adopt a critical social research methodology. Such an approach would entail historical and structural analysis, deconstruction or critique of phenomenal forms, and a praxiological orientation that entailed linking the production of knowledge to the

struggle to achieve social change. The welfare professionals were unaware of critical social research methodology, and in any case their location within the state obliged them to adopt a positivist approach instead.

A post-modernist critique was also presented as an alternative reading of WHAP's difficulty in producing emancipatory knowledge. For post-modernists the assumed viability of social solidarity, emancipatory knowledge, and collective action, represents a modernist myth that cannot be recognised under any circumstances. However, the post-modernist approach was found to be self-contradictory and generally unsatisfactory. It was, therefore, concluded that whilst the production of emancipatory knowledge remained a viable project, it could not be achieved within community development projects like WHAP because the welfare professionals' location within the state rendered them incapable of objectively 'taking the side of' the local population - they were therefore unable to address the structural basis of alienation, or adopt a critical social research methodology.

Chapter 4: The Challenge to Professional Power

It was concluded that the welfare professionals location within the state meant that their involvement in WHAP was contradictory. On one hand they brought professional expertise and access to resources, but they were also obliged to act as agents of social control, exercising surveillance and regulation over their 'clients', and to resolve 'social problems' within welfarist frames of reference rather than through autonomous emancipatory activity.

The contradictory location of the professionals led them to experience role conflict. Subjectively their sympathies lay with the local residents whom they wanted to empower, but their professional role rendered them incapable of doing so. Although this contradiction originated in the relationship between the professionals and the state, it was transposed to the relationship between the professionals and local people. Therefore, the professionals sought to overcome their alienation, not by seeking greater autonomy from the state, but by trying to achieve cultural synthesis with representatives of the local community. This entailed establishing an informal or 'off-

duty' relationship with the volunteers, building up mutual trust, and providing access to professional expertise in the non-threatening environment of the Drop-in.

However, it was concluded that although WHAP had succeeded in building a more trusting relationship between the welfare professionals and volunteers/Drop-in users, this was not sufficient to diminish the exercise of professional power. It was found that in order to utilise professional expertise and the resources at their disposal WHAP was obliged to activate welfarist frames of reference. This became apparent whenever WHAP addressed an issue or difficulty. Developing an effective organisational form led to the emulation of the bureaucratic model of authority characteristic of public administration. The problem of smoking at the Drop-in was addressed by conceptualising smokers as helpless victims in need of professional services. Accusations of racism were used to justify professional dominance of the decision-making process on the grounds that multi-culturalism was an area of professional expertise. The disciplining of an aberrant volunteer, provided grounds for resurrecting the type of contractual relationship that prevails between an employer and employee. All of which served to reproduce and reinforce the relationship of dominance and passivity between the state and the 'clients' of welfare professionals.

Rather than empowering the volunteers WHAP embroiled them more deeply in welfarist frames of reference, subordinating them to even greater professional surveillance and regulation. It was concluded that, despite contrary intentions, rather than dismantling professional power WHAP had only succeeded in extending its exercise.

Different theories of professional power were considered, but it was concluded that the most appropriate was that which explained the power of welfare professionals as a function of state-power. Historical analysis of the state form revealed its class character and its role in the reproduction of oppressive social and economic relations. However, the WHAP study had revealed that welfare professionals were often reluctant bearers of state-power, that they might be subjectively committed to · emancipating local people rather than facilitating their subordination to the state. This raised the question of why welfare professionals who were subjectively committed to

emancipatory practice were apparently so unsuccessful in their attempt to avoid exercising state-power.

It was concluded that the professionals' location within the state meant that the adoption of a professional self-identity entailed interpellation within welfarist frames of reference. Welfarist frames of reference were found to be simultaneously ideational and material in content, both of which were structured by dominant social and economic relations. To become a welfare professional entailed defining one's self-identity in terms of welfarist frames of reference, and containing one's practice within their narrow constraints. To challenge the validity of welfarist frames of reference would entail denying one's self-identity, in terms of professional values, status, et cetera, and coming into conflict with an increasingly constraining managerial structure of control. There were therefore strong incentives for welfare professionals to structure their practical activity in terms of 'good professional practice', unfortunately, this meant that even when they were subjectively committed to emancipatory activity their actions only served to reinforce state-power.

Whilst it remained theoretically possible that welfare professionals could shake off their professional self-identity and engage in genuine emancipatory activity, this could not be achieved by attempting to reform the professional role, but only by stepping outside of the state and welfarist frames of reference, and engaging in autonomous emancipatory activity.

Chapter 5: The Myth of Community Empowerment

It had been noted in chapter two that WHAP had taken the community development model as its point of departure, but had evolved into a community empowerment initiative. The final chapter described the new model and evaluated its emancipatory potential.

A key aspect of this transformation was found to be a shift in focus away from the broad project of producing emancipatory knowledge as a basis for social action, towards the more introspective goals of raising the self-esteem and inter-personal

competence of the volunteers, and providing social support services to the Drop-in users. This was partly a response to the statutory agencies failure to act on the findings of the survey, and also the volunteers desire to conduct charitable activities and acquire new skills, as a potential route into paid employment.

WHAP improved the self-esteem of the volunteers by enabling them to adopt a quasi-professional identity, in which they acquired social support and skills such as counselling and stress management, that could then be used to provide a service to Drop-in users. However, although this gave a transitory boost to the self-esteem of the volunteers, it was concluded that it did little to emancipate them or their 'clients'. In fact the quasi-professional identity was largely a myth; embroiling the volunteers more deeply in welfarist frames of reference, and subordinating them more thoroughly to professional surveillance and regulation.

Enabling the volunteers to adopt a mythical quasi-professional identity entailed positing the remainder of the community as impaired individuals in need of professional or quasi-professional services to enable them to cope. By positing the local community as helpless victims of adversity, WHAP lowered expectations of the community's capacity to engage in autonomous social action. In effect WHAP reproduced the traditional relationship between the state, welfare professionals and 'clients'. The Drop-in centre fronted by the volunteers provided an informal 'front-end' bringing sections of the population that had previously been difficult to reach within the purview of professional surveillance and regulation.

Many of WHAP's professional members felt that the project had failed to address the social and economic influences on health, so volunteers were still encouraged to participate in local decision-making agencies. However, it was concluded that such involvement was largely tokenistic, whilst it entailed the volunteers taking on board and legitimating the activities and agendas of local statutory agencies, very few concessions or benefits for the community were obtained. This further lowered expectations about the viability of change.

Consideration of the literature on empowerment showed that many other initiatives had adopted a similar model. Community empowerment was found to be based on a

political theory that stressed a pluralist model of oppression and a subjectivist conception of knowledge. This legitimated the intervention of welfare professionals, to directly mediate inter-personal relationships between different oppressed groups, and led 'clients' to internalise a culture of victimhood, personal risk, self-regulation and low expectations of the capacity for autonomous collective action.

It was concluded that the ideology of community empowerment provides a 'mask' which enables welfare professionals to exercise state power whilst deluding themselves and their clients that they are engaged in emancipatory activity. Rather than enabling people to obtain greater control over the social and economic forces that constrain their personal freedom, and limit the satisfaction of their needs, community empowerment expands the state's capacity to exercise surveillance and regulation of everyday life, whilst simultaneously giving rise to a culture of personal risk, dependency on the state, and low expectations of the capacity for autonomous political action. As such, community empowerment programmes are an operational arm of the new authoritarianism.

Appendix 1: Methodology

The production of knowledge was a central theme of this study, not just in chapter three where WHAP's attempt to produce an alternative body of knowledge about local health needs was examined, but throughout the thesis as a whole. Many issues arose about the relationships between: subjective beliefs and objective knowledge, the production of knowledge and the exercise of power, and knowledge production and emancipatory social action. In chapter three the limitations of the positivist methodology adopted by WHAP were contrasted with an approach described as critical social research, and it was concluded that the latter was an essential element of emancipatory practice. Many of the contradictions and difficulties of knowledge production encountered by WHAP are also pertinent to my own study and the methodology I adopted. Here I want to explore my attempts to address those issues, and particularly the difficulty of combining ethnography with a critical social research methodology.

Critical Ethnography

Generally, the approach I adopted can be described as qualitative, because my intention was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the meanings and definitions of the situation of the people I studied, rather than to produce a quantitative 'measurement' of their characteristics or behaviour. This concern to reveal the subjective beliefs of those being studied is common to ethnography, participant observation, and the various other strands of qualitative research. For many qualitative researchers the subjective beliefs of the people being studied have explanatory primacy over the theoretical knowledge of the researcher, thus Jorgensen suggests:

> *While the researcher may have a theoretical interest in being there, exactly what concepts are important, how they are or are not related, and what, therefore, is problematic should remain open and subject to refinement and definition based on what the researcher is able to uncover and observe.*
> (Jorgensen, 1989, p.18)

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The ethnographer's concern to avoid imposing a theoretical framework of meanings and definitions perhaps originates from the anthropological study of low technology tribal cultures in the third world, where the intention was mainly to describe cross-cultural variations in social behaviour and beliefs. Methodologically this entailed detailed observation and interaction by the researcher, in order to see the world 'through the eyes' of the people being studied. The same approach has been adapted to the study of sub-cultures within western society, most notably in the classic studies conducted by the Chicago School and succeeding generations of neo-Chicagoans. As Downes and Rock have noted, the primary imperative for such research is to catalogue and describe a particular worldview without imposing external theoretical schema:

> *The interactionist takes his job to be the documentation of the social worlds that constitute a society. He methodically plots the connections between communication, meaning, symbolism, and action. He would claim that there is little profit in imposing alien interpretative schemes on a world: people do not build their lives on the logic of sociology or the sensibilities of foreign groups. They have their own methods of doing things together.* (Downes & Rock, 1986, p.143)

Whilst this approach has yielded a diverse and colourful variety of descriptions of everyday life, it poses a number of problems or limitations when viewed from the perspective of critical social research. First, no attempt is made to place the beliefs and behaviour of the people being studied into a historical or structural context; it is considered sufficient to simply describe different forms of consciousness without trying to explain how and why they developed. This leads to a second problem - the tendency to adopt an uncritical attitude to the beliefs and consciousness of subjects, without considering their epistemological adequacy or their emancipatory potential. The result is a form of voyeuristic relativism where everyone's testimony is accorded equal status, and no attempt is made either to explain or inform the development of consciousness.

Superficially, such an approach appears to be the epitome of a value-free sociology; rather than passing judgement on the lives of others the researcher becomes an

impartial reporter enabling subjects to express their own definition of the situation. However, the reluctance to address the processes by which different forms of consciousness are socially and historically constructed, coupled with the absence of any evaluation of the epistemological status and emancipatory potential of a set of beliefs, amounts to little more than a passive legitimation of dominant ideology. Moreover, it is based on an assumed antagonism between social theory and the immediate experience of everyday life. Rather than the means of obtaining a critical consciousness of ideological oppression, social theory is conceptualised as an inevitable part of the dominant ideology - something to be resisted and struggled against, rather than a basis for emancipatory activity. In short, it is assumed that the sociologist has everything to learn from the people s/he studies, but that critical social theory can have no reciprocal role in their emancipation.

In the light of such criticisms a new generation of 'critical' ethnographers (Hammersley 1992) have attempted to synthesise the traditional focus on the meanings and definitions of those involved in a social phenomenon with the insights gained from social critique. The objective is still to access the subjective beliefs of the people being studied, but rather than accepting such beliefs at face value they are examined critically in the context of a broader historical and structural analysis. Whilst Hammersley is keen to distance himself from critical ethnography, he recognises the value of this shift in emphasis:

> ... we have no grounds for dismissing the validity of participant understandings outright: indeed they are a crucial source of knowledge, deriving as they do from experience of the social world. However, they are certainly not immune to assessment, nor to explanation. They must be treated in exactly the same manner as social scientific accounts. (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p.234)

Crucially, appraisal of the testimony of respondents amounts to much more than simply checking that they are telling the truth, it entails looking at the processes that shaped their views and assessing the extent to which they may be distorted by ideology. The intention is not primarily to 'weed-out' unreliable testimony, but to use historical analysis and sociological theory to get beneath the surface of everyday

'common-sense' assumptions in order to arrive at a deeper level of understanding that will not only be of academic interest to the researcher, but will also contribute to the development of critical consciousness amongst oppressed groups.

In chapter three I described the key characteristics of critical social research as: the application of dialectical logic which views the material and social world as in a constant state of flux, the study of phenomena over time to reveal their historical specificity, the critique or deconstruction of existing phenomenal forms and analytical categories which delves beneath the superficial appearances available to unaided common sense to reveal the network of social and economic relations that are the essential conditions of existence for a phenomenon, the exposure of previously hidden oppressive structures, and a praxiological orientation in which knowledge is considered to be inseparable from conscious practical activity in the material world. To avoid duplication readers are referred to chapter three for a more detailed exposition of these concepts. Critical social research is diverse and constantly changing, and many critical ethnographers would not share the above definition, however, they would presumably agree that critical ethnography entails synthesising the subjective accounts of the people studied with a broader historical and structural critique.

This synthesis of the insights that traditional ethnography provides into the subjective experience of everyday life, with the theoretical insights offered by social critique, is by no means easy to maintain. The possibility always remains that the analysis will slide into either a top-down deductive approach in which a pre-existing theory is simply legitimated by the selective and biased use of ethnographic data, or else into a superficial and particularistic account of the views of respondents. The aim is to ensure that the analysis is informed by both strands of inquiry, for example, that issues emerging from participant observation or ethnographic data can be placed in an historical and structural context, and that problems identified in the academic literature can influence the direction of the ethnographic study. As such, critical ethnography entails a constant inter-weaving of inductive and deductive logic. The researcher does not set out to test a pre-conceived hypothesis, nor is an entirely open-ended approach adopted, instead the researcher begins by observing the field of study, both as a participant observer and as a reviewer of academic literature. From the synthesis of

these sources a research agenda emerges that can be pursued, again, by a mixture of observation and theoretical work.

The key to managing this unstable dialectical relationship between ethnographic observation and social critique is the practice of reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to the researcher's conscious self-understanding of the research process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983), or more specifically, to a sceptical approach to the testimony of respondents (are they telling me what I want to hear?), and to the development of theoretical schema (am I seeing what I want to see?). The purpose of reflexivity is not to produce an objective or value-free account of the phenomenon, because qualitative research of this kind does not yield standardised results, as Janet Ward-Schofield has suggested:

> ... *at the heart of the qualitative approach is the assumption that a piece of qualitative research is very much influenced by the researcher's individual attributes and perspectives. The goal is* not *to produce a standardised set of results that any other careful researcher in the same situation or studying the same issues would have produced. Rather it is to produce a coherent and illuminating description of and perspective on a situation that is based on and consistent with detailed study of the situation.* (Ward-Schofield, 1993, p.202)

Thus, reflexivity is not a means of demonstrating the validity of research to an audience, but rather a personal strategy by which the researcher can manage the analytical oscillation between observation and theory. To summarise the argument so far, the methodology adopted in this study has been described as a strand of critical ethnography that aimed to link the insights gained from detailed observation of the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour of the actors involved in the phenomenon, with the theoretical insights of social critique. It was recognised that the relationship between the two strands of the methodology was difficult to manage effectively, but that the adoption of a reflexive perspective on the research process would help to achieve an appropriate balance. The account now turns to how these methodological issues were addressed in practice, from establishing relations in the field to writing up the thesis.

Selecting and gaining access to a site

Choosing an appropriate site to study, and forging a relationship with its participant members, is a key issue for all ethnographic studies. Ward-Schofield (1993) has explored the consequences of site selection for validity and *generalisability*, and suggests that both can be maximised either by selecting a 'typical' site or else conducting a multi-site study. However, there are problems with either option; first, how can one identify what constitutes a typical site without conducting at least a basic reconnaissance of all potential sites? Secondly, given that most qualitative studies are conducted by single researchers or small teams, is it viable to study multiple sites to the depth required by qualitative analysis?

Other commentators set less rigorous standards for site selection, for example, Jorgensen (1989) refers to a number of qualitative studies derived from everyday life experiences, where the researcher literally found him/herself in a fortuitous location to study a phenomenon. This was the case with my study of WHAP; I became involved in WHAP as part of my job and I found it to be an interesting phenomenon to study.

Front-end management

My professional involvement in WHAP was both an advantage and a disadvantage. On one hand it gave me a reason for being there and a pre-defined role in the group, both of which can be difficult to achieve for an outsider. But on the other hand, my involvement also led to me being identified as 'one of the professionals' with a professional outlook and a particular line of argument about how the project should develop. This close proximity to the phenomenon being studied can be viewed as an advantage, for example, some feminist writers (Stanley (ed.), 1990) have suggested that personal experience can be a vital source of inside information to be tapped as part of the research process. Nigel Fielding has also suggested that there may be advantages as well as disadvantages:

One is participating in order to get detailed data, not to provide the group with a new member. One must maintain a certain detachment in order to take that data and interpret it (sic). But it is also important to note that another problem is much less remarked in the literature, though it may be more common. This is the problem of 'not getting close enough', of adopting an approach which is too superficial and which merely provides a veneer of plausibility for an analysis to which the researcher is obviously committed.
(Fielding, 1993, p.158)

Whatever the merits of my close proximity to WHAP, it did present a potential problem of bias with regard to the in-depth interviews with WHAP members. The interviewees were familiar with my views on how WHAP should develop, and were also aware that I was responsible for some of the documents and survey work that I was asking them to comment on. Clearly there is a danger that they would either tell me what they thought I wanted to hear, or that they would simply continue with arguments that had commenced outside the interview.

There was no way of totally safeguarding against this potential source of bias, but I did try to minimise its effect. First, I attempted to modify my role in the group before the first round of interviews commenced. Thus, after the survey had been conducted and the report written, I made a positive effort to take more of a 'back seat' involvement in the project; observing meetings rather than contributing to them, arranging to attend the Drop-in during study leave rather than during 'office hours' - this enabled me to dress like the volunteers, rather than in a suit and tie! Although these changes were subtle they did alter my relationship with WHAP members, especially the volunteers, and may have reduced their perception of me as one of the professionals. Secondly, I briefed each interviewee to answer the questions as if I was an outsider who knew nothing about WHAP. Whether these measures effectively reduced the potential bias is difficult to say, but they were the best that could be done under the circumstances. Finally, I adopted a reflexive approach when analysing the data, and attempted to avoid material that I felt may have been biased in this way.

Data collection

There were three elements to the process of data collection: documentary evidence, (such as reports minutes of meetings and strategy documents), observation of the group meetings and Drop-in sessions et cetera, and in-depth interviews with the professional and volunteer members of WHAP. The documentary evidence was used to give a detailed description of WHAP, presented as a case study in chapter two. Whilst this gave basic information about who was involved and what happened when, it gave little insight into the meanings ascribed to those events by the people involved in them.

The participant observation was useful because it gave me first hand experience of WHAP as it evolved over time. Detailed field notes were not taken at the time of the observation because I felt that it would be inappropriate for the other members to see me noting down their comments and behaviour. Some post observation notes were kept, along with early attempts at interpretation and theory. With hindsight these notes could have been recorded as a much more systematic and formal research diary.

The main emphasis of the analysis was on the in-depth interviews. Most of the WHAP members involved at the time were interviewed, comprising: ten professionals (of whom 5 were interviewed twice), and five volunteers (of whom three were interviewed twice). On average the interviews lasted approximately one hour, and were all tape-recorded and transcribed by me. The first round of interviews commenced in November 1993 (by which time the survey had been conducted and the Drop-in had been open for six months), the second round concluded a year later in November 1994. The two-stage design, spread over a one year period, enabled me to capture the change in consciousness that occurred amongst the WHAP members as the project evolved from a community development initiative to community empowerment. This capacity to capture the process of change or transformation is an important aspect of the dialectical logic of critical social research - it reveals, that social phenomena are always in the process of becoming something else, and hopefully, the forces that are driving that change.
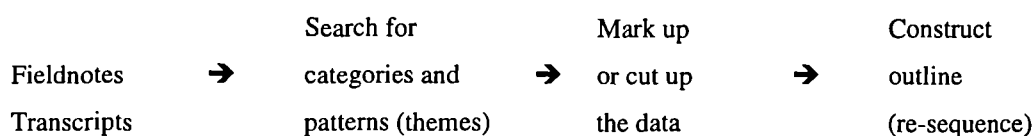
For many ethnographers the in-depth interview should be entirely open ended, with at most a series of topics to be discussed, but certainly no pre-conceived questions, as this would entail the researcher imposing his/her own definition of the situation rather than enabling the respondents to structure the research. Thus, Sue Jones suggests that pre-conceived interview schedules are unacceptable because:

> *... the interviewers have already predicted, in detail, what is relevant and meaningful to their respondents about the research topic; and in doing this they have significantly prestructured the direction of enquiry within their own frame of reference in ways that give little time and space for their respondents to elaborate their own.* (Jones, 1985, p.46)

Whilst this may be a valid approach for traditional ethnography, or where the interview is the researcher's first contact with the respondent, I would argue that critical ethnography entails a much more focused approach to interviewing, in which questions are asked about specific issues derived from the broader social critique. This is particularly the case where, as in my study, extensive participant observation has already revealed issues to be examined in greater depth in the interviews. For these reasons, I adopted relatively fixed interview schedules for both rounds of interviews (see the schedules in appendix II), although I did use them flexibly, for instance, departing from the schedule to pursue an interesting line of inquiry. Also the questions were very wide ranging and open-ended.

Data analysis

Nigel Fielding (1993, p.163) has summarised a common approach to ethnographic data analysis in the following model:

		Search for		Mark up		Construct
Fieldnotes	➜	categories and	➜	or cut up	➜	outline
Transcripts		patterns (themes)		the data		(re-sequence)

Harvey (1990) refers to the same process as 'pile-building', in which the ethnographic data are first read 'vertically', usually in chronological order, to identify common themes and relations which are then coded. The data are then literally cut up and re-

ordered into 'piles' that reflect the key themes. Specialist software is available to facilitate this process, but I found the 'cut and paste' utility of a word-processor to be adequate for my needs. The re-ordered data are then re-read, enabling a sequential argument to be constructed, and illustrative quotations from the transcripts to be selected. Harvey also suggests that critical ethnography also differs from traditional forms of qualitative data analysis, by bringing the broader critique of social relations to bear on the structuring of analytical themes. Hence the final analysis is not derived exclusively from the ethnographic data but from an oscillation between that and the social critique. As Sue Jones has noted, this inevitably entails going beyond the concepts and understandings of the respondents:

I know I cannot empathise with the research participants completely. I also know that I am likely at some points to set my understanding of their 'concrete' concepts - those which they use to organise, interpret, and construct their own world - within my own and/or an audience's concepts and frameworks that are different from theirs. When I do this, however, I try to be clear that I am doing this and why, and to ensure that this 'second level' of meaning retains some link with the constructions of the research participants.
(Jones, 1985, pp.56-7)

The identification and selection of themes also raises a fundamental issue about the validity of qualitative research; as David Silverman has noted:

The various forms of ethnography, through which attempts are made to describe social processes, share a single defect. The critical reader is forced to ponder whether the researcher has selected only those fragments of data which support his argument. (Silverman, 1985, p.140)

Silverman's preferred solution to this dilemma is to introduce simple counting procedures into the analysis, for example to identify how many people referred to a specific theme. But this begs the question of how many people must refer to a theme · before it is deemed significant; moreover with a small quantitative study it is unlikely that a view shared by a majority of respondents could be claimed as representative of the views of a broader population. In fact, the application of quantitative criteria of

validity to qualitative data is inappropriate. The rationale for conducting in-depth interviews is that people involved in a phenomenon may have insights that would not otherwise be available to the researcher, and it is the quality of the insight that is important, rather than the number of respondents that share it. This is what Hammersley meant (in the above quotation) when he suggested that ethnographic data should be treated in the same manner as social scientific accounts - when we quote the work of a particular social scientist we do so because of its explanatory power, not because it represents a commonly held view, and the same logic applies to qualitative data.

Mays & Pope (1995) have addressed the validity issue by recommending that qualitative researchers pass their ethnographic data to independent researchers to see if they arrive at the same analysis. But again this is unsatisfactory. How are we to select an alternative researcher, and how many should we consult before we can conclude that the analysis is valid? Again the mistake lies in applying quantitative criteria of validity to qualitative data. Whilst two statisticians applying the same test of statistical significance to the same quantitative data-set might stand a good chance of arriving at the same result, it is extremely unlikely that two ethnographers would produce the same reading of a case study, for the same reasons that a group of students reading the same text books would be unlikely to produce the same essay.

As noted above, the researcher can influence the validity of an ethnographic analysis by adopting a reflexive perspective on his/her work, the problem resides in demonstrating this validity to the reader. Whilst the quantitative researcher has more effective ways of demonstrating validity, such as, random sampling and statistical inference, even here there remains the need for the reader to trust in the integrity of the researcher not to knowingly engage in deception, and this is doubly true of qualitative research. Beyond this, the qualitative ethnographer can strive to demonstrate the validity of the analysis by providing a 'thick' description of the case study, and including sufficient ethnographic data for an alternative reading to be constructed.

Thesis Writing

In many accounts of the research process 'writing up receives little attention, or else it is treated as an independent activity from data analysis. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) however, claim that writing-up is inevitably a part of the analytical process, suggesting that the structure of the report influences the type of analysis, or at least the way it is understood by the reader. They identify four types of report: the 'natural history (in which the report reflects the different stages of the research process as they progressed over time), the 'chronology' (also temporally organised, but reflecting the development or 'career' of the phenomenon being studied, rather than the research process), 'narrowing and expanding the focus' (in which the analysis moves backwards and forwards between specific observation and consideration of broader structural issues), and 'separating narration and analysis' (in which the ethnographic data are presented first before theoretical issues are addressed).

The 'natural history' approach is a very common format, particularly for presenting quantitative findings, but I felt that it did not fit well with qualitative research. In fact it can lead to a form of dishonesty, giving the impression that that the research followed a tight structure of background reading, hypothesis construction, research design, data collection & analysis, and discussion of results. In my experience the research process is less well ordered. The background reading was essential, but which texts were relevant, and therefore, worth including in the thesis, only became apparent towards the end of the research process, and the literature review continued throughout the project. Similarly, the sequence of hypothesis - data collection - analysis, was not clear cut or linear, but an ongoing and disorganised process.

The other three formats for writing-up are more relevant, but should be seen as different aspects of the process, rather than discrete types. In my thesis I wanted to represent the way in which WHAP changed from a community development project into an empowerment initiative, so I organised the last three chapters in a broadly chronological order, first reporting the failed attempt to produce emancipatory knowledge, followed by the re-emergence of professional power, and concluding with the chapter on empowerment. By the same token, combining the methodologies of ethnography and critical social research obliged me to oscillate between micro and

macro analysis; looking in detail at WHAP, but broadening this out to a consideration of structural and historical issues. In fact it is difficult to imagine a sociological analysis that does not to some degree broaden and narrow the analysis.

Finally, I also wanted to keep a degree of separation between presentation of the ethnographic data and the sociological analysis. First, to provide a relatively transparent description of the phenomenon, uncluttered by theory, and therefore able to support alternative readings. Secondly, I wanted to show that the analysis *really was* led by the ethnographic data; that the findings had caused me to carry out further reading and construct new theoretical schema. For this reason I preceded the ethnographic data with a descriptive chapter based on the documentary evidence, with very little theoretical interpretation. I also divided the final chapters into two parts, presenting the ethnographic data first, followed by provisional conclusions, and then tried to deepen the analysis by examining sociological texts and more formal theory.

Again this entails a slight fiction. Although the theoretical analysis was largely a response to the ethnographic data, the ethnography itself was shaped by my earlier reading and perspective - indeed the critical research methodology emphasises the need to situate empirical data in a broader historical and structural context. To overcome this, I used the first chapter to provide a broad historical and structural analysis of different modes of empowerment, to provide a context for the WHAP study, and to show how key themes emerged from the literature *as well* as from the ethnographic data. The structure of the thesis is therefore unusual, but it does capture the complicated oscillation between observation and theory that characterises critical ethnography.

Generalisability

An important question to ask at the end of this discussion on methodology is the extent to which the methods employed enable the research findings to be generalised to other situations. In a quantitative study generalisability is largely determined by random sampling and statistical inference, obviously such techniques are not usually relevant to qualitative research, making generalisation more of a problem. In many respects, the way in which generalisation is conceptualised in quantitative studies is

alien to both ethnography and critical social research. For the ethnographer what matters most is gaining an in-depth understanding of the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour of the people s/he studies; the assumption is that this worldview will be context specific, and that generalisation to others will therefore be extremely limited. Similarly, critical social research starts from the assumption that society is in a constant state of flux, that the social world and our understanding of it are constantly changing, again limiting the value of generalisation.

However, although ethnography and critical research may question positivist/quantitative assumptions about generalisability, I would argue that both approaches aim to produce findings that have relevance beyond the immediate context of the study. Whilst the production of laws of behaviour is eschewed, there remains an almost hidden claim that the behaviour found in the study will shed some light on the behaviour of others, even if this explanatory range is limited in time and space. As Janet Ward-Schofield (1993) has suggested this claim entails a re-conceptualisation of generalisability in terms appropriate to qualitative research. She prefers the terms 'fittingness', 'comparability', or 'translatability', reflecting the process of detailed description of the content and context of a study, so that it can be generalised to examples that match it closely. The use of 'thick description' to boost the generalisability of a qualitative study, is important and I tried to achieve this in the second chapter of my thesis. However, I would go beyond Ward-Schofield's suggestion, and argue that generalisability depends not just upon detailed description of a phenomenon, but on revealing the social relations that underpin it. In studying WHAP I tried to demonstrate that empowerment was an expression of a specific set of relations between the state, welfare professionals and their clients, indeed that these relations were the condition of existence for empowerment. I concluded that these relations limited the emancipatory potential of empowerment, and that this limitation would apply wherever those conditions prevailed. To move beyond those conditions would be to move beyond something that was recognisable as empowerment.

Conceptualising a phenomenon in terms of its conditions of existence and the social relations that characterise it, is a sounder basis for generalisation than the simple description of immediate appearances. For example, the number of people involved in an empowerment initiative might change, as might the designation of the

professionals, the geographical location, even its claimed aims and objectives, but whilst the conditions of existence and social relations that characterise the phenomenon remain constant, then the conclusion that its emancipatory potential is extremely limited remains valid. By the same token, WHAP might retain its outward appearance, in terms of the people participating, its geographical location, et cetera, but be transformed into a completely different phenomenon (with a different degree of emancipatory potential), if change occurs in the social relations that underpin it. In either instance, defining the phenomenon in terms of social relations reveals whether or not generalisation is valid.

In conclusion, the methodology I adopted attempted to synthesise ethnographic data collection with critical social theory. This is an uneasy and in some senses contradictory combination that requires reflexive management. But it does provide an opportunity to get beneath the surface of everyday appearances, to produce a theoretical account of a social phenomenon that is grounded in people's experience of everyday life, but which takes a critical approach to the categories and forms through which everyday life is experienced.

Appendix 2: Interview Schedules

NB. The interview schedules were only used as a basis for the interviews. Questions were modified, added or deleted, as appropriate.

First Round:

1. Approximately how long have you been involved in WHAP?

2. How did you first become involved in WHAP?

3. What was it that made you want to take part?

4. When you first started coming to WHAP meetings what did you expect to get out of it, or what did you think it would achieve?

5. Did these expectations change over time? In what way and why?

6. What do you think you have personally gained from your involvement in WHAP?

7. Has your involvement with WHAP caused you any problems or difficulties?

8. Are you satisfied with WHAP's achievements up to now?

9. Are you happy with your own role in the group?

10. Have you ever wanted to leave the group or reduce your involvement?

11. Do you think that you will continue to be involved in WHAP?

12. Is there anything you would like to say about your personal involvement in WHAP that we haven't discussed yet?

13. What do you think are the main objectives of WHAP; what is it trying to achieve?

14. What does WHAP do in practical terms?

15. What do you think WHAP should do in the future?

16. How do you get on with the professionals involved in WHAP? Are you happy with the role that they play?

17. How do you get on with the volunteers involved in the Group? Are you happy with the role that they play?

18. What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of having professionals involved in the group?

19. Would you like to see the relationship between the professionals and the volunteer members of the group change?

20. Much of WHAP's decision making takes place in business meetings, general meetings, and occasional away-days. Does this structure enable you to make your feelings known to the group? Do you feel it enables you to exert sufficient influence over decision making? M Are there other ways in which you make your feelings known to the Group?

21. The WHAP Report made two points, amongst others, about the way in which existing health services are planned and managed. First, that they are very bureaucratic and professionally dominated, and secondly, that they make members of the population feel powerless. Do you think that WHAP has avoided these problems, either in the way it makes decisions, or in its relationship with the broader community, through the Drop-in?

22. How do you feel about WHAP's relationship with the broader community?

23. What will WHAP be like in the future; who will be involved and what will it do?

24. Will WHAP achieve its original objectives?

25. Is there anything else you would like to say about WHAP as an organisation that we haven't covered yet?

Second round:

1. Almost from the beginning WHAP decided to gather information on local people's attitudes to health and their experiences of illness. Why was that considered to be important

2. It was decided that the information gathered by WHAP should have scientific validity. This imposed certain constraints on who was interviewed, what questions were asked, and the general design of the survey. What do you think were the benefits and disadvantages of this approach.

3. Do you think that the information could have been gathered in a better or more appropriate way?

4. How do you think the information gathered has benefited the project, or, the local population? Was it worth the time and resources invested in it?

5. The report came in two parts: first a brief summary, and then a longer more detailed version. These questions refer to both. Have you read either? How much?

6. What did you think of the way the report was written and set out, particularly its length and the type of language used?

7. How much of the report was meaningful to you? Did you learn anything from it?

8. Do you feel that you had enough influence over the writing of the report? If you had written the report how would you have done it differently?

9. Do you think that the report tells the truth? Is it an accurate reflection of the attitudes and beliefs of local people?

10. Do you think that the report is likely to be read and/or understood by local people?

11. Do you think that the information contained in the report is a sound basis for action either by local people, or by statutory agencies such as the council or health authority?

12. The findings of the survey were presented at public meetings and through presentations to various statutory agencies and groups. Do you think that this approach was an effective way of getting the message across? How else could it have been done?

13. To what extent have the findings of the survey been taken on board either by local people, or by the council and health service? What practical benefits have come from this?

14. What is the purpose of the drop-in? How would you describe its objectives and the things that it does?

15. How does this relate to WHAP's original objectives about addressing the social, economic, and environmental influences on health, and enabling people to participate in the planning and management of local health and welfare services? What brought about this shift of emphasis?

16. It has been suggested that the drop-in will eventually lead to a more critical/campaigning approach. Do you think this will happen? Why?

17. Do you think that involvement in WHAP will change the way in which either the volunteers or the people attending the drop-in will use health services, and the way they will relate to doctors and other health professionals?

18. What effect has WHAP had on the way in which health and local authority services are provided?

19. Shortly after the drop-in had been established a question arose about whether people should be allowed to smoke either at the drop-in or during meetings. This caused a degree of conflict. Why do you think that was? What did you think of the way it was managed?

20. More recently, one of the volunteers became disruptive and engaged in anti-social behaviour which affected the project. WHAP responded by convening a disciplinary hearing. What are your views on this incident and WHAPs response to it?

21. Some of the volunteers have expressed an interest in acquiring professional skills, such as counselling and health promotion. What do you make of this?

22. How would you respond to the argument that the drop-in provides an inexpensive alternative to services which should be provided by the state?

23. How would you respond to the argument that WHAP provides a means by which health and welfare professionals can exercise surveillance and social control over marginalised groups like the poor or people from ethnic minorities?

24. During these two interviews we have discussed: how and why you became involved in WHAP, what you thought it would achieve, the way WHAP is organised, the relationship between volunteers and professionals, the survey and report, the drop-in, and WHAPs influence on those directly involved in it, the broader population and the statutory services. Is there anything else you would like to say about any of these issues or anything else relating to WHAP?

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