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# **Exploring micro-sociality through the lens of ‘established-outsider’ figuralional dynamics in a South Wales community**

Rachel Swann and Gordon Hughes

## **Abstract**

On the fiftieth anniversary of its original publication, this article revisits ‘The Established and the Outsiders’, a largely forgotten and in our view unfairly neglected community study by Elias and Scotson (1965). Drawing from our ethnographic research on an urban community in South Wales, the contemporary significance of the theoretical and empirical contributions to the analysis of insider-outsider relations in bounded, household-based communities made by the original work is foregrounded. The findings from our participant-observational research on ‘Cornerville’ confirms many of the empirically-based conceptual claims of Elias and Scotson’s earlier diagnosis of largely intra-working class relations, distribution of status honour and processes of micro-sociality. The article concludes by drawing out some of the implications of community-based research for advancing sociological criminology’s contribution to the specific analysis of group stigmatisation and more broadly of social processes of communal ordering and informal rule-making and rule-breaking in contemporary localities.

**Keywords:** Elias, sociological criminology, community studies, insider/outsider relations, group stigma and charisma

## **Introduction**

Much of the impetus to study the contemporary role of communities in the local governance of problems of social order in sociological criminology has focused on the rise of a governing strategy of ‘responsibleilisation’ in these neo-liberal and austere times (see Edwards and Hughes, 2012, Edwards et.al, 2014), recently epitomised in the UK by the communitarian appeal of the ‘Big Society’ of self-helpers. In particular, the focus of such governance studies, including much of the previous work of one of the present authors (Hughes, 1996, 1998, 2007), has been a critique of the dominant ideological construction of community as an unquestionably ‘good thing’ through specific political and policy discourses. Meanwhile much critical social science has not just challenged the

cozy, feel-good appeal of community but has argued that where communities exist at all, they are often oppressive, exclusive and backward looking social formations increasingly outmoded in an era of ‘liquid modernity’ (Bauman, 2001, Young, 1999). In this paper we aim to steer a route past the ‘Charybdis’ of nostalgic communitarian romanticism regarding community and the ‘Scylla’ of cosmopolitan critique of community as oppression. In particular, we return to the ‘older’ tradition of community case studies in sociology in order to explore how communities live and breathe and seek to offer more realistic pictures of communities as household-based ‘figurations’, to use Elias’ (1976) concept, which bond and bind people in simultaneously creative and coercive ways. In turn, we suggest that the conceptualisation of ‘community performance’ (Studdert, in this issue) may be advanced through studying the mundane processes of ‘established-outsider’ group dynamics in geographically bounded places. We share the commitment of Studdert and Walkerdine (2014: 3) and fellow contributors to this Special Issue to viewing community not as a noun but as a verb, involving ‘constantly created actions of recognition’, both positive and negative. As we will argue further, this dynamic and processual understanding of community has an elective affinity with ‘figurational’ or ‘process’ sociology (Mennell, 1992).

The paper is organised as follows. First, we revisit a largely forgotten and in our view unfairly neglected community study by Elias and Scotson (1965) on the fiftieth anniversary of its original publication. This process of revisiting and retrieval of ‘old’ sociological knowledge is not borne out of nostalgia but rather due to the lasting empirical and theoretical significance of this sociological enquiry for both the contemporary and future analysis of insider-outsider relations in bounded, household-based communities. Second, we present empirical findings from ethnographic, participant-observational research on an urban village in South Wales which both confirms many of the empirically-based conceptual claims of Elias and Scotson’s earlier diagnosis of largely intra-working class relations particularly with regard to the distribution of both status honour and disgrace. Third we conclude our paper by drawing out some of the implications of community-based research for advancing sociological criminology’s contribution to the specific analysis of group stigmatisation and more

broadly of social processes of communal ordering, informal rule-making and rule-breaking in contemporary localities.

### **Revisiting a classic sociological community study fifty years on: Elias and Scotson's *The Established and the Outsiders***

It has been noted that both contemporary sociology and the more specialist field of study of 'sociological criminology'<sup>1</sup> each suffer from a tendency towards a collective 'chronophobia' (Rock, 2005) and 'amnesia' (Atkinson and Housley, 2003) towards many of the contributions of previous generations' research and theory. What is not new and not seemingly of the present is too often ignored or held in disdain in contemporary sociology and criminology (see, however, Savage, 2010, and Hughes, forthcoming). In contrast to this tendency we aim in this paper to play a modest role in alerting a broader range of scholars to the theoretical and empirical potential of the work of Norbert Elias and the subsequent espousal of 'figurational' and 'process' sociology<sup>2</sup>. Ritzer and Smart (2001) in their overview of the state of contemporary social theory have noted that theoretical renewal and recalibration may come from several distinct types of intellectual process, one of which may be termed 'retrieval' by which older theories and concepts undergo 'generational rediscovery'. This adequately describes our work here in retrieving and revisiting the core analytical propositions found in the community study undertaken

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<sup>1</sup> On the contested nature of what to call the sociological analysis of questions of crime and control and the argument for 'sociological criminology' rather than the 'sociology of crime and deviance' and other suitors such as Young's (2011) 'criminological imagination', see Hughes (forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> The sociological legacy of Norbert Elias' work remains deeply contested. In much of continental Northern Europe, he is now widely recognised as one of the most important sociologists of the twentieth century but yet his work has tended to remain at the margins of the discipline in the UK and USA (Mennell, 1992). Unlike Bourdieu, whose work is of similar relevance to what we might think of as the 'mundane' aspects of social life and ordering as performed in manners and etiquette, has been highly influential (see Sayer, 2005, 2011), Elias' promotion of a processual and figurational sociology has never been as intellectually fashionable in the UK and USA. There are of course some notable exceptions, including some influential criminological theorists. There has been, for example, a growing recognition of importance of his thesis of the 'civilising process' and the long-term decline in violence and the rise of modern 'civilised' penality within sociological criminology (Fletcher, 1995, Garland, 1990, Pratt, 2011). However, it is striking that there has been little attention in criminological circles to his other seminal contribution to the sociological canon, namely the social processes producing status group honour or charisma and its obverse group stigma and disgrace (but see Griffiths, 2014). On Elias' broader sociological contribution, see, for example, Mennell, 1992, Smith, 2001, Gabriel and Mennell, 2011. Meanwhile, see Hughes, forthcoming, for a sustained argument for its relevance to the revitalisation of the sociological imagination in contemporary criminology.

by Elias and Scotson in 1965 entitled *The Established and the Outsiders* alongside the contemporary ethnographic research in South Wales which underpins this paper. In passing we may note the very mundane and unsensational events and processes unearthed in Elias and Scotson's community study compared to much of the more sensational 'fare' served up in criminological studies of deviance and control mechanisms in often violent urban community settings focused on street 'gangs' (Hallsworth and Young, 2010); we see this acuity to processes characterised by their very 'ordinariness' as a positive rather than negative feature of the study.

In this section we begin by summarising by the key methods and empirical findings of the fifty year old study of 'established' and 'outsider' groups in the small English community of 'Winston Parva' in Leicester. We then make the case, drawing on findings from our own contemporary case study, for its lasting and wider theoretical significance for both the broader sociological understanding of micro-sociality and mundane community building and the interdependent processes of social exclusion and inclusion, and for the criminological study of processes of informal, quotidian rule-making, rule-enforcing, and rule-breaking today.

### ***Ordering everyday life in an 'urban village' community***

*The Established and the Outsiders* was a study of a small urban community<sup>3</sup> characterised by a relatively old settlement as its core (zone 2) with two more recent settlements (zones 1 and 3) formed around it. The three zones were recognised as different by the inhabitants themselves; zone 1 being a middle class residential area and zones 2 and 3 being working class areas, one 'old' (zone 2) and one 'new' (zone 3). The research study was initially prompted by official and local concern over the fact that one of the neighbourhoods (zone 3) manifested a much higher delinquency rate than the others. As Elias and Scotson (1965: ix) note in the Preface, '(I)ocally that particular neighbourhood

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<sup>3</sup> The definition of community provided by Elias and Scotson is refreshingly clear with regard to an idea that has been marked by definitional controversy in much sociological and criminological work (see Hughes, 1996, 2007). According to the authors, 'The interdependencies which establish themselves between them (people) as makers of homes, where they sleep and eat and rear their families, are the specific community interdependencies. Communities are essentially organisations of home-makers, residential units such as urban neighbourhoods, villages, hamlets, compounds or groups of tents' (Elias and Scotson, 1965: 146)

was regarded as a delinquency area of low standing'. However, '(a)s we began to probe into the actual evidence and to look for explanations, our interest shifted from the delinquency differentials to the differences in the character of the neighbourhoods and to their relationships with each other' (*ibid*). In particular, the authors note ambitiously that some of the problems around what they later term processes of group charisma and group disgrace had a 'paradigmatic character' in the sense of throwing light on problems which are encountered on a much larger scale in wider societal domains.

The small-scale nature of the study, involving just two researchers and not involving any external research grant, also proved advantageous in that the study could be conducted in a relatively elastic manner without the need to stick to any prescribed problem or to a set schedule. According to Elias and Scotson,

It enabled us to scan the horizon for inconspicuous phenomena that might have unexpected significance. And this seemingly diffuse experimentation led in the end to a fairly compact and comprehensive picture of aspects of the community which one can regard as central- above all of *the power and status relationships and of the tensions bound up with them* (Elias and Scotson, 1965: x, emphasis added).

As a result of their fieldwork and immersion in the area (in reality primarily that of the younger researcher, Scotson), the key question they sought to answer was why and how under certain conditions did the 'oldness' or 'established' nature of one working class group come to be regarded as a prestige giving factor (Weber's 'status honour'), and 'newness' of the other working class group come to be regarded as a reproach and group stigma (Elias and Scotson, 1965: 3). Elias and Scotson go on to trace the longer-term processes at work in creating this 'conflict situation' and how all are trapped in it in an interdependent manner. They also focus on how specifically the 'old families' network operated through the role of mother-centred families in zone 2 and in turn how key local associations were centred on the old 'village'. They explained how zone 3 families on the 'Estate' in turn manifested a comparative lack of local kinship ties, of common rituals of social intercourse, and exclusion from key power centres such as the local associations of church etc. Even the public houses were segregated along 'established' and 'newcomer' lines.

The image of the ‘Estate’ (i.e zone 3) in the eyes of zones 1 and 2 corresponded to the ‘minority of the worst’ (‘it inclines towards denigration’) whilst the self-image of zone 2 (the ‘Village’) is modelled on the ‘minority of the best’ (including zone 1) and ‘it inclines towards idealisation’ (Elias and Scotson, 1965: 7). In passing Elias and Scotson see this process of the making of social images being characteristic of other much wider social settings. Controversially perhaps, they conclude that ‘most of the Estate people seemed to accept, however grudgingly, the lower status allotted to them by the established groups. Although almost all inhabitants of the Estate were British, many regarded each other as foreigners’ (Elias and Scotson, 1965: 79). The specific configuration of the Estate as a loose community of immigrants and outsiders was ‘self-perpetuating’:

People with any desire to get on resented the slur cast on them because their place of residence was given a bad name in the neighbourhood and tended to move out as soon as they possibly could thus making room for other immigrants some of whom probably went through the same cycle (Elias and Scotson, 1965: 80).

### ***Conceptual retrieval: towards a figural theory of established-outsider relations***

A necessarily brief summary such as this cannot do service to the richness and subtlety of the conceptual analysis and the contextualised empirical insights associated with such an intensive case study of a ‘community divided against itself’ and ‘trapped in a conflict situation’ (Elias and Scotson, 1965: 89; 156)<sup>4</sup>.

It has been noted that Elias elsewhere in his work conceptualised communities as ‘figurations’ through which communal behavioural standards are established, learned and maintained (O’Connor and Goodwin, 2012: 476). According to Elias, a figuration (or ‘configuration’ as used in the 1965 study) may be defined as a social structure consisting of a set of individuals who are linked by a set of positions, rules, norms and values, providing a framework for group and individual action, regulating and orienteering their behaviour and communication which both constrains and provides options to act (Elias

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<sup>4</sup> In particular we are unable to give due attention to the rich analysis of young people (in chapter 8 of the study). See, however, the discussion in Hughes, forthcoming, on young people, family life and socio-genesis of so-called ‘anti-social behaviour’ (the latter term strictly speaking being a sociological oxymoron!)

2009). Anton Blok (1974: 9) clarifies further the meaning of the concept of figuration in arguing that it is constituted by the ‘changing patterns of independencies in which individuals and groups of individuals are involved: both as allies and as opponents. The locus of change is not extraneous to the configuration. Change evolves from the built-in tensions and polarities between elements that form the configuration’. In turn communities are viewed as social phenomena necessarily emerging and changing over time, with the Winston Parva study being but an episode in the development of an urban industrial area marked by ‘frictions and disturbances’ (Elias and Scotson, 1965: 148). As such, this mode of analysis also allows us to view communities not as ‘static’ objects but instead as ‘processes’ highlighting relationships past, present and (possible) future and which refer to changing balances of power and changing interdependencies.

Particularly telling and worthy of brief attention here is Elias and Scotson’s conceptualisation regarding the key role played by gossip, both ‘praise gossip’ and ‘blame gossip’, and collective fantasies in maintaining the figural processes of established and outsider status honour and in trapping individuals and groups in such interdependencies. In observing the collective power of what is now often termed ‘othering’ (for the out-group) and what may also be termed somewhat inelegantly ‘we-ing’ (for the in-group), the authors do not shy away from making broader claims as to the more universal tendencies at work in human figurations across time and place. Accordingly,

attribution of blame or for that matter of praise to individuals who, individually have done nothing to deserve it, because they belong to a group which is said to deserve it, is a universal phenomenon... Everywhere group charisma attributed to oneself and group disgrace attributed to outsiders are complementary phenomena (Elias and Scotson, 1965: 102-4).

In turn the task of the sociologist is not to praise or to blame but rather to better understand and explain the interdependencies which can trap groups of people in a figuration not of their own making (Elias and Scotson, 1966: 155-6). In a later discussion of the broader significance of the Winston Parva research study for theorising

established-outsider relations, Elias observes that we need as sociologists to avoid the tendency to discuss the problem of social stigmatisation as if it

simply a question of people showing individually a pronounced dislike of other people as individuals...Thus one misses the key to the problem usually discussed under headings such as 'social prejudice', if one looks for its solely in the personality structure of individual people. One can find it only if one considers the figuration formed by the two (or more) groups concerned or, in other words, the nature of their interdependence (Elias, 1976: 6).

In this sense the 'whole drama' of Winston Parva was 'played out by the two sides as if they were puppets on a string' (1976: 36).

If we accept the proposition that 'in the last resort, the crucial test for the fruitfulness or sterility of a sociological theory is the fruitfulness or sterility of empirical enquiries stimulated by and based on it' (Elias and Scotson: 1965: 171), it is necessary now to present an empirical enquiry stimulated by the theorisation discussed above and undertaken on an 'urban village' community in South Wales.

### **The rediscovery of established-outsider figural processes: findings from a participant-observational study of a South Wales urban community**

#### ***Methodological note***

In the conference presentation that preceded this paper the data discussed was described as being drawn from an 'accidental auto-ethnography'. On reflection this was not entirely accurate and was perhaps more indicative of our initial unease at how to discuss the data. The origins of this research enquiry can be found in what could most accurately be described as a diary, an incident log in which one of the authors recorded experiences of anti-social behaviour that began shortly after the family moved to the village. Initially the intention behind the recording of events was to provide some form of evidence base for the possible involvement of the police or council. It was necessarily centred on what happened to the family but it was never experiential in the sense of being oriented on how 'we' felt. Of the two broad approaches described by Anderson (2006) (the other being 'analytic auto-ethnography'), the 'emotive auto-ethnographies' associated with authors such as Ellis (1995, 2002, 2004) and Bochner (2000), amongst

others, are essentially introspective accounts of the author's experience. Whilst growing in popularity in some disciplines<sup>5</sup>, it has also attracted a considerable body of criticism, including that it is 'essentially lazy, literally lazy and also intellectually lazy' (Delamont, 2007:02). In part reflecting the dispositions of the authors as realist sociological criminologists, this view is one that we would share. To write with the first person voice and to blur the distinctions between author and subject, self and other, is ultimately anathema to scholarly objectivity. Such 'limiting self-indulgence' (Coffey, 1999) is difficult to reconcile with what we conceive of as what 'good' social scientific practice is, or should be. Accounts of 'I' and 'me' and the personal anguish of living with anti-social behaviour are not necessarily criminologically nor sociologically interesting of themselves. We contend that the focus of this research is not the narcissistic musings of the researcher but rather is about fundamentally social processes and inter-dependent group immersion in a bounded place.

There is of course a long tradition of sociological immersion in localities associated with community studies (for example, Jephcott, 1964; Pons, 1969; Stacey, 1960; Stacey et al., 1975). Living in the locale 'facilitated the study of neighbouring' (Burgess, 1991: 12) and gave a depth and richness to the account whilst avoiding losing the critical distance necessary and was undoubtedly in the main due to the way in which the research evolved. Contrary to Mills' oft-cited disparaging remarks on community studies which he said 'often read like badly written novels' (1959: 358); a critique based on the style in which they were written and the absence of sociological analysis to accompany the copious empirical description, the following account is an analytical account of the community in which one of the author's lived. Building on the original 'incident log' that provided the impetus for the study, data was collected from participating and observing, listening and talking (see Walkerdine, this issue); characteristics we would contend that firmly situates the account within what is thought of as traditional ethnography and

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<sup>5</sup> With some notable exceptions (see for example Hallsworth's *The Gang and Beyond*, 2013 and the rise of 'cultural criminology', Young, 2013), auto-ethnography is very much on the margins of criminological research.

bears the hallmark of what Elias (1956) termed ‘problems of involvement and detachment’.

What had begun as private troubles, personal lived experiences of anti-social behaviour in an urban village in South Wales turned into a public issue and a wider study of community relations and ‘performativity’ some three years after moving to the village. Weber’s work on class, status and party, together with Elias’ process sociology with the allied concepts of status honour, figurations, interdependencies proved useful in providing some much needed clarity. Together with related key ideas including mechanisms of stigmatisation, monopolisation of power, collective fantasy and the role of gossip in ‘us’ and ‘them’ group dynamics, the ‘outsider’ and ‘established’ images which support and reinforce divisions were revelatory intellectually in making sense sociologically of this community. A mutual interest in working with and testing these ideas and thinking through the experiences of living in ‘Cornerville’ together has led to this research inquiry. Building on three years of notes recorded initially as an incident log and latterly as fieldnotes, the research became more explicitly ethnographic and less auto-biographical over the following three years. Occupying the researcher position of newcomer-outsider, spending time watching, listening and talking with members of each zone in Cornerville has enabled an albeit small-scale but in-depth understanding of community relations, grounded in the lived experiences of those who live, work and play in the village.

Sampling was opportunistic in the sense that it used the ‘researcher’s local knowledge of an area on which to base a study or using a researcher’s past experiences to contact participants or gatekeepers’ (Brady, 2006). It was thus a deliberate research strategy common to community studies rather than indicative of laziness or a lack of rigour. The gossip in the shops, pubs and the village hall, snatched conversations with fellow dog walkers and with mums at the local park were complemented by the addition of interviews with key informants. Some of the interviewees were purposively sampled, often because they had been mentioned by others as important in some way; most commonly because they were the subject of ‘blame’ or ‘praise’ gossip. For some, their importance lay in their quasi-official role and/or their being a long-standing member of

the community. For others, their inclusion was informed by their being identified by members of one zone as being the source of problems. For example, members of zone 2, and less commonly zone 1, often identified individuals and families of zone 3 they considered to be most troublesome. Zone 3 members identified members of zone 2, and less commonly zone 1, who they felt were blaming their group for any and all problems in the community. Others were included because at some point over the four years they had been considered important. For example, Carol and her family had been subject to much gossip because of a long-running feud with two other families that had come to a head. Lynne's son had his bicycle stolen, allegedly by a member of zone 3. Mike's son, who had been brought up in zone 2, was returning to the village and was buying a house in zone 1. Essentially this sampling-through-gossip was not focussed on the spectacular but rather the processes of everyday social relations in the community. As Elias (1987:16) observes, 'the task of the social scientists is to explore, and to make people understand, the patterns they form together, the nature and the changing configuration of all that binds them together'. It is this central tenet that has guided this research.

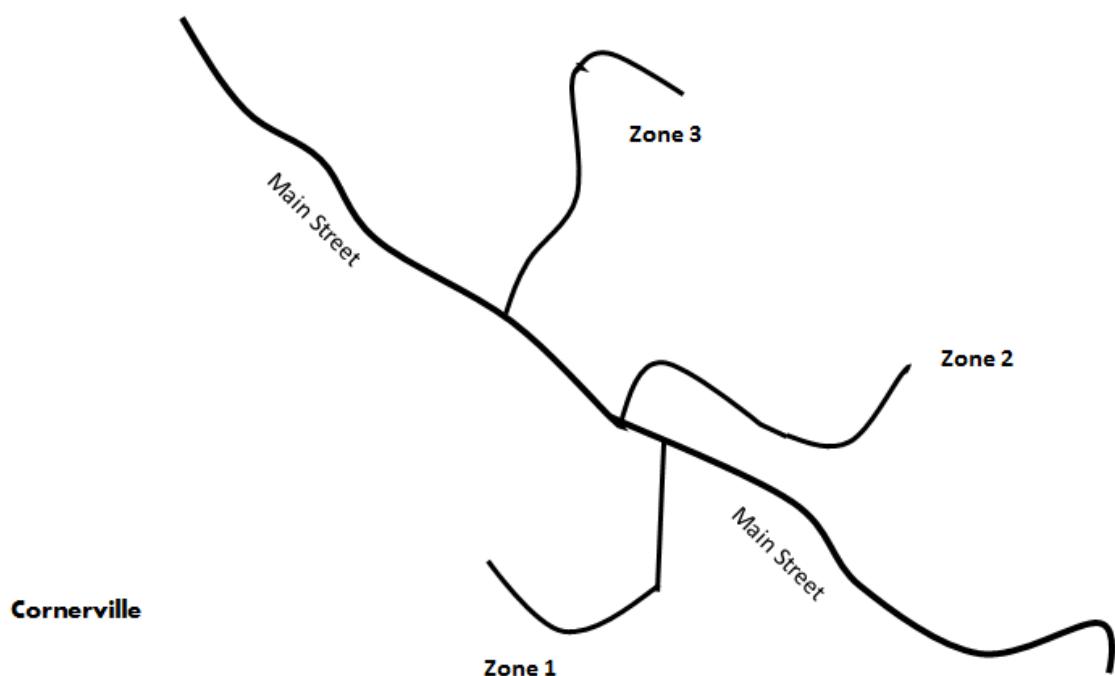
### **'Cornerville'**

'Cornerville', the naming of which is an homage to Whyte's participant-observation-based ethnography *Street Corner Society* (1943), is a suburb of a city in South Wales with a population of approximately 2000 who are overwhelmingly white and Welsh. Governmentally it is seen as unproblematic, principally because of its low levels of officially recorded crime and anti-social behaviour. This is not a view shared by its more affluent neighbours bordering it who view the village as 'hard' and its community the source of crime and anti-social behaviour problems in their neighbourhood (UPSI confidential report, 2008<sup>6</sup>). As in Winston Parva, there are 3 main zones (see figure 1). Zone 1 is the smallest part of the suburb and consists of large semi-detached and detached homes built approximately 20 years ago and considered locally to be the more desirable area; beliefs reflected in the higher property prices. It is close to, but slightly

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<sup>6</sup> This source is not publically available due to it being a confidential report for South Wales Police compiled by the University Police Science Institute (UPSI). The report was written in 2008 and in it the participants from a neighbouring village frequently identified residents of Cornerville as responsible for the anti-social behaviour and crime in their locale.

geographically separate from, Zone 2 which consists of (largely) ex-council housing<sup>7</sup> built in the 1950s. Zone 3 is an area of housing association homes<sup>8</sup> that was built approximately 15 years ago. There are some houses dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century along the main route through the village that are not allied with any of the zones and this is where the researcher lived for seven years as a newcomer-outsider.



**Figure 1: Corncrake**

### **Neighbourhood relations in the making<sup>9</sup>**

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<sup>7</sup> Council housing refers to homes built by local authorities and funded by central government.

<sup>8</sup> In the UK Housing associations are private, non-profit organisations that provide affordable homes for people in need. Whilst they have existed for many years there has been a considerable rise in their number since the Housing Act of 1988 gave local authority tenants the 'right to buy' their homes at a considerable discount. Cuts in funding for council's has meant that social housing is increasingly built and managed by housing association entities. For a full discussion of the marginalisation and residualisation of social housing see Pitts and Hope, 1997.

<sup>9</sup> Those familiar with Elias and Scotson's (1965) monograph will note that we have used the same headings for the key sections of this research account as those deployed as chapter titles in the original. This structuring of the narrative further confirms the cumulative, inter-generational nature of the work we have undertaken here. Note also the recent 're-studies' of 1960s Leicester Sociology Department local case studies, including Elias and Scotson's, which raise some important issues with regard to the

The following section outlines some of the history, and what Walkerdine and Studdert (2014: 4) term the ‘historical memory’, of Cornerville and by which meanings of the past enter into the present (Walkerdine, this issue). This is not mere background detail but rather an essential component of developing an understanding of the present which cannot be abstracted from the historical processes that play a key role in constituting contemporary communal forms and ‘problems’. Cornerville has a long history with settlements dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. There are still some terraced houses, some of which have been ‘gentrified’, and shops along the main road through the village that date back to the late 1800s but the mansions that once stood are long gone, the last being demolished in the 1940s. Zone 2, a housing estate of semi-detached homes was built on the land on which the mansion home of one of the most influential and wealthy industrial capitalist families in South Wales once stood. Built in the 1950s by the local authority, in parallel with Zone 2 of Winston Parva, some of its streets and a recreational area are named after the family whom once owned large swathes of land throughout South Wales.

The size of the village swelled significantly in the 1990s when both zones 1 and zone 3 were built. The semi-detached and detached family homes of Zone 1 with their picturesque setting, relatively lower house prices and proximity to the city and major transport links were marketed at professional commuters. According to ‘Edith’ and ‘Julia’, both of whom are senior members of the established group who say their families have been residents in the village for approximately 100 years, initial apprehension about the development of the small estate centred on increased traffic through the village but this was relatively short lived and out-weighed by the anticipated benefits. For example, Julia commented that

people were very against it, very, at the time. Well some said they thought it was a good thing, a good thing in the long run. I wasn’t one of ‘em! Not at the time. It took me a while to come around to it but when you’re thinking and get talking

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methodological challenges of follow-up studies. These are summarized in O’Connor and Goodwin (2012) although few significant insights are offered in their paper with regard to the continuing pertinence of the conceptual framing of *The Established and the Outsiders* which we wish to celebrate.

you think will what's the harm really? Don't get me wrong I still didn't like it but the new houses looked nice and had big gardens for the kiddies. They weren't cheap either, the developers knew how to charge!

In particular, it would give zone 2 members with aspirations for larger or new homes the opportunity to realise their goals and stay in the village. Furthermore, the 'executive' style of the homes was thought to raise the status of the village to the significantly more affluent neighbouring areas. For example, Edith commented that 'because it's nice then, and on a par really with what they did in (neighbouring village, name removed) it would show them.....them who think they're better than us' (Edith).

According to the shared memories of Edith, an elderly resident, and Julia who is in her late 60s and Karl (a younger man in his late 30s whose mother has lived in the same house for 40+ years), reactions of the established group at the time toward the building of semi-detached and terraced social housing on a green field site were markedly more negative. In a similar manner to concerns regarding the development of zone 1, there was some resentment regarding traffic, parking and the removal of an albeit little used overgrown field. For example, Karl said;

we were none of us keen.....not one. Up in arms some of us....it was a bit petty looking back on it.....I mean it was just a field and the kids knocked around up there but it wasn't useful as such. But we knew there'd be traffic, cars and wot not everywhere and traffic jams all the way through. But at the same time we were right weren't we? Not just about that but all the problems that would come.

We knew, we told 'em.

A more significant source of tension was centred on the anticipated social problems that would accompany the zone 3 newcomers' arrival in the 1990s. Despite most residents of zone 2 at the time living in homes that were originally built by the local authority and some still being tenants, stigma was attached to housing association renters. Both the tenants and their homes were, and still are, seen as inferior. Comments related to opposition to the development included beliefs that the incomers would be *inter alia* 'foreign' (Dave, 35), 'single mothers' (Maureen), 'asylum seekers' (Carol), 'drug addicts' (Mark), 'benefit claimants' (Karl) and/or 'ex-offenders' (Margo): a veritable gallery of the

‘usual suspects’ or contemporary folk devils. Moreover, they would not take care of their homes, for example Dave said they would not ‘keep it nice’ – and they would also be poorly designed with ‘no gardens’ and of inferior ‘flimsy’ construction compared to their own. It is not clear what the origin of these beliefs was; rather there was a sense of them being natural and immutable. For example, Maureen, a long-standing resident in her 50s commented that

....I mean to say they don’t know any better then do they? What can you do with ‘em? I can’t say as I know. They don’t help themselves, not their own and not others. Not at all. They don’t care about anything or anyone....It’s just how they are.

These preconceptions together with the latter realisation of their fears in the actions of a minority of the incomers are significant. Underlining the interdependency and bonding between the social groups, the on-going stigmatisation and ‘group disgrace’ conferred on all members of zone 3 based on a few problem families (see below) serves to reinforce, and cannot be separated from, the established group’s own ‘group charisma’, their shared sense of superiority by engaging in a process of juxtaposing their own virtues with those of the outsiders, their close neighbours.

An additional source of tension, and one that mirrors again the story of Winston Parva’s community life, centred on the local pubs. One has since closed and been redeveloped as large ‘executive’ accommodation but the other two are still thriving. At the time of their arrival the ‘Old Canal Inn’ was the busiest of the three and had a largely young (some said not entirely legal) clientele who were drawn from zone 2. The young people would often drink to excess and occasionally their anti-social behaviour (including groups shouting in the streets, urinating on windows, emptying rubbish bins and damage to street furniture) would escalate to more serious incidents. Most anti-social behaviour was/is tolerated by the older residents <sup>10</sup> in zone 2 who viewed it from across the road as natural youthful excess (for example, Margo commented ‘they’re just kids’). They (the police) would intervene if they thought it necessary; if anyone was ‘out-numbered’ or

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<sup>10</sup> This was not shared by the police and local council and the (then) owner lost his license and a new manager was installed within 2 years.

'hurt' but this would very rarely involve appeals to the police<sup>11</sup>. For example, Mark who is in his 30s said

most of the time there's no need to get them involved. Let's face it, and we all know this is how it is, well those of us that do anyways. They just make it worse. I've got nothing against 'em, got a lot of respect, it's a tough job. And if things were out of hand then sure, give 'em a bell. But most of the time, I'd say 99 per cent, near as 100 per cent as you can get, well why would you? Just use your head, there's no point man.

The 'Glamorgan Arms'<sup>12</sup> was the preferred pub for the older residents of zone 2 and when they socialised in the village, the middle-class of zone 1. The latter were, and still are, welcomed into the pub because they do not 'cause problems' (Mark). However, zone 3 were met with a significantly more frosty reception. According to the regulars the newcomers drank too much, 'didn't know when they've had enough' (Carol) and were too noisy, disturbing the 'peace of the regulars' (Sid, barman), and because of this were not welcome. Rather than relocating themselves, as had happened in Winston Parva, the established drinkers in the 'Glamorgan Arms' shunned the newcomers who moved to the 'Old Canal Inn'. Whilst their own behaviour could be deemed as being profoundly anti-social, the responsibility for their being ostracised was attributed solely to the unacceptable behaviour of the newcomers. For example, Carol a member of zone 2 in her 40s said

they roughed it up didn't they?....we couldn't be bothered with them.....if they can't make an effort then, well that's them. Some of 'em they're alright but not many, I mean most of them, they're not alright.

The pub's reputation for rowdy and noisy excessive alcohol consumption was now attributed to the behaviour of the outsiders despite there being no discernible differences between the two groups. Evidence we suggest of the 'collective fantasy'

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<sup>11</sup> As a public service the police are generally held in high regard but community policing is often just that: policing by the community. What constitutes an issue that warrants official responses depends on the severity and the group. For example, anti-social behaviour by zone 2 young people would rarely be referred whereas similar behaviour from those from zone 3 is more likely to involve appeals to public policing.

<sup>12</sup> This pub was named after the powerful aristocratic family who had once been landowners in the village.

(Elias and Scotson, 1965) of the established group yet it was viewed as further evidence that the outsiders were a disruptive and unwelcome intrusion on (their) village life. The newcomers had failed to understand or adhere to the rules of the established group which included, importantly, some expected due deference to the social standing of zone 2 members. From a well-established position of power the established group were able to apply the stigma of ‘group disgrace’ (*ibid*) on the outsiders. Had the balance of power between the two status groups been less uneven the outsider group of zone 3 may have been more resilient to the social slurs applied to them.

Part of the explanation for how the established group succeed in maintaining their superior group image can be found in their monopolisation of resources of power in the community, again paralleling the processes unearthed in Elias and Scotson’s study. Almost all official and administrative positions in the community are now carried out by members of zone 2 and to a lesser extent zone 1. To a large extent then organising ‘community’ events is an exclusive and excluding performance: from hall bookings to lay members of the parish church, community council members and children and youth activity/play scheme leaders, village fair to putting out green cones to prevent parking outside the local primary school: the established dominate. Excluded from key positions in the community and lacking the advantages of an established network, the zone 3 group lacks the organisation and channels through which gossip is transmitted to be able to effectively retaliate. That said, they can, and do, occasionally hit back at their ‘social superiors’.

### ***Overall picture of zone 1 and zone 2***

Similarly to Winston Parva many of the moderately affluent middle class residents of zone 1 and some of the ‘pockets’<sup>13</sup> of the oldest houses in the village do not actively participate in community life. With few exceptions most of the residents of zone 1 are ‘dormitory’ villagers: professionals who are not active in the village during the day and tend to socialise away from the village at night. These ‘lightly engaged strangers’ (Young, 1999) tend to stay within, and socialise with, other residents of their small area,

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<sup>13</sup> Like Winston Parva there are small ‘pockets’ which do not fall within the zones focussed on in the study.

living ‘their own lives within the invisible walls which often enclose middle class families in residential areas’ (Elias & Scotson, 1965: 25). The established group tend to view them with kindly tolerance; even pitying them because that they cannot fully participate in the community, for example Gloria, an elderly woman in her 70’s said ‘it’s a shame’. A few do participate more actively in governing the village; two of the three members of the community council are members of zone 1 (the other is from zone 2). Interestingly, and reminiscent of Winston Parva’s community leaders, both of them are members of long-standing ‘old families’ and moved back to the neighbourhood with their (then) young families when the new homes were built.

Overall zone 1 enjoys a reputation as a more desirable area because of the size and style of housing but the difference between zone 1 and zone 2 could not be entirely attributed to their appearance. Neither are the differences between the groups entirely based on social class distinctions. Zone 2 identifies itself as (respectable) working class, as ‘nice people’, and the members of zone 1 as middle class. Zone 1 members may well have middle class status advantages in terms of public services (as suggested by LeGrand & Winter, 1986; Hastings & Matthews, 2011, amongst others) but their relatively small size (in comparison to both zones 2 and 3), lack of cohesion as a social group, and length of residency means that despite their superior class position in terms of economic indicators they do not have the highest social status. Underlining the importance of considering the chains of interdependence between the groups (despite little direct contact between individuals or direct experience of what Giddens’, 1984: 64, terms ‘co-presence’) the members of zone 1 are needed by the established group. Comments from members of zone 2 on the group included noting that they are ‘professionals’ (Bill), with ‘nice homes’ (Mary, 27) that they ‘look after properly’ (Edith). Their children are rarely seen in the village unsupervised and are unproblematic. Their very presence in some way offsets the damage to the village’s reputation, namely the shame associated with the outsiders of zone 3. Zone 1 residents do not tend to socialise in the village or use the local amenities and being slightly set apart from both of the other zones they are set apart, at a distance, from zone 3. Though they can and do engage with blame gossip about the residents of zone 3, they are not as troubled by them because of the social and geographical distance between them. The praise gossip shared by zones 1 and 2 about

zone 1 has over recent years led to a change in the power differentials between them with zone 2 members conceding a little to them by, for example, electing their members as community representatives. Zone 1 residents are nonetheless dependent on the established zone 2 group to achieve and maintain these positions of power.

### ***The mother-centred families of zone 2***

Over the course of the last 50 years it could be reasonably suggested that the structure of families and women's position in society has changed dramatically and thus significant differences between the Winston Parva of the early 1960s and contemporary Cornerville would be expected. Whilst 'having it all' is still out of reach for most women and change should not be read as necessarily implying some whole improvements, there have nonetheless been significant shifts (Greer, 2007). Yet there is a surprising level of similarity between 1960's Winston Parva and 21<sup>st</sup> century Cornerville. The 'self-sufficient' families in zone 1 are small, with most having one or two children and most of these leave once they are grown up (Elias and Scotson, 1994:44). The familial and kinship ties amongst zone 2 members are similarly close to those in Winston Parva, with inter-marriage and regular contact between extended family maintained. Families often gather at the 'mam's' house on a Sunday to share a 'cooked dinner'; a tradition that is passed on to daughter's or daughter in-law's when the matriarch is unable to do it anymore. Mike (50's) commented;

We used to always go round my mams on a Sunday for a cooked dinner....regular as clockwork.....all the family went so 9 of us....there's only 5 of us now with Bill too cos he's on his own like....she's knocking on a bit now so she comes to us and Pat does for everyone.

Whilst the established families of zone 2 no longer consider it a source of pride to have large families, the senior maternal figures are the 'hub' of family life and afforded considerable status honour not only by their own families but more broadly by other members of their status group.

In close correspondence to Charles and Davies' (2005) research, the women of the established have a pivotal role to play. It is possible here to draw some parallels with Bea Campbell's (1993) work Goliath with working class women as community builders,

admittedly in what were both highly impoverished and conflict-ridden public housing ‘estate’ areas, including Ely in Cardiff. Rather than being powerless, they are held in high esteem as care-givers to both children and elderly members. They have enabled younger women to gain employment outside of the home and for senior members to remain in the community. Care-giving is not routinely derogated but rather this is viewed positively, as exemplified by this comment from Bill, ‘the whole place would fall apart without the women’. Their caring is seen most routinely in the numbers of children who are collected and cared for after school by grandparents or other community members. Unlike the residents of zones 1 and 3 who do not tend to have senior matriarchal figures, there is a high level of organisation and co-operation amongst community members in zone 2 that supports the flourishing of its members who lay great store in claims to ‘look out for each other’ (Margo, shop worker in her 50s). Again illustrative of the chains of interdependence between the groups in this figuration, this moral imperative (and sense of superiority which accompanies it) is frequently juxtaposed against the alleged failings of zone 3 women who, according to members of zone 2, ‘don’t care’, their homes are ‘dirty’ and their children ‘wild’. The disgrace inferred on zone 3 (based on a few individuals) contributes to the collective fantasy of the established in zone 2 and to their group charisma.

### ***Local associations and the ‘old families’ network’***

The old families of Cornerville who have been present in the village for at least 2 or even 3 or more generations enjoy a privileged position in the status order. This cannot be solely attributed to age, but rather to the social network that has developed over time (Elias and Scotson, 1965: 94). Unlike Winston Parva which offered few leisure opportunities for its residents, Cornerville has an array of activities for community members. There are 3 churches in the village which tend to reinforce the divisions between the groups in the figuration. The congregation of the parish church which was built on land donated by the influential Glamorgan family is largely drawn from zone 1 and a churchless neighbouring community to Cornerville. The chapels are frequented by zone 2 residents whilst zone 3 residents are largely absent from all. Community events in the village hall are organised and patronised by the members of zones 1 and 2. With the exception of primary school-related events, the youth club and bi-annual village fair,

there are few occasions when all of the zones are present at the same events. The presence of community members of zone 2 and to a lesser extent zone 1 together with the absence of zone 3 serves an important function in enabling the established group to reinforce their superiority. Maintaining their associations and networks assists in sustaining their monopolisation of power and to reinforce the outsider, lesser status of zone 3. Their members seem unwilling and/or unable to tackle the barrier that the members of zones 1 and 2 pose to their acceptance in both leisure and quasi-official settings. These local associations and interdependent web of connections throughout the neighbourhood are critical for the sharing of both praise gossip about themselves and blame gossip on zone 3 members; both of which are essential mechanisms for the on-going process of maintaining their status.

### ***Overall picture of zone 3***

‘Collins Way’ is the road that runs through the (largely) social housing estate and the name by which other members of the communal figuration identify zone 3. In common with Winston Parva there is little outward appearance of the estate residents having pride in their homes. There are no planters on windowsills, no hanging baskets and the grass on house gardens is not always cut. Litter blows around the parking areas where cars share the space with abandoned household appliances, old toys and furniture. Whilst the worst of the environmental disorder is in reality limited to a few houses and the parking areas, it is nonetheless interpreted by the established group members as evidence of their being ‘lazy’ and ‘not caring’. For example, Lynne, a zone 2 member in her mid-30s said

Kids are grubby, houses are grubby. They just don’t care.....Their sort never do, I don’t think. That and they are bone idle... dirty people.....ignorant people.

Compounding this is a belief that the children of zone 3 are ‘out of control’ and ‘don’t know how to behave’ (Lynne). Worst of all they and their homes are ‘dirty’, a slur that carries with it moral connotations of a person’s value (Sayer, 2005; Skeggs, 2004). In this, as with so many of the established group’s understandings of zone 3, their overly simplified understandings related to ‘the minority of the worst’ (Elias & Scotson, 1965:81).

The shame inferred on all of the residents because of the actions of ‘a few’ can be felt keenly by those who are in the majority and not ‘the worst’. In conversations with Sue, Karen and Louise, all mothers who live on ‘Collins Way’, they shared their experiences of living on the estate. A key part of this was the knowledge of the low regard in which they are all held and interestingly some acceptance of this because of the behaviour of a minority of their own group. For example, the actions of the notorious ‘Staynes’ family are a source of some embarrassment to them and whilst keen to distinguish themselves they nonetheless understood that they were a key cause of the contempt heaped on the rest of the residents because of them. Together with one of his friends from the estate, a teenage male ‘Staynes’ accosted a young girl from the established group one morning whilst they were waiting for the school bus. News of the incident, including her trip to an accident and emergency (A & E) hospital department, spread quickly. Given the severity of the incident the police were called by the girl’s mother. There was widespread dissatisfaction with their handling of the incident and in particular the police’s advocacy of a ‘restorative justice’ approach – bringing victim and offender together to resolve the dispute - in response. According to her mother this was ‘taking the piss’ in trivialising the seriousness of what had happened. It was also seen as abrogating responsibility for dealing with the offence to the victim and the community. Given the nature of the assault restorative justice was viewed widely as not an appropriate response, particularly as the police’s interpretation of the punishment appeared to be little more than mediation. Contemptuously dismissed as ‘having a chat’ by Julia, this was derided by the established group. Whilst the incident was seen as ‘typical of them lot’ (Ken, zone 2 resident in his late 50s) and added to the litany of their wrong-doing, Sue, Karen and Louise shared in their horror of what had occurred and agreed with the criticism of the police’s handling of the incident. Moreover, they were equally, if not more, damning of the Staynes family who are a ‘horrible lot’ (Sue) and the teenage boy who committed the assault who they described as ‘mental’, ‘evil’ and ‘twisted’. For them it is this family, and two others, who ‘make us all look like shit’ (Karen) but illustrative of the sense of powerlessness that accompanies their shame, Sue asked ‘what can we do?’

For the majority of zone 3 who are shunned and despised because of a minority there is little they can do. They lack the organisation, the tightly bound cohesion that could

support a more concerted response. In another more mundane everyday example of the ‘talk’ of zone 2, three mothers from the established group were discussing the spread of headlice (‘nits’) in the primary school. The blame for their children’s infestation lay with ‘them lot’ and ‘them up Collins Way’ who ‘don’t care’ and ‘don’t treat ‘em’. These and similar comments were often heard being shared by parents and carers waiting outside the school. In conversations with Karen and Louise from zone 3 three weeks into the school term, they were also discussing the spread of ‘nits’ and their frustration with the school and futility of endlessly ‘treating them’ (Louise) only for the children to come home ‘riddled with them again’ (Karen). Both said they had treated them in the first week when they found them but at ‘15 quid a go’ (Karen) they were struggling with the costs of fortnightly treatments although both said they would buy more once they had some more money. Whilst ostensibly the medications are available from the local doctor free of charge in reality the surgery refuses and were not providing prescriptions. Karen is raising 3 children as a single mother and whilst she works part time in a supermarket her income is meagre. Louise, whose youngest child is 2 years old, does not work and after splitting from her partner before his birth she has been reliant on state benefits. Both of the women were distressed and could by no means be dismissed as uncaring but unable to refute the allegations nor explain their positions, they are left literally and figuratively ‘lousy’.

The ability of zone 3 residents to refute or address the blame and disgrace attributed to the whole group because of the behaviour of a minority is curtailed by their relative powerlessness. That said, in recent years there have been examples of some of the disgraced group retaliating. One of the most significant developments related to broader austerity measures is the growth of alcohol-related anti-social behaviour in the village. Until the latter part of 2008/09 Saturday nights used to cue an exodus into the city centre. Aware of the long observed tendency for drunken groups (most of whom hail from the respectable, established working class of Zone 2) to gather in the bus stop, the police used to drive along the bus route through the village at regular intervals throughout the evening but these stopped. Concurrently the economic downturn has been linked to a distinct decline in the popularity of the city’s night-time economy as a destination. Few now sit in the bus stops on Saturday evenings as drinks and entrance

fees together with transport costs have all risen. For the established group there is now a noticeable tendency for groups of young people to congregate in private houses and to a lesser extent in public spaces that are away from the immediate surveillance of the neighbourhood and officialdom alike. Zone 3 members have tended to drink in their homes anyway, not least because they are not welcome in the local pubs. Much of the alcohol-related behaviour in the village centre (which is in zone 2) is by the young people of the established group. However, occasionally some of the intoxicated members of zone 3 will walk the 15-20 minutes into the village and cause damage to street furniture and cars. Two years ago a group of 7 went through the village destroying the planters that the community council had paid for and planted. Whilst not condoning their actions, Sue and Karen were not entirely humourless in their recounting of the story. Neither were they completely unsympathetic with the motivations for the damage, with Karen commenting that

It was wrong but you could see their point... I'm not trying to say it was ok but, well, everyone... I mean everyone, all of them, right, they blame them for everything anyway. They just think well sod you, have it.... It was bad though.

It could be reasonably argued that there is some evidence of the outsiders beginning to accept some of the stigma from zone 2 as part of their own group image. Retaliation would seem to suggest an attempt to redress the tensions linked to the very uneven power balance between the groups. However, beyond some isolated events such as the locally infamous destruction of the planters there is little to suggest that this is widespread. Rather, whilst their motivation may have been viewed with some albeit guarded sympathy by the residents of zone 3, it serves to reinforce the established group's charisma and the group disgrace of their own members.

### ***Observations on gossip***

Just as in Winston Parva, gossip serves an important function in reaffirming the positive shared image of the established group. The shops, pubs and community based clubs are hubs for the exchange of gossip, together with the bus shelter and local convenience store, both of which are located on the main road in zone 2. Gossip in the village serves to praise the established group members and can be seen as 'supporting' and a means of

'mobilising communal help' (Elias & Scotson, 1965:92). 'Gwen', now in her late 60s, was born in the village, has never married or had formal employment having 'devoted her life' to caring for her grandparents, then her parents and finally an uncle. When he died she was left with no family and no home. Without being a member of an established family or having local associations she is nonetheless supported by the community. Indeed, she is afforded near saint-like status by the shop assistants who are the main channel through which gossip on her well-being (which is always described as 'poorly' but 'bearing up') and her care needs are shared. Despite not being particularly well liked (this is excused as an unfortunate consequence of her caring duties rather than attributed to her as an individual, for example, Ceri who is in her 20s commented that 'it's not really her fault, it's circumstances that got her like that'), members of the established group get her shopping, ensure she has enough money for her utility meters and check on her daily. They also organised for the minister from the chapel to administer communion when the parish priest declined to continue home visits after finding her coming back from a trip into the city centre with shopping bags. Gwen is, as observed by Edith (a senior matriarchal figure in the established group), a 'good woman', a view regularly shared amongst the residents. Such praise of Gwen, and – importantly - their caring for her, serves to reinforce the values that the zone 2 group hold dear, particularly the ideal of 'taking care of our own'. Commenting on this Edith said

...it's what we do, we look after our own. It might be old fashioned in this day and age and the ways things are going, but, well, we always have taken care of our own. You won't see anyone round here being left.....There's them that don't but taking care of our own is what we do and I know it's not what some do but we always have and we always will.

This praise gossip of their own group superiority based on an individual is frequently juxtaposed against the supposed behaviour of all of zone 3 who, as commented by Bill, 'don't care about anyone else'.

Bill, a well-liked elderly man in his 70s who is a prominent and highly visible member of zone 2 (it is a rare day when he is not seen), is a key source and transmitter of gossip in the village. He is an 'elder' in the village chapel, a title that is used in general parlance when referring to him and his role in the community. Amongst his various roles, it is Bill

who serves as unofficial school crossing guard and puts out the green cones to stop parking outside the village school. The primary school is opposite zone 2 so none of the parents drive, rather it is the parents of children from zone 3 who are frequently alleged to be ‘putting our kids lives at risk’. Some of the parents from zone 1 also drive but they are never identified as problematic, again it is the parents of zone 3 who, according to Bill, ‘don’t care’ and ‘can’t drive’ – comments that are often accompanied with a further critique of the (il)legality of their cars. Added to this, their irresponsible parking is also gossiped about as further evidence of their inability to ‘look after their kids properly’ (Carol). Such gossip was not usually said with malice but with pity. Blame gossip like this often goes through key members of zone 2 like Bill and, as can be seen from this example, it serves an important purpose. Deriding the members of zone 3 contributes to the on-going process of stigmatisation of the outsiders who themselves have few opportunities to gossip, still less any networks beyond a few parents outside the school through which to channel it. Gossip also benefits the members of zone 2 in that such praise gossip reinforces the positive self-image of the established group as both virtuous and blameless in the Cornerville figuration.

### ***Young people in Cornerville***

The established group’s shared sense of their superiority extends to their own young members. Interestingly, there is little discernible difference between the youths of zones 2 and 3 (the children of zone 1 are rarely seen unaccompanied in the village) in terms of their behaviour. Yet the young people in zone 3 are blamed for a litany of offences from verbal abuse to shop lifting, vandalism and damage to cars and property. According to local gossip (this time shared in the convenience store), one of the ‘old dears’ would no longer go out because ‘the abuse they throw at her has left her too shaken up to go out, poor love’ (Margo). On another occasion the shop assistants and a few customers were talking about two boys who had been caught stealing chocolate bars from the store just a few minutes before. One of them was from a long established family in the village and after being verbally chastised by the shop assistant who knew his name and where he lives was sent home where ‘his nan will sort him out’ (Tina, 20). He was not held responsible for what had happened as he had been ‘led astray by that little bastard’ (Tina) from zone 3. Unlike the child from zone 2 there would be ‘no point’ in talking to his

family, even if they knew them, because ‘they won’t sort him out! They wouldn’t know how’ (Margo). In the absence of being able to rely on the parents in zone 3 to punish the child appropriately they felt they had ‘no option really’ but to ban him from the shop.

The notion that the children from zone 2 are better than those from zone 3 is deeply held. Bill, who is unusual in being generally well liked by members of both the established and outsider groups, sits in the bus shelter every weekday morning where he can observe the pick-up and drop-off points for the school buses. He is ‘keeping an eye’ on the children, a role deemed necessary since the village no longer has its own PCSO (police community support officer)<sup>14</sup> because of austerity measures. Bill’s is a protective role but it is also an example of the communal surveillance that the young people of zone 2 are constantly subject to. Whilst it may be that the network of informal social controls serve as a deterrent as noted in Elias and Scotson’s account of Winston Parva (1965: 106), this is not always the case. Rather, the behaviour of the young people is seen as a natural part of growing up, just ‘kids being kids’ (Tom, zone 2 member in his early 40s); a maternalistic attitude that is rarely extended to the young people of zone 3 who are more commonly viewed as troublesome. Misbehaviour does not go unpunished but for the established group it is familial, informal and community based, rarely involving recourse to formal sanctions. Whilst this nurturing can be considered to have benefits for the young people who are likely to desist once they reach adulthood, it can have less positive consequences for those considered less worthy of the community’s protection. The established group does encourage the young people from zone 3 to join the church youth club. This seemingly uncharacteristic benevolence is not as altruistic as it might initially appear. Rather, as a local councillor from zone 1 said, they are trying to ‘teach them’.

As outlined in the outset of this paper, one of the authors is a resident of ‘Cornerville’ and has experienced community life, and anti-social behaviour, as an outsider in one of the

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<sup>14</sup> Police community support officers are civilian staff employed by the police. They have limited powers when compared to police constables and are in the main tasked with working within neighbourhood policing teams to deal with minor offences and build constructive relationships with the local community (see Hughes and Rowe, 2006).

‘pockets’ between zones 2 and 1. ‘We’ (researcher and partner) were woken very late night to loud banging outside in the street. Going to the bedroom window we saw one young man jumping on the roof of my partner’s van, encouraged by two others who were banging the bonnet and back doors. One of our two neighbours went outside and, addressing two of them by their names, told them to get off and go home – which they duly did. Both neighbours then stood outside talking about the young men, one of whom is the son of a woman who works in a shop in the village. After a few minutes they noticed that our bedroom window was open and they went back inside. The next day we asked if they had seen or heard anything the night before. Apologetically they said sorry, no, they had no idea what had happened. They had neither seen nor heard anything at all. We were personally bemused by their responses; we thought we enjoyed a neighbourly amiability with them. On reflection this is true but the importance of protecting the young men from being identified and potentially punished (we could have called the police) was critical. In developing a sociological understanding of why they had reacted like this (they are after all ‘nice people’), it is important to foreground the importance of shame and the potential group disgrace of a member of zone 2 being accused of behaving in ways very similar to the uncivilised members of zone 3. This serves as an immensely powerful inhibitor as the reputational damage would not be restricted to the young men themselves but to their families. One of the young men is a member of a long-standing family, 3 generations of which still live in the village. Being a good neighbour carries with it responsibilities to uphold shared norms and values of what constitutes acceptable (and unacceptable) standards, but these are not necessarily extended to newcomers-outsiders. On this occasion the potential threat posed to their group charisma and sense of being virtuous, respectable, good people meant they protected members of their own group. They are not ‘bad’ people and indeed in their own understandings they may well believe that they did the ‘right thing’ for the benefits of helping us ‘newcomers-outsiders’ were vastly out-weighed by concerns about their own positions and well-being. To be an outsider or to be ostracised by the established group is not comfortable to live with.

### **‘Us’ and ‘Them’; ‘Now’ and ‘Then’**

There are striking and perhaps surprising parallels between our research enquiry in the 2010s and that of *The Established and the Outsiders* in the 1960s accepting the very significant shifts in politics, economy and culture across the five decades<sup>15</sup>. We discovered that some groups are more powerful than others and believed their group to be superior to the members of lesser, inferior groups. Just as in Elias and Scotson's research the members of the older more established group considered themselves to be better than those who live in the more recently constructed area of social housing. These people, residents of zone 3, are considered to be outsiders – they do not belong. Unlike Elias and Scotson's study, it is beyond the scope of this present study to comment definitively on the extent to which the attribution of blame for a host of incivilities to zone 3 is deserved or not (in Winston Parva it was only a minority but all were assumed to be the same). Similarly to Winston Parva, Cornerville residents of zones 1 and 2 tend to avoid contact with zone 3. The role of blame and praise gossip is crucial in understanding how the more powerful group is able to sustain its group-held belief of superiority over the 'lesser mortals' of zone 3. The length of residence was important (just as in Winston Parva) and both groups are located in predominantly working class areas. That said the members of zone 2 consider themselves to be more respectable (and 'working') than the ('workless') inhabitants of the contemptible zone 3. The level of social cohesion amongst residents of zone 2 is high and of long standing. Many families will remain in the village and the more powerful ones can trace their families' residency back several generations.

### **Concluding remarks**

We conclude this paper by drawing out some of the implications of community-based research for advancing sociological criminology's contribution to the specific analysis of group stigmatisation and more broadly social processes of communal ordering and rule-making and rule-breaking in contemporary localities.

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<sup>15</sup> Inter alia, it is vital to note (see O'Connor and Goodwin, 2012: 478) the move away from the fixed, linear education to work trajectories of the 1960s, the increased transitions into precarious and insecure employment, underemployment or mass unemployment which have all meant that the processes through which young people acquire the behavioural standards of adulthood have become more uncertain and more complex. This, along with the accompanying de-industrialization of many communities, may, according to O'Connor and Goodwin (*ibid*), represent something of a 'decivilizing process'.

We noted earlier our growing dissatisfaction with the dominance of discursive accounts of ‘community governance’ and our modest realist ambition of foregrounding the study of the concrete social relations involving interdependent, figural processes which take us nearer to the living, throbbing, and at times dark, heart of the beast that is ‘communing’ in bounded localities. So in this sociological tale comparing two groups trapped in a web of interdependency, there is nonetheless a bright side - for those insiders, ‘the established’ who have lived in the community their entire lives. For them, their communal belongingness offers them safety, tolerance and protection. Despite the claims of theorists of ‘liquid’ late- or post-modernity, the established working class residents in Cornerville community appear to have a surfeit of ‘ontological security’ (Giddens, 1984: 375), manifesting a confidence and trust that the social world is as it appears, including the basic existential parameters of self and social identity. Theirs is a story of successful (for them) communal problem solving. Their community is protected by capable, informal guardians and provides the insiders with security. In many ways theirs is an exclusive success story of goods, virtues and flourishing. It looks very like Putnam’s ‘bonding social capital’ in extremis with its own dark side represented by the disgraceful outsiders of zone 3.

Accordingly, community is neither all bleak, nor all bright but more markedly complex with clear distinctions as well as entangled interdependencies in the figuration of established insiders and outsiders witnessed both in Winston Parva in the mid-1960s and Cornerville some fifty years later. What is markedly not in evidence in Cornerville today is the death of community –unlike Sennett’s over-blown claim of ‘no shared narrative of difficulty, and so no shared fate’ (1998: 147). But what we find is a very restricted sense of ‘us’ (requiring very close ‘others’) and is a long way away from both the ideal of post-war social democratic solidarity and the contemporary utopian aspirations of cosmopolitan pluralism. A plethora of sociologists and critical criminologists have argued that the death of community or at best its rebirth as an exclusive club good is the result of wider processes of neo-liberalism and more specifically abandonment by the state since the 1980s (see Lea, 2001). More particularly it has been contended by John Lea (2001: 180) that such abandoned working class communities are likely to witness the rebirth of pre-modern systems of control in which communities define their own

priorities and settle them in their own way ('self-policing' and 'bottom-up governance'). Our modest findings from Cornerville, South Wales, alongside the 'generational rediscovery' (Ritzer and Smart, 2001) of similar sociological realities in Winston Parva fifty years ago raise the question of how 'new' such self-policing really is or rather is this how things have been for generations in certain locales such as Cornerville and Winston Parva in terms of mundane processes of social control? There is of course an important caveat to be made here. Cornerville, like Winston Parva fifty years ago is not an extreme case of communal control (and its obverse communal disorder) when compared with the harsher realities in the poorest, geographically and financially abandoned, contemporary post-industrial communities of the Valleys of South Wales or those of Britain's largest metropolises. The processes of established-outsider dynamics and the nature of such abandoned communal figurations require much greater attention but not at the cost of neglecting the less dramatic communal processes in the types of household-based communities explored here. There remains much conceptual retrieval and recovery work to be done in re-examining past community studies and the social scientific tradition built around these, not least its 'determination to respect the everyday and the mundane' (Savage, 2010: 249). There remains a pressing need for more community case studies across different types of household-based community figurations in contemporary society. The findings and discussion generated in this paper has attempted to make a small but significant contribution to this collective intellectual process.

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