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## Ideology in the Staffroom? A Critique of False Consciousness

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As used today, the concept of ideology functions less as an analytical device than as an argumentative one. It does not tell us much about what ideas are like, how they are formed or why they are held but enables, instead, *ad hominem* argument against them, a means of attributing sinister and malign motives, or writing off positions on the basis of their alleged social consequences.

(Sharrock and Anderson, 1981, p. 293)

The only false consciousness recognized by the interactionists is the contemplation of an alienated mind which retires to a place of distant analytic reflection.

(Rock, 1979, p. 66)

### Prologue

Sociological research always provides an opportunity to learn something about *sociology* as well as about the activities of those being studied. That such learning is only rarely evidenced reflects, perhaps, the generally unreflexive character of the discipline, despite the efforts of writers like Gouldner (1970) and Friedrichs (1970). The applicability of sociological analysis to sociological work itself, and its implications for such work, continue to be neglected – no doubt for reasons that are themselves susceptible to sociological analysis.

As a result, the sociologist in his work typically presupposes a very unsociological self-image. While others are embroiled in a world of latent functions, patterned interests, mystifications and false consciousness, he purports to view that world from the Olympian heights, apparently untrammelled. At one time such a view was conventionally and conveniently justified by an appeal to 'the scientific method'. But with the public demise of 'positivism', this has become generally unpersuasive. Notwithstanding this, many sociologists, like wise Calvinists, continue to act as if their place in heaven were assured.

However, claims that the accounting procedures underlying current sociological work are sharply distinguishable from those employed by members do not survive close scrutiny. Faced with this discovery there are at least two possible responses. One can try to substitute some alternative conception of science for that of 'positivism', by means of which the accounts of sociologists can be assigned priority over others. However, those who have employed this strategy, such as Althusserians and the ethnomethodologists, have generally run into severe problems in differentiating science from commonsense or ideology (Thomas, 1978).<sup>1</sup>

A much more fruitful strategy, however, is to abandon any attempt at drawing an epistemological distinction, and to accept that members' accounts may be true or false to varying degrees, and in various ways, and that in this respect they are no different from sociological accounts. Indeed, sociology must be viewed as a collection of practices operative in the social world, and thus as subject to the influences and constraints characteristic of that world. To one degree or another, then, sociologists also misinterpret phenomena because of interests, preconceptions etc. Indeed, there may be misconceptions characteristic of the sociological community itself. However, at the same time, sociology's distinctive concerns must be recognized. The criteria for judging the adequacy of accounts are likely to differ from the more practical considerations employed in everyday life. Moreover, while this view requires sociologists to renounce their Olympian stance, it does not remove the obligation to eliminate, as far as possible, influences other than a concern for truth from the process of developing and testing sociological theory. Indeed, sociological analysis of sociological work should be partly concerned with clarifying the relationship between the concern for truth and the other goals and interests which underlie sociological accounts, with a view to how the effects of the latter might be minimized. At the same time, this position requires recognition that, for those being studied, a concern with the truth of accounts is not necessarily uppermost, and their accounts must not be treated simply as proto-science.

This whole issue became central for me during the course of an ethnographic study of Downtown, an inner-city boys' secondary modern school (Hammersley, 1980). The particular configuration of political and intellectual commitments with which I entered the field, and the relationship between these and the perspectives of the teachers in the school, placed me in a double-bind. Politically I was in fundamental disagreement with the teachers and, initially, I regarded their comments about the pupils as simply outrageous, and their treatment of pupils as deplorable. Yet I was also committed to interactionist sociology with its injunction to adopt an 'appreciative stance' towards the attitudes and activities of those studied (Matza, 1969). It was this role conflict which forced me to re-examine my own orientation. Once I began to do this I found that, despite our different views, there were parallels between the accounting practices employed by the teachers and those I tended to use as a sociologist; and this forced me to reconsider the proper nature of sociological analysis.

The focus in this paper is on the concept of ideology and its analytic viability, an issue thrown into sharp relief by the nature of staffroom talk at Downtown. I shall begin by giving, as background, a brief outline of the nature of this talk before turning to the concept of ideology itself.

### **Staffroom Talk**

In the Downtown staffroom, talk was undoubtedly the major activity, ranging in focus from soccer to classical music. However, most conversation was shop-talk, concerning the school and its pupils. Some of this talk involved the trading of news about events in the school: fights among the pupils, visits from parents and so on. Typifications of pupils were also exchanged – often structured by a concern with 'whose worst' – and accounts were presented for why the pupils were the way they were.

Implicit in this staffroom talk was a particular set of views about pupils, parents, teaching and the world in general. At its centre lay the assumed superiority of 'traditional' teaching, and in particular the importance of 'discipline'.

(Staffroom)

*Denison* What we ought to do is to run a school using all the old traditional methods.

*Webster* It'd go like a bomb.

(Greaves, Webster and MH talking in the staffroom. Greaves tells an anecdote about the lack of discipline at a junior school which feeds Downtown).

*Greaves* I had to teach there for a short time. I went into a classroom of about thirty of the little buggers, stood at the front and clapped my hands: and nothing happened. I did it again and still nothing happened. Eighteen years teaching experience and I couldn't even bring a class to order. A Jamaican student was there trying to teach them, with no success. Eventually, she brought two Jamaicans, no prejudice there, out from the back of the class but put them behind her back where she couldn't see them, so of course they were pulling faces. I decided I'd have to do something about it so I picked up a standard arithmetic book, y'know with hard backs, calmly walked up behind them and gave them a good belt round the ears, praying of course that they hadn't mastoids. It was like lifting a needle from the gramophone, everything stopped and the student taught the rest of the lesson in peace. Some of those pupils are in the first form now, they remember me although I don't remember them.

(Staffroom)

*Webster* Have you noticed how few graduates are coming into teaching to teach science and maths.

*MH* Of course there are fewer people doing science at universities compared to arts and social science subjects.

*Walker* Yes that's because science and maths are disciplines, they don't want discipline today.

Premised on this 'traditional' conception of teaching and emphasis on 'discipline' was the belief that there had been a serious decline in the standard of pupils' 'behaviour' and 'work' at Downtown over the previous few years.

(Staffroom discussion)

*Larson* You talk about educating these kids.

*Webster* You can't.

*Larson* You're nurse-maid to them most of the time.

(Staffroom: Walker talking to me)

*Walker* It's a sad deterioration from what it was.

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(Staffroom: Greaves talking to me)

*Greaves* You don't realize there's only eighteen of them. In twenty years teaching I've never had so many disciplinary problems and I'm not alone. I can remember having forty-three in room five and I could mark all lesson; I couldn't even hear them breathing never mind talking.

In the view of Downtown teachers, then, there has been a fall in the quality of the pupils coming to the school. This was blamed, in part, on 'immigration', locally and nationally:

(Webster talking to me in his classroom)

*Webster* Used to be nice kids, good uniform, dropped in cars, but its gone down since the coloureds came.

(Greaves talking to me after a lesson)

*Greaves* They're thick. Things have changed, the comprehensive school creams entry and in the local area the better class, I know it's an old-fashioned term, have moved out and Jamaicans and Pakistanis have moved in. I looked up the IQs of our present pupils and compared them with those of a few years ago, there's been a considerable decline.

(Staffroom)

*Webster* I thought (that next year) we were going to get eight hundred kids and not a coon among them but it looks as if we'll have lots of coons. Larson says it's known as an immigrant school. I hadn't realized that, I'm too involved internally to think of the external view.

*Holton* Yes and the tab end of the coons as well.

(Staffroom)

*Larson* The coloured boys know no restraint, no discipline, it's natural for them to shout and carry on, they're used to it I suppose. Some people say they're just happy but you can't have them acting like that in a *school*, and of course our boys see them doing things which they'd like to do but are not allowed to do and so they begin to do it as well.

The other major explanation for the decline in pupil quality voiced in the Downtown staffroom was the claim that there had been a general moral decline in society, as reflected in the attitudes of pupils, parents and many teachers.

(Denison talking to me in the staffroom)

*Denison* Anarchy is creeping into the classroom.

*MH* Do you think the NAS are right then?

*Denison* Yes, it's part of a general trend, not just restricted to this country.

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(Staffroom)

*French*

The staff at Windsor Street (another secondary school in the same area) don't even look like teachers, scruffy, long hair, how can you expect the pupils to dress respectably if the teachers dress like that?

Important elements, or symptoms, of this moral decline were progressivism and comprehensivism:

(Staffroom: Webster talking about comprehensivization)

*Webster*

The changeover's going to produce rubbish and it's no good these educational experts poo-pooing it, standards have gone down.

(Walker talking to me after a lesson)

*Walker*

(These pupils) can't spell, some can't copy, all they believe in at junior schools now is spontaneity, they don't teach them anything, just make sure they haven't any repressions, it's wrong.

(Staffroom discussion)

*Webster*

People at the top will just not accept, for political reasons I suspect, that people are *born* with different amounts of talent. There's an article in *Teacher* the slant being that the universities should be open to everyone. This idiot doesn't realize that sixty-five per cent of them are illiterate. What's the use of sending people to university who can't even read the directions to get there!

This attack was occasionally generalized beyond the realm of education, for example to 'egalitarianism' and 'the welfare state', youth culture and 'radical' students, and great stress was laid on 'law and order':

(Walker and Wright talking after a lesson)

*Wright*

I've noticed that 3t alone are very good but with the rest of the year they're hopeless.

*Walker*

I believe in streaming not non-streaming and other modern things like the Welfare State and equality. Putting them all together brings them all down to the lowest level.

(Staffroom)

*Denison*

The idea of equality is the cause of all the rot in our society.

*Teacher*

It's a myth.

*Denison*

Yes but a very dangerous myth. It's equated with justice as if people can be the same, there's no such thing.

*Aldridge*

Equality of what, opportunity, ability, emolument?

*Denison*

Equal to the lowest level.

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(Staffroom)

*Webster* Class has nothing to do with it now (the working class have no brains) it's so open it's – anyone can get anywhere – I was going to say it's a farce which I suppose it is, over-loaded [refers to Hoggart etc.: 'they made it'].

(Staffroom: Denison to me)

*Denison* 'Law and Order' is the most important issue today, why don't the government do something about it?

This is by no means an exhaustive account of the nature of staffroom talk at Downtown (see Hammersley, 1980), but it should give sufficient flavour of it to raise the analytic issues I want to address in this paper.

### **Ideology and Context**

Now one obvious, and currently rather fashionable, way of approaching the analysis of this data would be to treat it as documenting an ideology. The term 'ideology' has, of course, been used in a wide variety of ways (Minar, 1961; Williams, 1976). I limit myself here to usages which define ideology as a distorted or inaccurate view of the world which serves the interests of some class or group and/or facilitates the reproduction of the existing social order (Huaco, 1971; Barth, 1976; Larrain, 1979; Naish, Hartnett and Finlayson, 1976; Apple, 1979).<sup>2</sup> The views expressed in the Downtown staffroom positively invite treatment in this way, even more so than those ideas more commonly subjected to this form of analysis under the headings of liberal and social democratic ideology. Here we have views which are close to Black Paper conservatism (Grace, 1978), and as such are more 'obviously' ideological than the claims of liberals and social democrats. On the other hand, of course, because these views are so 'obviously' a distortion, pointing this out has rather less news value than revealing the ideological character of liberalism or social democracy. Perhaps this explains why, relatively speaking, conservative ideology has been rather neglected, though the time is now more than ripe for a reassessment! What I want to try to show here, however, is that *even* in the case of 'conservative' views of the kind expressed by the teachers at Downtown, the ideology concept is analytically unsound.

At face value the ideology model seems to work quite well on this data. Thus, it can be shown that all the task-related staffroom talk I documented at Downtown is not only infused with an underlying traditional/conservative viewpoint but is also structured in ways which deflect blame for the poor disciplinary and academic performances of pupils away from the teachers. Furthermore, it can be cogently argued that this deflection enables the teachers to continue teaching in the same 'traditional' manner despite apparent failure, and despite perceived pressures locally and nationally for a more 'progressive' approach. Moreover, it has been argued that, under capitalism, 'traditional' teaching is functionally appropriate for pupils like those at Downtown who, in the main and at best, are destined for unskilled and semi-skilled manual work (Leacock, 1969; Bowles and Gintis, 1976).

However, while it possesses some plausibility, this line of analysis also has serious drawbacks. For one thing, and ignoring the implicit functionalism, use of the concept of ideology in this way runs into the problem of the relationship between beliefs and actions, something which also plagues attitude research (Deutscher, 1973). It is

a sociological commonplace that people do not always act in accordance with their stated 'beliefs'. Thus, we cannot rely solely on these in explaining behaviour. Moreover, this problem persists even where, as in the case of Althusser, ideology is identified not as a set of ideas but rather as a collection of material practices. Such an approach still leaves no room for recognition of the way in which people's behaviour, including their expressions of belief, is shaped by or to particular contexts; it assumes that a unified and internally coherent 'competence' underlies their behaviour. Yet some analysts have made much of precisely such contextual variation in the behaviour of teachers (Keddie, 1971; Sharp and Green, 1975; Lacey, 1977). Unfortunately, much of this work has tended to treat the 'educationist' or interview context as representing 'ideas', and what teachers do in the classroom as 'practice': this implies that there are only two contexts, and it discourages analysis of the material effects of staffroom or meeting talk. There are also some severe and largely untackled methodological problems involved in the identification of 'inconsistencies' in behaviour (Hammersley, 1977 and 1979). Nevertheless, this work does reveal the importance of context, something which the concept of ideology neglects, at least in its current stage of development.

The upshot of this argument for the analysis of staffroom talk at Downtown is that the latter must be treated not as a straightforward reflection of the attitudes of individual teachers but as a perspective constructed and sustained in the particular circumstances of staff relations. Furthermore, the teachers' classroom behaviour cannot simply be read off from their staffroom views. For example, we might expect that, given their resentment over 'immigration', the teachers would discriminate against black pupils in the classroom. In fact I could detect no such tendency. Moreover, racist talk was not generally used in the presence of pupils.

Now there is a conception of ideology which does allow for contradictions in people's orientations and behaviour, and it is neatly represented by Johnson's reading of Gramsci:

Gramsci employs three key terms of cultural/ideological analysis (where culturalism and structuralism employ only one): 'common sense' which refers, concretely, to the lived culture of a particular class or social group; 'philosophy' (or sometimes 'ideology') which refers to an organized set of conceptions with a more or less transformative relation to lived culture; and 'hegemony' which describes the state of play, as it were, between the whole complex of 'educative' institutions and ideologies on the one hand, and lived culture on the other; the extent to which common sense is made to conform both to 'the necessities of production' and to the construction of consent and a political order. (Johnson, 1979, p. 73)

Commonsense is 'the more or less spontaneous way of thinking of a class', though it is 'deeply contradictory, shot through with ideological elements' and lacks 'a knowledge of the historicity and determinate origin of elements in its own folklore'. Ideologies on the other hand are 'organized' and are to be understood in relation to 'the particular "class-related" position of the intellectuals who produce them'.

This is certainly a more promising starting point than other versions of ideology theory, not least because it draws attention to the complex ways in which ideologies are received. It also seems to accept that *both* ideologies and commonsense can facilitate social reproduction or constitute an obstruction or challenge to it. This is



certainly necessary to accommodate analyses such as those of Keddie (1971), Sharp and Green (1975), and Lacey (1977). However, this is also a cause of some serious problems. It certainly renders any general account of the role of ideology very complex. Indeed it threatens to undermine the concept altogether, since it seems unlikely that commonsense and ideology can be clearly distinguished in this approach. In what sense is ideology 'organized' and commonsense unorganized? Moreover, intellectuals themselves presumably operate in the context of commonsense, nor are they (except by means of a very broad definition) the only ones who develop and transmit world views. The Downtown data provides a good example of people drawing on the cultural resources available to them to develop a distinctive view of their circumstances (Hammersley, 1980). What we have, at best, is a difference of degree between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, and it is not at all clear that their products differ in kind; though they may differ in transmission media and in level of influence.

#### Misrecognition by Whom?

The second general problem I want to discuss is, I believe, inherent in the ideology model. Even if it were accepted that I had satisfactorily shown that task-related staff-room talk at Downtown is structured in ways which serve the teachers' interests, I have not established that the teachers' views are actually mistaken. Moreover, demonstrating this is not quite so straightforward as might be imagined; though it is a problem which is ignored or treated in a cavalier fashion in many sociological analyses of ideology. Willis (1977) provides a useful example since he presents a sophisticated version of the ideology model. Instead of simply treating the views of 'the lads' as ideological, he argues that they involve both 'penetrations' – true understandings of reality – and ideological distortions. However, Willis treats the identification of penetrations and ideology as straightforward, as requiring little empirical support.<sup>3</sup> This is made possible by reliance on the implausible assumption that only false knowledge, or knowledge of appearances, can be functional for the reproduction of the social order. But the truth or falsity of knowledge is irrelevant to its mode of operation; though people's perceptions of it *will* play an important part.

Without this implausible assumption, the distinction between penetrations and ideology rests, at best, on a judgement of 'the lads' views against the findings of social science. What is particularly significant is that such judgement is necessary for the very *identification* of ideology. This places an unsupportable burden on the findings of sociology. We all know that the philosophical grounding of science, and especially of social science, is far from firm, and that in any case all scientific findings are necessarily provisional. Yet the use of the concept of ideology involves the assumption that there is some clear and definitive method of deciding, once and for all, whether some account is true or false. We have no such method. The most persuasive one suggested so far – Popper's falsificationism (Popper, 1972) – still fails to solve the problem (see for example Keat and Urry, 1975, chapter 3). Without such clear and definitive arbitration, our very identification of an ideology is contingent upon the current state of knowledge in the field to which the 'ideology' relates. As a result, what is judged at one point in time to be true may later have to be reclassified as ideological, and *vice versa*. This reclassification would be required not because we have found out anything new about the mode of production or functioning of the knowledge concerned, but simply because our assessment of its validity had

changed. Moreover, this argument applies whether or not ideology is seen as involving distortion or as mistaking phenomena for real forms.

What I am arguing is not that it is impossible or illegitimate to assess the validity of participant views, simply that this is neither necessary in order to explain these views, nor a matter often open to definitive judgements. As it happens, if we examine the views of Downtown teachers, as expressed in the staffroom, to the extent that relevant evidence is available, it seems that their factual claims are substantially correct. The social composition of the neighbourhood has certainly changed, and there is some evidence to suggest that, nationally, there has been a history of steadily increasing 'permissiveness' on the part of parents and teachers (see the discussion in Woods, 1977, pp. 32-4). And we can expect that both these trends will have affected the 'amenability' of the pupils Downtown teachers are required to teach (Becker, 1951; Hammersley, 1980). But, of course, these 'facts' are sketched and interpreted in terms of a theory; and this theory is open to criticism.

Some writers have argued that the conservatism of many teachers is to be found in their tendency to blame the pupils and *not* the school or the wider society for their problems (Lacey, 1977). It is clear from the Downtown case, however, that this is not an adequate basis for differentiating 'conservative' and 'radical' teacher perspectives since the two options are not empirically exclusive. Downtown teachers blame both the pupils and wider social conditions; they certainly do not take their conditions of work for granted but draw on ideas about the wider society to account for changes in the quality of their pupils. However, it is true that the account they provide takes their own beliefs and practices as given, as not in need of description, explanation or justification.

But it is not at all clear that what I am challenging here is simply the theoretical interpretation the teachers place on 'the facts'. It seems likely, though I do not have the evidence, that the Downtown teachers would recognize that they and their current practices are relevant in principle; but that they leave them out of account because their concern is not with explanation *per se*, but with identifying the factors which are to blame for their situation and the conditions which need to be changed. In other words, a value criterion underlies their account.

However, before we start criticizing this practice as ideological, claiming that it is not just the *content* of what Downtown teachers say in the staffroom that is ideological but also the forms in which it is produced, we should note that this practice is often employed by sociologists themselves. The difference lies, in large part, in the underlying values and, thus, in who or what gets blamed. Downtown teachers blame the pupils, their parents, 'progressives' of all kinds, immigration policy and certain secular trends in the society. Sociologists tend, implicitly at least, to blame, for example, the bourgeoisie, bureaucratization or the capitalist mode of production. In their accounts, too, it is often the case that variables are singled out for attention in large part according to value criteria. Thus, for example, in the Political Arithmetic of the 1950s and 1960s, as is well-known, the nature of what passes for knowledge and intelligence in schools was largely ignored. This topic, unlike the issue of the effects of allocation procedures such as the 11 plus and streaming, was not taken to be a political issue. In much current sociology of education what is taken for granted, again because in the relevant circles it is a political given, is that socialist education would take a libertarian form with no hierarchy between teachers and learners. Thus, the fact that schooling under capitalism does not match libertarian ideals is assumed to be because hierarchy serves to reproduce capitalism (Sharp and Green, 1975; Bowles and Gintis, 1976).

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This, of course, raises the issue of the relationship between values and science and whether we can avoid, or indeed should avoid, using value criteria in this way. What seems clear, however, is that if we adopt the position that value criteria cannot be avoided (Seeley, 1966), use of the concept of ideology *itself* becomes a form of distortion unless we can show that our values are in some objective sense superior to those of the people we are studying, and we are not in a position to even begin to do that.

### Conclusion

In this paper I have tried, in the context of a study of some staffroom talk, to show that the concept of ideology is fatally flawed, under all those definitions which take distortion or inaccuracy as a key criterion. It provides little basis for that analysis of contextual variation in people's behaviour; and the very identification of an ideology is premised on the reification of current, and necessarily corrigible, findings of sociological research, and/or on the taken for granted objectivity of the sociologist's own values. What I am suggesting, then, is that the road taken by many sociologists in recent years from 'culture' to 'ideology', so clearly marked in the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies CCCS (Hall and Jefferson, 1976; CCCS, 1977), is a *cul de sac*.

Of course, this shift from the concept of culture to that of ideology reflects deeper theoretical changes in the sociology of education in the last five or six years. It also highlights a disturbing feature of these changes. The deficiencies of the ideology concept reflect a lack of concern for the principles of understanding and context which lie at the heart of social phenomenology and symbolic interactionism.

Rather than superseding interactionism and phenomenology, then, recent neo-Marxist approaches, whether of a political economy or culturalist variety (Whitty, 1978), simply ignore lessons already learned. It is not that the arguments for the importance of understanding the perspectives of participants and analyzing their activities in context have been refuted, they have simply been forgotten; presumably to be revived again in the future by some 'new, new, new sociology of education'. Indeed, I suspect that the current preference among many sociologists for the concept of ideology derives not from the analytic strengths of that concept – indeed I have suggested that these are distinctly limited – but from a desire to present their accounts as *by definition* superior to those of other people. The appeal of the concept lies, in other words, in its capacity to disguise political value judgements under a veneer of academic objectivity.<sup>4</sup>

### Notes

1 As Thomas (1979) points out ethnomethodologists have displayed commitments to a variety of different positions on the relationship between sociology and commonsense. He goes on to argue that 'the variety of positions it takes is an index of the fact that ethnomethodology is most at home in the view that sociology must break with commonsense (an option it does not explicitly embrace), but that certain of its constituent theses prevent it from recognising this point' (p. 66). In fact there are occasions when this commitment is made explicit, notably in Sacks (1963). While ethnomethodologists generally express a disinclination to provide

alternatives to commonsense accounts, this self-restraint is frequently, and understandably, abandoned when it comes to sociological accounts, which are condemned as merely trading in commonsense.

2 Recently attempts have been made by Marxists to distinguish between false consciousness and ideology, arguing against the idea that ideology involves distortion. Instead it is to be seen as an objective level of social formations which constitutes subjects rather than being produced by them (Althusser) or as being based on 'phenomenal forms' not real relations, (Mepham, 1972; Sayer, 1979). Hirst (1976) and others have shown that Althusser's appeal to the 'imaginary' relationship which ideology bears to the real relations of individuals to their conditions of existence is merely an elaborate restatement of the misrepresentation argument. The same point can be made about the distinction between appearance and reality. This spatial analogy is specious. What are, in fact, being contrasted are commonsense experience, portrayed as a passive reflection of existing social relations, and the penetrating understanding made possible by science. The conception of science involved is, however, rarely spelt out. For the most part authors simply assume that they can distinguish 'penetrations' from ideology without any indication of how this is possible (but see Sayer, 1979 for an important exception). A much more radical line has been taken by McCarney (1980) who argues that Marx's use of the concept of ideology does not involve any implication of distortion or falsity. However, in my view what he succeeds in showing, despite his efforts, is that Marx did not develop a coherent conception of ideology (for a very different account which also reveals the incoherent character of Marx's conceptualization in this area, see Abercrombie, 1980, chapter 1).

3 For example, appeal is made to 'a common educational fallacy that opportunities can be made by education, that upward mobility is basically a matter of individual push, that qualifications make their own openings' (p. 127), which, it is claimed, 'the lads' see through. However, little evidence is provided to show that conformist pupils are committed to this view, and that the several claims conflated here are indeed fallacies. (For an argument demonstrating that one of these claims is by no means fallacious, see Demaine (1981, p. 106)). Indeed, attribution of the 'penetration' to 'the lads' is shrouded by distinctions between individual and group understanding, and between the level of 'words' and that of 'cultural practices': 'Though it would be wrong to impute to "the lads" individually any critique or analytic motive, it is clear that their collective culture shows both a responsiveness to the uniqueness of human labour power and in its own way constitutes an attempt to defeat a certain ideological definition of it' (p. 132). Such an inevitably speculative mode of attribution is perhaps particularly necessary for the other 'penetrations', where elements of the labour theory of value are divined in the 'cultural practices, of 'the lads'. Here again very little reference is made to arguments or evidence regarding the validity of this theory.

4 Sometimes the veneer is very thin indeed, as in the recent case of Sharp (1980).

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