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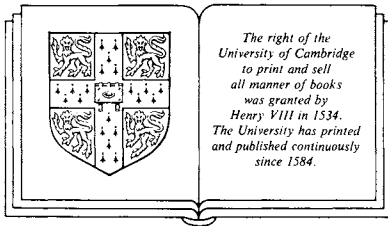
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PHILIP ABRAMS



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A note to the reader

Two different typefaces are used throughout this book to distinguish between what was written by Philip Abrams and what by Martin Bulmer.

Material by Philip Abrams is printed in Times typeface, which is the type used for this sentence.

Material by Martin Bulmer is printed in Univers typeface, which is the type used for this sentence and for most of the Preface.

Preface

Between 1976 and his death in October 1981, at the age of 48, Philip Abrams, Professor of Sociology at the University of Durham, directed three projects on neighbours, neighbouring and neighbourhood care. When he died, he was about to commence writing up this research in book form. The present work is an attempt to present posthumously a unified account of the results of this Durham research by Philip Abrams. The author was asked to undertake this task by the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust, who supported the first and (in part) the third phases of the work. Most of the material in this book is drawn from manuscripts written by Philip Abrams and members of his team during his lifetime. These have been selected, edited and integrated by me with addition and commentary where this seemed necessary and appropriate. All material in the book by Philip Abrams is set in Times typeface, the same as this sentence is set in. All passages written by Martin Bulmer are set in Univers typeface, as is this sentence and the rest of the page.

At first sight, Philip Abrams was perhaps rather an unlikely person to make a close study of the interpersonal world of neighbours. Both by academic background and interests he had previously concentrated on history and macro-sociology. Born in 1933, he took a first in both parts of the Cambridge history tripos, graduating in 1955. After six years as a research student and then research fellow at Peterhouse, he was awarded his PhD in 1961 for a thesis on John Locke as a Conservative, subsequently publishing a critical edition of Locke (Abrams 1963). These postgraduate years were also spent in the study of sociology, particularly political sociology, which he taught in his first job as assistant lecturer in sociology at LSE from 1961–62. He then returned to Cambridge as assistant lecturer, teaching political sociology in the Faculty of Economics and Politics. In 1965 he was appointed University Lecturer and Fellow and Tutor at Peterhouse. Between 1968 and 1970 he was Chairman of the Social and Political Sciences Committee, which was responsible for setting up and then running the new Part II tripos in social and political sciences, which became the main instrument for introducing substantial sociology teaching into the university (cf. Bulmer 1984a:23–7). From January 1971 until his death in October 1981 he was Professor of Sociology at the University of Durham (British Sociological Association (BSA) 1982; Brown 1982; McCulloch 1982).

Philip Abrams's scholarly interests ranged widely. Political sociology was his first love and remained a major centre of interest. Historical sociology was an abiding interest (cf. Abrams 1972; Wrigley and Abrams 1978), culminating in his posthumous *Historical Sociology* (1982). An early interest, too, was in the soci-

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ology of the military (cf. Abrams 1962, 1965, 1970), which led to an invitation from Morris Janowitz to spend the year 1966–67 at the University of Chicago. There he wrote *The Origins of British Sociology 1834–1914* (Abrams 1968), a classic essay and standard source of reference. He continued to work on the development of British sociology after 1914, holding a Social Science Research Council (SSRC) personal research grant in 1979–80 to investigate the utilisation of British sociology in the present century (cf. Abrams 1984a) and organising the thirtieth anniversary conference of the British Sociological Association with its theme of the history of the discipline (Abrams *et al.* 1981b).

A more practical strain was however evident in his work, which may be traced back to interests developed while spending the year in Chicago. There he was attached to the Centre for Social Organization Studies in the Department of Sociology, directed by Morris Janowitz, and rubbed shoulders with Albert Hunter and William Kornblum, absorbing some of the themes and interests of the Chicago school which are apparent particularly in chapters 2 to 4. He saw a good deal also of Lloyd and Margaret Fallers and of Edward Shils, whose interests in primary group relationships may have influenced his later work. What is most evident is the connection between the kind of applied sociology encouraged there by Morris Janowitz, combining an interest in sociology and social policy (cf. Janowitz 1970; 1977) and Philip Abrams's own developing interests in social policy and policy research apparent in chapters 7 to 12 of this book.

Among his earlier books, this tendency was most evident in the wide-ranging survey of contemporary British society which he commissioned and edited. When he came to Durham he carried on an earlier series of research projects spanning sociology and social policy, starting with studies of regionalism and regional development. The immediate antecedents of his work on neighbours may be found in the SSRC-funded project on communes in Britain, which explored empirically contemporary alternatives to the nuclear family, the nature of friendship in capitalist society, and sociological theories of social solidarity and cohesion. There he quoted approvingly Durkheim on the moral necessity for collective life, the perils and pains of social isolation and the need to nurture social cooperation (Abrams and McCulloch 1976:219–20). The communes project led directly to a study (funded by the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS)) of the effectiveness as a type of care of therapeutic communities, particularly those concerned with the mentally and emotionally disturbed and with unsupported mothers. (This work remained unfinished at his death.)

This book does not attempt to give a personal portrait of the man, nor to assess the significance of his historical and sociological work as a whole. Such a task would be too complex and, in the case of his scholarly work, premature. The focus here is exclusively upon the research on neighbouring and neighbourhood care. The sources of his interest in these subjects were varied. During his year in Chicago he became familiar with the classic sociological studies of the urban neighbourhood. He had a long-standing interest, apparent in the communes research, in the basis of social solidarity, and was much influenced by Durkheim's *Division of Labour in Society* (cf. Abrams and McCulloch 1976:152–88). The communes research raised questions about the relative roles

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of friendship and of the family as foundations for social relationships. Through his interest in political sociology he came to issues of community power and neighbourhood control with a fresh eye. And it may be that his active involvement in the Cambridge Labour Party up to 1965 was also a contributory factor.

The immediate origins of the research on neighbours lay with the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust. The Trust's Associate Director in the mid-1970s, Robin Huws Jones, had identified a number of areas for research under the umbrella of the effectiveness of social care. One of these was a study of neighbourliness.

We read in the paper of people who die alone. Being alone before you die can matter greatly, and sometimes this happened in areas where statutory and voluntary social services were very active. In any society, but especially one with an increasing proportion of people who are old, or handicapped, or in community care because they are mentally ill or handicapped, we need more good neighbourliness, however well the statutory and organised voluntary services performed. (Interview with Robin Huws Jones, 23 November 1983.)

When the opportunity came, Philip Abrams hesitated at first, then, with his wife Sheila's enthusiastic support, he seized it. From this began a series of studies in which he became progressively involved, so much so that shortly before his death he had committed himself to a career move into policy research as Deputy Director of the Policy Studies Institute.

Writing in 1980, Philip Abrams said that three reasons had impelled his own interest in neighbours and neighbouring. In the field of social policy a number of major initiatives, conspicuously the Seebohm Report, had directed attention to the desirability of strengthening 'informal', 'community' or 'neighbourhood' care in relation to the organised statutory and voluntary services. And, rightly or wrongly, such developments had been seen as involving actual neighbours in being 'neighbourly'. In sociology a whole tradition of community and neighbourhood studies seemed to have come to a dead end so far as firm knowledge about neighbouring was concerned. Indeed, apart from a number of truisms about 'working class community', neighbouring appeared to be a relationship which had elusively defied analysis. And in society as a whole there was a widespread belief that for obscure reasons we were living through a major decline of neighbourliness. New styles of architecture and planning, social and geographic mobility, working wives, television and a host of other reasons for the decline were proposed, but the essence of the argument seemed to be that the costs of neighbourliness to the individual had come to seem excessive in relation to the apparent cheapness of other relationships and other sources of support and care. It was an argument cogently set out by Fred Hirsch (1977) in his image of an emerging 'society of bad neighbours'. Faced with such challenges and opportunities, above all with the prospect of social policy moving boldly into the unexplored territory of 'neighbourhood care' and often firmly behaving as if it knew its way, he could not resist the temptations of research.

The results of this research up to the time of his death are presented here. A considerable quantity of unpublished material arising from the first two phases

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of the research survives, together with a number of published papers listed in the bibliography. This forms the basis of the present book. Material already published has been drawn upon sparingly, since it is already in the public domain. Particular attention has been paid to presenting the results of empirical research and to tracing the evolution of Philip Abrams's ideas about neighbourhood care. Some 21 case studies were completed in the course of the two projects, and 16 of them are referred to frequently here. A considerable body of data resulted. The Street studies (chapter 4) involved about 165 interviews, the Neighbourhood Care studies (chapters 8–10) about 570 interviews with Helpers, Clients and Residents. To aid the reader in identifying places, a glossary appears on page xiv. All places and persons are referred to by pseudonyms; no real names are used of local people studied. To complicate matters, more than one pseudonym was sometimes used for a particular place or street. Thus the Durham pit village whose Good Neighbour scheme was studied was variously referred to as 'Sunniside', 'Pitside' and 'Slide'. The alternative pseudonyms are shown in the glossary, but only one pseudonym is used for each place in this book.

The form of this work is somewhat unusual, for the posthumous exegesis of someone else's unfinished scholarly work is comparatively rare. There were scarcely any models to follow. There are one or two posthumous reconstructions of a social scientist's lectures from student notes (e.g. Mead 1934) but that is a rather different exercise. On the other hand, critical assessments of the work of leading figures like Tawney or Titmuss (cf. Terrill 1974; Reisman 1978) can take for granted that their work is already well-known. This was not the case here, since much of the work was unpublished. The task seemed a worthwhile one to me personally because of my dual interest in the sociology of community and the relevance of social network analysis on the one hand, and the nature of informal social relationships and the extent to which they can be built upon to provide social care on the other. Moreover, the bridges which Philip Abrams was seeking to build and maintain between theory and policy need constant reinforcement, particularly in Britain where sociology and social policy have become unnecessarily distant as academic subjects.

Philip Abrams left a number of unpublished manuscripts which form the basis of the book. These, however, have been drawn on in different ways in preparing individual chapters, so that some chapters can be more closely related to a single unpublished work than others. Thus chapter 4 is largely based upon research reports of the six 'Street studies' prepared for the Durham advisory committee, as well as re-reading of the original interview schedules. Chapter 6 reproduces his influential paper 'Altruism and reciprocity: altruism as reciprocity'. Chapters 8 to 10 and the second half of the methodological appendix draw heavily upon the report which Philip Abrams, Sheila Abrams, Robin Humphrey and Ray Snaith submitted to the Department of Health and Social Security in March 1981, for which Robin, Ray and Sheila carried out all the fieldwork. Chapters 1–3, 5, 7, 11 and 12 are more composite, drawing upon several sources among the unpublished writings. Thus, for example, material from two draft chapters which Philip wrote for a projected book entitled *Neighbours, Sociology and Social Policy* is incorporated in chapters 1, 2, 3, 5 and the first part of the

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methodological appendix. In the autumn of 1979, Philip Abrams gave four lectures at the Volunteer Centre on neighbourhood care, dealing with definition, relations, values and policy. Material from the first of these is used in chapter 2; from the first and second in chapter 5; from the fourth in chapters 7, 11, and 12; and from the third in chapter 12. Chapter 7 also contains an extract from an account of the Stonegate Street Warden scheme which was produced as a research team working paper. Where a published source written by Philip Abrams is drawn upon in the text, this is cited as such and the publication listed in the bibliography. Where material comes from an unpublished source, this is not cited in order to avoid cluttering up the text with references to unpublished reports and working papers which are not accessible to the reader.

Not only is the form of this work somewhat unusual, but the reader will become aware that it is the work of two different people, the first speaking with a clear and modulated voice, the second putting the unfinished work of the first together, filling gaps and setting the Durham research on neighbours in its wider context. In places, there is some reference by the second voice to other research work on related issues, and the raising of critical questions. Occasionally, certain inconsistencies are pointed out. If the work is one of reconstruction and critical exegesis, the exegesis looms largest. There has been no attempt to achieve a unified prose style as between the two voices. Philip Abrams's writing style was his own, clear, subtle, winning, distinctive, and marvelled at by his colleagues. The reader is therefore asked to bear with the two rather different voices, and such disjunctions and even incompleteness which must in places inevitably result.

Nor is the book by two people only. Philip Abrams conceived, guided and directed the research from his department with the assistance of several research staff whose contribution to the finished product was considerable. Sheila Abrams (1976–83), Janice Davinson (1976–78), Fred Robinson (1976–77), Robin Humphrey (1978–83) and Ray Snaith (1978–83) worked on the project at different stages and for varying lengths of time. Sheila Abrams's influence is discernible throughout, reflecting participation in team meetings over five years, continuing involvement in fieldwork and the salience of neighbouring as a regular topic of conversation at the family dinner table. Janice Davinson's contribution as a creative fieldworker is particularly apparent throughout chapter 4; she drafted the reports of fieldwork in Boswell, Congreve Hall and Dryden Square. Fred Robinson laid the groundwork for chapters 2 and 3 and also contributed to chapter 4. Robin Humphrey and Ray Snaith worked on the studies of Good Neighbour schemes at the second phase, where their contribution has already been publicly recognised (Abrams *et al.* 1981a; Abrams *et al.* 1982). This was followed by the ten detailed case studies reported in chapters 8 to 10, for which they and Sheila Abrams carried out all the fieldwork (see p. 255). This work will be reported in full in an HMSO monograph (Abrams, Abrams, Humphrey and Snaith forthcoming) and is also drawn upon in a practitioner-oriented publication edited by Diana Leat (Abrams, Abrams, Humphrey and Snaith 1985b). Philip Abrams did not work on his own but directed a research team, and their contribution to this account of his work is the foremost acknowledgement to be made. I should also like to thank Sheila, Janice, Fred, Robin and

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Ray for their helpfulness to me personally at various stages along the road to preparing this account of Philip's work.

Without the support of the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust, which enabled me to take leave from my teaching duties to carry out this work, this book would not have been possible. To the Trustees and especially to the Trust's Director, Robin Guthrie, a particular debt is owed. Robin's determination to see that Philip Abrams's work was brought together and his contribution to sociology and social policy remembered led directly to this book being written. As indicated earlier, Robin Huws Jones, when Associate Director of the Trust during the 1970s, was the person who originally suggested that work on the topic of neighbours and care would be fruitful, and initiated the discussions which led to the first grant from the Trust to Philip Abrams.

The present work to write up the neighbouring research benefited from the existence of an advisory committee, and it is a pleasure to acknowledge their helpful contributions at various stages to the completion of the task. Ably chaired by Alan Little, the other members were Mark Abrams, Sheila Abrams, Jack Barnes, John A. Barnes, Richard K. Brown, James Cornford, Robin Guthrie, Robin Huws Jones, Dennis Marsden, John Pinder, Robert Pinker, Alan Walker and Peter Willmott.

Certain acknowledgements are customarily left until last, but they deserve more prominence. Throughout the year spent preparing this book, Valerie Campling provided admirable help with all manner of typing work, including this manuscript itself, which she prepared with her customary accuracy and efficiency. Gay Grant provided very effective general secretarial support.

The first stage of Philip Abrams's research in Durham also had an advisory committee, and four members of that previous committee shared with me their recollections of the development of Philip's work: Esther Goody of the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge, Fred Philp, Assistant Director of Cumbria Social Services, Erica Vere, a Rowntree Trustee, and Sir Derman Christopherson, former Vice-Chancellor of Durham University.

In the research community, others working on different aspects of informal social care provided information and advice. Particularly helpful were Peter Stubbings and Giles Darvill at the Volunteer Centre, Tilda Goldberg at Berkhamsted, and Peter Willmott and Diana Leat at the Policy Studies Institute. Also consulted were Michael Bayley and Hazel Qureshi at Sheffield, George W. Brown of the Medical Research Council (MRC) External Staff, Sally Baldwin and Gillian Parker at York, Michael Power at Bristol, Clare Ungerson, Claire Wallace and Bledwyn Davies at Kent, Clare Wenger at Bangor, Marie Johnson at Newcastle and Ian Sinclair at the National Institute of Social Work. The opportunity to make presentations at Colin Bell's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Workshop on Community Studies in January 1984 and at the Social Administration Association conference in July 1984 was also valuable. Jack Barnes and Hazel Canter in the Office of the Chief Scientist, Department of Health and Social Security, facilitated the use of the 1981 Report to DHSS.

Several friends of Philip Abrams talked to me about his entry into sociology and the Cambridge years, and I would like to thank James Cornford, Liam Hudson, Morris Janowitz, Sonia Jackson, Peter Laslett, Andrew McCulloch,

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Jonathan Steinberg, Edward Shils and Ken Woollard for doing so. John Barnes, Maurice Cowling, Sir Moses Finley, Jack Goody and W. G. Runciman also talked to me more generally about the development of sociology at Cambridge and Philip's role in that growth.

A visit to the United States in the summer of 1984 provided an opportunity to trace the influence of Philip Abrams's year in Chicago in 1966–67, and to learn more of related American work on neighbouring. At the University of Chicago, Morris Janowitz, Margaret Fallers, Donald Levine, Richard Taub and Gerald Suttles all provided fresh insights, and a conversation with Albert Hunter at Northwestern University was especially valuable. In New York, discussions with Herbert J. Gans and Eugene Litwak at Columbia were very useful. Meeting Diane L. Pancoast, Nancy J. Chapman and Alice H. Collins in Portland, Oregon, and Barbara Laslett of the University of Minnesota was also helpful. The view of the world from the campuses of the University of Chicago, Northwestern University and Columbia University is a very different one from that in London or in Durham, and a refreshing one. As Philip Abrams himself found in Chicago, the stimulation provided was beneficial.

The responsibility for the interpretation of Philip Abrams's work on neighbouring presented here lies with me. Based as far as possible on his own writings, it has nevertheless involved selection and piecing together, as well as engagement with the issues with which he was engaged. The experience of the year preparing the book has been for me an exciting one intellectually, which has enlarged my perspectives upon social policy and sociology. At the same time, the experience of completing someone else's work posthumously is a rather unusual one. Counterfactuals are of limited usefulness, but I am bound to say that I wish it had not been necessary for me to prepare this book. Philip Abrams's death in 1981 was a sad loss to British sociology and social policy.

London
November 1984

MARTIN BULMER

Glossary: Places studied which are referred to in the text

Place (under pseudonym)	Location	What was studied	Where referred to
Alphaville (Reaching, Zoom)	Large northern city	Good Neighbour scheme	Chapter 1; and Abrams 1978b, 5–14; Abrams <i>et al.</i> 1981a, 66–72. Chapter 4
Austen Avenue (Balaclava Road)	Yorkshire woollen town	Informal neighbourliness	Chapter 4
Boswell village	Cumbria	Informal neighbourliness	Chapter 4
Bradbury	Suburb of northern city	Neighbourhood Care scheme	Chapters 8–10
Brandling	Inner London Borough	Neighbourhood Care scheme	Chapters 8–10
Congreve Hall (Manor Court)	Cambridge	Informal neighbourliness	Chapter 4
Dryden Square	Leeds	Informal neighbourliness	Chapter 4
Easethorpe	Village on South Downs in Sussex	Neighbourhood Care scheme	Chapters 8–10
Etherege Terrace (Prospect Terrace)	Durham	Informal neighbourliness	Chapter 4
Fielding Close (Hutton Crescent)	County Durham New Town	Informal neighbourliness	Chapter 4
Grantley	Central area of a northern city	Neighbourhood Care scheme	Chapters 8–10
Hope Green	London Borough of Camden	Good Neighbour scheme	Abrams <i>et al.</i> 1981a:87–94
Parsons Green	Suburb of an East Anglian town	Neighbourhood Care scheme	Chapters 8–10
Riverside	Inner London Borough	Good Neighbour scheme	Abrams 1981a:94–8
Skeffington	Commercial and industrial city	Neighbourhood Care scheme	Chapters 8–10
Southfield Park	Suburb on edge of GLC area	Neighbourhood Care scheme	Chapters 8–10

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Place (under pseudonym)	Location	What was studied	Where referred to
Stonegate	District of a great steel city	Neighbourhood Care scheme	Chapters 8–10
Sunniside (Pitside, Slide)	Durham mining village	Good Neighbour scheme	Chapter 1; and Abrams 1978b, 5–14; Abrams <i>et al.</i> 1981a:59–66
Task Force	London Borough of Greenwich	Good Neighbour scheme	Abrams <i>et al.</i> 1981a:72–9
Tattworth (East Kinley)	Inner area of a midlands city	Neighbourhood Care scheme	Chapters 8–10
Trimdon (including Darnton, Bream and Strathburn within it)	District of a large city in south of England	Neighbourhood Care scheme	Chapters 8–10

Note: The localities studied are given pseudonyms. Where Philip Abrams used other pseudonyms for the same place in other publications, these are given in brackets.